Building Bridges Between Cultures in the Nuclear Age: Globalization and the Current World-Wide War

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abstract

The peace community encourages building bridges between cultures to resolve conflicts and prevent war. Other positive results can be more trade to increase wealth, nation building, and growth of our global civilization by cross-fertilization of ideas and art as well as commerce. The UN asked people of goodwill to consider building bridges during a decade of dialogue among civilizations, rather than engage in destructive clashes. Unfortunately, the current "global war on terrorism" ("GWOT" in American military jargon) highlights some downsides to the building bridges theory. The same mechanisms that move people, money, goods, and information more efficiently can also move murderers, bombs, war plans, and nuclear or biological weapons components. Also, "Globalization" was increasing economic inequalities and tearing up established economies long before the current war. And "cultural hegemony" became a recognizable term long before the "war on terrorism" did. So global tension grows for many reasons. This paper will review these issues and examine three specific cases: South Africa, North and South Korea, and Israel / Palestine to ask whether, on balance, we are moving forward or backward on the road to peace and global harmony. One case appears a clear success, another a failure, and the third remains to be determined.

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Turkey is the quintessential crossroads of civilizations. So a few comments on Turkey's special role in our global evolution will be made from time to time; it is why I came here. No other truly Muslim country has tried so hard to embrace the modern world and to accomplish the pluralistic ideals of the original Umma. Mustafa Kemal Ataturk had many flaws, but he saw that the secular state was essential to getting religious factions to coexist peacefully. Many others have seen that finding a constructive balance between modernity and tradition is essential for wealth in this global economy which punishes so ruthlessly those who insist that the old ways are the only legitimate ways. Thus Turkey is a key to life and death in the age of nuclear terrorism (by state or non-state actors). If Turkey succeeds, the world succeeds, so its ongoing experiment with a modern, pluralistic Islam is critical to all.

There is no escaping the central dilemma that a bridge can carry good or bad things equally well. Like any other tool, bridges are ethically neutral and mute. People determine whether tools are used for good or evil. Those who wonder whether we shall see a "clash of civilizations" or a "dialogue among cultures" should recognize that we are seeing both right now. The global pressures that result in the current world-wide war, among many other consequences, will be pushing the voices of light to find better ways to achieve effective pluralism as much as they push the anger of those who chose to fight over scarce resources, national identities and political space. It is a clash between "idealists" and "realists" too.

An eloquent example of these contrary reactions to the same dilemma is expressed in Stanley Crossick's "Turkey: Bridge or Bridgehead?"(1) But here we sit; our children deserve a better future, and the dilemma is inescapable. So the practical question becomes "How can we maximize the good consequences of this great and inexorable tension, and minimize the bad?" I chose to look at three hard cases where building bridges has been tried (and walls sometimes, or DMZs) in response to similar tensions. I will consider them in rough order of difficulty, from South Africa to the Korean dyad, to the Israeli – Palestinian conflict which every international student knows because it has been the Gordian Knot of conflict resolution cases for many decades. Since a pullout from Gaza is scheduled days before this conference, current events could easily overwhelm some details in this paper!

Finally, for more context before taking on such cases, I want to simply list some of the other major global tensions that affect whether any particular bridge or civic exchange program will succeed or fail at achieving positive outcomes. These pressures affect almost everyone, consciously or unconsciously, so you will all be familiar with them.

-- Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) interact with the anger of "Terrorists" to create a nightmare driving many decisions of both large and small scale. The non-proliferation regime that helped for 40 years is unraveling as we watch and talk.

-- Population pressure increases inexorably even though there are many positive trends one may discern on that front. Differential demographics are central to understanding tensions between Jewish Israeli's and Muslim Palestinians, for one example, or Turkey's desire to join the EU and the fear among many Europeans that Turkey would then become an easy gateway for violent extremists.

-- This pressure combines with the pressure of gluttonous appetites among some who have much, leading to severe environmental stresses that include global warming, declining biodiversity and emerging diseases like AIDS and bird flu that can threaten the welfare of human civilization if not the fate of the earth.

-- We are on the cusp of "Peak Oil" (peak in global oil production) after which many things will become much more expensive and harder to solve while tension rises. (2)

-- All of these factors make issues like "generational equity" ever more important.

-- Finally there is a crisis within ALL of the major religions I am aware of on this earth, between what I will call here 'fundamentalists' and 'ecumenicals.'

Each of these large pressures can be illustrated in the cases I will consider, and they complicate finding solutions that can work and endure. But that is our ultimate task. So I end this contextual introduction with a much simpler declaration of strategy. **The agenda for dialogues among civilizations should be human survival**, rather than divisive details.

I press this concept for strictly practical reasons. Without rapport, dialogues often degenerate into debates that yield more heat than light. Human survival is a goal virtually every human being supports, regardless of religion, politics, geography or prosperity. Thus it can be a key to achieving constructive "dialogues" rather than destructive "debates." Enough context; I will begin with South Africa.

South Africa

One of the oddities of the South African case is that the protagonists differed far more from each other than in North and South Korea or than the Semitic Jews and Muslims in and around Israel do. South Africa has at least 7 different black tribes (Zulu, Xhosa, et al.) and arguably 2 white ones (descendents of Dutch ancestors, the Boers, and descendents of British colonialists who defeated them in 1902). Each speaks quite different languages and enough time has past that all 9 groups feel 100% native African, but they certainly differ more than most. Yet more success at building bridges has occurred in South Africa than in either of the other cases so far. I have met at length with members of a leading intelligence unit there that is focused on early warning (not just of wars but of natural calamities and other significant public health problems). They spanned the rainbow spectrum but worked together better than most families do. It was quite something to watch. In a continent of failed and failing states, South Africa is a beacon of hope for the future now.

One key concept and three key people seem to have been critical to the success of this bridge-building endeavor. The key concept was the "Truth and Reconciliation Commission" which was translated from theory into a practical form by Anglican Bishop Desmond Tutu. He was one of the three leadership keys; the others were Nelson Mandela and the white Prime Minister at a critical moment, F.W. de Klerk.

Of course great changes never happen just because of leaders. The system called apartheid in South Africa had become a global symbol of racial injustice as blacks and whites contested ever more violently over wealth and power. The roots went back centuries, and like all real wars were more complicated than we have time for here. Yet today, despite many very severe and continuing problems all 9 groups coexist in one nation with a level of harmony now that none would have predicted 20 years ago. Leadership is always important, and enlightened leadership is always in scarce supply. But in this case some very exceptional personalities were involved at the critical moments when people decided whether to build constructive bridges between their cultures or to burn them.

All three won Nobel Peace prizes for their remarkable efforts. I will presume that Nelson Mandela's contributions are well enough known, but many do not know that Prime Minister Frederik Willem de Klerk began his term at the top with an extraordinary speech. In the words of his Nobel introduction (3): "In his first speech after assuming the party leadership he called for a nonracist South Africa and for negotiations about the country's future. He lifted the ban on the ANC and released Nelson Mandela. He brought apartheid to an end and opened the way for the drafting of a new constitution for the country based on the principle of one person, one vote." From *Les Prix Nobel* 1993.

Desmond Tutu won his Nobel Prize in 1984, but from where I sit his biggest contribution was during the critical phase of peace building after power had been transferred. He articulated a detailed concept of "Truth and Reconciliation Commissions" and gave it life by chairing the most successful example of the modern era, although other examples exist with mixed success. In a recent speech to the Kroc Center at the University of Notre Dame (Indiana, USA) Tutu described the process this way (4).

> **"Forgiveness and reconciliation have been shown not to be nebulous namby-pamby things. No, they are the stuff of *real politik*. The alternative, the way of revenge, of retribution, leads to a ghastly *cul de sac* – the spiral of reprisal provoking counter reprisal ad infinatum, ending with no security, no peace, but a toll in human lives and property that is inexorable and exorbitant. It is not to be merely idealistic to say that without forgiveness there is no future, it is being a hard-nosed realist. Just ask the people of the Middle East and of Northern Ireland or Sri Lanka or Rwanda. True peace and real security will never come from the barrel of a gun, however overwhelming.**
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> **Peace and security come because all enjoy justice and freedom. Peace and security come because it is acknowledged that people matter."**

This does not mean that all problems are solved in South Africa, of course. It has one of the highest incidences of AIDS in the world, and poverty remains severe for many black South Africans. But it is still the strongest economy in all of Africa, and it is becoming the blueprint for multi-ethnic social norms for a continent in severe distress. At the same Notre Dame conference, two prominent South African economists debated the prospects, Dr. Mamphela Ramphele, managing director of the World Bank and former vice chancellor of the University of Cape Town, and Dr. Charles Villa-Vicencio, former National Research Director of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission which Tutu set up. Their consensus and differences were described by an observer as follows. (5)

> "From the presentations and a lively debate that followed, a clear message emerged: that while South Africa had set an exemplary precedent regarding the possibility of peaceful political transitions, the challenges posed by post-accord peacebuilding are numerous and often daunting. One contested issue was the **appropriate role of the state in redistributing wealth.** [my emphasis] …
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> The panelists agreed that the constraints imposed by a highly competitive **globalized** economy set severe limits on state initiatives, forcing the South African government to choose between orthodox economic policies and the basic needs of its people – which if unmet, might threaten the country's hard-earned peace."

Every such effort today must deal with that ephemeral thing called "Globalization." Most attempts to characterize this force focus on economic impacts, which are surely profound. But I will end this section with a political observation. Nations often meddle in their neighbor's affairs. Another important factor in whether nations or factions in conflict go to war or mend fences is whether outside forces offer real help at mediation, or exploit the situation for their advantage. During this same, critical time, the superpowers observed that South Africa had recently built their first nuclear weapons, and some key parties had the nightmare of what might happen to such weapons if the African National Congress took over as they appeared poised to do. What might have been acceptable under other circumstances suddenly was not. So external forces decided to cooperate on this one, rather than meddling, unlike similar cases in nearby Angola and Mozambique where brutal civil wars persisted for over 20 years, partly because they were financed by big powers far away.

North and South Korea

The jury is still out on whether building bridges will work to resolve the conflict between North and South Korea. Many have tried with very small results so far. Yet the Koreas were one nation just 60 years ago, with thousands of years of common history. Then

they were torn asunder by World War II, and the Korean War of 1950 – 1953. There was a cease fire, but technically that war has never ended, which complicates the current situation. Two populations that are literally blood relatives with a common language and culture were propagandized very thoroughly to hate each other. In the South, school children received one hour per day of propaganda prepared by the army and KCIA, and by most accounts the North was worse. Many Koreans now hate each other so enthusiastically that this case illustrates better than most others how powerful state institutions can be in teaching people what to think. Still there are many reasons to support a rapid reconciliation with associated economic development like that which occurred between East and West Germany when conditions allowed. When the Germanys reunited, great efforts at truth without retribution, real reconciliation, and massive economic development were all required.

The best name for this recurring effort to build bridges between these now different cultures in the Koreas is the "Sunshine Policy" (6). It is most associated with former South Korean president Kim Dae Jung, who won a Nobel Peace prize for it in October of 2000. Its basic goal was promoting peace and reconciliation by sponsoring energy development, tourism, family exchanges, and some specific economic projects like railroads, and an industrial park. The sunshine policy has been continued in spirit by his successor Roh Moo Hyun, but has fallen on much harder times for reasons I'll detail in the next paragraph. The North was run as a Stalinist state by founder Kim Il Sung, then by his son Kim Jong Il when the father died in 1994. A good review of the politics of these issues and their complicated historical context was written by Heo Mane of Pusan National University in 2002 (7).

Unfortunately, the wheels came off this process after a new U.S. President George W. Bush informed Kim Dae Jung in a March, 2001 meeting that he would not pursue Clinton's previous negotiations over missiles in the North anytime soon. This was followed by 9/11 and then by Bush's State of the Union address in January 2002 linking North Korea among the "axis of evil" nations. Several of the most ambitious "sunshine" projects foundered or were half completed, leading to a pessimistic story in the Asia Times by Donald Macintyre (8) who wrote: "Groundbreaking for the planned $2.3 billion Kaesong Industrial park, a showpiece of North-South cooperation, has been indefinitely postponed." "Hyundai Asan nearly went bankrupt developing the [Mount Kumgang tourist] project …" and revelations that Hyundai Asan Chairman Chung Mong Hun had "secretly sent $500 million to North Korea to win business concessions" led to scandal.

A dispassionate review can find fault with South Korean business-politicians (who conspire as much there as anywhere) with American policies, AND with the secretive and often ruthless North Korean leadership. A German observer of the scene from an interested foundation (Ronald Meinardus, 9) wrote for the Korea Times on June 15, 2001: "One year after the historic Pyongyang summit, the Koreans' national euphoria has disappeared." "…most analysts agree that mainly two factors have been responsible for the stalemate. Firstly, the hardening of the U.S. position after the Bush administration took office, and second, the obvious unwillingness of the regime in Pyongyang to continue engaging the South under transformed international conditions." He also expressed a deeper and a darker view of the role of conservative politics. "For different reasons, both sides [US and DPRK] have reasons not to be interested in a peaceful settlement of the inter-Korean disputes. Tensions and conflict suit their political agendas better than peace and reconciliation."

There is no doubt this is a very hard case. Still, in its warm phases the Sunshine Policy accomplished more than anyone thought was possible before, including meetings between family members separated for 50 years by the peculiar politics of the Cold War, and initiatives which while incompletely fulfilled, remain dormant for that better day when the larger geopolitical context allows some real progress. That context has been dominated recently by the North's quest to obtain nuclear weapons, and America's responses including an aggressive missile defense program. This brings in the other regional powers, China foremost, but also Japan and the Soviet Union. Essentially everyone in East and Southeast Asia fears a breakout where North Korea openly declares nuclear weapons and the missiles to deliver them. That could prompt a cascade of other new nuclear powers (Japan, South Korea and Taiwan) which would in turn infuriate China. So there are many reasons why many nations will try to resurrect some sunshine when that is possible there. On the other hand, if Meinardus is right, there are also powerful 'conservative' forces who would prefer eternal conflict. We shall see. Only one thing is certain. Neither Presidents Roh nor Bush nor dear leader Kim Jong Il are comparable to Mandela, de Klerk or Bishop Desmond Tutu.

Israel / Palestine

Anything I write about this situation now could be overwhelmed by events as the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) try to evict some 9000 very determined 'settlers' in Gaza and an unknown number of very angry friends from the larger movement they are a focal point of. This conflict appears eternal to many who have watched it for a few decades. No place on earth has better demonstrated the dual character of bridges, and the great struggle between forces of light and darkness over which will dominate the future. Many observers have also noticed that it is almost impossible to talk about any significant aspect of this conflict in mixed company without arousing the wrath of someone.

The wretched mess in Israel / Palestine has generated so many failed peace proposals and angry rebuttals that it is widely regarded as the hardest conflict on earth to mediate. Still people try -- and that itself is somewhat amazing and a cause of hope. I can safely assume that anyone in international relations is quite familiar with the history of this conflict since it is covered more extensively than any other. But the forces of light get much less publicity there than suicide bombers and IDF operations in the occupied territories. So before I review core conclusions, let me list just ten Israeli – Palestinian or Muslim - Jewish peace projects I culled from various sources. I would bet there are a hundred or a thousand more, too modest to make the web or get major publicity.

1. "Hand in hand" is a project sponsoring two Arab – Jewish schools in Jerusalem, founded by Lee Gordon.

2. IPCRI stands for the Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information, founded by Dr. Gershon Baskin and Dr. Zakaria al-Qaq, also in Jerusalem. They sponsor academic conferences, water projects, teacher training and more.

3. Tauush, is an Arab-Jewish partnership that protests house demolitions.

4. ICAHD is the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, founded by Jeff Halper.

5. Musalaha is a ministry of reconciliation between Arabs and Jews which "held a very successful Youth Leaders Conference in Germany Aug. 24-29, 2003" (according to Vermonters for a Just Peace in Israel).

6. The UNESCO Prize for peace education in 2003 went to Emile Shoufani, an Israeli Arab Priest who founded the Mutran school in Nazareth which has partnered with Jewish schools since 1988.

7. On June 28, 2003, 300 "personalities" half Palestinian and half Israelis founded a "Joint Israel-Palestinian Action Group for Peace," followed 2 months later by the publication of a joint political statement signed by 1500.

8. Voice of Peace is a radio station revived by joint activists to begin broadcasting on Nov. 4, 2003, the anniversary of the assassination of former Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin by an Israeli law student angered by his efforts to make peace.

9. The Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center in Jerusalem (sabeel is Arabic for "The Way" and/or "a Spring of Water") has sponsored international conferences in Jerusalem and elsewhere for at least five years. It was founded by a Palestinian pacifist named Naim Ateek, and is very active in the Christian community there.

10. In our own little town in Minnesota, USA, a group called Jewish Community Action has sponsored a very successful Jewish / Muslim women's club.

All of these peacemaking efforts are animated by the fundamental fact that extremists from both sides have been murdering each other (and moderate political opponents) for many decades now. Thousands of innocent others have died in the crossfires of urban warfare, so many that the world sickens and rejects the excuses of zealots on both sides. Particularly important murders were of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin by right wing Jewish zealot Yigal Amir on November 4, 1995, and of Egyptian Prime Minister Anwar Sadat by right wing Muslim zealots (there were many shooters here, with machine guns on a parade ground, so assigning blame must be less focused) on October 6, 1981. Sadat was not a Palestinian, but he was killed for trying to make peace with Israel. Many less famous have also died for that cause. The 21st century carnage has been dominated by Palestinian suicide bombers, represented by Yasser Arafat until his somewhat strange death in France, and by high tech murders of both guilty and innocent by the Israeli Defense Forces led by Ariel Sharon. Outright assassinations have been accomplished by the more shadowy Shin Bet and Mossad intelligence agencies on the Israeli side, and by no less ruthless counterparts on the other.

In this sad case, the many voices for building bridges between these two cultures have been almost completely drowned out by very vocal and violent enthusiasts for war. Some have been killed (like Rachel Corey, a particularly poignant case in America; she was crushed by a bulldozer intent on destroying a Palestinian home). Many give up hope of a shared future. A physical expression of that despair on the Israeli side is a huge wall which is being built on Palestinian land to completely separate parts of the occupied West Bank from Israel and some hundreds of Jewish settlements that have been built in the disputed territories. Israelis say that this is for their own security, and point to the suicide bombers;

the Palestinians call it an "Apartheid Wall" remembering South Africa's cruel experiment with racial separation. Whatever it is called, it is literally an 8-10 meter high concrete wall (or sometimes a very strong barbed wire fence monitored electronically) that cuts all bridges between these desperate, hostile, yet strikingly similar Semitic peoples.

So, what will happen? Maybe even God does not know. But almost any Israeli can show you the likely parameters of a peace settlement, even the streets and landmarks where lines would be drawn, if ever the combatants allow it. The "formula" for peace in the Middle East has been discovered by hundreds of diplomats representing dozens of countries many times. What is lacking is that critical will to compromise among those who hold power, and its necessary counterpart, the will to confront extremists on both sides who simply want it all. The Berlin wall was long and strong and heavily fortified too, but it came down; we shall see.

The South African case highlighted the exceptional importance of enlightened leadership at critical times, and of external powers who actually help bridge the differences of contesting parties rather than covertly exploiting them. How does Israel / Palestine fare in this respect? Among the international community there was a rare consensus that Yasser Arafat was just not up to the task of peace for his people when he could not say yes to the best deal in decades offered him by Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak in September of 2000. Certainly that was not a perfect deal from a Palestinian perspective, but perfect deals are the stuff of dreams, not of *real politik*. On the Israeli side, Mr. Barak was also a rare diplomat. The only other top politician who had been able to compromise constructively with the Palestinians was Yitzhak Rabin, who got murdered for his courage by his own countrymen. So it takes more than enlightened leaders; significant numbers of people must also embrace their visions for better futures.

A phenomenon we call "**parallel realities**" vastly complicates this problem. It is not unique to this conflict; rather it is common to conflicts. But like so many other things in the Middle East, it is especially vivid there. Decades of bitter and brutalizing conflict have left both sides with extraordinarily different perceptions of their common history (10). To each, the other is demonic, and indifferent to the sufferings of the many innocents they injure and kill. To each, their own attacks are justified by historic atrocities of the other. And there is plenty of blood on both sides to fuel this highly distorted and polarized reading of history.

For serious students of this conflict there are thousands of sources, but I am going to cite two which are especially useful for me, and accessible to you. One is the Electronic Intifada of Ali Abunimah in Chicago, Illinois, USA who publishes a daily digest of news relevant to them which can be accessed at mailto:alinews@electronicIntifada.net (11). The other is the Women in Green (Women for Israel's Tomorrow) run by Ruth and Nadia Matar in Jerusalem, Israel, which can be accessed at mailto:michael@womeningreen.org (12). Reading both on a regular basis is one tool for appreciating how completely different their lenses on history are, such that every current event is seen quite differently because they are set in contradictory historical context. Those who would end war must master such parallel realities to have credibility with some of their most important audiences, who are the violent extremists much more than the silent majorities who watch and sometimes suffer, but who also chronically fail to restrain their angry neighbors who obstruct every effort for peace.

I have been critical of leadership in this region; let us be fair. It is a difficult region with profoundly difficult problems, only a few of which I've mentioned. The neighbors are notorious for negative meddling (e.g. Syria and Iran, to cite only two). And the village idiot who is currently running America is simply not up to the task of actual mediation, in this area and in many others. His help with the Korean issue set things back about a decade, but that is another long, sad story. So our President goes along with policies adopted 27 years ago (the Camp David Accords, both formal and informal, of Sept. 17, 1978) that provide among other things billions of dollars in annual support for the Israeli Defense Forces regardless of how often they violate terms by using American heavy weapons to attack cities in occupied Palestine. Our current President Bush exemplifies black and white thinking, indifferent to shades of gray. So he divides the world into 'good' people and 'bad' people (or us vs. them).

That is a disaster. The head of our CIA's Bin Laden desk tried to point out how this inability to properly understand Muslim grievances was resulting in major strategic miscalculations in our 'global war on terror' (13). He avoided naming the dunce directly as any good bureaucrat must. But our own version of parallel realities exerted its force and he was purged from his position because President Bush made it clear to our entire intelligence community that he did **NOT** want to hear what he needed to know, only what he wanted to hear. This is a cardinal mistake among intelligence professionals, because there is always some dolt in the system who simply wants his prejudices confirmed so he can get permission to wage war on someone. Pre-war "intelligence" on Iraq is a stunning case study of that problem for those who have much time to wade through the deceptions and betrayal of public trust (14). Intelligence 'professionals' are supposed to 'tell the truth' 'without fear or favor.' But when the dolt is the Commander in Chief, they can all lose their jobs or at least the ears of the relevant policy people. Many of our best and brightest chose to hold their noses and go along with a party line that was being pushed quite ruthlessly. But when top leaders lose their anchors to reality in this way, everyone is at risk. Innocent people and professional soldiers are usually the first to die because of such grotesque mistakes.

Another dramatically complicating factor is that large and energetic group in America that calls itself the "Christian" right. Its unswerving support for Israel no matter how unfairly Arabs are treated is also quite important, and directly related to the elevation of dolts to high office in America today. The greatest tragedy here is the original tragedy of black and white thinking, since the only true path to a safe future for Israel is to make peace with its neighbors, not endless war. But our fundamentalists here are no more interested in nuance or actual peacemaking than are those who think that bombing innocents is OK (in a mall or transit way with backpack bombs, or in a house that might hold bad guys with helicopters, F-16s and Maverick missiles).

Lest I seem unduly partisan, let me take the Israeli side of this dilemma for a moment. Domestic politics on these issues in Israel is dominated by two factors, one obvious to all and the other rarely spoken of openly. The ruthless murders of innocents by suicide bombers rendered half of Israel terrified that their children would not return from school or the mall alive, and certain that they would never enjoy the life of carefree tranquility we all desire for those we love. And the history of conflict with neighboring governments (at least 5 wars since 1948) provides plenty of reasons for reasonable anxiety about that. The seldom spoken, but immensely powerful other factor is differential demographics.

Palestinian birthrates greatly exceed the birthrates of Israeli Jews, even though the orthodox do everything possible to compete on this front. And Muslim birthrates exceed Jewish birthrates worldwide. So every Israeli is keenly aware that they are outnumbered by a hostile community. One compensation is seizing all the land they can, and that other most critical resource in deserts, the water. Many otherwise confusing aspects of settlement geography become crystal clear if one simply examines a hydrology map of the region.

So, in the Israel / Palestine case we see that differential demographics provides great fear and pressure within a global context where critical resources get more scarce every day. Combine this with stunningly incompetent leadership, and parallel realities that make simple conversation about common issues extraordinarily difficult even for professional diplomats. Combine that with extremely partisan but highly skilled and prolific communicators who agitate themselves and others with ever more efficient communications technologies, and who teach their own children bone-deep hatred of 'the other.' Combine that with well armed nuts who murder their own leaders if they try to make peace with the 'demonic' enemy, and you really have a formula for trouble. And finally, combine all that with weapons of mass destruction, and the whole world trembles.

A little "Truth and Reconciliation" seems to be called for here. Is anyone calling for anything like that in Israel today? Does anyone in Israel or in the occupied territories admit that they have done anything wrong? And where are the Palestinian pacifists, urging a better future for all, and nonviolent means to get there? Good luck finding pacifists, on either the Jewish or the Muslim side. They exist, but they don't get much voice from any mainstream media. I can tell you one place to look, however. Look among Israeli Arabs, and Palestinian Christians, or among the many others who don't fit the stereotypes, but have suffered due to their angry neighbors, because they have had to deal with this madness for a long, long time.

Conclusions

Building bridges between cultures is a challenging task when the weather is balmy and the social climate serene. Today, fear about weapons of mass destruction, terrorism and a host of other security problems makes that harder. The economic forces that many call globalization increase tension everywhere except among the few who benefit directly because economic inequality rises with the tide that is supposed to lift all boats. The global context includes several other major trends I barely mentioned, like the many environmental issues that impact real qualities of life, the peak of global oil production with all that implies (which is much, much more than the oil interests will admit, and is directly relevant to wars today), and that bubbling tension within all the major religions between fundamentalists who think their way is the only way (often that the earth was made exclusively for them) and ecumenicals who at least allow some legitimacy and respect for those who think differently.

When I looked at cases I concluded that some mechanism for getting real truths out is essential (and really hard truths, often about murders, torture, and the manifold mechanisms of repression and retaliation on both sides) in ways that do not condemn to punishment "the others" one has warred with. I cited the "Truth and Reconciliation" model refined in South Africa, though of course it has been tried and been partly successful in other places like

Guatemala. I also concluded that exceptional leadership seemed to be required but was exceedingly rare, and that national neighbors should play a constructive role instead of the deceptively competitive or even destructive role they usually play in international relations.

I dogmatically affirmed that to achieve these positive behaviors among people and institutions that are notoriously not interested in the general welfare, there should be one, special agenda for the dialogue among civilizations we are all a part of sometimes in our lives. That agenda should be human survival. It should be human survival because that is the only value that very nearly everyone agrees on, and without some solid common ground the difficult work of building bridges almost always fails. It should be survival because for the first time in human history, that is actually at risk. Yes, of course, the weapons industries deny that WMDs are really that dangerous. And of course, the oil and auto interests deny that global warming matters, or is even real. And of course, the religious zealots deny that their intractable anger towards those of other faiths is a sin, much less the source of much death and destruction on this earth today. All these special, vested interests deny the fear they create in children's hearts worldwide, who wonder whether they will get a future at all, much less a happy one. The vested interests are in denial. So Recommendation #1 is "Don't let their madness infect you." And don't let them promote their madness without challenge.

Recommendation #2 is "Look at the whole thing as a gigantic mental health problem."

Recommendation #3 is "Press on, despite the obvious difficulties" – your children watch with hope in their hearts because it is in the nature of children to hope for the future and to trust that their parents will take care of the serious issues. Let's start now. We should look on Huntington's "clash of civilizations" as a Chinese opportunity (15) (16).

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9. Meinardus, Ronald. "The Future of the Sunshine Policy," The Korea Times, June 15, 2001. At: http://www.fnfkorea.org/fnst_eng/Liberal%20Times/liberal/times59.html

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11. "Electronic Intifada," especially Abunimah News, a daily news digest produced by a small group in Chicago, Illinois, USA. mailto:alinews@electronicIntifada.net

12. "Women in Green," a.k.a. Women for Israel's Tomorrow, run by Ruth and Nadia Matar in Jerusalem, Israel. mailto:michael@womeningreen.org

13. "Anonymous" (a.k.a. Michael Scheuer, published before he resigned his position as the head of the Bin Laden desk at the CIA). Imperial Hubris: Why the West is Losing the War on Terror. Washington, D.C., USA: Brassey's Inc., 2004

14. "Uncovered: The Whole Truth about the Iraq War," a video documentary produced by Robert Greenwald and distributed by the Center for American Progress, 87 min. 2003. This is an extraordinary documentary composed mainly of dialogue clips with recently retired US intelligence professionals a third of whom I've met and vouch for.

15. Huntington, Samuel. "The Clash of Civilizations," in Foreign Affairs, Summer 1993, v72, n3, p22 (28).

16. Two final points don't fit with the flow of text but seem important to me. First, the breakthroughs of diplomacy between Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin that resulted in their Nobel Prizes were preceded by two years of secret diplomacy brokered by Norwegian diplomats. The primary significance to the topic at hand is that their goal was breaking down the demonizing process, to put human faces on these long-time adversaries. So they met, most secretly since each would be condemned by their respective publics, in the diplomats' homes and other such places where ordinary acts of life could be done without prying media eyes, or threats of bombs from extremists. Second, it is foolishness cubed for outsiders to comment on the politics of other nations. But from what little I know about contemporary Turkish thinking on foreign affairs, the work of Dr. Ahmet Davutoglu (advisor to Prime Minister Erdogan) seems the most appropriate to surmounting the challenges of our time that I have written on here. His is a civilizational perspective on a constructive role for a modern Islam.