

Diane DeMell Jacobsen, Ph.D.-June 18, 2008
“The War on Terror and the Prospects for Peace”

On June 18, 2008 at Public Television Station WJCT, Jacksonville World Affairs Council board member, Dr. Diane Jacobsen, a distinguished specialist in foreign policy and peace negotiations, presented her analysis of challenges facing the United States in the Middle East and South Asia. Drawing on her deep knowledge of the history of conflict and visits to the Middle East and Horn of Africa at the invitation of Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and to India, where she participated in counterterrorism briefings, Dr. Jacobsen talked about the dark history of Al Qaeda and the outlook for current struggles involving US forces in Iraq and Afghanistan and prospects for peace in the historic conflicts between Israel and Palestine and Pakistan and India.

Dr. Jacobsen is hopeful about long-term prospects for Iraq, even though disruptive challenges such as the one from Moktada al-Sadr must be solved. Whatever one thinks about the reasons for entering Iraq, she believes there is a strong rationale for finishing well. She noted that on June 18, New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman had written about the “reality” of a number of recent improvements that “clearly” had taken place in Iraq. Dr. Jacobsen is more concerned about the difficult problem of Afghanistan where historical animosities make it difficult for the 40 nation NATO led contingent to be successful. In discussing India and Pakistan, she documented the unresolved tensions between these two nuclear powers, the growing number of internal terrorist incidents in India, and the startling contrasts in both countries between poverty and modernity. Turning to Israel and Palestine, she described the recent fragile “cease fire” agreement between Hamas and Israel which had been “violated” just before it went into effect and drew on the advice of former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger who had once told him, in describing peace efforts following the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, that in some cases long standing international problems could not be satisfactory resolved but instead could perhaps only be contained and managed.

-Admiral Jonathan T. Howe, USN (Ret.)