

## *Editor's Page*

Alan Johnson

**Shalom Lappin** offers a meticulous review essay of Jacqueline Rose's *The Question of Zion* – which characterises Zionism as a collective mental disorder induced by centuries of Jewish suffering. In what is possibly the most serious critical treatment that the book has yet received, Lappin mounts a devastating critique across a range of levels, raising serious questions about not only the scholarly standards of Rose's book, but also concerning her serious misunderstandings of Jewish theology and history upon which the argument rests, particularly her misunderstanding of the Jewish messianic tradition and its relation to Zionism. He also highlights the book's consistent repression of historical context, amateur and reductive misuse of psychoanalysis, and mis-reading of Israeli history and society. We invite the responses of our readers.

From Beirut Rayyan **Al-Shawaf** sends a clear-sighted analysis of the political dynamics of the recent tragic conflict between Israel and Hezbollah. The Palestinian and Lebanese attacks on Israel served the purpose of 'diverting attention from the ongoing troubles of the attackers and their regional sponsors,' Syria and Iran, who 'seek to use their leverage with Lebanese and Palestinian militants as a means to pressure the West.' Israel, however, 'made good on its promise to "turn back the clock in Lebanon by 20 years."' The 'only remaining hope,' argues Al-Shawaf, 'is that those who truly care about Lebanon will eventually succeed in radically altering the dominant political culture, so that the "resistance" is no longer enveloped in a halo of immunity, and the Lebanese can finally discuss it freely and critically.'

The roots of conflict in the world system, its various systemic and local expressions, and debate about the most effective political responses that progressives can make are the concerns of reviews from Pratt, Montgomery, Roxborough, Turner and Chilton.

Ami Pedahzur is a senior researcher at the National Security Studies Centre at the University of Haifa. His book, *Suicide Terrorism*, reviewed by **Nicola Pratt**, aims to define the phenomenon, explain the causes of its emergence and dispersion, and suggest how to deal with it. From a pacifist perspective, Pratt is heartened by Pedahzur's conclusion: the long-term solution to suicide terrorism is not military.

Rather trust must be built amongst those communities in which suicide terrorists emerge. Indeed, as Pedahzur notes, 'Inflicting pain on a civilian population will eliminate trust and simply drive more people into the unremitting cycle of violence and revenge.'

**Sarah Montgomery** reviews *Human Rights in the 'War on Terror'* edited by Richard Ashby Wilson. Wilson has assembled a range of leading human rights academics, international lawyers and activists such as Richard Goldstone, Geoffrey Robertson, Kenneth Roth and Mary Robinson to 'seek to develop a counter-terror strategy in which human rights and security considerations can be reconciled.' Montgomery finds the book's central argument persuasive and inspiring: 'it is not only possible but necessary to reconnect rights and security. Human rights are an indispensable constituent of democratic politics required in an emergency situation.'

**Ian Roxborough** finds himself in sympathy with the world sought by the editors of *European Security and Transatlantic Relations After 9/11 and the Iraq War* – a world 'in which the United States respects international institutions and works closely with its allies in a more measured approach to security matters.' But he is sceptical of the book's central assumption – that there is fundamental agreement between Europe and the United States on threat assessment – and critical of the book's failure to consider factors other than structural features of the international system when considering US foreign policy (such as the domestic roots of the Bush administration's foreign policy, or the peculiarities of the American political system). Indeed, Roxborough raises the possibility that 'What may be emerging is a new set of alignments. The "West" (and hence "Europe" and the Atlantic partnership) may not be the entity that defends itself against a common threat.'

How do you build peace in a society emerging from civil war? This question is posed by Roland Paris' *At War's End: Building Peace after Civil Conflict*, reviewed by **Mandy Turner**. She finds much of value in Paris's empirically rich assessment of fourteen peacekeeping missions from 1989 until 1999, including a sharp critique of existing peacekeeping practice, and a careful tracing of the oft-neglected geo-political context to the emergence of 'peacekeeping.' But Turner finds Paris' proposed solution to these problems – 'institutionalisation before liberalisation' – to be problematic, arguing that Paris 'puts the onus on domestic sources of poverty, instability and underdevelopment' while 'building a global political economy of peace will require an extensive redistribution of wealth and power at both the local and global levels.'

**Patricia Chilton** offers a sparkling review of the updated and augmented edition of Gilbert Achcar's 2002 *The Clash of Barbarisms*. Chilton is impressed by Achcar's anatomy of the sources of two barbarisms – the 'failure of Islam to evolve a modern socio-political form' and 'the failure of the West (and former Soviet bloc) to evolve a credible progressive alternative to neoliberal capitalism.' Achcar's counterposition of two futures – Hobbes' state of fear, accompanied by hyper-armament and violent subjugation or Locke's 'political society,' achieved by freely consented association, the will of the majority, and international law – she finds a powerful interpretive lens to approach the contemporary world. But she complains that the remarkable failure to properly update a book first published in 2002 'leaves numerous sore thumbs sticking out of the original text,' and, given the events of the intervening years, represents a missed opportunity.

Three reviews, from Simonon, Havedal and Bew, explore the prospects for the advance of human rights and democracy in the Muslim and Arab world.

**Alexandra Simonon**, reviewing *Unspeakable Love: Gay and Lesbian Life in the Middle East*, by Brian Whitaker, is critical of what she sees as 'essentialist' views of Islam, arguing that 'the institutionalised homophobia that has developed in the Muslim world is not a religious or a cultural issue, but is first and foremost a political problem.' Whitaker, she argues, 'has met men and women in the Middle East who aspire to liberty and who are no less Arab or Muslim for it.'

**Anja Havedal**, an editor with the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit in Kabul, reviews the Tunisian scholar Mohamed Charfi's *Islam and Liberty: The Historical Misunderstanding*. Charfi 'makes a very strong case that Islam, in its pure, un-politicised form, is not only compatible with democracy, but in fact embraces it.' He traces the family tree of Muslim reformers, from the Mutazilites to Abdou Filali-Ansary, concluding that their theories 'may enable Muslims in the third millennium to combine their religion with fully committed modernism in a life of peace and harmony – the peace of a clear conscience as well as social and religious peace.' Charfi indicts the grand 'historical misunderstanding' that stands in the way – 'Islam's evolution from a religion and a moral code into a politics, a legal system, and a societal blueprint.' He argues that 'this evolution was spurred by the *ulema* and by those who saw Islam as a political tool to acquire power and wealth.' Havedal assesses Charfi's book and the prospects of success for his proposed solution – educational reform.

**John Bew** reviews *The Long War for Freedom: The Arab Struggle for Democracy in the Middle East*, by Barry Rubin – a study of ‘the small group of liberals and democrats in the Arab world who continue to strive for political freedom and democratic reform across a number of states.’ Bew finds a story of ‘great bravery and a struggle against the odds’ but also ‘an important corrective to the tendency of many to see recent clashes between “Western” and “Arab” values in simplistic and teleological terms.’ The real clash of civilisations is the one that is taking place within the Arab world. Rubin, revisits intellectual debates in the Arab world between the 1920s and 1950s to overturn the notion that there was ‘some sort of irreversible trajectory to the polarised world we now find ourselves in.’

Who are the new global social movement activists and what political spaces do they operate in? Sidney Tarrow has written *The New Transnational Activism*, reviewed here by **Simon Thompson**, to answer these questions. Tarrow develops the ‘political process’ school of social movement theorising to construct a typology of contemporary forms of ‘contentious politics’ and he builds a system of concepts – internationalisation, internationalism, and globalisation – to capture the new ‘political opportunity structures’ which activists can exploit. However, Thompson argues that for all its strengths, the book lacks an engagement with the literature on state capacity and globalization, and so remains unsure about ‘the residual power of states compared to the power of international and global processes and systems’ and so less than fully clear about the political terrain on which activists struggle.

The Henry Jackson Society, a cross-party foreign policy think tank based in London, has launched a new foreign policy manifesto. We reproduce the introductory essay of *The British Moment*, written by **John Bew** and **Gabriel Glickman**. They take a stand for the principles of humanitarian intervention and the spread of liberal democracy, and against ‘the creeping revival of a defeatist “Suez” mentality in Britain’s political consciousness: whether it takes the form of visceral anti-Westernism on the Left, or the derision of “realists”, directed against “turning the British state into a branch of Oxfam.”’ They make the case for all progressives ‘to join forces to make a democratic Iraq a sustainable reality.’

Christopher Phelps called **Max Shachtman** ‘one of the most brilliant champions’ of American radicalism of the twentieth century (see Phelps’s introduction to Shachtman’s *Race and Revolution*, Verso, 2003, p. xii). In this speech from 1958 Shachtman sets out his vision of a democratic socialist movement and his core

## Democratiya 6 | Autumn 2006

belief that 'the highest attainment of democracy lies in Socialism, and by the same token, that the road to Socialism lies in the highest fulfilment of democracy.'

A **Democratiya Symposium** was held in London on July 1. The problems and prospects for a 'Progressive Foreign Policy After Blair' were debated by Isabel Hilton, Martin Shaw, John Bew, Oliver Kamm, Ziba Norman, David Clark and Alan Johnson.

Thanks to Catriona Roberts, the Democratiya editorial assistant, and Eve Garrard, for their support in putting this issue together, and to Maurice Savage and Richmal Lee-Smith for their work on the Iraq Memory Foundation DVD.