

Believe. And be brave. And come home.

By Daniel Gordis DanielGordis.org June 22, 2007

"Did you read the article in HaAretz about Avrum Burg?" It was, of course, the question of the week. It was the same week that Shimon Peres was elected (now there's a phrase few of us ever thought we'd hear) Israel's next President, and the week that Gaza turned into Hamastan. It was also the week that Ehud Barak was named Defense Minister. But few of the people I hang out with were talking about Peres, Gaza or Barak. Everyone, it seemed, was talking about Burg, and the superb job that Ari Shavit, one of Israel's foremost journalists, had done interviewing him.

This time, though, the question was coming from my son, on our way back from shul. "I did read it," I told him. "Did you?" "I read it twice," he said.

"Twice?" "Yeah. I read it once, and then, when all my friends started talking about arguing about it, I read it again." "What'd you think?" I asked him.

"No, what did you think?" The truth is, I was already thinking about something else. I was trying to remember whether, when I was a senior in high school, just weeks away from graduating, any article about nationalism, ideology or anything of the sort could have gotten my high school friends and me so worked up. And I couldn't think of anything. We grew up in a world, it now seems to me, about which we didn't have to think very much. Not so our kids. They're growing up in a world in which the very existence of the country in which they live is a matter of continued debate. They understand that Arab hatred of Israel is so deeply entrenched that it will flourish even when it destroys any hope for a better Palestinian future. They don't even get terribly surprised when British academia chooses to boycott Israeli academics. But when someone like Avrum Burg, a former speaker of the Israeli Knesset and the former head of the Jewish Agency, says that it's time for Israel to give up on being a Jewish state, or that the Jewish state doesn't have a soul, even that young-but-jaded generation takes note.

But Avi deserved an answer. "I didn't think his critique was entirely wrong," I said, wondering what he would say to something like that. "Me neither," he said. "But I thought he was mostly wrong. And I thought that his conclusions were completely misguided." And then we started to talk.

Though it's tempting to dismiss Burg and his critiques of Israel out of hand, that would be letting ourselves off the hook a bit too easily. Burg is clearly not wrong that three-quarters of a century of

incessant warfare and loss have turned Israeli society into a rather militaristic one, with sometimes ugly consequences. "Israelis understand only force," he says. An overstatement, I think, but not a critique that any of us who care about this society should dismiss cavalierly. But the question is not whether he's right. The question is what we do about it.

Burg is not wrong that there are racist elements in Israeli society. His prediction that the Knesset will one day prohibit sexual relations between Jews and Arabs is ridiculous, I hope, but again, it would be too easy to focus on Burg's excesses, and to deny the parts of his argument that aren't wrong. One fifth of this country is made up of Arab citizens, and most of my kids' friends have never met one, unless that person was doing some work in their house. Here, too, Burg's not entirely wrong. We're proof (as are many other societies) that living among hostile neighbors for generation after generation can breed xenophobia.

But again, the question is what you do. Burg's suggestion? Adopt Gandhi's strategy, and get rid of Israel's nuclear weapons. Oh, Israel should cease seeking to be a Jewish State. And then, every Israeli who can, should get a second passport.

Timing's everything, they say. Burg's book (available so far only in Hebrew) came out as Iran moves inexorably closer to nuclear capability. It came out less than a year after Hizbollah, an Iranian proxy, demonstrated that the IDF is no longer the invincible force we once imagined it was. And it came out just as Hamas took over Gaza, extending Iran's conventional-weapon reach to the very edge of many of Israel's cities.

And in the face of Iran, Syria, Hezbollah and Hamas, Burg thinks we should become Gandhi.

That prescription makes sense, of course, if you want to give up on the enterprise. And Burg clearly does. He insists that we're psychological cripples, wounded by Hitler and incapable of recovering, and that our wounds color everything about this society.

He's right that we're wounded. What the Jewish world went through not only from 1938-1945, but for decades before, has clearly shaped much of our worldview. And 60 years of war since 1947 haven't helped. Burg wants to know to where we should run. And I'd rather ask how we should heal.

Burg believes that we'll be healthier in Brussels. We don't need this place any longer, he believes. "I see the European Union as a biblical utopia. I don't

know how long it will hold together, but it is amazing. It is completely Jewish." (A direct quote.)

Sounds a lot like the Jews of Cordova in 1485, or the Jews of Berlin in 1920. Or the Jews of West Los Angeles, Newton and the Upper West Side of New York today. About Europe, I think Burg's completely wrong. But one can still hope that America will continue to be a place of vibrant and vigorous cultural Jewish life.

Yet even if it does, what's wrong with Burg's placing the hope for our survival on some other place, and what Burg knows but doesn't want to admit, is that outside of this place, the sorts of choices that Jews have to make are limited to a very particular set of spheres. Outside of this little slice of the planet, the vast majority of Jews do not have to back up their foreign policy sentiments with the lives of their sons and daughters. In America, Jews can vote one way or the other on amnesty for illegal immigrants, but only here does the question take on distinctly Jewish qualities. I don't think I was the only one gratified to hear Justice Minister Daniel Friedmann insist that Israel simply must take in the Darfur refugees who are making their way to Israel's borders. The Bible, he said, affords us no other choice. Had anyone asked me (which, of course, no one did), I would have added that a country created largely on the backs of people who had nowhere else to go when the world shut its borders and looked away, dare not forget that part of its history. I'm much less interested in why certain things happened to the Jews than I am in what the Jews have to be, given that those things did happen. Sixty-five years after boatloads of Jews were turned away from shore after shore, is there really any question about what we need to do when people fleeing Darfur end up at our border? (Does wandering the desert on the way from Egypt to Israel sound familiar?)

Of course, everyone here understands that this could become a huge problem, if thousands and thousands begin to arrive. That's undeniable. And it's true that Israel's Jewish majority (which is necessary for Israel to be both Jewish and democratic) is shaky, with 20% of the population Arab, many of the Russian immigrants not technically Jewish, children of foreign workers petitioning to stay, etc. And that complexity, I think, is precisely the problem that comes with sovereignty, and is precisely the problem that we should celebrate, for it's key to this country having a soul.

Some people disagree. The Chief Rabbi of Hebron, Dov Lior, recently insisted that Israel does not have to take these refugees in. "The poor of one's own country take precedence over other peoples' poor," he insisted, referring to the famous Talmudic principle in Bava Metzia. "We have enough problems of our own with immigration absorption. We need to take care of our own Sderot refugees and we do not have budget reserves. We

have enough poor people in Israel. There are plenty of nations that can help those refugees besides us."

I don't agree, and find it ironic (to put matters mildly) that Lior's own parents starved to death after his family was expelled from Poland and was wandering through the Soviet Union. But the irony's not the important part. What's significant is that we have a dispute between a (very secular) Minister of Justice quoting the Bible, and a well known rabbi quoting the Talmud. And in the midst of that, kibbutzim all over the south are adopting these families from Darfur, as is the city of Beer Sheva.

Is the problem solved? Obviously not. But the very fact of the argument, and the beginnings of real action, make it hard for me to buy Burg's argument that Israel's soul is lost. Hurting? Absolutely. Calloused? Probably. But lost? No way.

Burg's also distressed by the quality of Israeli writing, and again, sees the solution in the Diaspora. "There is no important writing in Israel. There is important Jewish writing in the United States."

Obviously, what constitutes genuinely important writing could constitute an interesting debate. But perhaps not coincidentally, Burg's book came out during Hebrew Book Week in Israel, the annual festival of Hebrew writing and publishing that's taken place, without fail, every year since 1926. And this year, the press noted, about 6,000 new books were published in Israel. Not bad for a country with a population smaller than that of Los Angeles.

Quantity, though, is surely not a guarantee of quality, and even if there were quite a few very good books, one can debate whether anything truly "important" emerged here. But what's emerged of late in the United States that's so "important"? Some great fiction, to be sure, like the work of Nicole Kraus, Michael Chabon, Jonathan Safran Foer, and the tireless Philip Roth, among others.

In the non-fiction world, though, what truly "great" ideas have recently been introduced to the Jewish conversation? I can't think of any, to be honest. But I'm not surprised. We're living in a confusing age. Though many very good books this year were published in both countries, perhaps the reason that nothing comes to mind of genuinely mindset-altering significance is that none of us yet knows precisely what to say about the collapsing ideologies on which many of us were raised.

For those who were nurtured on the classic Zionist notion of Israel as a haven for Jews, it is of no small significance that Israel is probably the most dangerous place to be a Jew. With Ahmadenijad to the east, Hezbollah to the North, Hamas to the south-west and a host of other players all contributing, even Paris doesn't compare to the lurking threat with which Israelis have to contend. That portion of early Zionist ideology has clearly come crashing down.

And for those who believed that Israel's victory in the Six Day War heralded the coming of the Messiah, Israel has turned her back on that messianic possibility. Admittedly, many of us may not think in those theological terms (I don't think most Jews think in any theological terms, for that matter, theology being an ex post facto language for commitments to which we've already come for other reasons), but some people here did. And those people, it must be noted, were the vanguard of the new Zionism. Say what you want about the settlements (and Gershom Gorenberg's book about the settlements, *Accidental Empire*, deserves to read by people on both sides of the political divide), the people who populated them were the new blood and energy for Zionism. As these ideologues see the world, Israel abandoned them. When Israel gave back Sinai, Gaza and took steps (by electing Olmert) towards getting rid of the West Bank, too, Israelis turned their back on the messiah. On God.

Given that, is it hard to understand the fissures in the ideological commitment of religious-Zionist youth? And what about the "other" youth? They, of course, are the children of the peace-niks, of those who believed that all it would take was a bit of territorial compromise, and two reasonable peoples would divide this land and live in peace, side by side. But that dream, of Jews and Arabs sitting in the hills of the Judean desert, smoking peace pipes and singing "Kumbaya", is probably further away than it has ever been. (It's perhaps a token of Israel's deeply-entrenched optimism that on the same week that Hamas' conquest of the Gaza strip marked the end of any possible accommodation with the Palestinians for the foreseeable future, the Knesset elected as Israel's next President practically the only living person who still believes in the possibility of the "New Middle East.") These kids, too, step towards the future without the ideological underpinnings that their parents had at the same age.

The Jews of the world are no longer certain what they should believe in. Theology is dead. History wounds. Zionism is shaken. Israel is living - "hanging on" is probably more apt - in a post ideological era, with an uncertain and undefined future. It would be nice to have some genuinely important Jewish books appear, but with the Jewish world's assumptions so up-ended, is it any surprise that they are slow in coming? So Burg's not entirely wrong. This is a society plagued by many ills.

But again, the question is what you do about it. Some Israelis (and many of Israel's supporters in the Diaspora) would rather pretend that the problems don't exist. Other Israelis are ready to throw in the towel, pointing, like Burg, to the ills that plague us, preferring to flee rather than to work.

Some of us, though, still want to slog through and work, because we believe that a Jewish State that's not Jewish and decent ought not exist, but that

a Jewish people without a Jewish state has no chance of surviving. So, to save not only the State, but the People as well, we're going to stick it out see what we can build here. We'll try to fight to stay alive and to be decent at the same time. And we'll try to figure out a way to educate another generation of kids, pre- and post-army, who can speak intelligently about Judaism, Zionism, humanism and history, whether they're left or right, religious or secular. That, more than anything else, is probably what will save this place. But the solutions to Burg's list of ills are long-term fixes, and this will be a wounded, broken place for a good, long time. That's why it was a welcome relief, given the past few weeks, that Avi's high school graduation came last night. Given the virtually religious obligation that most Jewish parents feel to rag on their children's schools, I should note that Avi graduated from one of the best high schools I've ever seen. I went to an excellent high school in Baltimore, and his was infinitely better.

In last night's informal ceremony (a few of the kids wore ties, but many more wore sneakers and shorts - this is Israel), there was a refrain among virtually everyone who spoke. Teachers, principal, a parent - they all spoke about the combination of openness and commitment that characterizes the kids. The intellectual and religious openness. The Zionist and religious commitment. The insistence on thinking for themselves. "Our generation failed," the parent who spoke basically said, "and it's up to you to make this place into what we dreamed it could be."

And, though the talks were all very different, each ended with an implicit reference to what no one explicitly said all night - some of these kids are going to the army now, but all will be in the army within a year, and these are not simple days to be getting drafted. Thus, each person who spoke ended with virtually the same words. Tze'u le-shalom, veshuvu sheleimim u-vri'im. "Go in peace, and come back to visit, whole and healthy." Because given what these kids are soon about to do, no part of that can be taken for granted.

Professor David Hartman, the key personality behind the founding of the school some twenty years ago, also spoke to the kids. "Don't give up on what you believe in," he said, reminding them of the values that the school is all about. And then, he concluded: "Be brave out there Be brave, but don't be careless. Take care of yourselves. And come back in peace."

And as I watched more than a few parents wipe away a tear, hugging their younger children still sitting next to them, it was clear. The ideologies are wounded, and so are our souls. About that, Burg is clearly correct. But that's why the people at last night's ceremony - and their sons - aren't throwing in the towel. For they understand that the healing can't happen any place else but here. Avrum Burg can

enjoy his second passport. And he can myopically call Europe a "Jewish utopia." He can make a life in France. It sounds great, and for his sake, I'm glad he's found something in which to believe.

But our kids, I think, have been brought up both to stare reality squarely in the eye, and, at the same time, to understand that this place is the only chance the Jewish people will ever have to heal and to flourish. They get it, and they're on board. Last night, it was clear that Burg notwithstanding, this place isn't going down so quickly.

The kids read Burg's interview, and argued about it. Some probably agreed more, and some

probably agreed less. At the end of the day though, it wasn't Burg, once a rising star of Israeli politics, who told them what they needed to hear. It was a rabbi, a professor, one of contemporary Judaism's most important thinkers (who, Burg might note, chose to leave North America and to live here) in a school, wishing them - quite literally - "fare well."

"Remember what you believe in. Be brave out there. Be brave, but don't be careless. Take care of yourselves. And come back here whole, and in peace." Amen to that.

The road to hell By Moshe Arens

If you want to know what hell looks like just take a look at the recent pictures of the carnage in Gaza. It might be comforting to say that this has nothing to do with us in Israel, but this would only be another of the many escapist delusions that capture Israeli minds so frequently. Not only will the Hamas takeover in Gaza affect us in the years to come, but there is little doubt that Israel's flawed policy in past years bears a good share of the responsibility for what is happening there now. These Israeli policies were no doubt motivated by the best of intentions - a desire to arrive at peace and do justice to the Palestinians - but as is well known, the road to hell is paved with good intentions.

Who likes to be told "I told you so"? Most certainly not those like Yossi Beilin and Avraham (Avrum) Burg and the other politicians of their dovish circle who have for years advocated negotiations with the Palestine Liberation Organization and concessions to the PLO and who have consistently called for an end to what they keep calling the occupation of Judea, Samaria and Gaza.

It all started in Oslo 15 years ago. The arch-terrorist, the man who invented the hijacking of passenger aircraft and who ordered the murder of Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympic games, was hailed by some Israelis as a freedom-fighter with whom it was said we must negotiate and make peace.

"You make peace with your enemies" was the insane slogan repeated endlessly to justify this foolish course of action. And thus, at the conclusion of the negotiations in Oslo begun by amateur meddlers in international diplomacy, Yasser Arafat and his gang of corrupt terrorists were brought in from Tunis and imposed on the Palestinian population in most of Judea, Samaria and Gaza. (Israel left Gaza then, and not, as the advocates of disengagement have falsely claimed, at the time of the uprooting of the settlers in Gush Katif in August 2005). A straight line connects Arafat's corrupt rule and his support for acts of terror against Israel's civilian population to the Hamas takeover in Gaza. Just connect the dots. They start with the Oslo Accords and pass through Ehud Barak's decision in

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2000 to abandon Israel's security zone in southern Lebanon and betray Israel's long-time allies in the South Lebanon Army. It was not only Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah who then saw Israel as no more than a spider web, incapable of putting up resistance to terror. That brought on the Al Aqsa Intifada, orchestrated by Fatah and Hamas, with its terrible toll of civilian deaths.

And just as the Israel Defense Forces and the Shin Bet security service were about to hand the terrorists a decisive defeat, along came the Sharon government with the nonsensical idea of forcibly uprooting Israeli settlements and retreating to the Israeli-Egyptian armistice line of 1947, an idea marketed under the false slogan that "we were getting out of Gaza."

That was all the encouragement that Hamas needed to claim victory over Israel and win the Palestinian elections against the corrupt Fatah party.

As should have been expected, Israel's unilateral retreat was followed by a continuous barrage of Qassam rockets against Israeli towns and villages. Despite all this, government spokesmen, led by Tzipi Livni, kept repeating that it is Israel's aim and Israel's interest to bring about the establishment of a Palestinian State in Judea, Samaria and Gaza. Encouraged by Israel's seeming weakness, Hamas' power grew, it won the Palestinian elections, and now, in a no-holds power struggle, Hamas has taken over the entire Gaza Strip. They don't intend to stop there.

Israeli governments have been mistaken, again and again, in gauging Arab reactions to Israeli moves intended to move toward a relief of tension in the area and bring the Arabs closer to their goals as they are perceived by Israel. But to those whose goals are unlimited - the destruction of Israel - coming closer to their goal, as perceived by them, simply encourages them to intensify the struggle against Israel.

Good intentions are not enough. If not combined with a healthy dose of realism they can lead straight to hell. I don't like to say I told you so, but I told you so.

Two states of destruction

By Cal Thomas The Washington Times June 19, 2007

The Bush administration's announced goal for Israel and the "Palestinian people" has been two states, living side by side in peace. The administration is two-thirds there. There are now two states — one in Gaza, headed by the militant Hamas organization, which shot its way to power; and another in the West Bank headed by accused Holocaust denier Mahmoud Abbas.

Unfortunately for Israel, there is no peace, which should not surprise those who have been predicting exactly what is now coming to pass.

Whatever their names, be they groups like Hamas, Fatah, Hezbollah, Islamic Jihad and al-Qaida, or states like Saudi Arabia, Syria and Iran, their objectives are identical: the annihilation of the democratic Jewish State and the elimination of all Jews, either by death or displacement, from the land.

To argue otherwise and to continue believing the fiction that "infidel" diplomats from the State Department or European Union can magically transform people commanded to hate Jews and Israel based on a twisted mandate from their corrupt notion of God, is to be in extreme denial.

Hamas won't stop with Gaza. After its victory over poorly directed Israeli forces in Lebanon last summer, why should it? The one thing terrorists understand is weakness. They perceive Israel, under Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, as weak and they are going for Israel's jugular. Benjamin Elon, a conservative member of Israel's Knesset, said, "The Fatah is diminishing in front of our eyes, and a group of gangsters is taking over. Israel can wake up now from the delusion of an independent Palestinian state." Will it, or will Olmert be passing out and swallowing, himself, more diplomatic sleeping pills during meetings this week with President Bush, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and members of Congress?

The violence and broken agreements are not being perpetrated by Israel. They are being perpetrated on Israel. It is mystifying why Western diplomats continue to pressure Israel to "do more" when "more" has brought Israel less.

Each time Israel gives up something necessary for its security, it receives in return more war, more terror and more insecurity.

If more for less remains the "strategy" of the United States, then Israel has two choices: surrender

now, or prepare for all-out war with catastrophic results.

Since President Bush laid out his "vision" for a two-state solution to Middle East turmoil four years ago this month, Israel has frozen expansion of Jewish communities beyond the armistice lines of 1949 (a major Palestinian demand). As Caroline Glick wrote in The Jerusalem Post, "Israel expelled all Israeli residents of Gaza and northern Samaria in order to render the areas Jew-free to the Palestinians."

What was the Palestinian response to Israel's construction halt? Did they suddenly embrace the two-state solution of peace and harmony with Israel? They did not.

The Palestinians held elections in January 2006 and instead of picking leaders to make peace with Israel, they overwhelmingly voted in members of Hamas to head the Palestinian Authority. A flood tide of terrorists and arms subsequently flowed into Gaza.

The intentions of Hamas and other terrorist groups are not hidden. They openly proclaim what they intend to do and then they do it. Osama bin Laden said five years before Sept. 11, 2001, that he planned to attack the United States. Few took his statement seriously enough to eliminate him when they had the chance.

Those still in doubt or denial about what Israel's (and America's) enemies are planning might benefit from reading Jed Babbin's new book, "In the Words of Our Enemies" (Regnery Publishing).

In it, Babbin assembles what the Islamic terrorists, Chinese and North Korean communists and Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez are saying they want to do to us. This quote from the al-Qaida training manual leaves no room for diplomacy: "The confrontation that Islam calls for with these godless and apostate regimes, does not know Socratic debates, Platonic ideals nor Aristotelian diplomacy. But it knows the dialogue of bullets, the ideals of assassination, bombing and destruction, and the diplomacy of the cannon and machine-gun."

Anyone who questions the sincerity of such a statement is a fool. Apparently enough fools remain in leadership in Israel, the United States and Europe to encourage the killers to fight on until victory is attained.

Who Killed Palestine?

By Bret Stephens The Wall Street Journal June 26, 2007

Bill Clinton did it. Yasser Arafat did it. So did George W. Bush, Yitzhak Rabin, Hosni Mubarak, Ariel Sharon, Al-Jazeera and the BBC. The list of culprits in the whodunit called "Who Killed Palestine?" is neither short nor mutually exclusive.

But since future historians are bound to ask the question, let's get a head start by suggesting some answers. And make no mistake: No matter how much diplomatic, military and financial oxygen is pumped into Mahmoud Abbas's Palestinian

Authority, it's oxygen flowing to a corpse. Palestine has always been a notional place, a field of dreams belonging only to those who know how to keep it. Israelis have held on to their state because they were able to develop the political, military and economic institutions that a state requires to survive, beginning with its monopoly on the use of legitimate force. In its nearly 14 years as an autonomous entity, the PA has succeeded in none of that, despite being on the receiving end of unprecedented international good will and largesse. Hamas's seizure of the Gaza Strip this month -- and the consequent division of the PA into two hostile, geographically distinct camps -- is only the latest in a chain of events set in motion when Israel agreed, in September 1993, to accept Arafat and the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. An early indicator of what lay ahead took place on July 1, 1994, when Arafat made his triumphal entry into Gaza while carrying, in the trunk of his Mercedes, four of the Palestinian cause's most violent partisans. Among them were the organizers of the 1972 Munich Olympics massacre and the 1974 Ma'alot school massacre. If ever there was an apt metaphor for what Arafat's rule would bring, this was it.

Arafat was determined to use Gaza and the West Bank as a staging ground for attacks against Israel, and he said so publicly and repeatedly: "O Haifa, O Jerusalem, you are returning, you are returning" (1995); "We will make life unbearable for Jews by psychological warfare and population explosion" (1996); "With blood and spirit we will redeem you, Palestine" (1997). With equal determination, the Clinton administration and the Israeli governments of Rabin, Shimon Peres and Ehud Barak treated Arafat's remarks as only so much rhetorical bluster. Mr. Clinton desperately wanted a Nobel Peace Prize; Israelis wanted out of the occupation business at almost any cost. These were respectable goals, but neither had as its primary aim the creation of a respectable Palestinian state.

Later, after the second intifada had erupted in all its suicidal frenzy, former U.S. negotiator Dennis Ross would admit the Clinton administration became too obsessed with process at the expense of substance. He should give himself more credit. The decision to legitimize Arafat was Israel's, not America's; once he was brought inside the proverbial tent he was bound to put a match to it. Still, the Clinton administration elevated Arafat like no other leader of the 1990s. If the rai came to flatter himself as a second Saladin, the flattery of White House banquets surely played a role.

The global media also did their bit in Arafat's elevation. Successive generations of Jerusalem bureau chiefs developed a conveniently even-handed narrative pitting moderates on both sides against extremists on both sides -- a narrative in which

Arafat was a "moderate" and Ariel Sharon was an "extremist." When Mr. Sharon took his famous walk on the Temple Mount in September 2000, it was easy to cast him as the villain and Palestinian rioters -- and, later, suicide bombers -- as the justifiably aggrieved. Cheering Palestinians on from the sidelines were the Arab media and the governments that own them, happy to channel domestic discontent toward a foreign drama.

As with individuals, nations generally benefit from self-criticism, and sometimes from the criticism of others. No people in modern history have been so immune from both as the Palestinians. In 1999, Abdel Sattar Kassem, a professor of political science in the Palestinian city of Nablus, put his name to the "petition of the 20," written to "stand against [Arafat's] tyranny and corruption." Arafat imprisoned him; the rest of the world barely took notice. Arafat's global popularity reached its apogee in the spring of 2002, exactly at the same time the civilian Israeli death toll from terrorism reached its height. Yet what served Arafat's interests well served Palestinian interests poorly. Arafat learned from his experience with Mr. Clinton that one could bamboozle an American president and not pay a price. George W. Bush took a different view and effectively shut the Palestinians out of his agenda. Arafat learned from the "international community" that no one would look too closely at where its foreign aid was spent. But a reputation for theft has been the undoing of Fatah. Arafat thought he could harness the religious power of "martyrdom" to his political ends. But at the core of every suicide bombing is an act of self-destruction, and a nation that celebrates the former inevitably courts the latter.

Above all, Arafat equated territory with power. But what the experience of an unoccupied Gaza Strip has shown is the Palestinians' unfitness for political sovereignty. There are no Jewish settlers to blame for Gaza's plight anymore, no Israeli soldiers to be filmed demolishing Palestinian homes. The Israeli right, which came to detest Mr. Sharon for pulling out of the Strip, might reconsider its view of the man and the deed. Nothing has so completely soured the world on the idea of a Palestinian state as the experience of it.

What does this mean for the future? At yesterday's summit in Egypt, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Jordanian King Abdullah threw rose petals at Mr. Abbas's feet. But the potentates of the Middle East will not midwife into existence a state the chief political movement of which has claims to both democratic and Islamist legitimacy. The U.S. and Israel will never bless Hamastan (even if the EU and the U.N. come around to it) and they can only do so much for the feckless Mr. Abbas. "Palestine," as we know it today, will revert to what it was --

shadowland between Israel and its neighbors -- and Palestinians, as we know them today, will revert to who they were: Arabs.

Warnings from Gaza

By Newt Gingrich *The Washington Times*

The Hamas victory in Gaza is a warning that World War IV (as Norman Podhoretz has called it) is going to be long and hard. It is also a warning that the West is currently losing that war.

These defeats are not a function of the courage and will of the American people. In a June poll sponsored by American Solutions, 85 percent of the American people said it was important to defend America and its allies. Only 10 percent were opposed. On an even stronger question, 75 percent said it was important to defeat America's enemies. Only 16 percent disagreed. So the hard left in America is only 16 percent. It is outnumbered almost 5-1 by those who would defeat our enemies.

The source of failure is not to be found in the American people but in the inarticulate and unimaginative leaders all across government who now preside instead of lead.

The tragedy of the current debate in Washington is that while the inarticulateness and the failing performance of the Bush administration have led the American people to desire a new direction, the politics of the left insists that the new direction be less than President Bush. Yet the lessons of Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, New Jersey, the JFK plot, the Algerian bombings, the Iranian nuclear program, the conflict in Lebanon and now the defeat in Gaza all point to the need for a war policy that is substantially bigger and more robust than Mr. Bush.

As the forces of modernity are being ground up by terrorism, our political process is not producing a Churchill or Roosevelt to rally the democracies but instead embracing advocates of surrender withdrawal and defeat. As women are being oppressed, we remain silent. Faced with the weakness, vacillation and inarticulateness of the leaders of Israel and America, the people see the violence as senseless, the bloodshed as repugnant and the current strategies as too flawed to continue to invest in them.

Gaza is the most recent example of where Western failure of imagination is being defeated by ruthlessness and determination.

Israel has had enormous power over Gaza for 40 years. The United Nations has been running refugee camps since 1949 with disastrous results that have led to massive population growth, vast unemployment, deep bitterness and a society which produces entrepreneurs of terrorism rather than entrepreneurs of wealth creation. Michael Oren has noted that since 1993 the Palestinian Authority "has garnered more international aid than any entity in modern history — more per capita than the

Whether there might have been a better outcome is anyone's guess. But the dream that was Palestine is finally dead.

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European states under the Marshall Plan." With all these advantages the old "reasonable" terrorist organization has been destroyed in Gaza by the newer, more militant and more ferocious Hamas.

This is a signal victory for Iran and a defeat for Israel, the United States, and the so-called moderate Arab governments. The first reactions to this defeat have been pathetic. The beleaguered American and Israeli governments have met to wring their hands and pledge funding for the old terrorists in the West Bank. This will surely prove to be a losing strategy. Hamas will consolidate its hold on Gaza and begin to extend its reach more decisively into the West Bank. The West will sooner or later have to confront several hard realities if it is to defeat its enemies.

First, terrorist organizations like Hamas and Hezbollah will have to be rooted out and destroyed. We do not today have the strategy, the doctrine or the techniques for defeating these kinds of organizations. In Iraq, after more than four years of effort, our current doctrine for population control and for effective local policing and intelligence is pathetic. To defeat ferocious committed and enthusiastically violent organizations like al Qaeda and the Taliban will take new energy, new drive and new determination on our part.

Second, the indirect strategies of propping up corrupt dictatorships have to give way to direct people-to-people help, securing private-property rights and direct financial assistance so we can improve their families' lives and they can be empowered to defend their neighborhoods from evil men. Hernando de Soto will be vastly more effective in designing this than all the bureaucrats at AID and the United Nations combined.

Third, the U.N. camp system of socialism with unearned anti-humanitarian charity has to be replaced with a totally new system of earned income and earned property rights to restore dignity and hope to every Palestinian.

Fourth, the current system of schools under both Fatah and Hamas control have to be replaced in their entirety with a system dedicated to genuine education and to teaching human rights rather than jihad and hatred.

Lastly, mosques can no longer be allowed to preach hatred and violence. The de-Nazification that seemed obvious in Germany in 1945 will have to be matched by a dehatred campaign today. The haters have to be defeated, disarmed and detained if the forces of peace and freedom are to win.

These steps are only the beginning, but the gap between our current pathetic reaction to the Hamas victory and the requirements of victory give some indication of how far the West has to go before it starts winning. In Churchill's phrase, we are not even at the end of the beginning. However, we may be at

the beginning of recognizing that this will be a real war.

Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich is a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.

Fatah Isn't the Answer

By Michael Oren **The Wall Street Journal**

June 20, 2007

America and its Middle Eastern allies have every reason to panic. The green flags of Hamas are furling over Gaza and the al-Fatah forces trained and financed by the United States have ignominiously fled. Fears are rife that Iranian-backed and Syrian-hosted terror will next achieve dominance over the West Bank and proceed to undermine the pro-Western governments of Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and the Gulf. To avert this catastrophe, the U.S. has joined with the Israelis and the Europeans in resuming the flow of hundreds of millions of dollars in financial aid to the Palestinian Authority under the leadership of its Fatah president, Mahmoud Abbas, and accelerating talks for the establishment of a West Bank Palestinian state. The goal is to provide Palestinians with an affluent, secular and peaceful alternative to Hamas, and persuade Gazans to return to the Fatah fold. But the policy ignores every lesson of the abortive peace process to date as well as Fatah's monumental corruption, jihadism and militancy. Indeed, any sovereign edifice built on the rotten foundations of the Palestinian Authority is doomed to implode, enhancing, rather than diminishing, Hamas's influence.

movement, embracing the lexicon of jihad. Hundreds of mosques were built with public funds, and imams were hired to spread the message of martyrdom and the hatred of Christians and Jews. These themes became the staple of the official PA media, inciting the suicide bombings that began in 2000 and poisoning an entire generation of Palestinian youth. Ironically, the Islamization of Fatah legitimized Hamas and contributed to the cadres of religious extremists who are now defying its authority.

In addition to its fiscal malfeasance and Islamic radicalism, Fatah has never fulfilled its pledges to crack down on terror. Though Mahmoud Abbas routinely criticizes Palestinian terrorist attacks as "contrary to the Palestinian national interest" -- not an affront to morality and international law -- he has never disavowed the al-Aqsa Brigades, a Fatah affiliate responsible for some of the bloodiest attacks against Israeli civilians.

Since its creation by the so-called Oslo Accords of 1993, the PA has garnered more international aid than any entity in modern history -- more, per capita, than the European states under the Marshall Plan. The lion's share of this fortune has been siphoned into the private accounts of Fatah leaders or used to pay off the commanders of some 16 semi-autonomous militias. The PA also maintains an estimated 60,000 uniformed gunmen on its payroll, giving the West Bank the world's highest percentage of policemen-to-population.

In the past, such assaults have served as a means of maintaining Fatah's legitimacy as a resistance movement and countering charges that the organization sold out to America and Israel. In fact, a distinct correlation exists between the amount of support that Fatah receives from the West and its need to prove its "Palestinianess" through terror.

The Palestinian people, meanwhile, languish in ever-deepening poverty and unemployment, while lawlessness plagues Palestinian streets. The unbridled corruption of the PA and its Fatah headmen served as a principal cause of Hamas's electoral victory in 2006, as well its takeover of Gaza. Viewers of Hamas television have recently been treated to tours of the lavish villas maintained by Fatah officials in the Strip, and video clips showing PA policemen, more abundantly armed and more numerous than Hamas's troops, fleeing at the first sign of battle.

In view of its performance over the past 14 years, the Palestinian Authority under Fatah can be counted on to squander most or all of the vast sums now being given to it by the U.S. and the international community. More gunmen will be hired and better weapons procured, but in the absence of a unified command and a leadership worth fighting for, PA soldiers will perform no more credibly than they did in Gaza. Mr. Abbas will continue to denounce terror while ignoring the terrorist units within his own organization, while PA imams will persist in preaching their jihadist sermons.

Though Fatah originally aspired to replace Israel with a secular, democratic state in Palestine, the organization refashioned itself in 1990s as an Islamic

In response, Israel will be precluded from lifting the checkpoints that not only block suicide bombers but hinder communication between Palestinian cities. Impeded by Palestinian attacks and Israeli countermeasures, the peace talks will inexorably grind to a halt. In the end, the Palestinian people will remain impoverished, divided and stateless, and more than ever amenable to the purist polity of Hamas. If funding and empowering Fatah is not a viable option for the U.S., what other courses might

the administration take? Clearly no progress toward Palestinian statehood can be made before Fatah has reformed itself financially, ideologically and structurally. Even under the most propitious circumstances this process is certain to take many years -- longer if economic aid and political support are provided to the PA unconditionally. Similarly, proposals for containing Hamas's influence by stationing an international force along the Gaza border are unlikely to succeed if for no other reason than Hamas's avowed determination to resist such a deployment. Yet the need to combat Hamas and provide Palestinians with an attractive diplomatic horizon remains acute. There is, fortunately, an interim answer.

The U.S., together with its Quartet partners, can work to establish areas of extensive Palestinian autonomy in the West Bank. Within these districts, local Palestinian leaders will be fully empowered to manage all aspects of daily life including health, education and resource management. A national assembly, comprised of representatives from each district, will meet regularly to deliberate issues of West Bank-wide concern. Security, however, will be jointly administered by Israel and Jordan. The

Jordanian involvement is crucial to convincing Palestinians that the status quo of occupation has ended and they may in the future assume full responsibility for their internal defense. Such an arrangement will benefit Jordan as well, by facilitating its efforts to fight radicalism and stem the flight of Palestinians over its borders.

Visiting Washington this week, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert described the Hamas conquest of Gaza as an opportunity for the Palestinians. This indeed may be the case, but not by resurrecting long-failed policies and imposing a state structure on a corrupt and incompetent Fatah. Doing so is tantamount to investing in the Titanic. Significant opportunities do, however, exist for policy makers -- American, Israeli, and Palestinian -- who are willing to consider new paradigms and incremental steps toward the realization of a durable peace.

Mr. Oren is a senior fellow at the Shalem Center and the author of "Power, Faith, and Fantasy: America in the Middle East, 1776 to the Present" (Norton, 2007).

(A little bit of fantasy for our readers. They really believe this stuff. editor)

What Hamas Wants By Ahmed Yousef The New York Times June 20, 2007

The events in Gaza over the last few days have been described in the West as a coup. In essence, they have been the opposite. Eighteen months ago, our Hamas Party won the Palestinian parliamentary elections and entered office under Prime Minister Ismail Haniya but never received the handover of real power from Fatah, the losing party. The Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, has now tried to replace the winning Hamas government with one of his own, returning Fatah to power while many of our elected members of Parliament languish in Israeli jails. That is the real coup.

From the day Hamas won the general elections in 2006 it offered Fatah the chance of joining forces and forming a unity government. It tried to engage the international community to explain its platform for peace. It has consistently offered a 10-year cease-fire with the Israelis to try to create an atmosphere of calm in which we resolve our differences. Hamas even adhered to a unilateral cease-fire for 18 months in an effort to normalize the situation on the ground. None of these points appear to have been recognized in the press coverage of the last few days.

Nor has it been evident to many people in the West that the civil unrest in Gaza and the West Bank has been precipitated by the American and Israeli policy of arming elements of the Fatah opposition who want to attack Hamas and force us from office. For 18 months we have tried to find ways to coexist with Fatah, entering into a unity government, even conceding key positions in the cabinet to their and international demands, negotiating up until the last

moment to try to provide security for all of our people on the streets of Gaza.

Sadly, it became apparent that not all officials from Fatah were negotiating in good faith. There were attempts on Mr. Haniya's life last week, and eventually we were forced into trying to take control of a very dangerous situation in order to provide political stability and establish law and order.

The streets of Gaza are now calm for the first time in a very long time. We have begun disarming some of the drug dealers and the armed gangs and we hope to restore a sense of security and safety to the citizens of Gaza. We want to get children back to school, get basic services functioning again, and provide long-term economic gains for our people.

Our stated aim when we won the election was to effect reform, end corruption and bring economic prosperity to our people. Our sole focus is Palestinian rights and good governance. We now hope to create a climate of peace and tranquillity within our community that will pave the way for an end to internal strife and bring about the release of the British journalist Alan Johnston, whose kidnapping in March by non-Hamas members is a stain on the reputation of the Palestinian people.

We reject attempts to divide Palestine into two parts and to pass Hamas off as an extreme and dangerous force. We continue to believe that there is still a chance to establish a long-term truce. But this will not happen unless the international community fully engages with Hamas.

Any further attempts to marginalize us, starve our people into submission or attack us militarily will prove that the United States and Israeli governments are not genuinely interested in seeing an end to the violence. Dispassionate observers over the next few

weeks will be able to make up their own minds as to each side's true intentions.

Ahmed Yousef is the political adviser to Palestinian prime minister, Ismail Haniya.

Last Chance for Abbas

By Charles Krauthammer *The Washington Post* June 22, 2007

Gaza is now run not by a conventional political party but by a movement that is revolutionary, Islamist and terrorist. Worse, Hamas is a client of Iran. Gaza now constitutes the farthest reach of the archipelago of Iranian proxies: Hamas in Palestine, Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Mahdi Army (among others) in Iraq and the Alawite regime of Syria.

This Islamist mini-replica of the Comintern is at war not just with Israel but with the moderate Arab states, who finally woke up to this threat last summer when they denounced Hezbollah for provoking the Lebanon war with Israel. The fall of Gaza is particularly terrifying to Egypt because Hamas is so closely affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood, the chief Islamist threat to the secular-nationalist regime that has ruled Egypt since the revolution of 1952. Which is why Egypt has just invited Israeli, Jordanian and moderate Palestinian leaders to a summit next week -- pointedly excluding and isolating Hamas. The splitting of Palestine into two entities is nonetheless clarifying. Since Hamas won the parliamentary elections of January 2006, we've had to deal with the fiction of a supposedly unified Palestine ruled by an avowedly "unity" government of Fatah and Hamas. Now the muddle has undergone political hydrolysis, separating out the relatively pure elements: a Hamas-ruled Gaza and Fatah-ruled (for now) West Bank.

The policy implications are obvious. There is nothing to do with the self-proclaimed radical Islamist entity that is Gaza but to isolate it. No recognition, no aid (except humanitarian necessities through the United Nations), no diplomatic commerce. Israel now has the opportunity to establish deterrence against unremitting rocket attacks from Gaza into Israeli villages. Israel failed to do that after it evacuated Gaza in 2005, permitting the development of an unprecedented parasitism by willingly supplying food, water, electricity and gasoline to a territory that was actively waging hostilities against it.

With Hamas now clearly in charge, Israel should declare that it will tolerate no more rocket fire -- that the next Qassam will be answered with a cutoff of gasoline shipments. This should bring road traffic in Gaza to a halt within days and make it increasingly difficult to ferry around missiles and launchers.

If that fails to concentrate the mind, the next step should be to cut off electricity. When the world wails, Israel should ask, what other country on Earth is expected to supply the very means for a declared enemy to attack it?

Regarding the West Bank, policy should be equally clear. Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas represents moderation and should be helped as he tries to demonstrate both authority and success in running his part of Palestine.

But let's remember who Abbas is. He appears well intentioned, but he is afflicted with near-disastrous weaknesses. He controls little. His troops in Gaza simply collapsed against the greatly outnumbered forces of Hamas. His authority in the West Bank is far from universal. He does not even control the various factions within Fatah.

But the greater liability is his character. He is weak and indecisive. When he was Yasser Arafat's deputy, Abbas was known to respond to being slapped down by his boss by simply disappearing for weeks in a sulk. During the battle for Gaza, he did not order his Fatah forces to return fire against the Hamas insurrection until the fight was essentially over. Remember, too, that after Arafat's death Abbas ran the Palestinian Authority without a Hamas presence for more than a year. Can you name a single thing he achieved in that time?

Moreover, his Fatah party is ideologically spent and widely discredited. Historian Michael Oren points out that the Palestinian Authority has received more per capita aid than did Europe under the Marshall Plan. This astonishing largess has disappeared into lavish villas for party bosses and guns for the multiple militias Arafat established.

The West is rushing to bolster Abbas. Israel will release hundreds of millions in tax revenue. The United States and the European Union will be pouring in aid. All praise Abbas as a cross between Anwar Sadat and Simón Bolívar. Fine. We have no choice but to support him. But before we give him the moon, we should insist upon reasonable benchmarks of both moderation and good governance -- exactly what we failed to do during the Oslo process. Abbas needs to demonstrate his ability to run a clean administration and to engage Israel in day-to-day negotiations to alleviate the conditions of life on the ground.

Abbas is not Hamas. But despite the geographical advantages, he does not represent the second coming, either. We can prop him up only so much. In the end, the only one who can make a success of the West Bank is Abbas himself. This is his chance. His last chance.