

## SUPPLY AND DEMAND

Beirut wasn't the only thing that went up in smoke during this past summer's war between Israel and Hezbollah. According to Israeli border police, the flow of drugs from Lebanon, mostly hashish and marijuana, continued unabated during the chaos. A Knesset report stated that despite increased funding for drug running countermeasures, border police were only able to intercept between five to ten percent of the 25-40 kilograms of hashish—with street value as much as \$100,000—smuggled through Israel's northern border each day.

For decades Lebanon has had a strong position in Israel's drug market. In recent years Hezbollah has taken control of many trading routes and supply lines. The Party of God relies on the lucrative drug trade not only to fund its various activities, but also as a means to gather intelligence within Israel.

Drug traffickers use towns like Ghajar to smuggle drugs between the two countries. There is no fence or barricade dividing the Lebanese and Israeli sides of the village, which enables both residents and drug smugglers to cross the border with relative ease.

Some Israelis, realizing that their drug habits were fueling rocket attacks inside their own country, sent out mass e-mails and posted web logs in an effort to encourage citizens to boycott the use of hashish during the conflict. Despite the wartime effort, there are no signs that Hezbollah will lose its market share any time soon. ■-CC

## PARDON ME

By Haim Malka

There is plenty to atone for in Arab politics. Heavy handed tactics of oppression and civil strife have embittered people across the region for decades. In other societies wrecked by similar conflicts, pardons and amnesties have been used to help heal these wounds. In the Middle East, however, they are more often disingenuous political maneuvers, used to strengthen the regime and manipulate opposition forces rather than engage them.

When President Anwar Sadat of Egypt came to power in 1970, for example, he released thousands of Muslim Brothers imprisoned by his predecessor Gamal Abdel Nasser. Sadat was far less interested in currying favor with the Brotherhood than he was in strengthening the foes of his own leftist Nasserite opposition. It was his Islamist opposition, not the Nasserites, who killed him in 1981. In October 2002 Saddam Hussein emptied his prisons in a last ditch effort to rally Iraqis before the imminent U.S. invasion. Hussein did not save himself, but he contributed to the chaos that overtook Iraq after the fall of his regime.

Such political manipulation strips amnesties of their potential to help stabilize societies in conflict. By holding out an incentive for fighters to lay down their arms, amnesties are a vital component of a long and painful process of reconciliation. Pardoning those who have committed acts of violence is not a moral judgment, but an incentive to stop killing. When thousands have killed and been killed, it is hard to imagine another way for the cycles of violence to end. Effective reconciliation is not merely about forgiveness, but also about reaching accommodation through redress of grievances. It addresses not just violence, but the spurs to violence as well.

In recent years, there have been some encouraging signs that Arab regimes are taking reconciliation more seriously. Morocco's Equity and Reconciliation Commission and Algeria's Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation are both important efforts. The idea of reconciliation is increasingly resonating in Iraq, where rising sectarian violence threatens the unity of the state.

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## CHINA-MIDDLE EAST CONFERENCE

On September 14, the Middle East Program hosted the inaugural conference of our Vital Triangle project, examining the intersection of U.S., Chinese, and Middle Eastern interests. At the core of the CSIS project is determining whether the United States and China are more likely to compete or cooperate in the Middle East, what conditions would influence that determination, and what impact U.S. competition or cooperation with China would have on the interests of the U.S., Chinese, and Middle Eastern governments. The conference was the first of several planned around the world. Jon Alterman co-directs the project with Professor John Garver of the Georgia Institute of Technology. Read more at [www.csis.org/mideast/china](http://www.csis.org/mideast/china). ■

The recent efforts in Algeria and Morocco have multiple critics. For many, the plans don't go far enough in exposing and punishing crimes. For many others, they go too far, exposing old wounds that many would prefer to leave covered. To be effective, amnesty needs to be a tool in a larger effort. South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission—considered the gold standard for such bodies—did not always exercise the amnesty-granting power that it had. The Commission had the power to grant amnesty to perpetrators of political violence who were truthful about their actions, but it referred a majority of cases to the regular courts. The amnesty created an incentive to tell the truth, rather than an all-purpose excuse for culpable parties.

Algeria's effort has lacked the element of transparency on which the South African commission and many other reconciliation attempts have insisted. Nonetheless, the broader process spearheaded by President Abdelaziz Bouteflika has made Algerians much safer than they were just a few years ago. The charter for reconciliation has been combined with greater space for opposition forces, most notably conservatives and Islamists. Exiled leaders from the banned Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) have been allowed to return home, and hundreds of activists have been released from prison, though most remain banned from politics.

Bouteflika's plan is not perfect, and much of its success depends on his leadership. While those who committed rape and mass murder are not eligible for pardon, the government has extended amnesty to those accused of killing both soldiers and civilians. Beyond stabilizing the country, the Algerian amnesty has achieved something else: it has helped draw a line between those who can be co-opted into the political arena and those who insist on fighting to the death. Furthermore, it has helped alienate the latter group from the general population.

Morocco has its own ambitious plan, backed by the king and led by former political prisoners. The Equity and Reconciliation Commission has chronicled abuses between the years 1956-1999, issuing a 1,500 page report last year that was unprecedented in the Arab world. Still, critics argue that it does little either to curb current abuses or force past abusers from the offices that some currently hold.

Iraq's amnesty plan remains stalled in part because of reluctance to pardon those who killed American soldiers. Such reluctance may be due more to American political considerations rather than Iraqi ones, however, and they could stand in the way of reconciliation among Iraqis, who must live with the consequences.

There is of course no guarantee that militants, once pardoned, will play a constructive and stabilizing role within their societies. Algeria's national reconciliation is still a work in progress. Iraq is still in the midst of a bloody nightmare. What is clear, however, is that continuing to deny those with legitimate grievances an opportunity to participate in a national debate will ensure that civil conflicts continue to fester in fractured societies throughout the region. Those who seek South African style justice will be disappointed. Amnesties alone are not about serving justice. They are about preventing more bloodshed.

■10/20/06

## Links of Interest

CSIS hosted Prince Turki Al-Faisal, Saudi Arabia's ambassador to the United States, for a speech on the future of U.S.-Saudi relations:

[http://www.csis.org/component/option,com\\_csis\\_events/task,view/id,1090/](http://www.csis.org/component/option,com_csis_events/task,view/id,1090/)

The Middle East Program continued its Congressional Forum on Islam with a discussion with Bernard Haykel of NYU entitled "Radical Islam: Five Years after 9/11":

[http://www.csis.org/component/option,com\\_csis\\_events/task,view/id,1082/](http://www.csis.org/component/option,com_csis_events/task,view/id,1082/)

Jon Alterman discussed *Judging the Iranian Threat: 20 Questions We Need to Answer*:

[http://www.csis.org/component/option,com\\_csis\\_progj/task,view/id,784/](http://www.csis.org/component/option,com_csis_progj/task,view/id,784/)

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### The CSIS Middle East Program

JON B. ALTERMAN, Director

HAIM MALKA, Fellow

FARES BRAIZAT, Visiting Fellow

GREG BROSMAN, Program Coordinator/Research Assistant

FAROOK AHMED, CHRIS CASSIMUS, AND JEFF SILLIN, Interns

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