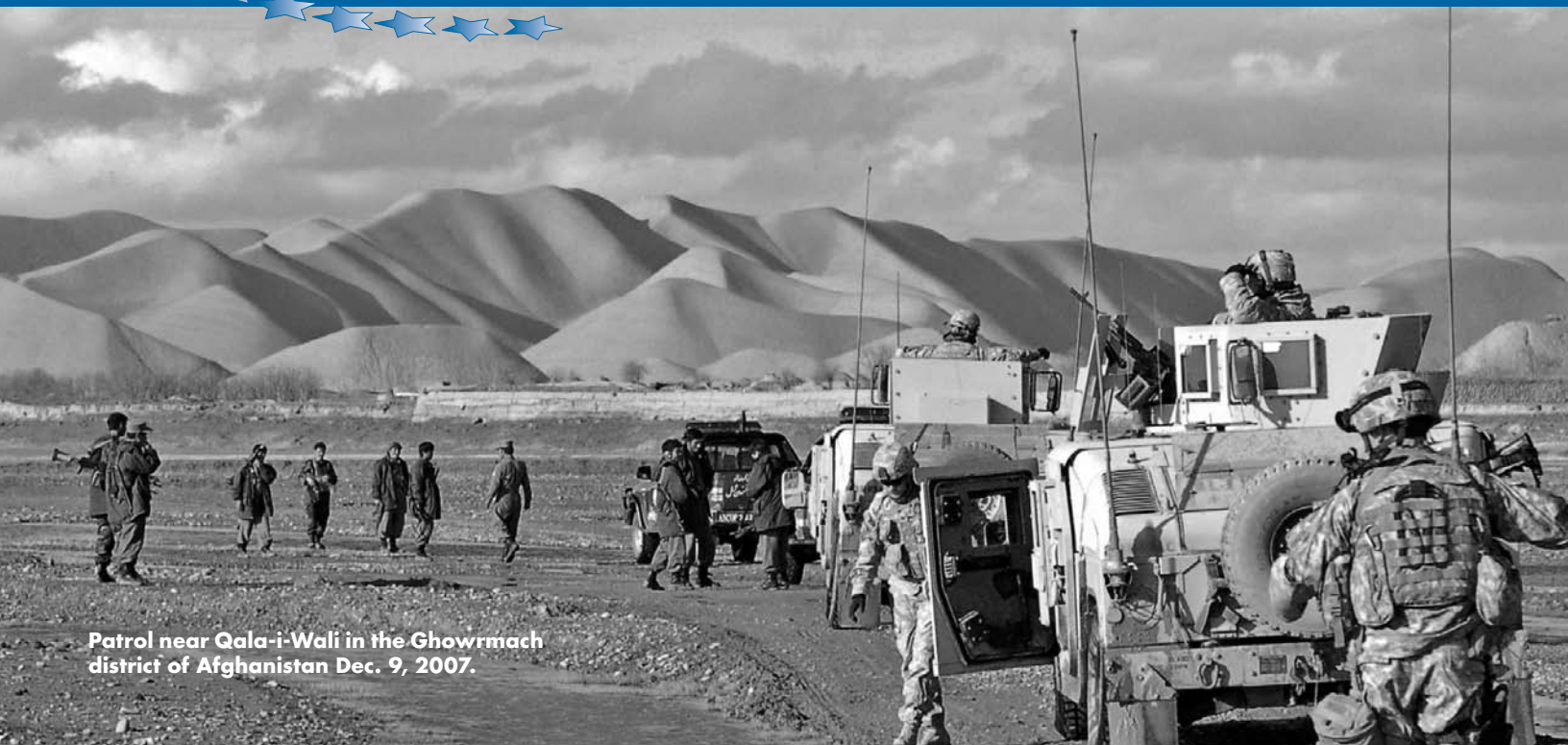


THE DEFENSE MONITOR

The Newsletter of the Center for Defense Information



Patrol near Qala-i-Wali in the Ghowrmach district of Afghanistan Dec. 9, 2007.

Photo: Petty Officer 2nd Class Brian P. Seymour

SPECIAL ISSUE:

THE WORLD AT WAR



Col. (Ret.) Daniel M. Smith, special to CDI

The three bullets fired that date at former Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, killing her as she departed a campaign stop in the army garrison town of Rawalpindi, may well turn out to have more and longer-term global repercussions than Bush's troop "surge."

One reason, of course, is that Pakistan actually has a nuclear arsenal, whereas neither Iraq nor Afghanistan even has a nuclear energy program. But the more significant point

Until Dec. 27, the "success" of U.S. President George Bush's defiant rejection of the American public's repudiation of his Iraq and Afghanistan war policies – evidenced by the November 2006 congressional election – looked to be the most significant aspect of major armed conflicts around the world during 2007.

is that the Bush administration, for all its rhetoric about supporting democracy and opposing dictators, has been just as duplicitous as other administrations in its abandonment of principle for expediency in foreign relations.

A brief look at U.S.-Pakistan relations illustrates the point.

Pakistan is one of the three nuclear weapons states (the others are China and India) that have used armed conflict against one another in terri-

torial disputes since World War II. In 1998, the United States imposed sanctions on Pakistan following its tests of nuclear weapons, sanctions which were promptly abandoned after Sept. 11, 2001.

Pakistan is the only Islamic country to possess nuclear weapons and was, at one time, hailed as Islam's answer to Israel's nuclear stockpile. The United States discouraged this perception, but now warns that Pakistan is a potential source of weapons for

terrorists should they, or those sympathetic to terrorists, come to power in Islamabad.

Pakistan has experienced five coup d'états and endured 28 years of direct and another 12 years of indirect military rule in the 60 years since independence. The last coup, led by Gen. Pervez Musharraf in 1999, deepened already strained relations with the United States.

Since partition in 1947, India and Pakistan have fought three significant wars over the disputed area known as Kashmir, the last one in 1971-72, before both had nuclear weapons. Interestingly, when this third armed conflict ended, East Pakistan emerged as Bangladesh and the head of government in West Pakistan was Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Benazir's father. He was ousted in a coup in 1977 and executed in 1979 by the ruling general, Mohammed Zia ul-Haq.

The United States used Pakistan as the conduit for weapons and training for Afghan resistance fighters during the period of Soviet occupation of Afghanistan (1979-1989). In turn, to secure its western border and free military units for the struggle against India, Pakistan supported the Taliban faction in the Afghan civil war of the 1990s.

After Sept. 11, the United States dropped its opposition to Musharraf as it needed his help in trying to control the Pakistan-Afghan border regions. The Bush administration has given Musharraf \$10 billion, but the expected return – in terms of border control, cooperation with the U.S.-backed Afghan president in the fight against a resurgent Taliban, or a return in Pakistan to true civilian control after a democratic election for parliament – has not materialized.

As the Western world turns the

calendar to 2008, Pakistan is highly combustible: its president is under siege; the electoral process is on hold with the distinct possibility of significant delay, if not cancellation, of the promised ballot and re-imposition of a state of emergency; while in neighboring Afghanistan, large numbers of U.S. forces have been extended to fight Taliban insurgents and al-Qaida adherents who continue to move freely across the border.

The final four days of 2007 in Pakistan introduced unexpected complications for Bush, just as it appeared that he might succeed in refurbishing his image as a successful international leader. As already noted, Bush took a significant gamble on Jan. 10, 2007 when he announced that U.S. forces in Iraq would not be coming back home but would be increased over the following five months. He justified this decision as a way to open "political space" for discussions leading to eventual political reconciliation among Iraq's religious sects and ethnic factions.

It would be June before the troop surge reached full strength, and October before the number of attacks against security forces fell significantly, particularly in Baghdad and al-Anbar province in Iraq where the bulk of the troop reinforcements were sent.

This decrease, in turn, produced a welcome lowering of fatalities among U.S. and other coalition personnel, as well as among noncombatants in both countries. What could not be immediately determined – and remains unknown still – are the longer-term consequences of "surging" 30,000 more soldiers into the fray.

Going into the surge, it was clear to the Pentagon that the elevated troop numbers could not be sustained

much beyond the end of 2007. In fact, the military found itself hard-pressed to muster the troops promised for Iraq by Bush in his speech – partly because logistics and force protection missions to support the announced troop increase of 21,500 required an additional 8,000 troops. This brought the "official" surge numbers in Iraq to 162,000 U.S. soldiers. In actuality, the late autumn-early winter rotation of U.S. units into and out of Iraq temporarily increased the total troop numbers as high as 175,000.

Whatever else al-Qaida in Iraq and the other groups opposed to the continuing U.S. occupation of Iraq may or may not be able to do, they undoubtedly can count and understand calendars. Why should they take on as many as 40,000 extra U.S. troops in Iraq when, by spring 2008, that number – plus additional "adjustments" to the pre-surge steady-state deployment level of 130,000 U.S. soldiers – will open new opportunities to kill coalition troops and their "collaborators." In the interval, those committed to expelling the foreigners can blend back into society to rest, recuperate and rearm, venturing out at times and places of their choosing.

With 2008 an election year in the United States, the Bush administration will be more than eager to declare "victory" – which will be re-defined yet again, this time as a "permanent" reduction in attacks and fatalities, which allow for faster troop withdrawals. In fact, as November drew to a close, U.S. commanders in Iraq affirmed they intended to cut the number of U.S. combat brigades from the baseline 20 to 15 by summer 2008 and shift missions from combat patrols to training and mentoring Iraqi security forces.

The reduced activities of anti-

government forces also brought into sharper focus in Baghdad and Kabul the number of noncombatant deaths at the hands of coalition (usually U.S.) forces. Moreover, the people and governments in Iraq and Afghanistan also took steps to rein in private “security contractors” who have literally been getting away with murder when noncombatants are killed because the armed foreign security detail felt “threatened.” It is not an exaggeration to suggest that these security contractors are as much a danger as insurgent groups like al-Qaida in Iraq to indigenous noncombatants in these countries.

Even so, by November, what had been a trickle of returning Iraqi refugees had become a steady, if small stream. Some returned as part of a widely publicized but token program by Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki’s regime in Baghdad that paid refugees as much as \$800 to take Iraqi-provided transportation back to Baghdad. Others returned because, unable to find work (often host countries refuse to allow refugees to seek employment), they simply had exhausted all their savings and had no money.

But others, sent last year to safer realms by their families, were being told to return to their families in Iraq. After living in Syria as a refugee for 11 months, one Iraqi woman who came back to Baghdad described her feelings: “Overwhelming happiness of being home again, of not being a stranger, a refugee, anymore, but a family member. It’s the most beautiful feeling.”

Who can argue with that? ■

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The War Count

Analysis of Selected Significant Conflicts

UNFORTUNATELY, the increased security in Baghdad and al-Anbar province was not always mirrored elsewhere. As 2008 began, the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) registered one less significant ongoing armed conflict (1,000 or more deaths) than at the start of 2007 and nearly the same 21 “hot spots” that could slide into or revert to serious violence.

The graph on page 5 illustrates the changing count globally and regionally since 1989.

The geographic distribution of significant conflicts also remained unchanged. As at the start of 2007, Africa continues to endure the largest number of significant armed conflicts – fully one-third of the total. Asia still counts four significant conflicts, although the fall-off of clashes in two “hot spots” during 2007 suggests that these opposition groups have decided to work within the political systems or they have effectively disbanded.

EUROPE

The chart on page 7 provides a snapshot of the significant armed conflicts as 2008 begins. Rather than start, as in the past, with details of the U.S. wars, this year’s report opens with the transfer of what had been the sole major “European” conflict from the “Significant” to the “Suspended” conflict chart.

This judgment reflects the apparent absence of “effective” and collective sustained resistance by the remnants of the Chechen rebel movement, largely penned up in

the mountains, and Russia’s virtual stranglehold – through Chechen proxies – on the political, educational, economic, social, and justice-security life in the area.

That is not to say that the surviving fighters cannot on occasion cause security force fatalities. On April 27, a Russian Mi-8 transport helicopter, one of five pursuing suspected rebels, crashed, killing all 20 onboard. Initially, Russian officials said the helicopter was hit by ground fire. This explanation was quickly amended to mechanical failure, which in turn gave way to a finding by a Russian aviation investigative board of “human error.”

Most Russian troops appear to have left Chechnya, although information is difficult to get because of tight media censorship by both Chechen and Russian security forces. One sign that Moscow is confident that the rebellion is crushed came in November when the last Russian base and the last Russian troops were withdrawn from the neighboring Caucasus country of Georgia – a full year ahead of the expected withdrawal date.

Moscow frequently accused Tbilisi of allowing Chechen rebels to use Georgia as a safe haven, a charge always denied. For its part, Russia used the Chechen conflict as an excuse to overfly Georgia and provided political and economic support to demands for independence by two sub-regions of Georgia, South Ossetia and Abkhazia. As it is, the Tbilisi regime faces unrest of its own making. In Novem-

ber, President Mikheil Saakashvili suddenly declared a state of emergency and closed all opposition media because of popular protests against government policies.

AFRICA

In 2008 the Pentagon plans to activate the new Africa Command (AFRICOM) as a full-fledged Unified command on a par with the other five geographical commands (European, Central, Southern, Pacific and Northern) into which Washington has partitioned the globe. This new command will build on the foundation and relationships established by the current Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) in Djibouti. This new emphasis, together with the volatility and number of African armed conflicts and potential for renewed conflicts, suggests a closer look at Africa than in the past.

History attests to the proposition that the most fragile realities known to humankind are cease-fires, armi-

stices, power-sharing and other arrangements short of formal treaties between warring nations that are designed to stop violence. And among the identified major ongoing conflicts, those touching the **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)** best illustrate this fragility.

The DRC's size (about the same as the United States east of the Mississippi River) and central position on the continent give it borders with nine other countries, most of which have emerged from their own internal violence only within the last 20 years. Particularly in east and northeast DRC, Kinshasa's writ is quite weak despite the presence of some 17,000 UN peacekeeping troops who are frequently the target of Congolese rebels seeking to overthrow the regime of President Joseph Kabila, or of foreign rebels using eastern Congo as a "safe haven" as they pursue efforts to overthrow regimes in Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda and southern Sudan. In mid-October, a particular-

ly severe attack by one of the many warring factions sent 30,000 refugees streaming from their camps in pouring rain. The UN High Commissioner for refugees estimates that 375,000 Congolese are internally displaced in their own country.

One group whose leaders hide in eastern DRC is the **Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)** that terrorized **Uganda** for two decades as it tried to overthrow the government of President Yoweri Museveni. Peace talks continue in Juba, southern Sudan, but so far there is little progress. Museveni has set a Jan. 31, 2008 deadline for LRA chief Joseph Kony to accept the current government proposal. A complicating factor is that the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for the top four LRA leaders (one of whom recently was killed). On the other hand, violence has decreased significantly over the last year as many LRA fighters have gone into rehabilitation camps, learned civilian skills, and are reintegrating into Ugandan society.

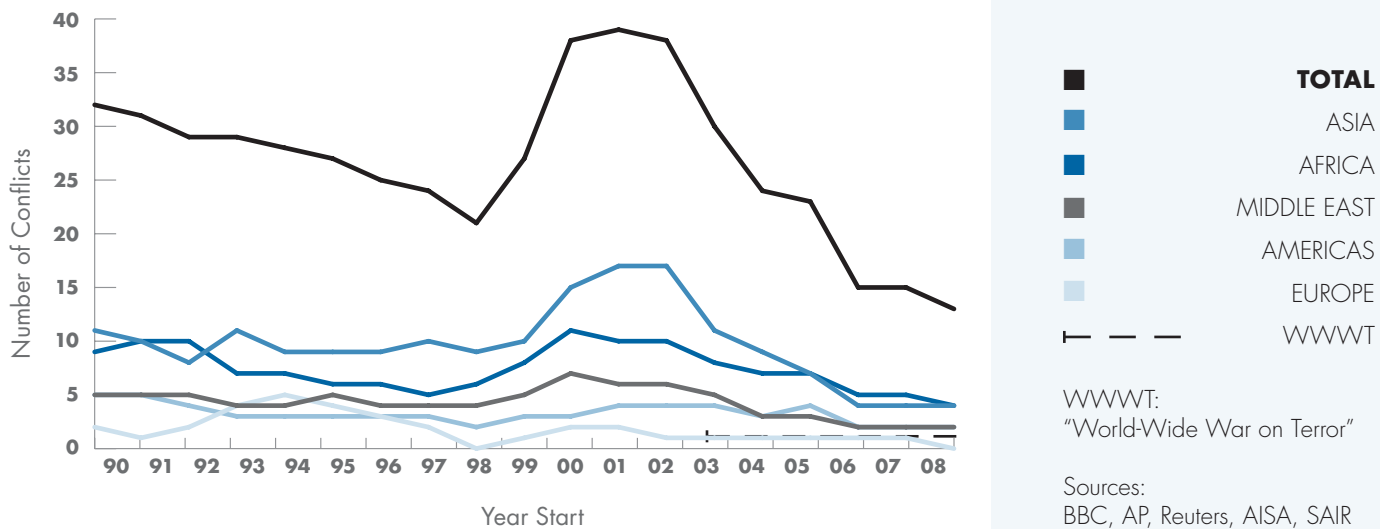
A year ago it appeared as if the intervention of the Ethiopian army (with sotto voce U.S. backing) had succeeded in crushing **Somalia's** ruling Council of Islamic Courts (CIC, formerly the Union of Islamic Courts). Kenya sealed its borders with Somalia to prevent fleeing CIC leaders from escaping the Ethiopian-U.S. onslaught, but not all were killed or captured and, with the help of "foreign fighters," continue to resist.

Meanwhile, the UN-recognized, but fractious Transitional Federal Government of President Abdullahi Yusuf is dangerously close to restarting the clan warfare that has plagued Somalia for 15 years. Yusuf is seen as favoring his Darod clan in naming ministers of state, prompting Moga-



Rebel fighters in eastern Sudan, near the border with Eritrea.

Global Conflicts 1990-2008



dishu's more numerous Hawiye clan to take up arms. Severe sustained rocket, artillery and mortar attacks drove an estimated 34,000 Somalis from Mogadishu between February and April 2007. Fighting continued through the summer, and in August the CIC and Hawiye militias formed the Alliance for the Liberation of Somalia (ALS) to drive the Ethiopians out of Somalia.

The African Union and the UN have committed to send 8,000 peacekeepers to Somalia, but so far only 1,700 troops from Uganda and an advanced party from Burundi have arrived, and they are maintaining a low profile. In October, renewed shelling struck Mogadishu, presumably fired by the newly-integrated ALS fighters, among whom the U.S. State Department reportedly has identified known al-Qaida operatives. In November, Yusuf appointed a member of the Hawiye clan, Nur Hassan Hussein, as prime minister. As the year ended, Hussein dissolved the Cabinet and moved to redistribute ministerial portfolios, but it is unclear what effect this might have on opposition

Hawiye clansmen whose chief issue is the continued presence of Ethiopian troops in Somalia. As it is, Ethiopia forces have pulled out of a logistics and communications hub astride the main highway from the Ethiopia-Somalia border to Mogadishu.

While the Bush administration has backed Ethiopia in Somalia, it has had to take a harder line on Addis Ababa's continued rejection of the findings of the Boundary Commission, established to resolve the border disputes with Eritrea that cost more than 10,000 lives in the 1990s. Eritrea has worked closely with the United States to oppose Islamic "extremism" in Africa, making it a key ally in a region where the U.S. presence and motives are highly suspect.

Another fragile "peace" struggles along in **Cote d'Ivoire** in western Africa. In October 2005, Laurent Gbagbo unilaterally extended his term as Cote d'Ivoire's president. The UN acceded to the declaration with a stipulation that elections had to be held by October 2006. That too did not happen, but in March 2007, the government and rebels reached a power-

sharing accord under which all sides were to prepare for elections in January 2008. With a history of missed deadlines, it is still not clear whether this latest one will actually be met. If elections are not held, the mandate for the UN peacekeeping contingent, set to expire in mid-January 2008, will have to be renewed. The caution in last year's World at War remains pertinent as 2008 begins: Renewed large scale violence in Cote d'Ivoire will resume and the country will fall back into the major wars category for the 2009 report.

Cote d'Ivoire's neighbor **Liberia** has been able to move from civil war five years ago to free elections with UN support. In renewing the mandate of the UN peacekeeping force until September 2008, the Security Council set in motion a phased drawdown of troops and police – an alternative model for UN operations that more often end with the complete withdrawal of troops and police trainers and advisors before political integration of the various factions is achieved. And without some residual support, the structures and institu-

tions of governance in many instances, unable to survive stress, have suffered renewed instability and even political collapse.

Elsewhere in Africa, three separate conflicts have become intertwined.

The bloodiest “killing fields” outside of Iraq and Afghanistan continues to be in western **Sudan’s** Darfur region and the refugee camps dotting both sides of Sudan’s international borders with **Chad** and **Central African Republic (C.A.R.)**. At the start of 2007, the estimated aggregate death toll – noncombatant and fighters – among the contending parties in the Darfur rebellion was as high as 200,000, with another two million in refugee camps or internally displaced.

With diplomatic support from Beijing, Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir resisted the proposed 17,000 (later increased to 26,000) combined UN-African Union peacekeeping mission. The procedural logjam over which organization would be in command of the mission was broken when Khartoum dropped its demand that the AU be in charge. Even so, by year’s end, some five months after Khartoum’s change of heart, the UN Secretariat was still waiting for UN member states to supply the forces to carry out the Security Council’s mandate. Meanwhile, the estimated aggregate death toll at the start of 2008 had climbed to 300,000.

Fighting in western Darfur seems to be directed increasingly toward terrorizing refugees who fled their homes in earlier fighting that pitted rebels against government-backed Janjaweed militias and the Sudanese army. Reports from the area clearly show a pattern by Khartoum of forcing camps in southern Darfur to close, forcing inhabitants

north to other already overburdened camps. The “why” behind this tactic is unclear, although there are unconfirmed sightings of a military buildup by government troops in northern Darfur.

Often where armed conflict persists, adjacent countries get drawn into the fighting. This has happened to Sudan’s western neighbors bordering Darfur, C.A.R. and Chad, which is bearing the brunt of Sudanese-backed rebels in the latest iteration of 49 years of civil unrest. Security conditions have deteriorated to such an extent in both C.A.R. and Chad that humanitarian workers are being attacked by both government and rebel troops.

In late September, with many world leaders in New York for the opening of the UN General Assembly, the Security Council approved a separate combined European Union military force of 3,700 men, half of whom would be French (Paris already has 1,000 soldiers in Chad and provides military equipment, including helicopters), along with 1,000 UN police trainers for Chad and C.A.R.

Follow-on negotiations held Oct. 27-28 in Sirte, Libya, may not have helped resolve outstanding issues. Khartoum’s delegation showed up with a unilateral if temporary ceasefire. Agreement was reached among Khartoum and the Movement for Resistance and Change, the National Accord of Chad, and two dissident groups from the United Force for Democracy and Development (UFDD), but this still left nearly a dozen factions that refused even to attend. Heavy fighting resumed a week later between Chadian government troops and at least two rebel organizations, the Rally of Forces for Change and the main UFDD, but the lack of ac-

cess to the conflict area precludes independent verification of claimed battle casualties. (Each side claimed it had killed 200 or more enemy combatants.)

Finally, **Nigeria** did manage to hold elections in April, but the verdict of every foreign electoral monitor was that this election reached new lows, even for Nigeria, in the extent of corruption and voter fraud present. More than 200 died in election-related violence – and that was just during the balloting.

MIDDLE EAST/NORTH AFRICA

2008 marks the 60th anniversary of U.S. diplomatic recognition of Israel and 70 years of unending animosity between **Israel** and **Palestinian Arabs**. But 2006-2007 saw new complications: a power split between the Fatah-dominated Palestinian Authority (PA), which controls Palestinian areas on the West Bank (formerly Trans-Jordan), and the **Hamas**-dominated Gaza Strip; the new power balance between Israel and **Hezbollah** in **Lebanon**; and the re-engagement of the United States with the mid-November 2007 diplomatic summit at Annapolis, Maryland. This gathering, the first really substantive involvement in the Palestinian-Israeli negotiating process by the Bush administration, brought together nearly 50 mostly-Arab and Muslim countries and organizations in a show of support for renewed efforts by Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and PA President Mahmoud Abbas to solve all “core issues” by the end of 2008: borders of the Palestinian state, right of return and the status of East Jerusalem.

Obviously, the disunity within the Palestinian ranks between Hamas and Fatah complicate implementation

World at War Ongoing Significant Conflicts as of Jan. 1, 2008

MAIN WARRING PARTIES	YEAR BEGAN	CONTRIBUTING CAUSES*	OTHER FOREIGN INVOLVEMENT
U.S. World-wide War on Terror vs. "terrorists with global reach"	2001	Sept. 11, 2001 attacks	UN, multiple countries
MIDDLE EAST			
Iraq government and Multinational Forces vs. Iraqi resistance and al-Qaida-in-Iraq	2003	Invasion and occupation	United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Japan, S. Korea, Italy, Poland, Ukraine, Denmark, others
Israel vs. Hamas, Hezbollah, Islamic Jihad, others	1975	Religious and territorial	United States, UN, Syria, Lebanon, Iran, individuals
ASIA			
Afghanistan: Kabul government vs. al-Qaida and Taliban	1978	Ethnic, religious, and territorial	United States, UN, NATO, Russia, Iran, Tajikistan, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan
India vs. Assam (ULFA) insurgents, others	1986	Independence	UN, Bhutan, Myanmar, Bangladesh
Philippines vs. New People's Army (Communist)	1969	Criminal, terror	United States, Malaysia, Libya, Indonesia
Sri Lanka vs. Tamil Eelam	1978-2002	Ethnic, religious, and independence	India
LATIN AMERICA			
Colombia vs. National Liberation Army (ELN)	1978	Drug trade, socio/economic, political	United States
Colombia vs. Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)	1978	Drug trade, socio/economic, political	United States
AFRICA			
Democratic Republic of Congo vs. indigenous insurgents and foreign renegades	1997	Political and socio/economic using ethnic divisions	Angola, Uganda, Rwanda, Chad, Zimbabwe, France, Burundi, South Africa, African Union, UN
Nigeria: ethnic and religious communal violence	1970	Religious, ethnic and economic	None
Somalia: TFG vs. CIC Somaliland, Puntland, other factions	2005 1978	Power and ethnic	UN (humanitarian aid), United States, Ethiopia, Kenya
Sudan vs. Sudan Liberation Army (splinter) and Justice and Equality Movement	2003	Autonomy and ethnic	UN, United States, EU, NATO
Uganda vs. Lord's Army	1986	Power	Sudan

* Causes are simplifications and should not be regarded as the full explanation for what is often a very complex set of circumstances.

of any agreements between Abbas and Olmert. Hamas has already said they will not accept any concessions made by Abbas in his talks with the Israelis. And as the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) made clear on Dec. 11,

2007, negotiations with Abbas are a separate track from IDF multiple operations into Gaza to find and destroy Qassam rockets fired from Gaza into Israel.

Although the United States has

roundly castigated Syria for not better controlling its border with Iraq, thereby allowing foreign fighters to cross into Iraq, Damascus was invited to Annapolis – and came. Syria would like to regain the Golan

Heights, seized by Israel in the 1967 war, reach some accommodation with Tel Aviv as to each country's sphere of influence, and sign a formal peace treaty.

Syria also is vying for significant influence in Lebanon, whose territory south of the Litani River serves as the principal base for Hezbollah. Lebanon itself barely escaped a constitutional crisis when the speaker of the Lebanese parliament postponed for the fifth time a vote to elect a successor for President Emile Lahoud, whose term of office expired Nov. 23. The compromise finally worked out among the various confessional power-brokers called for amending the Lebanese Constitution to allow the highly respected commander of the Lebanese armed forces, Gen. Michel Suleiman, to become president. Since Suleiman is a Maronite Christian, no change in the division of political leadership positions among the major religious sects was required.

Given Syria's involvement in Lebanese affairs, it is a bit of a surprise that Damascus has not been vocal on this compromise. It is possible, however that they have "spoken" – as they seem to do so often – through assassinations of opponents. On Dec. 12, a roadside bomb killed Gen. Francois Hajj who had been tipped to succeed Suleiman as head of the Lebanese military.

Fifteen years after the **Algerian** army voided the 1992 elections that would have brought Islamic fundamentalists to power, it looked as if the main anti-government militant organization, the **Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat** (GSPC) was nearing exhaustion. In 2006, under an amnesty, 2,000 former insurgents were freed. Then in February 2007, the GSPC allied with a group calling it-

self al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, and attacks against government forces and personnel accelerated again. One attack in April 2007 killed 33 in Algiers. Available reports list 435 people killed in the renewed violence in the first 10 months of 2007. And while only six deaths were attributed to anti-government fighters in November, on Dec. 11 two bombs in Algiers killed at least 41 people and increased the level of fear throughout the capital.

ASIA

As the opening pages of the 2008 World at War suggest, this first entry should read "**Afghanistan/Pakistan**," for there is no hiding the fact that there will be peace or war in both, but not war in one and peace in the other. Nor is there likely to be a viable democracy in Afghanistan until there is real democracy in Pakistan.

As to this latter point, against the backdrop of the Bhutto assassination, whether even a nominal civilian administration can emerge under a government headed by a just-retired general remains unclear. Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party and another party headed by former prime minister, Nawaz Sharif (overthrown by Musharraf in 1999), have announced they will participate in any rescheduled elections for parliament. Yet considering that Musharraf boldly stacked the Pakistan Supreme Court to win "confirmation" of his "election" to the presidency as a civilian, even without direct control of the army, he remains the dominant figure in Pakistan at least until a rescheduled ballot takes place – and thereafter if the election meets what passes for the "free and fair" standards of Pakistani politics.

Regardless of the results of any

new election, Pakistan still confronts the historically ungovernable tribes that inhabit the Northwest Frontier areas used as a base for operations against NATO and Afghan security forces by al-Qaida and Taliban adherents.

Musharraf and Afghanistan's President Hamid Karzai accuse each other of insufficient efforts to control border areas and curb the seemingly unchecked movement of fighters and weapons back and forth. Undoubtedly, there is truth on both fronts: Musharraf has been distracted by electoral matters whereas Karzai finds his administration in Kabul underfunded and underresourced by the international community despite six years of promises. At a mid-December meeting of NATO defense ministers in Oslo, Norway, U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates pressed his European counterparts for more combat troops, fewer operational restraints, and monetary help. One can only speculate as to the real reaction of the other ministers to Gates' demand – especially when the chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Adm. Mike Mullen, had just told the House Armed Services Committee on Dec. 10 that Iraq, not Afghanistan, was the Bush administration's top priority. NATO countries had stepped up their presence in Afghanistan in 2007, both for combat and reconstruction work, but security gaps continued (e.g., Taliban forces had captured large areas of southern Helmand province early in 2007, but could not be dislodged from their gains until December, when a combined Afghan-NATO force recaptured Musa Qala, the last urban stronghold seized in February by Taliban fighters).

Gates and his fellow ministers may run out of time to stabilize Af-

ghan democracy for other reasons: growing numbers of fatalities among the Afghan population because of increased use of U.S. airpower as a substitute for ground forces, and record numbers of coalition force deaths. The U.K.-based charity OXFAM estimates that at least half of the 1,200 Afghan civilians killed died at the hands of security forces. (Newswire service estimates place total deaths from the violence at 6,300.) Adding to the anger created by these tactical errors is the almost blanket assertion by U.S. or NATO spokespersons that all those killed by coalition actions were Taliban or al-Qaida.

As 2007 ended, conflicting estimates of NATO success appeared, with one U.S. general asserting that insurgent attacks along the Afghan-Pakistan border were down 40 percent since July. That would mirror Iraq, as would the pattern of battlefield losses for all of 2007, where most of the record number of fatalities – 112 from the United States and 116 from other coalition countries – were con-

centrated in the middle of the year.

Relying solely on warfare will only prolong the stalemate. All the actors – deposed war lords, Taliban and non-Taliban Pashtun politicians, Hamid Karzai, even Mullah Omar – must work out compromises to end the fighting and turn the energies of the people to rebuilding and reintegrating the levers of governance. So far 745 coalition troops assigned to Operation Enduring Freedom have died in just over six years (Oct. 8, 2001-Dec. 31, 2007). And the trend of the last three years has been increasing deaths with each year – not a joyous prospect.

In **Iraq**, as in Afghanistan, numbers tell the story. On March 19, 2003, 48 countries had joined the U.S.-led coalition, with 38 of them contributing troops. There remain only 25 in the coalition and only 20 non-U.S. troop contributors. Australia, Poland, and the United Kingdom will pull their remaining forces out of Iraq before the end of 2008 – and others may follow suit. South Korea, which had in-

dicated it would remove all its forces by mid-2008, will now retain a small contingent throughout the year.

American fatalities fell sharply in the last quarter of 2007. In fact, the 23 U.S. deaths recorded in Iraq in December is the second lowest total since the March 19, 2003 start of the Iraq War. (February 2004 recorded only 20 U.S. deaths in Iraq.) As a result, the interval required for each 500 U.S. war fatalities will lengthen. The interval had fallen to just over five months when the 3,500th U.S. fatality occurred on June 5, 2007. In the subsequent almost six months ending Dec. 31, 2007, U.S. fatalities stood at 3,902 – still too many for a war that need never have occurred.

And as in Afghanistan, Iraqis are weary of the unnecessary deaths caused by occupation forces and armed “security contractors” who seem to be accountable to no one.

The promising moves that could have ended the constitutional crisis that overtook **Nepal** in 2006 never reached fulfillment in 2007. The



A view of the world's conflict hotspots.

Africa continues to endure the largest number of significant armed conflicts, with one-third of the total.

Low Level Political Violence Conflicts in Suspension

PARTIES TO CONFLICT	DURATION	CONTRIBUTING CAUSES*	FOREIGN MEDIATION/INVOLVEMENT
MIDDLE EAST			
Iran vs. Kurds	1961-	Independence	None
Turkey vs. Kurds (PKK)	1961-	Independence	None
Israel vs. Palestinian Authority	1948-94, 2000	Independent State	U.S., UN, European Union, Russia, Egypt, Jordan
Israel vs. Syria & Lebanon	2001-	Water, land and peace	UN, U.S., Turkey
ASIA			
India vs. Assam Rebels (NDFB)	1982-	Independence	UN, Bhutan, Myanmar, Bangladesh
India vs. All-Party Hurriyat Conference Kashmiri militants	1989	Ethnic and religious	UN, Pakistan, U.S.
India vs. insurgents in Arunachal Pradesh & Tripura, and Nagaland	1980-	Ethnic unification in separate states	None
Myanmar (Burma) junta vs. minorities, Indian Assam rebels, & National League for Democracy	1942-2003, 1988	Ethnic and drug trade, borders, democracy	U.S., UN, Association of South East Asian Nations
Nepal vs. Maoist insurgents	1996	Ideological	None
People's Republic of China vs. Uighur East Turkistan independence movement	1982	Independence	None
East Timor vs. army rebels	2006	Power	Australia
Philippines vs. Abu Sayyaf	1999	Ideological and independence	None
Thailand vs. Barisan Revolusi Nasional and Mujahideen Islam Pattani	2003-	Economic and religious	Malaysia
AFRICA			
Côte d'Ivoire vs. army rebels	2002-	Power	France, UN
Central African Republic vs. insurgents	2005-	Power	France
Chad vs. insurgents	2005-	Power	France
Ethiopia vs. Eritrea	1998-2000	Territory	African Union, UN, U.S.
Sudan vs. Sudanese People's Liberation Army	1983-2002	Ethnic and religious	U.S., Iran, Uganda
EUROPE			
Republic of Georgia vs. Abkhazia & S. Ossetia	1992-93	Independence	UN, OSCE, Russia, U.S.
Russia vs. Chechnya	1994; 1998-2007	Independence	Organization for Security & Cooperation in Europe
AMERICAS			
Haiti government vs. former army and police factions and Aristide supporters	2004-	Economic and power	U.S., UN, Organization of American States

*Causes are simplifications and should not be regarded as the full explanation for what is often a very complex set of circumstances.

“legal” parties in the old constitutional monarchy did form an interim government that excluded the monarchy but included the Maoist Communists who had been waging a bloody civil war since the mid 1990s. But negotiations and governance proved prickly, so much so that by December, the Maoists were threatening to withdraw completely from the government. A new compromise was reached on Dec. 9, in which the major political powers agreed to reshuffle the Cabinet and move more forcefully on integrating Maoist fighters into the former Royal Nepalese army. The Maoists dropped their demand that the monarchy be abolished outright and agreed that the royalty’s fate would be decided as part of the general elections scheduled for April 2008. Sensing disarray, the Maoists then renewed their demand for a commitment by the “legal” parties to end the monarchy without a referendum – and won the concession.

On the subcontinent, January 2007 saw a major government push against India’s rebel **United Liberation Front of Assam** (ULFA) after the latter killed 61 migrant workers. Possibly as a consequence, in March the ULFA called for restarting the 2005-2006 negotiations that had ended after three meetings. But there is a new force at work – the populist “People’s Committee for Peace in Assam” that is demanding the right for indigenous peoples in all of India’s north-east to work out their own road to peace throughout the area. Both the ULFA and the government endorsed the initiative, but violence did not end. A sustained effort on this front could get representatives from all insurgent groups in the northeast area – Manipur, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Nagaland – into a single forum for

discussions. In terms of the ULFA and New Delhi, in November 64 ULFA fighters formally surrendered to the army.

In the Indian Ocean, the heavy fighting in **Sri Lanka** that resumed in late summer and autumn of 2006 continued into 2007. In January 2007, government troops captured the Tamil Tigers’ last stronghold in the east, Vakaria, creating another wave of internally displaced Tamils fleeing the battle area. Two months later, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the main anti-government faction, launched its first ever air attack, flying two small planes that attacked the government airbase at Bandaranaike International airport. Some munitions were dropped, but the attack was more symbolic and damaging to the government’s pride than substantive. By July, the LTTE had been effectively routed, restoring Colombo’s control over the eastern part of the island and pinning the LTTE into its traditional ethnic enclave in the north. Light fighting punctuated by suicide bombings by LTTE adherents continued through the autumn of 2007. Ironically, the 2002 cease-fire formally remains in effect, with neither side willing to abrogate it – possibly because that would signal the end of the now-dormant Scandinavian-led Sri Lankan Monitoring Mission.

Still in Asia, the **Philippines** government continues to launch occasional operations against remnants of the al-Qaida-affiliated **Abu Sayyaf** group and the **New Peoples Army** (Communist). The latter rejected a three week Christmas truce proposed by the government. As for the peace talks between the government and the **Moro Islamic Liberation Front**, until mid-December, it

appeared that an accord would be ready for signing in January, ending 30 years of warfare. After that long, another month or two will seem of little consequence.

THE AMERICAS

Under the “get tough” policy of President Alvaro Uribe, who was reelected in 2006 to a second four-year term, **Colombia’s** cities reportedly are more secure. Nonetheless, Colombia remains locked in struggles with the **National Liberation Army** (ELN) and the **Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia** (FARC). Because the drug trade fuels so much of the violence across so much of Colombia, the Bush administration has allowed some of the \$4 billion in U.S. aid under “Plan Colombia” to be used to support counterterrorism as well as anti-drug operations.

At the same time that Uribe was pressing military operations, he also offered to create a “neutral zone” where FARC and government negotiators could explore the possibility of a hostage/prisoner exchange. This effort received an unanticipated (and somewhat unwanted) “boost” from Venezuela’s President Hugo Chavez, who offered to be an intermediary between the two sides. Chavez’s offer was initially accepted, but was then terminated in late November when Uribe discovered that Chavez had overstepped the limits of his commission. Then in December, the swap of three foreigners was back on and then back off. At year’s end, three Venezuela helicopters were in Colombia waiting for the FARC to produce the three hostages. Meanwhile, the killings continue – an estimated 3,000 per year, although as in Iraq and Afghanistan, the true toll may never be known. ■



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