

It's not about Israel

By David A. Harris The Jerusalem Post December 30, 2006

A number of voices in the international community have recently identified the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as the root cause of many of the Middle East's problems. British Prime Minister Tony Blair and outgoing UN Secretary General Kofi Annan have been among the most prominent of these voices.

In his article "A battle for global values," (Foreign Affairs, January/February 2007), Tony Blair reiterates what he has expressed in previous public statements: "How can we bring peace to the Middle East unless we resolve the question of Israel and Palestine?" Achieving peace, he continues, "would not only silence reactionary Islam's most effective rallying call but fatally undermine its basic ideology."

Kofi Annan, addressing the UN Security Council on December 12, said, "The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not just one regional conflict amongst many. No other conflict carries such a powerful symbolic and emotional charge even for people far away."

True, genuine peace between Israel and the Palestinians would remove one of the long-standing conflicts in the Middle East. Moreover, to state the painfully obvious, peace would serve the best interests of those involved.

But to suggest, as Prime Minister Blair in particular does, that such a settlement is a necessary precondition for peace in the Middle East and would take the wind out of radical Islam's sails is unsupported by the facts.

Let's assume for a moment that Israel did not exist. Would that have changed the basic story line of the bulk of recent events in the Middle East?

Would Iraq and Iran have chosen not to pursue an eight-year war that cost more than a million fatalities? Would Iraq have decided not to invade Kuwait in 1990? Would it have rethought its use of chemical weapons against both its own Kurdish population and Iran?

Would Syria have refrained from slaughtering over 10,000 of its own citizens in Hama in 1982? Would it have relinquished its hold on Lebanon, as demanded by multiple Security Council resolutions?

Would Saudi Arabia have stopped exporting its Wahhabi model of Islam, with its narrow, doctrinaire view of the world and rejection of non-Muslims as so-called infidels, across the globe? Would al-Qaida not have attacked the US in 2001, when, it should be remembered, the Israeli-Palestinian issue was never

even mentioned among Osama bin Laden's main "grievances"?

Would the danger posed by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Jordan magically disappear absent the Israel factor? Would Iran today abandon its hegemonic ambitions in the region? Would the Shi'ite-Sunni split, with its profound political and strategic ramifications, evaporate into thin air? Would the Sudanese government stop its collusion with the Arab Janjaweed militias to end the massive murder and displacement in Darfur?

Would the desperate poverty and widespread illiteracy that dampen hope and create a fertile recruiting ground for radical Islamic movements suddenly be alleviated? Would Saudi women instantaneously have the right to drive, would non-Muslims finally enjoy equal rights in all those Arab countries where Islam is the official religion, and would the Baha'i no longer experience persecution at the hands of the Iranian government?

In reality, the destabilizing factors in the Middle East run far deeper than the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Strikingly, while most Western political leaders mince their words, the courageous Arab authors of the annual Arab Human Development Report have not. They have spoken of three overarching explanatory factors for the region's unsatisfactory condition: the knowledge deficit, the gender deficit and the freedom deficit.

While there is no certainty of a successful outcome unless these three areas are addressed in a sustained manner, the Middle East, which ought to be one of the world's most dynamic regions, is likely to continue suffering from instability, violence and fundamentalism, irrespective of what happens on the Israeli-Palestinian front.

Consider some of the important findings in the Arab Human Development Report and related studies:

- The total number of books translated into Arabic in the last 1,000 years is fewer than those translated in Spain in one year.

- Greece, with a population of fewer than 11 million, translates five times as many books from abroad into Greek annually as the 22 Arab countries combined, with a total population of more than 300 million, translate into Arabic.

- According to a 2002 Council on Foreign Relations report, "In the 1950s, per-capita income in Egypt was similar to South Korea, whereas Egypt's

per-capita income today is less than 20 percent of South Korea's. Saudi Arabia had a higher gross domestic product than Taiwan in the 1950s; today it is about 50 percent of Taiwan's."

As Dr. A.B. Zahlan, a Palestinian physicist has noted, "a regressive political culture is at the root of the Arab world's failure to fund scientific research or to sustain a vibrant, innovative community of scientists." He further asserted that "Egypt, in 1950, had more engineers than all of China." That is hardly the case today.

According to the 2005 UN Human Development Report, only two Egyptians per million people were granted patents (and for Syria the figure was zero), compared to 30 in Greece and 35 in Israel.

In the 2005 UN report the adult literacy rate for women aged 15 and older was 43.6 percent in Egypt

and 74 percent in Syria, while for the world's top 20 countries it was nearly 100 percent.

And finally, according to the current Freedom House rankings, the only country in the Middle East that is listed as "free" is Israel. Every Arab country is at best "partly free" or, worse, "not free."

The sad truth is that it is precisely political oppression, intellectual suffocation and gender discrimination that explain, more than other factors, the chronic difficulties of the Middle East. To be sure, there exist no overnight or over-the-counter remedies for these maladies that would allow the region to unleash its vast potential, but they are at the heart of the problem. It would be illusory to think otherwise.

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A sovereign Palestine?

By Paul Sheehan The Sydney Morning Herald (Australia) January 1, 2007

Three young brothers, Salam, 4, Ahmed, 7, and Osama, 9, were gunned down outside their school on the morning of December 11. They had just arrived by car when they and the driver died in a wild spray of gunfire. Four other schoolboys who happened to be nearby were wounded.

It was an assassination attempt, and it failed. The target was the boys' father, Bala Ba'lousheh, but he wasn't in the car. He was a senior Fatah official with the Palestinian Authority's intelligence service in Gaza City, and his would-be assassins were almost certainly from Hamas, the rival Palestinian political party which won power in last year's election. After the shootings, demonstrations erupted in the West Bank and Gaza. Within 48 hours, a prominent Hamas leader was shot to death in the Gaza Strip.

The level of conflict between the Palestinian parties simmers just below the level of civil war, even as the spoils keep shrinking. The open wound inspires strong reactions among millions of people around the world with no direct stake in the problem.

For the sake of reality, let's put aside whatever views and prejudices you may hold on the Palestinian question. Put aside any animosity about grasping Jews or murderous Arabs. Put aside the Holocaust, and Muslim anti-Semitism. Put aside hopes and judgements. Simply look at what has happened on the ground. Stripped of all emotion and prejudice, right and wrong, one reality becomes clear: there is no chance of a sovereign, autonomous Palestinian state. Not within our lifetimes. No chance. None.

Not only won't there be a sovereign Palestinian state, there can't be.

It's no longer viable. At every historic juncture since Israel was created in 1948, rhetoric has taken precedence over pragmatism in the Arab world. As a

result, every one of these historic junctions has resulted, without exception, in material defeat for the Palestinians.

In 1948, roughly 700,000 Palestinian Arabs - the number remains contested and inexact - heeded calls from the Arab world and fled their homes in the newly proclaimed Israel. The result? The Palestinian position of 1948 now looks infinitely superior to the Palestinian position of today.

In 1967, Israel was invaded by its Arab neighbours in the Six Day War. The result? The Arabs lost control of the holy city of Jerusalem and the Palestinians went from Arab rule to Israeli control.

In 1982, after the Palestinians sparked a civil war in Lebanon, Israel invaded Lebanon and Jordan's army attacked the Palestine Liberation Organisation. The result? The Palestinians were crushed in Lebanon and Jordan and Israel fortified its position in the West Bank.

In 1987, the first Palestinian intifada began at the instigation of PLO leader Yasser Arafat, and suicide bombings came to Israeli life. It lasted almost five years. The result? Israel again fortified and expanded its positions and the West Bank was divided into military-controlled subdivisions.

In 2000, Arafat launched the second intifada, his response to Israel's final offer in the Oslo peace accords. It lasted six years. The result? What the Palestinians were offered in 2000 is now impossible today, because Israel has since encircled Jerusalem with settlements housing 100,000 Jewish settlers. And Israel began building the Wall.

In 2006, Hezbollah attacked Israel, in the cause of Palestine, and Hamas and other militant elements fired rockets into Israel from the Gaza Strip, as political opposition was Islamicised. The result? Some 175 Israelis were killed by Hezbollah, for

which Lebanon paid with more than 1500 dead, and Hezbollah lost its military control of southern Lebanon. It thus lost its strategic forward position for no strategic gain.

In the West Bank, the dividing fence and wall became a reality, effectively halting suicide bombings but also annexing more sections of the West Bank. Israeli military control became more intense. According to B'Tselem, the Israeli Information Centre for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, 1065 Palestinians were killed by Israeli security forces in 2006, while 23 Israelis were killed by Palestinians.

Everyone I spoke to while visiting Israel recently hates the wall. One prominent Palestinian moderate, Khaled Abu Toameh, who once worked for the PLO and now writes for The Jerusalem Post, told me in Jerusalem: "The wall is a tragedy. The wall is bad. It is the direct result of Yasser Arafat's intifada. It will become the wailing wall for both sides. I'm not optimistic. Not at all."

A conspicuous critic of the wall is the former US president Jimmy Carter, who, in his new book, *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid*, writes: "An enormous imprisonment wall is now under construction, snaking through what is left of Palestine to encompass more and more land for Israeli settlers. In many ways, it is more oppressive than what blacks lived under in South Africa during apartheid."

Compare this fenced-off community of today with 20 years ago, before the intifadas. The Palestinian workforce was integrated into the Israeli economy, with relatively free movement into Israel. Education and health systems were built, universities opened, local governments were functioning,

corruption was minimal, and life expectancy had soared from 47 under Arab rule to 68. Then came Yasser Arafat and Fatah.

"Fatah is the mafia," Abu Toameh told me. "It is responsible for most of the anarchy on the West Bank. Fatah is a monster." Nor does he think much of Hamas, though he thinks it is much less corrupt, much more competent, and more pragmatic. He believes the West erred shockingly in trusting and subsidizing Fatah and has now mishandled the transition to Hamas.

"But on the Muslim side, the message has always been 'No', and 'No', and 'No'. They quote the Koran: God is on the side of the patient . . .

"And what is the West Bank now? It is six Arab cities, two refugee camps, 150 villages. A series of cantons, with no economic base. And Gaza? An awful place."

And Israel? Through all the wars, terrorist bombings and threats of annihilation, and despite intense internal divisions, Israel has grown into a muscular economy of almost 7 million, with a per capita gross domestic product far higher than any Arab neighbours, including Saudi Arabia. The Jewish population has grown from 600,000 to 5.3 million, with a birthrate higher than those in Western Europe. Per capita, Israel has the most engineers and the most high-tech economy in the world.

Untold damage would be done to this economy if one anti-aircraft missile, fired from the West Bank, brought down an airliner flying out of the futuristic new Ben Gurion International Airport. Israel can't afford to let this happen.

Sixty years of years of "No" has put an end to a sovereign Palestinian state, indefinitely. This pawn has been sacrificed in a much larger game.

Iran and the Holocaust deniers

By The Washington Times editorial January 2, 2007

Three weeks ago, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad hosted a conference in Tehran to promote the cause of Holocaust denial. Sixty-seven persons from 30 countries attended the International Conference on Review of the Holocaust: Global Vision," which had two main aims: to deny that the Holocaust ordered by German dictator Adolf Hitler killed 6 million Jews, or as a fallback position, to minimize Nazism's human toll; and to deny the international legitimacy of Israel. Participants included former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke; and some of Europe's most prominent Holocaust deniers, including French Professor Robert Faurisson, who has questioned whether Nazi gas chambers really existed. At the conference hall, there were pictures, CDs and posters, all of them dealing with some aspect of Holocaust denial. These included pictures of Holocaust survivors liberated from Nazi death camps; the pictures were falsely

labeled as photographs of typhus patients who had been quarantined to prevent the spread of the disease. (Visit www.intelligence.org).

A recurring theme at the Tehran conference was the connection between Holocaust denial and the destruction of Israel. "Just as the Soviet Union was erased from [the map of] the world, so will the Zionist entity soon disappear," Mr. Ahmadinejad told conferees. Iranian Foreign Minister Mamouchehr Mottaki declared that "an official study of the Holocaust will also lead to the nature of the Zionist regime's existence being questioned." Mr. Duke, who denied that gas chambers were used to kill Jews, said "the Zionists have used the Holocaust as a weapon" to conceal Israeli crimes.

Conference participants agreed to establish an international institution to study the Holocaust, and appointed Mohammad Ali Ramin, an adviser to Mr. Ahmadinejad, as general secretary. Mr. Ramin says

that, throughout history, Jews have "inflicted the most damage on the human race," and that some Jews have engaged "in plotting against other nations and ethnic groups to cause malice, cruelty and wickedness." Mr. Ramin has also suggested that the Holocaust was a myth concocted by the United States and Great Britain to weaken Germany by falsely depicting it as a "human-burning nation."

Such statements, while disturbing enough in and of themselves, must be viewed in the larger context of Iranian support for terrorist groups targeting Israel, along with the fact that Mr. Ahmadinejad has missiles capable of reaching Israel and is working to develop nuclear weapons. When you add it all up, the International Association of Jewish Lawyers and Jurists argues persuasively in a new report issued in conjunction with the Jerusalem Center for Public

Affairs, Mr. Ahmadinejad is actively attempting to incite genocide against Israel. In its report, which is endorsed by Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel, the association notes that all too often, the civilized world, when confronted with leaders bent on mass murder, "has consistently delayed action until after thousands or even millions were already slain." In Rwanda, for example, the 1994 massacre of 800,000 Tutsi tribesmen was preceded by years of propaganda incitement against them by the Hutu majority and reports that death squads were being formed. In Bosnia, there was ample warning that Serb President Slobodan Milosevic was prepared to slaughter his neighbors, but the world refused to act until 200,000 Bosnians were killed. With Tehran determined to acquire nuclear weapons, the failure to act could be far more costly this time.

Why are Arabs upset by Saddam's execution? Tears for Fears

By Efraim Harsh *The New Republic* (on line) January 3, 2007

While Saddam Hussein's execution was greeted with delight by many of his victims--Iranians, Kuwaitis, and Iraqi Shia--it also generated widespread criticism among many Arabs and Muslims. Though only Libya showed official solidarity with the fallen dictator by declaring three days of national mourning and canceling the public celebrations of Eid Al Adha (the Festival of Sacrifice, commemorating Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son to God) even the Saudi government, perhaps America's staunchest Arab ally, expressed its dismay at the timing of the execution on the first day of the Muslim festival.

In India, thousands of Muslims staged anti-U.S. protests, as did scores of Palestinians in the Jordanian capital of Amman and in the neighboring refugee camps. In Mecca, pilgrims voiced outrage that the Iraqi authorities had executed Saddam on a major religious holiday, while in the Palestinian-controlled territories of Gaza and the West Bank, where Saddam was considered a hero for his missile attacks on Israel during the 1991 Gulf war and his generous remuneration of suicide bombers' families, "houses of condolence" were opened, where mourners sat beneath Iraqi flags and played Iraqi revolutionary songs, surrounded by pictures of Saddam. Lawmakers and members of the ruling Hamas government condemned the execution, with one calling it "a political assassination" that "violates all international laws."

"Arab public opinion wonders who deserves to be tried and executed," Abdel Bari Atwan, editor of the London-based *Al Quds Al Arabi* newspaper, told *Al Jazeera* television. Should it be "Saddam Hussein, who preserved the unity of Iraq, its Arab and Islamic identity, and the coexistence of its different

communities, such as Shiites and Sunnis ... or those who engulfed the country in this bloody civil war?"

This lamentation evokes one of the more confounding paradoxes relating to Saddam--namely the wide discrepancy between his actual track record and the adulation in which he was held by non-Iraqi Arabs. It is true that Saddam managed to hold the reins of power for longer than any other leader in Iraq's modern history (and that he briefly brought it to the peak of its military might and economic prowess). But this was achieved at the monstrous cost of transforming Iraq into the most repressive police state in the world. Saddam's Iraq was a state where a joke or a reported thought could cost a person his life, where tens of thousands of civilians were brutally murdered by their government, and where millions starved while their unelected ruler spent incredible sums of money on monuments and palaces for himself.

Nor were Saddam's external exploits any more noteworthy. He embroiled his country in a string of catastrophic foreign adventures that claimed more than one million lives and wrought untold physical and economic wreckage. Upon his ascendance in 1979, Iraq was a regional economic superpower, boasting some \$35 billion in foreign exchange reserves. Twenty-three years later, after two devastating wars of its leader's making and a decade of crippling international sanctions, it had been reduced to dire poverty and underdevelopment, with tens of billions in foreign debt.

Why has such an abysmal record been widely applauded by Arabs and Muslims? Mostly, the rapturous eulogies show that, in the Middle East, physical force remains the main--if not the sole--instrument of political discourse. At the domestic

level, these circumstances have resulted in the world's most illiberal polities. Political dissent is dealt with by repression, and ethnic and religious differences are settled by internecine strife and murder. One need only mention, among many instances, Syria's massacre of 20,000 Muslim activists in the early '80s, the Lebanese and Algerian civil wars (in which hundreds of thousands perished), King Hussein's slaughter of Palestinians in "Black September" 1970, or the genocidal campaign now being conducted in Darfur by the government of Sudan and its allied militias. As for foreign policy in the Middle East, it, too, has been pursued by means of crude force, ranging from terrorism and subversion to outright aggression, with examples too numerous and familiar to cite.

Nowhere has this phenomenon been more pronounced than in Iraq. Torn by ethnic, social, and religious schisms--with the dominant Arab population hopelessly polarized between Shia and Sunni communities, each further split into rival clans, and with the Kurdish population of the north implacably opposed to Arab domination yet deeply fragmented along tribal lines--Iraq was a ruler's ultimate nightmare. As early as the 1830s, Ibrahim Pasha, the debonair warlord who had brought the Ottoman Empire to its knees, advised his father, the legendary Egyptian governor Muhammad Ali, to shun control of Mesopotamia altogether: "Upon my word, Baghdad ... is not worth the expenses involved in retaining it." King Faisal I of the Hashemite family, on whose behalf the modern state of Iraq was created in 1921, candidly opined that there was no such thing as an Iraqi people--only "unimaginable masses of human beings, devoid of any patriotic idea, imbued with religious traditions and absurdities ... and prone to anarchy."

The Lamest Excuse

By David Horowitz FrontPageMagazine.com January 1, 2007

That American progressives should have aligned themselves with the terrorists in Gaza comes as no surprise and is hardly interesting. American progressives have aligned themselves with totalitarian movements since 1917 and, indeed, since 1789. It is what they do and who they are. What is interesting are the pathetic excuses they make for 21st Century Nazis.

In the December 28th Nation Chris Hedges has a defense of Jimmy Carter's latest effort to throw the Jews to the lions. In the course of feeding the anti-Jewish frenzy of the Islamic crusaders, Hedges explains the fratricidal conflict between Palestinian factions in Gaza. For those not paying attention, a highlight of this mayhem was the assassination of three Palestinian children aged 3 to 9 who were on their way to school. The deed was done to punish their father for belonging to the wrong Palestinian

Saddam did not set the rules of the game; he merely inherited it. But he was surely its most savage and able player, bringing its brutal methods to awesome perfection. Yet, for all his brutality Saddam became the victim of his own success. Like many tyrants before him, he gradually maneuvered himself into domestic, regional, and global positions that required raising the stakes incessantly in order to survive. Each acquisition of power engendered more fear of losing it. In the violent manner of Iraqi politics, either one subdued the system or was devoured by it. Saddam managed to subject the system to his will, at an exorbitant price: domestic repression and external aggression. And, even then, he failed to eradicate all potential dangers. By way of deflecting the Iranian threat, he created an economic crisis that was about to destroy him; by way of fighting this predicament, he managed to implicate himself in a far more complex and costly conflict in Kuwait--one that pitted him against the world and eventually resulted in his downfall.

In other words, it is the Middle East's violent political culture that has created and perpetuated the monstrosity of Saddam (and his ilk) rather than the other way round, and only when this culture is fully eradicated will the region's inhabitants be able to look forward to a better future. Saddam's execution, at long last, sets a precedent of holding a local tyrant accountable for his crimes; if they wanted it, this could be a first step for Arabs in curbing their politicians' rule by violence. Sadly, they don't seem to want it.

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terrorist group. Approximately 500 Palestinians have been killed by other Palestinians in this feud.

Hedges' explanation for this nightmare is drawn from the fertile brain of an Israeli leftist: "[The Palestinians in Gaza] are behaving as expected at the end of the extended experiment called 'what happens when you imprison 1.3 million human beings in an enclosed space like battery hens.'"

This is pretty neat. For forty years -- since Israel liberated Gaza from Egyptian rule -- Arabs have complained about the "occupation" of their "homeland." To begin with, this is one of innumerable Arab lies that underpin their unworthy cause. The reason for the presence of Israeli troops was 1) Gaza was a hostile corridor across which Israel was invaded three times; 2) the Arabs have been in a state of declared war against Israel since 1948; and 3) there were 7,000 Jews living in Gaza

who, unlike the Arabs living in Israel, would be slaughtered if there were not Israeli troops to protect them.

Hedges and his friends, of course, relentlessly overlook the genocidal ambitions of the Palestinians in discussing the conflict in the Middle East. In 2005, the Israelis left Gaza and evacuated the Jews – by the way its most productive and law-abiding citizens.

So now that it is liberated, Gaza is – a prison! This is the explanation for Palestinian crimes against themselves. And of course the entire Middle East will be a prison until Jew-haters like Hamas and Nation progressives have their way and Israel is wiped off the map.

But this is only the beginning of the progressive explanation for the assassinations of three-year-olds. It seems that in the progressive mind Palestinians have the brains of chickens. When cooped up, they kill each other. Actually, not even chickens are this clueless. They have to be more than cooped up; they have to be packed like sardines.

But why do only Palestinians react this way? Gaza is a lot bigger than the Warsaw Ghetto, for examples, where 500, 000 Jews were actually imprisoned (unlike the Arabs of Gaza). Yet no Jews, in those circumstances, went around killing three- to nine-year-olds. Anne Frank and her family were actually penned up like battery hens. It didn't make them assassins. Of course they didn't have a religion like Islam in which assassins -- the word itself is Islamic -- are regarded as saints.

There are more than a million Arabs living in Israel – roughly the number of Arabs living in Gaza. By *The Nation's* standards, you could say they were penned up like battery hens. Yet they don't go around killing each other.

The reason is that in Israel – unlike any other Arab state – they are free. They are even part of the

Israeli government. And unlike the Arabs in Gaza they are not followers of a state-sponsored death cult which teaches them to kill for Allah and especially to kill Jews. This death cult is the problem in the Middle East, the source of the conflict and the reason why Palestinian factions are killing each other.

The death cult calls on its followers – the same religious fanatics that progressives have embraced – to kill and be killed for God. Of course, this genocidal mission begins with the Crusader-Zionist alliance, Americans and Jews. But it hardly ends there. Here is a frenzied utterance of the late and unlamented head of Hamas, Abdel Azziz al-Rantissi (mercifully terminated by Israel): “We realize that Bush is the enemy of God, the enemy of Islam and Muslims. America declared war on God. Sharon declared war on God and God declared war on America, Bush and Sharon.”

But it only begins with Bush and Sharon. If you are in the army of God then those who opposed you, even if they are in your own camp, are not. During the current mayhem in Gaza, followers of Mahmoud Abbas and Fatah fired on a Hamas rally in the West Bank. This was the response, as reported by ABC on December 16: “What a war Mahmoud Abbas you are launching, first against God, and then against Hamas,” senior Hamas leader Khalil al-Hayya told a Gaza City rally of 100,000 Hamas supporters, who fired their guns in the air and chanted ‘God is Greatest.’”

In other words the sickness that has consumed the Palestinians of Gaza and the West Bank is self-generated, an emanation of the death cult they have been nurturing for decades. On the other hand, if you're a progressive, blame it on the Jews. After all that is how your genocidal friends would explain it themselves.

America's many failed attempts at Mideast Peace

By Michael Oren *The Boston Globe* January 2, 2007

The recent Iraq Study Group report called for a new American effort to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict. This, it claims, is the only way to eliminate the primary source of anti-Americanism in the Middle East and facilitate a solution for Iraq. The report's authors claim to be realists, but given the state of Israeli and Palestinian politics, how realistic are the chances such an initiative will succeed? The possibilities are exceedingly limited, as the history of American mediation attempts reveals.

American attempts at Arab-Israeli peacemaking began in 1947, when Harry S. Truman supported the United Nations plan to partition Palestine into separate Arab and Jewish states. But the Palestinian Arabs rejected that compromise, and Arab armies tried to destroy the Jewish nation. Later, when Israel

repelled the invaders, American diplomat Ralph Bunche mediated an armistice -- an achievement for which he won the Nobel Prize. Yet the Arab League pledged to carry on the war, and Israel refused to repatriate Palestinian refugees. The Arab-Israeli conflict, as it came to be known, continued.

Next, Dwight Eisenhower mounted two secret initiatives, code-named Alpha and Gamma, in which Israel would trade desert territories for a non belligerency treaty with Egypt. Both combatants balked, and by 1956 were once again at war. President Kennedy also tried to foster reconciliation with a scheme for resettling Palestinians in the arid Jordan Valley.

Then came the 1967 Six-Day War, during which President Johnson crafted a framework for

exchanging Israel's territories for security and peace. The concept was embodied in UN Resolution 242, but Israel was reluctant to relinquish land, and the Arab states refused to negotiate with Israel, much less grant it peace. Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger strove to uphold the resolution, but fruitlessly.

Later, Ronald Reagan offered a plan for shared Jordanian-Palestinian rule of the West Bank. The first President Bush convened a peace conference in Madrid in 1991. Bill Clinton doggedly attempted to broker a Palestinian-Israeli accord. Special emissaries such as Dennis Ross and Philip Habib tirelessly crisscrossed the region. All these efforts failed, however, in the face of Israel's settlement policy and Arab terror and rejection of the Jewish state.

George W. Bush joined other members of the Quartet -- Russia, the European Union, and the UN -- in supporting a road map to Palestinian statehood and an end to the conflict. This, too, has floundered; the parties could not meet the map's minimal requirements.

Nearly six decades of American mediation have registered only one lasting success: the 1979 treaty between Egypt and Israel. But that agreement was only made possible by the courage of Anwar Sadat, who became the first Arab leader to visit Israel, and Menachem Begin, who agreed to restore Sinai to Egypt. Yet even this breakthrough failed to bring about a comprehensive settlement. Israel refused to give up the West Bank and Gaza, Syria boycotted the talks, and PLO chairman Yasser Arafat urged Sadat's assassination.

Why, after so many futile efforts, have American policy makers persisted in searching for peace? US leaders tend to view the Middle East as an arena for demonstrating their diplomatic prowess and for affirming America's status as a world power. A deeper impetus may be the desire of Americans, many of whom are religiously observant, to bring tranquility to the Holy Land.

Yet solving the world's most intractable conflict requires Arab and Israeli leaders who are committed to peace and strong enough to fulfill that commitment. That prerequisite is missing today. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel and President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority have both reiterated their willingness to renew negotiations and have recently agreed on confidence-building measures, but neither has the political clout to conclude an accord. Olmert's approval ratings are the lowest in Israeli history. Abbas, facing a civil war with Hamas, is literally fighting for his life.

So any American initiative is almost certain to fail. Though peace would reinforce America's self-image and perhaps ease its predicament in Iraq, it is unrealistic to hang hopes for resolving that crisis on an elusive Arab-Israeli accord. American mediation can succeed, but only after the emergence of local leaders who, like Sadat and Begin, have both the will and the strength to make peace.

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The longest-running big lie

By Caroline Glick *The Jerusalem Post* January 1, 2007

Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Yasser Arafat was a master of the big lie. Since he invented global terrorism with the founding of the Fatah terror organization in 1959, Arafat successfully portrayed himself as a freedom fighter while introducing the world to passenger jet hijackings, schoolhouse massacres and embassy takeovers.

To cultivate the myth of his innocence Arafat ordered his Fatah terror cells to operate under pseudonyms. In the early 1970's he renamed several Fatah murder squads the Black September Organization while publicly claiming that they were "breakaway" units completely unrelated to Fatah or to himself.

In 2000, as he launched the current Palestinian jihad, he repeated the process by renaming Fatah terror cells the Aksa Martyr Brigades and then claiming that they were completely unrelated to Fatah or to himself. This fiction too, has been successful in spite of the fact that all Aksa Martyr Brigades terrorists are members of Fatah and most are members of Palestinian Authority official militias

who receive their salaries, guns and marching orders from Fatah.

Last week, with the quiet release of a 33-year-old US State Department cable, a good chunk of the edifice of his great lie was destroyed.

On March 1, 1973, eight Fatah terrorists, operating under the Black September banner stormed the Saudi Arabian Embassy in Khartoum, Sudan during a farewell party for the US Embassy's Charges d'Affaires George Curtis Moore. The terrorists took Moore, US ambassador Cleo Noel, Belgian Charges d'Affaires Guy Eid and two Arab diplomats hostage. They demanded that the US, Israel, Jordan and Germany release PLO and Baader-Meinhof Gang terrorists, including Robert F. Kennedy's Palestinian assassin Sirhan Sirhan and Black September commander Muhammed Awadh (Abu Daud), from prison in exchange for the hostages' release.

The next evening, the Palestinians brutally murdered Noel, Moore, and Eid. They released their other hostages on March 4. Arafat denied any

involvement in the attack. The US officially accepted his denial. Yet, as he later publicly revealed, James Welsh, who served at the time of the attack as an analyst at the National Security Agency, intercepted a communication from Arafat, then headquartered in Beirut to his terror agents in Khartoum ordering the attack.

In 1986, as evidence of Arafat's involvement in the operation became more widely known, more and more voices began calling for Arafat to be investigated for murder. As the New York Sun's online blog recalled last week, during that period, Britain's Sunday Times reported that 44 US senators sent a letter to then US attorney-general Edwin Meese, "urging the American government to charge the PLO chief with plotting the murders of two American diplomats in 1973."

The article went on to note that the Justice Department's interest in pursuing the matter was making senior State Department officials uneasy: "State Department diplomats, worried that murder charges against Arafat would anger the United States' friends in the Arab world, are urging the Justice Department to drop the investigation."

As late as 2002, in spite of President George W. Bush's pointed refusal to meet with Arafat, the State Department continued to protest his innocence. At the time, Scott Johnson, a Minneapolis attorney and one of the authors of the popular Powerline blog weblog, inquired into the matter with the State Department's Near Eastern Affairs Bureau. In an emailed response from the bureau's deputy director of press affairs Gregory Sullivan, Johnson was told, "Evidence clearly points to the terrorist group Black September as having committed the assassinations of Amb. Noel and George Moore, and though Black September was a part of the Fatah movement, the linkage between Arafat and this group has never been established."

So it was that for 33 years, under seven consecutive presidential administrations, the State Department denied any knowledge of involvement by Arafat or Fatah in the execution of its own people. Until last week.

The cable released by the State Department's historian states, "The Khartoum operation was planned and carried out with the full knowledge and personal approval of Yasir Arafat, Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization, (PLO), and the head of Fatah. Fatah representatives based in Khartoum participated in the attack, using a Fatah vehicle to transport the terrorists to the Saudi Arabian Embassy."

Although clearly skilled in the art of deception, Arafat could never have succeeded in creating and prolonging his fictions and with them, his crimes, without the cooperation of the US government and the media.

In this vein, the release of the State Department cable raises two daunting questions. First, how is it possible that the belated admission of a massive 33 year cover-up of the murder of senior American diplomats spanning the course of seven consecutive presidential administrations has been ignored by the US media? A Google news search for Cleo Noel brought up but a handful of stories - none of which were reported by the major news networks or national newspapers.

On the face of it, the released cable, which calls into question the very foundation of US Middle East policy for the past generation is simply stunning. The cable concludes, "The Khartoum operation again demonstrated the ability of the BSO to strike where least expected. The open participation of Fatah representatives in Khartoum in the attack provides further evidence of the Fatah/BSO relationship. The emergence of the United States as a primary fedayeen target indicates a serious threat of further incidents similar to that which occurred in Khartoum."

The media's silence on the issue does not merely raise red flags about their objectivity. By not availing the American public to the knowledge that Fatah and the PLO have been specifically targeting Americans for 33 years, the media has denied the American people basic knowledge of the world in which they live.

The media's abject refusal to cover the story raises an even more egregious aspect of the episode. Specifically, what does the fact that under seven consecutive administrations, the US government has covered up Arafat's direct responsibility for the murder of American diplomats while placing both Arafat and Fatah at the center of its Middle East policy, say about the basic rationale of US policy towards Israel and the Palestinians? What would have US Middle East policy looked like, and what would have been the results for US, and international security as a whole, if rather than advancing a policy that made Arafat the most frequent foreign visitor to the White House during the Clinton administration, the US had demanded his extradition and tried him for murder?

How many lives would have been saved if the US had not been intent on upholding Arafat's big lie? How would such a US policy have impacted the subsequent development of sister terror organizations like Hizbullah, al-Qaida and Hamas, all of which were founded by members of Arafat's terror industry?

Sadly, the release of the cable did not in any way signal a change in the US policy of whitewashing Fatah. In contravention of US law, for the past 13 years, the State Department has been denying that Fatah, the PLO and the Palestinian Authority are

terrorist organizations, and has been actively funding them with US taxpayer dollars.

This policy went on, unchanged even after Fatah gunmen murdered three US embassy employees in Gaza in October 2003. This policy continues, unchanged still today, as Fatah's current leader, Arafat's deputy of 40 years Mahmoud Abbas works to form a unity government with Hamas. Indeed, the central component of the US's policy towards the Palestinians today is the goal of strengthening Fatah by arming, training and funding its Force 17 terror militia.

In a November 14, 2006 interview on Palestinian television, Ahmed Hales Abu Maher who serves as Secretary of Fatah in Gaza, bragged of Fatah's role in the development of international terrorism. In his words, reported by Palestinian Media Watch, "Oh warrior brothers, this is a nation

that will never be broken, it is a revolution that will never be defeated. This is a nation that gives an example every day that is imitated across the world. We gave the world the children of the RPG [Rocket Propelled Grenades], we gave the world the children stone [-throwers], and we gave the world the male and female Martyrdom-Seekers [suicide bombers]."

Imagine what the world would have looked like if, rather than clinging to Arafat's big lie that he and his Fatah terror organization were central components of Middle East peace, the US had captured and tried Arafat for murdering its diplomats and worked steadily to destroy Fatah.

Imagine how our future would look if rather than stealthily admitting the truth, while trusting the media not to take notice, the US government were to base its current policies on the truth, and the media were to reveal this truth to the world.

How to make '07 Ahmadinejad's last year in power

By Michael Rubin *The New York Daily News* January 3, 2007

In Iran, demonstrations are an art form. First, the government buses in state workers. Next, officials distribute banners with revolutionary slogans. Finally, state television reports a spontaneous rally in support of the Islamic Republic.

Stage-managed demonstrations, though, mask weakness. On Dec. 11, a group of students interrupted a speech by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad with chants of "Death to the Dictator." On Jan. 2, a demonstrator in Ahvaz waved a placard condemning inflation, unemployment and crime. Recent elections rebuked hardliners.

And unfortunately, rather than find a way to capitalize on such weakness, up to now, a desire for diplomacy has blinded the West. Between 2000 and 2005, European diplomats preaching engagement tripled trade with Iran. Tehran pumped 70% of the resulting hard currency windfall into its nuclear and military programs. After Secretary of State Rice offered dialogue with Iran, the regime announced it would redouble its nuclear efforts. Ahmadinejad said yesterday he would "humiliate" the United States.

European diplomats declare their strategy to be working, but privately say a nuclear Iran is inevitable. Last month's partial UN sanctions are only symbolic. Effectiveness requires comprehensive sanctions - which diplomats could lift in response to compliance. But the UN is feckless. If President Bush is sincere when he says the U.S. "will not tolerate" a nuclear-armed Iran, Washington may have to act alone. This need not mean military action, but rather willingness to exploit Iranian weakness.

The Islamic Republic is under tremendous pressure. A recent Johns Hopkins University report predicts Iran's oil industry could collapse within a

decade because of poor management and disintegrating infrastructure. Already, the Islamic Republic must import 40% of its fuel needs. The Iranian economy is unable to provide jobs for 700,000 young people entering the market annually. The World Bank estimates that Iran's GDP is 30% below its 1970s levels. Experts estimate 5 million Iranians are addicted to drugs. Prostitution has skyrocketed as poverty spreads.

The White House should exploit the growing cracks in Iranian society. Just as Ronald Reagan championed striking shipyard workers in Poland in 1981, so too should Bush support independent Iranian trade unions. Forcing the regime to be accountable to its people both better the lives of ordinary Iranians and undercuts Ahmadinejad's Dr. Strangelove fantasies. In Iran, wildcat strikes helped launch the Islamic Revolution; so too might they end it. It is wrongheaded to criticize Bush's Axis of Evil rhetoric. Not only does straight talk dampen European willingness to invest in Iranian industry, but the willingness of Iranian democrats to speak out has grown in proportion to all the White House talk about freedom. Peace activists should applaud such effective, nonmilitary action.

Finally, U.S. public diplomacy should prioritize information over pop music. The Iranian regime would be hard-pressed to dismiss as propaganda stories of unrest and corruption originating in local Iranian papers and amplified by the Voice of America into national news.

Military action against Iran would be a tragedy, but need only occur if U.S. policy remains a muddle. Here the White House and new Congress are fortunate. If they play their cards well, this year could be Ahmadinejad's last.

Blood Brothers

By Evan R. Goldstein *The Wall Street Journal* December 8, 2006

It all began with a "serendipitous feeling" that hit him while he stumbled through Auschwitz in 2000. Like most visitors John Haedrich was deeply moved by what he saw. But this was something different. A kind of epiphany. Though raised a Christian, for reasons Mr. Haedrich cannot quite articulate, he began to suspect that he might be Jewish. Gradually, this hunch became too vital to ignore. He decided to investigate his origins by taking a DNA test, the results of which confirmed that he had, according to the test conclusion, "rather populous pedigree of Ashkenazi Polish Jews."

Though he readily admits to not having the "traditional paperwork," Mr. Haedrich petitioned the Israeli government for citizenship under the Law of Return, by which any Jew with at least a single, confirmed Jewish grandparent can move to Israel. His appeal was denied on grounds that DNA does not prove Jewish identity. Undeterred, the 44-year-old nursing-home director from Glendale, Calif., took out advertisements in the Israeli and American Jewish press pleading his case and established the Jewish by DNA Research Institute. He hopes the institute will help others who want to establish their Jewish identity on biological grounds. As "a matter of principle," Mr. Haedrich will not convert to Judaism because, he insists, he is already Jewish.

But is he? What exactly does it mean to be a "Jew by DNA"? Is it even possible to define Jewishness biologically? And after Nazism perverted similar notions about heredity and race to justify ghastly, mechanized slaughter, is there something indecent about even posing the question?

"There is no biological marker that is unique to Jewish people," Raphael Falk, professor emeritus of genetics at Hebrew University tells me. "There are no markers that can define an individual, man or woman, as a Jew or as belonging to any other community." A pioneer in the field, Mr. Falk is the author of a fascinating new book, "Zionism and the Biology of the Jews" (currently available only in Israel), in which he explores the science, philosophy and history of various biological theories that have clung to the Jewish people.

One of Mr. Falk's most provocative themes is how many leading Jewish figures in the early 20th century embraced the language of race as a tool of positive self-definition. This was an era when ideas about blood and heredity enjoyed great intellectual prestige at the leading centers of scientific inquiry. Both Jews and anti-Semites adopted these terms of debate. At a press conference at the Hebrew University in 1934 renowned Hebrew poet Haim Nahman Bialik declared: "I too, like Hitler, believe in the power of the blood idea."

Many Zionists heralded these biological conceptions of race as objective evidence of organic peoplehood. And both anti-Semites and Jews subscribed to the myth of the degenerate Diaspora Jew as having, in the words of one prominent Russian Zionist, "weak muscles, badly developed respiratory organs, weak bone structure, slight physical strength, little capacity for labor." While the anti-Semites warned that the disease-prone Jew presented a grave threat to the racial vigor of those they lived among, the Jewish nationalists insisted that a healthy "new Jew" could only be forged in a Jewish state.

It is critical that these statements be placed in the proper historical context. Eugenics did not then bear the taint of Nazism. In fact, it was a "quite respectable scientific branch," according to Mr. Falk -- not least in America.

In our own time the increasingly widespread use of genetic testing raises a host of difficult questions about what it means to be a Jew. It seems that not a day goes by without word of some newly discovered genetic explanation for who we are physically, morally and spiritually. And it is now conventional medical wisdom that certain diseases, like breast cancer, are more common among the Ashkenazim. Some scientists even make the dubious claim that this imbues Ashkenazi Jews with an inherited advantage in intelligence.

But these genetic circumstances reflect not Judaism but rather the relatively isolated history of the people who descend from Ashkenaz -- the medieval Hebrew name for the vast lands of Central and Eastern Europe from which Jews were exiled into the Pale of Settlement. The genomes of other Jews, for instance the Sephardim who originate from the Iberian Peninsula, reflect their different histories.

As it did to the early Zionists, the reasserting of Jewish distinctiveness as biological fact may hold some appeal to those who fret about Jewish continuity. A recent essay in *Commentary* magazine laments precisely this erosion of "ethnic cohesiveness." The authors, Steve Cohen and Jack Wertheimer, despair that American Jews, particularly younger ones, are forsaking their "tribal" bonds. "American Jews are now regarded, and appear largely to regard themselves, as part of the undifferentiated mass of American whites," they write, "not as a distinctive group...."

But there is great peril in such a desire. If we accept that Jewishness can be transmitted by DNA it would impose upon us a reductive, clinical Judaism of molecules and genes, rather than texts and arguments.

Mr. Goldstein is contributing editor at Moment magazine.