his wife Barbara, will celebrate 39 years of marriage this year, and have three children and five grandchildren.

I ask all Members of Congress to join me today in congratulating Dominic Polimeni on a truly exemplary professional and public service career, and for his dedication and unwavering commitment to the city of San Gabriel.

ERITREA: A FRIEND THAT DESERVES RECOGNITION

HON. DAN BURTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 26, 2003

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, the small nation of Eritrea occupies a very strategic location on the coast of the Red Sea. This is an area that is and will continue to be very important to our country's security interests. Fortunately, Eritrea is a stable, reliable friend of the United States. Practically alone in its region and in its continent of Africa, Eritrea is developing a democratic, accountable, and responsible government.

I have been privileged to know many of Eritrea's leaders, since the time that they were freedom fighters struggling against the communist Mengistu regime in Ethiopia. Over all these years, they have been consistent in advocating, and implementing decent values. I am especially gratified that Eritrea is one of the countries standing shoulder to shoulder with us now in the ''Coalition of the Willing''. I might add that they are one of only two countries in all of Africa to do so.

I would like to insert into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD an excerpt of an article written by Robert Kaplan, which appeared in the April issue of the Atlantic monthly and focuses on Eritrea. I commend this article to all my colleagues in Congress who want to know which countries of the world are deserving of the label ''U.S. ally'' and worthy of American support.

ERITREA

On the Horn of Africa, just a forty-five-minute flight from Yemen, across the Red Sea choke point of the Bab el Mandeb (''The Gate of Lament''), is the newly independent, sleepily calm, and remarkably stable state of Eritrea. While the West promotes democracy, market liberalization, military demobilization, and the muting of ethnic hatreds as necessary to domestic tranquillity, Eritrea, at least for the moment, provides a rejoinder to all that. The country has achieved a degree of non-coercive social discipline and efficiency enviable in the developing world and particularly in Africa—and it has done so by ignoring the West's advice on democracy and development, by cultivating a sometimes obsessive and narcissistic dislike of its neighbors, and by not demobilizing its vast army, built up during a thirty-year conflict with Ethiopia, unless there are jobs waiting for the troops.

Whereas Yemen's streets and shops are plastered with photos of President Saleh (whose cult of personality is mild compared with those of other Arab and African leaders), one never sees such photos of the Eritrean President, Isaias Afewerki, the veritable founder of this country. For decades Afewerki led a low-intensity guerrilla movement that finally wrested independence from Ethiopia in 1991. ''Photos of me would create an air of mystery and distance from the people,'' he told me in December. ''It's the lack of photos that liberates you. I hate high walls and armed guards.'' While other leaders in the region live inside forbidding military compounds, Afewerki lives in a modest suburban-style house and greets people in his secretary's office, which sits at the end of an undistinguished corridor. He moves around the capital in the passenger seat of a four-wheel-drive vehicle, with only one escort car, stopping at red lights. Western diplomats here say they have seen him disappear into large crowds of Eritreans without any security detail at all. ''It's easy to put a bullet in him, and he knows it,'' one foreign diplomat said to me.

Security, which consumes the Western diplomatic and aid communities in Sana'a (and everywhere else in the Middle East), is barely an issue in Asmara, Eritrea's capital. Despite its tattered storefronts, Asmara not only is one of the cleanest capital cities in Africa but also may be the only capital south of the Sahara where one can leave the car doors unlocked or prowl the back streets at all hours without fear of being robbed, even though the police are barely in evidence. American, Israeli, and other resident diplomats and aid administrators in Eritrea move freely around the country without guards or other escorts, as if they were at home.

Desperately poor and drought-stricken, with almost three quarters of its 3.5 million inhabitants illiterate, Eritrea nonetheless has a surprisingly functional social order. Women run shops, restaurants, and hotels; handicapped people have shiny new crutches and wheelchairs; people drive slowly and even attend driving school; scrap-metal junkyards are restricted to the urban outskirts; receipts are given for every transaction; there are few electricity blackouts from sloppy maintenance or badly managed energy resources. Foreign diplomats in Asmara praise the country's lack of corruption and its effective implementation of aid projects. Whereas rural health clinics in much of Africa have empty shelves and unexplained shortages of supplies, clinic managers in Eritrea keep ledgers documenting where all the medicine is going.

An immense fish farm near the port of Massawa testifies to Eritrea's ability to utilize foreign aid and know-how. The 1,500-acre complex channels salt water from the Red Sea, purifies it, and then uses it to raise shrimp in scores of circular cement tanks. The nutrient-rich excess of that process is used for breeding tilapia, a freshwater fish. The remaining waste water is pumped into asparagus and mangrove fields and artificially created wetlands. Though the operation was initially overseen by a firm from Phoenix, Arizona, and for a time employed an Israeli consultant, the consultant is now only rarely used. The Eritreans themselves run the operation in every respect.

Such initiative and communal discipline are the result of an almost Maoist degree of mobilization and an almost Albanian degree of xenophobia—but without the epic scale of repression and ideological indoctrination that once characterized China and Albania. The Eritrean xenophobia and aptitude for organization are, as Eritreans never cease to explain, products of culture and historical experience more than they are of policy choices. Eritrea never had feudal structures, sheikhs, or warlords. Villages were commonly owned and were governed by councils, or *baitos*, of elders. ''It was not a society deferential to individual authority,'' I was told by Yemane Ghebre Meskel, the director of President Afewerki's office, ''so we didn't need Marxist ideology to achieve a high stage of communalism.'' Wolde-Ab Yisak, the president of the University of Asmara, observed, ''Communal self-reliance is our dogma, which in turn comes from the knowledge that we Eritreans are different from our neighbors.'' (On my flight out of Eritrea, I overheard a teenage Eritrean girl from the diaspora lecturing her younger siblings in American English about how ''the Ethiopians murdered our people.'')

A monument in downtown Asmara definitively symbolizes such self-reliance, collectivity, and rudimentary survival. The monument celebrates not an individual, or even a generic guerrilla fighter, but a giant pair of sandals—shedas, in the native Tigrinya language. Such sandals, worn by every Eritrean fighter during the long struggle with Ethiopia, were homemade from recycled tire rubber, and gave fighters the ability to move quickly in the stony desert war zone. The monument shows what mythic proportions the conflict with Ethiopia has achieved in the minds of Eritreans; it has come to supersede the power of religion itself, in a society split evenly between Islam and Orthodox Christianity. This is an impressive achievement on a continent where Muslims and Christians are forming increasingly antagonistic group identities.

Eritrea's clarified sense of nationhood, rare in a world of nation-states rent by tribalism and globalization, is in part a legacy of Italian colonialism. ''We acknowledge that the legacy of colonialism was not all negative,'' says Yemane Ghebreab, the political-affairs officer of the People's Front for Democracy and Justice—successor to the country's guerrilla force, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front. Having conquered Eritrea in the late nineteenth century, the Italians had by the late 1930s turned their new colony into one of the most highly industrialized places in Africa, with road and railway networks that united a people previously divided by mountains and deserts. To drive from Asmara to Massawa—a descent of more than 7,500 feet in only seventy miles, down tangled vertebrae of coppery-green peaks, on a road of never-ending switchbacks, bridges, and embankments, built by Mussolini in the mid-1930s and kept in excellent condition by Eritrean highway crews working seven days a week—is to experience the historical energy of the industrialized West transplanted successfully to an African nation.

Another benefit of Italian colonialism, according to Ghebre Meskel, was town planning. Rather than concentrate everything in Asmara, the Italians developed Massawa and similar towns so as to prevent the overcentralization that now plagues other developing countries. To stem migration into Asmara and preserve this legacy, the Eritrean government has tried to improve life in rural areas; thus Asmara is not surrounded by shantytowns that might breed political extremism.

Following the defeat of Fascist Italy in World War II, and the dissolution of its East African empire, the new United Nations voted to incorporate Eritrea into Ethiopia. The Eritreans, unhappy with this decision, finally revolted in 1961. For thirteen years Eritrean guerrillas fought an Ethiopia backed by the United States. In 1974, when Ethiopia's Emperor Haile Selassie was overthrown, leading to a Marxist regime headed by Mengistu Haile Mariam, Eritrean guerrilla activity did not cease, and from then on the Eritreans fought an Ethiopia backed by the Soviet Union. Despite their ability to grind away at a Soviet-supplied war machine, which featured MiG fighter jets in the air and Soviet generals on the battlefield, the secretive and independent-minded Eritreans received no aid under the Reagan Doctrine (a U.S. program for arming Third World anti-communist insurgencies). Nevertheless, in 1991 Eritrean and Tigrean guerrillas, fighting on separate fronts, defeated

Mengistu, and Eritrean tanks rolled triumphantly into the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa. In the minds of the Eritreans, they had fought and won a three-decade struggle against a state ten times as populous, with no help from either of the superpowers or anyone else in the outside world. They now feel that they owe nothing to anybody, and they are filled with disdain for international opinion. (A taxi driver berated me for the West's focus on the crimes of the former Yugoslav dictator Slobodan Milosevic; Mengistu, he said, was responsible for at least twice as many deaths through his collectivization programs, but now lives in lavish exile in Zimbabwe.)

In 1996, following a long series of town meetings, the Eritreans drafted what one foreign diplomat has called ''an impeccable constitution.'' But a second war with Ethiopia erupted in 1998, and the constitution has never been implemented. That war lasted until 2000; by some estimates it left 19,000 Eritreans and 60,000 Ethiopians dead, after tanks and fighter jets engaged in desert combat reminiscent of the Arab-Israeli wars of 1967 and 1973. A U.S.-brokered ceasefire has resulted in the current demarcation of the disputed border under UN auspices.

Since this latest war the very stubbornness and social discipline that continue to make Eritrea the most civil of societies, in ways rarely considered by Western journalists and policy elites, have also made it a pariah in Europe and the United States—and for good reason. In 2001 national elections were postponed indefinitely (though free and fair elections at the village level were under way at the time of my visit). Far more disturbing, though, is that Eritrea now has the worst press repression in Africa. And in a widespread government crackdown on political dissent, eleven high-ranking officials, nine journalists, several businessmen, and two Eritreans working for the political and economic sections of the U.S. embassy were arrested; they are still being held without charges. Moreover, a campaign of national mobilization requires young men and women to spend eighteen months in the military or the civil service: a good idea in principle, but they are often kept much longer, with no guaranteed release date. That, together with the political repression and the exceedingly slow pace of economic reform, has induced young people to quietly leave the country. An increasingly disaffected diaspora has refused to invest substantial amounts in Eritrea until conditions have been liberalized.

''We're not asking all that much,'' one foreign diplomat told me. ''They don't even have to hold national elections. If they would just implement a version of China's economic reforms, this place could bloom overnight, like Singapore, given its social control and small population.'' But several diplomats admitted that the sense of patriotism is so strong here, except among some of the urban elite in Asmara, that they detect no widespread unhappiness with the regime. ''The change would have to come at the top,'' one foreign resident told me. ''It's not altogether impossible that we will wake up tomorrow morning and learn that Isaias is no longer around.'' Another outside expert told me that he has not given up on the President, but if 2003 goes by without some political and economic reforms, he will consign Afewerki to the ranks of boorish African strongmen.

My first interview with Afewerki was in 1986, in a cave in northern Eritrea, during the war with Ethiopia. That meeting had been scheduled for ten in the morning—and at ten exactly he walked in and said, ''You have questions for me?'' He hasn't changed. He was just as punctual when we met this time, and he spoke in the same blunt and remote tone, with the same shy asceticism. He spoke in intense, spare bursts of cold analysis—in contrast to the gasbag homilies one hears from many Arab and African politicians—for more than two hours. Afewerki may be the most intellectually interesting politician in the history of postcolonial Africa.

''All that we have achieved we did on our own,'' he said. ''But we have not yet institutionalized social discipline, so the possibility of chaos is still here. Remember, we have nine language groups and two religions. No one in Africa has succeeded in copying a Western political system, which took the West hundreds of years to develop. Throughout Africa you have either political or criminal violence. Therefore we will have to manage the creation of political parties, so that they don't become means of religious and ethnic division, like in Ivory Coast or Nigeria.'' He went on to say that China was on the right path—unlike Nigeria, with its 10,000 dead in communal riots since the return of democracy, in 1999. ''Don't morally equate the rights of Falun Gong with those of hundreds of millions of Chinese who have seen their lives dramatically improve,'' he told me.

Yemen, Afewerki thinks, is ''a medievalist society and tribal jungle going through the long transition to modernity.'' He accused it of advancing an ''Arab national-security strategy against Israel,'' a country he openly supports. However, he accepted the international arbitration that awarded the disputed Hanish Islands, in the Red Sea, to Yemen. As for Ethiopia, he said it could fragment, because it is controlled by minority Tigreans who have created a Balkanized arrangement of ethnic groups (Amharas, Oromos, and so on) rather than trying to forge an imperial melting pot, in the way of Halle Selassie.

Despite Afewerki's refreshing, undiplomatic brilliance, a few hours with him can be troubling. His very austerity, personal efficiency, and incorruptibility are mildly reminiscent of Mengistu himself (who also suffered from a seeming excess of pride), even though the latter was a mass murderer and Afewerki could yet turn out to be among Africa's most competent rulers. Civilization in the Home of Africa has often bred sharp political minds that, with cold efficiency, dealt with their intellectual enemies not through written attacks but by imprisoning or killing them. And it is said repeatedly in Asmara that the President has closed himself off since arresting the very people who challenged him intellectually.

General Franks, on several visits here, and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, during a visit last December, have held long talks with Afewerki. ''The meetings were superb,'' Afewerki told me. ''I mean that they were frank, without pretensions or flattery on either side. I share the strategic view of the Americans in the region. French forces in Djibouti have been a stabilizing factor, and U.S. troops will add to that. You need outside powers to keep order here. It sounds colonialist, but I am only being realistic.''

When I pressed Afewerki about human-rights abuses, which Rumsfeld had pointedly raised in their meeting two weeks earlier, he said, ''If you just leave us alone, we will handle these matters in a way that won't damage our bilateral relationship and won't embarrass us or you.'' He indicated that he would be more likely to satisfy U.S. demands on human rights in the context of a growing military partnership, but would not do so if merely hectored by the State Department.

I worried that Afewerki, like many other realists, is obsessed with everything that could go wrong in his country rather than with what could go right. True realism requires a dose of idealism and optimism, or else policy becomes immobilized. And that might be Afewerki's problem. He seemed more comfortable when I first met him, in a state of wartime emergency, than he does now, in a state of peacetime possibility. He analyzes brilliantly what he knows, but he gives in to paranoia about what he doesn't know. He did not seem to understand that U.S. foreign policy is often a synthesis of what the State and Defense Departments are comfortable with, and that therefore Foggy Bottom alone cannot be blamed for Eritrea's image problems in the United States.

Nevertheless, Afewerki has essentially offered the United States exactly what it wants: bases enabling its military to strike at anyone in the region at any time, without restrictions. Although the World Bank has questioned the economic viability of a new airport at Massawa with a long jet runway, Afewerki reportedly told Rumsfeld, ''The runway can handle anything the U.S. Air Force wants to land on it.'' Eritrea also boasts deepwater port facilities at Massawa and Assab, both strategically placed near the mouth of the Red Sea.

Afewerki told me, ''The increasing social and economic marginalization of Africa will be a fact of life for a very long time to come.'' Ethiopia in particular, he said, will weaken internally as the Oromos and others demand more power. Its Tigrean Prime Minister, Meles Zenawi, already lives inside a vast security apparatus designed for his protection. Meanwhile, across the Red Sea in Yemen, not only water but oil, too, is running out even as the armed young population swells, potentially threatening the political order of significant parts of Arabia. And with fighting terrorism now a permanent strategic priority of the United States, the stability and discipline of Eritrea make it the perfect base for projecting American power and helping Israel in an increasingly unstable region. That, in turn, might foster the Singaporean kind of development for which, according to some, Eritrea appears suited.

So there you have it: Yemen and Eritrea, two case studies in the war on terrorism. In Yemen the United States has to work with unsavory people in a tribalized society in order to prevent more-unsavory people from destabilizing it to the benefit of Osama bin Laden. In Eritrea the United States may have to use a bilateral military relationship to nudge the country's President toward prudent political and economic reform, so that Eritrea, too, won't be destabilized. Thus our military involvement with both nations will mean political involvement in their domestic affairs-and throughout the ages that has been the essence of imperialism.

EXPRESSING SUPPORT AND APPRECIATION FOR THE PRESIDENT AND MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES PARTICIPATING IN OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

SPEECH OF

HON. HILDA L. SOLIS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 20, 2003

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the courageous men and women serving in our Armed Forces.

As we speak tonight, over 200,000 American soldiers are facing the reality of war straight in the eye. Thousands more here at