

Let's accept the truth of our own defeats

By Khairi Abaza The Daily Star (Lebanon) July 4, 2007

As the current situation in Palestine worsens, let Arabs not forget their past. Events that are portrayed as victories by Arab politicians are not always victories for the Arab people. Last month, the Arab world remembered one of its greatest defeats of the 20th century: the June 1967 war, which marked the end of the hope to wipe out Israel and the loss of East Jerusalem, the West Bank, Gaza, the Sinai, and the Golan Heights.

Despite the memory of those losses, Arab media, from Al-Jazeera to Dubai TV, still tried to find an honorable excuse for the Egyptian president in 1967, Gamal Abdel-Nasser. This same distorted logic has been applied to movements such as Hizbullah and Hamas, whose defeats are often transformed into victories. No independent commission has ever assessed any of Abdel-Nasser's, Hamas', or Hizbullah's declarations of victory. The Arab people must dig for the truth in the statements and behavior of these leaders or groups. We have allowed politics in the Arab world to be defined by slogans, not results. Our judgment of leaders can only be truly determined by what they do not just what they say.

Arabs will not progress before they face the truth about their own history. In memorializing the 1967 defeat, Arab media organized numerous talk shows, documentaries, and interviews. But none clearly defined who was responsible for the Arab loss.

Instead, the media tried to remind us how Abdel-Nasser gave Arabs a voice and pride. They failed to remind us that because of his bluff and provocation, in June 1967 Israel was able to win a devastating war. They failed to remind us how Abdel-Nasser encouraged King Hussein of Jordan to take part in the war only hours after he knew that Egypt had been defeated - providing Israel with a reason to occupy East Jerusalem and the West Bank. And they never mentioned that in 1970 Abdel-Nasser was considering accepting the Rogers Plan for a peace settlement with Israel, with terms less favorable than the Camp David agreement later signed by his successor, Anwar Sadat. Instead, Arab media tended to stress that it was Abdel-Nasser who had planned the October 1973 war, which took place three years after his death, removing all credit from Sadat, who had truly led the battle.

Some claim that while the June 1967 war was a military loss, the spirit of armed resistance endured. They believe that resistance is still the strategic choice of Arabs. We have seen the results of the strategic choice of violent resistance by Hamas: an ugly Israeli barrier depriving Palestinians of ever more land that has made their lives even grimmer. The slogans of resistance may incite support, but the consequences of these very slogans cannot be accepted by the Arab public. No one in the Arab world today would accept that Hamas' actions were a large part responsible for the Israeli barrier. There has not been and nor will there be independent assessment of Hamas' strategy. Slogans continue to trump the actual results of actions.

The same strategic manipulation of public opinion can be seen in Hizbullah's "victory" against Israel in summer 2006. But what was this victory? A victory that left around 1,200 Lebanese dead, led to billions of dollars in damages and losses in tourism income, and the entry of United Nations troops in Southern Lebanon? With such a balance sheet, how could Hizbullah and its Arab supporters mislead the Arab public and claim victory? Was any inquiry made? Where is the independent commission that studied Hizbullah's actions? Yes, the party's secretary general, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, was left standing, just as Abdel-Nasser was. But is that enough when their nations and people were left battered?

How can Arabs improve their lot if they do not face up to their truths? Why is it that Arabs have such a propensity to live amid lies? Why is it that so-called "free" or "independent" Arab media are apologists for those who mislead the Arab public? When will Arabs have independent commissions to look into their mistakes and evaluate them transparently?

Don't expect any of the authoritarian Arab states or their client organizations to produce such commissions. Independent intellectuals and experts in the Arab world should work to create these uncontrolled commissions as a first constructive step in any broad Arab action to improve transparency and accountability. We deserve to understand our history and to learn about the realistic options for our future. Victories in the Arab world must reflect reality not derive from hollow slogans.

Khairi Abaza is a senior fellow at the Center for Liberty in the Middle East.

An Academic Hijacking

By Alan M. Dershowitz *The Wall Street Journal* June 28, 2007

When a relatively small number of British academics tried to hijack the traditional trade union agenda of the British University and College Union by calling for an academic boycott of Israel, they expected little opposition. The union, after all, is British, and the nation whose academics were to be boycotted is Israel.

Anti-Israel sentiment among left-wing academics, journalists, and politicians in Britain is politically correct and relatively uncontroversial (as is anti-American sentiment). Several years earlier, a petition to boycott several Israeli universities initially passed but was later rescinded, and the British National Union of Journalists has also voted to boycott Israeli products. At about the same time, a British academic journal fired two of its board members apparently because they were Israeli Jews. Some popular British political leaders, most notoriously, London's Mayor "Red Ken" Livingstone, have made anti-Israel statements that border on anti-Semitism, in one instance comparing a Jewish journalist to a Nazi "war criminal."

Many of the academics who have been pushing the boycott most energetically are members of hard-left socialist-worker groups. These radicals devote more time and energy to international issues than to the domestic welfare of their own members, who have suffered a serious decline in salary and working conditions. Their pet peeve, sometimes it appears their only peeve, is the Israeli occupation -- not of the West Bank and, before its return, of Gaza but rather of all of Palestine, including Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. These are not advocates of the two-state solution, but of a one-state dissolution of Israel, with the resulting state being controlled by Hamas.

In a world in which dissident academics are murdered in Iran, tortured in Egypt, imprisoned in China and fired in many other parts of the world, the British Union decided to boycott only academics from a country with as much academic freedom as in Britain and far more academic freedom -- and more actual academic dissent -- than in any Arab or Muslim country. Indeed, Arabs have more academic (and journalistic) freedom in Israel, even in the West Bank, than in any Arab or Muslim nation.

But these union activists couldn't care less about academic freedom, or any other kind of freedom for that matter. Nor do they care much about the actual plight of the Palestinians. If they did, they would be supporting the Palestinian Authority in its efforts to make peace with Israel based on mutual compromise, rather than Hamas in its futile efforts to destroy Israel as well as the PA.

What they care about -- and all they seem to care about -- is Israel, which they despise, without

regard to what the Jewish state actually does or fails to do. The fact that this boycott effort is being undertaken at precisely the time when Israel has ended the occupation of Gaza and is reaching out to the PA, and even to Syria, in an effort to make peace proves that the boycott is not intended to protest specific Israeli policies or actions, but rather to delegitimize and demonize Israel as a democratic Jewish nation. One union activist said on a BBC radio show that "Israel is worse than Stalinist Russia."

The boycotters know that Israel, without oil or other natural resources, lives by its universities, research centers and other academic institutions. After the U.S., Israeli scientists hold more patents than any nation in the world, have more start-up companies listed on Nasdaq, and export more life-saving medical technology.

Israelis have received more Nobel and other international science prizes than all the Arab and Muslim nations combined. Cutting Israel's academics off from collaboration with other academics would deal a death blow to the Israeli high-tech economy, but it would also set back research and academic collaboration throughout the world.

Moreover, many Israeli academics, precisely those who would be boycotted, are at the forefront in advocating peace efforts. They, perhaps more than others, understand the "peace dividend" the world would reap if Israeli military expenses could be cut and the money devoted to life-saving scientific research.

It is for these reasons that so many American academics, of all religious, ideological and political backgrounds, reacted so strongly to the threat of an academic boycott against Israel. As soon as it was reported, I helped to draft a simple petition in which signatories agreed to regard themselves as honorary Israeli academics for purposes of any boycott and "decline to participate in any activity from which Israeli academics are excluded."

Working with Prof. Steven Weinberg, a Nobel laureate in physics, and Ed Beck, the president of Scholars For Peace in the Middle East, we circulated the petition. I expected to gather several hundred signatures.

To my surprise, we have secured nearly 6,000 signatures, including those of 20 Nobel Prize winners, 14 university presidents as well as several heads of academic and professional societies. Three university presidents -- Lee Bollinger of Columbia, Robert Birgeneau of Berkeley and John Sexton of New York University -- have issued public statements declaring that if Israeli universities are boycotted, their American universities should be

boycotted as well. Every day, I receive emails from other academics asking to be included as honorary Israeli academics for purposes of any boycott. We expect to reach at least 10,000 names on our petition.

It is fair to say, therefore, that the British boycott appears to be backfiring. British academics are on notice that if they try to isolate Israeli academics, it is they -- the British academics -- who will end up being isolated from some of the world's most prominent academics and scientists.

No one wants that to happen. Academics and scientists should collaborate with each other in the

interests of promoting knowledge. The hope is that this ill-conceived boycott will be voted down by general membership of the university and college union, and that those radicals who are pushing it will be delegitimized in the eyes of the vast majority of British academics who will not want to see their union hijacked by single-issue bigots.

Mr. Dershowitz is a professor at Harvard University school of law and the author of "Blasphemy -- How The Religious Right Is Hijacking Our Declaration of Independence" (Wiley, 2007).

More Middle East Madness

By Victor Davis Hanson TownHall.com

"The Palestinian people will never forgive the Hamas gangs for looting the home of the Palestinian people's great leader, Yasser Arafat." So Palestinian Authority spokesman Abdel Rahman recently exclaimed. "This crime will remain a stain of disgrace on the forehead of Hamas and its despicable gangs."

Looting? Crime? Despicable gangs?

Excuse me. For years, Palestinian Authority-sanctioned gangs shot and tortured dissidents, glorified suicide bombing against Israel and in general thwarted any hopes of various "peace processes."

Of course, this kind of behavior isn't limited to the Palestinian territories but is spread across the Middle East. The soon-to-be-nuclear theocracy in Iran is grotesque. Iraqis continue to discover innovative ways to extinguish each other. Syria assassinates democratic reformers in Lebanon. ABC News now reports that new teams of al-Qaida and Taliban suicide bombers have been ordered to the United States and Europe from Afghanistan.

Here's why much of the region is so unhinged - and it's not because of our policy in Palestine or our efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq.

First, thanks to Western inventions and Chinese manufactured goods, Middle Easterners can now access the non-Muslim world cheaply and vicariously. To millions of Muslims, the planet appears - on the Internet, DVDs and satellite television - to be growing rich as most of their world stays poor.

Second, the Middle East either will not or cannot make the changes necessary to catch up with what they see in the rest of the world. Tribalism - loyalty only to kin rather than to society at large - impedes merit and thus progress. So does gender apartheid. Who knows how many would-be Margaret Thatchers or Sandra Day O'Connors remain veiled in the kitchen?

Religious fundamentalism translates into rote prayers in madrassas while those outside the Middle East master science and engineering. Without a transparent capitalist system - antithetical to both

June 21, 2007

sharia (Muslim law) and state-run economies - initiative is never rewarded. Corruption is.

Meanwhile, mere discussion in much of the region of what is wrong can mean execution by a militia, government thug or religious vigilante.

So, Middle Easterners are left with the old frustration of wanting the good life of Western society but lacking either the ability or willingness to change the status quo to get it.

Instead, we get monotonous scapegoating. Blaming America or Israel - "Those sneaky Jews did it!" - has become a regional pastime.

And after the multifarious failures of Yasser Arafat, the Assads in Syria, Muammar Gaddafi, Gamal Abdel Nasser, Saddam Hussein and other corrupt autocrats, many have, predictably, retreated to fundamentalist extremism. Almost daily, some fundamentalist claims that the killing of Westerners is justified - because of a cartoon, a Papal paragraph or, most recently, British knighthood awarded to novelist Salman Rushdie. The terrorism of Osama bin Laden, Hamas, Hezbollah and the Taliban is as much about nihilist rage as it is about blackmailing Western governments to grant concessions.

Meanwhile, millions of others simply flee the mess, immigrating to either Europe or the United States.

These reactions to failure often lead to circumstances that can defy logic.

The poor terrorists of Arafat's old party, Fatah, seem to shriek that they have been out-terrorized by Hamas, and desperately con more Western aid to make up for what has been squandered or stolen.

Muslims flock to Europe to enjoy a level of freedom and opportunity long denied at home. But no sooner have many arrived than they castigate their adopted continent as decadent. The ungracious prefer intolerant sharia - denying to their own the very freedom of choice that was given to them by others.

Our response in America to this perennial Middle East temper tantrum?

In the last 20 years, we've sent billions in aid to the Arab world. We've saved Muslims from Bosnia to Kuwait. We've removed dangerous thugs in Afghanistan and Iraq, fostering democracies in their place. We've opened our borders to immigrants from the Middle East. We've paid billions of dollars in inflated oil prices. All the while, many in the West have wrongly blamed themselves for the conditions in the Middle East.

Palestine's crooks and kooks

By Austin Bay *The Washington Times*

"Vote for the crook, not the kook." That visually parallel phrase assumes that political criminality requires an appreciation of reality and consequences that political fanaticism inevitably lacks. The sleazy opportunist is less dangerous than the obsessed ideologue.

As a slogan "crook over kook" had immediate currency during Louisiana's 1991 gubernatorial campaign, which pitted the ethically challenged Edwin Edwards against former Ku Klux Klansman David Duke. It reappeared in the 2002 French presidential election, when the slimy, smarmy, prevaricating Jacques Chirac defeated Jean-Marie Le Pen, an ex-paratrooper and arguably "Old Europe's" best-known neo-fascist. Mr. Duke and Mr. Le Pen employed militant swagger and an updated "code language" richly littered with implicit violence. Both traits characterize the political fringe. To the credit of Louisiana and France the kooks went down to defeat.

As for the victorious crooks? Readers may gag, but Louisiana and France are democracies with the rule of law. Former Gov. Edwards ultimately went to jail. Former President Chirac now faces a judicial inquiry investigating several scandals during Mr. Chirac's tenure as mayor of Paris.

These poor alternatives are a common political motif, though "human affliction" may be a more apt description. The crook and the kook run for city council and school board. The crook intends to shovel contracts to pals. The kook wants to lard school textbooks with conspiratorial drivel. But these American manifestations are merely irritating, neither murderous nor nation-shattering.

Pity the Palestinians. Their crooks, the corrupt Fatah, and their kooks, Islamist Hamas, both rule by the gun, not law. They had an election in 1996 where the crooks prevailed. In 2006, the kooks took control of the statelet.

The U.S. and Europe have decided to back the crooks. It's not quite an echo of Louisiana 1991 and France 2002, but at the 3-by-5 card level of analysis, the U.S., Europe and Israel are making the same bet:

It's past time for Middle Easterners to fix their own self-inflicted mess. In the meantime, the U.S. and its allies should help as we can - but first protect ourselves from them as we must.

Victor Davis Hanson is a classicist and historian at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, and author, most recently, of "A War Like No Other: How the Athenians and Spartans Fought the Peloponnesian War."

June 29, 2007

that the corrupt Fatah, defeated in the latest flare-up of Palestinian civil war, understands the benefits of cooperation far better than Hamas' firebrand ideologues. Will Fatah seize the opportunity?

Fatah's gratefully dead Great Leader, Yasser Arafat, left a bitter legacy of missed opportunities.

Three years ago I wrote that Mr. Arafat's biggest mistake was his rejection of the summer 2000 peace deal engineered by Israel's Prime Minister Ehud Barak and President Bill Clinton. I still think that's the case. The Barak-Clinton deal would have given the Palestinians a Palestine, and Mr. Arafat the state that could have transformed him from stateless killer to statesman.

Any deal would have ignited an internecine Palestinian war between Palestinian secularists and Islamists, but instead of waging that necessary civil war with the support of the United States and Israel, Mr. Arafat chose renewed intifada. Mr. Arafat gambled that "internationalizing" the issue of Palestinian statehood might result in a "better deal." It did not.

During his presidency, Mr. Arafat allegedly stole a billion dollars, filched from aid scams and rackets. His played classic the "Strong Man's Game": l'etat c'est moi. That stunted Palestinian political development.

Today the civil war between the secularists and Islamists is raging anyway. At the moment it is a fettered sort of civil war, with Hamas and Fatah security men fighting ganglike battles complete with street executions and rampage captured on television. Several commentators have suggested the latest Gaza shootouts (which Hamas won) were a preview of Iraq following a precipitate coalition military withdrawal. It is that, but in the larger picture it is also a sad reminder of the consequences of tyrannical rule by force.

Hamas has several advantages over Fatah. Iran and Syria have provided funds and weapons, giving it a tactical military advantage. Compared to Fatah, Hamas is far less corrupt, which is a political advantage. Fatah, however, may have the strategic

advantage of offering an economically prosperous and physically secure future, a real-world future rather than Hamas' apocalyptic Islamism.

American, European, Israeli and now Egyptian support means extraordinary political and financial assets. Israeli intelligence cooperation certainly gives Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas' rump Palestinian government a leg up in stabilizing the West Bank, which Fatah still controls. Given the levels of

assistance Mr. Abbas can expect, within two years the West Bank could prosper. Hamastan (Gaza) would slide in Islamist misery.

To seize the opportunity, Fatah must transition from a corrupt collection of local oligarchs to focused nation builders. Is it likely? If they don't, they face either execution by Hamas death squads or permanent exile.

Getting up close and personal with Hamas

By Joel Brinkley The San Francisco Chronicle June 24, 2007

In the Gaza Strip last week, Hamas fighters grinned and preened as they drove around in new Jeep Cherokees seized from Fatah leaders in their successful coup. Hamas is now in undisputed control of Gaza, but calling that a pyrrhic victory may be too generous.

While President Bush and other Western leaders stumble over each other as they scramble to embrace Mahmoud Abbas, the Fatah leader, the leaders of Hamas are locked away in their new Gaza kingdom. Within days, tens of millions of dollars in foreign aid will begin sluicing into Fatah bank accounts -- while little more than emergency assistance trickles into Gaza. Israel is still debating whether to resume deliveries of gasoline. The Saudi foreign minister, Saud al-Faisal, said it best early last week: "The Palestinians have come close to putting, by themselves, the last nail in the coffin of the Palestinian cause." That's a time-worn truism about the Palestinians, but the way events developed through the week, it seemed to fit Hamas best.

I know the leaders of Hamas. And I am certain they will be the last people on earth to realize that their coup has backfired. During three decades in daily journalism, working in more than 50 nations around the world, I have never met as determined a group of dogmatic ideologues. During a reporting trip in Gaza a few years ago, I set out to meet and interview each of the five major Hamas leaders. I got to four of them. This was before the elections last year that put Hamas in power -- before, even, the Israeli air strikes that killed several of them.

For me, the most memorable of this group was Mahmoud al-Zahar, a surgeon. He served as the Hamas foreign minister until Abbas dismissed the government last week.

Zahar lived in a large, comfortable house amid the teeming slums of Gaza. He greeted me at his front door wearing a caftan, a full black beard and a confident smile, then led me to his cavernous living room, where he served sweet tea. Two of his seven children were playing pingpong on a table set up in the middle of the floor. On a credenza, two televisions competed for attention -- one offered Al Jazeera, the other CNN. Zahar sat on a faux Louis XIV settee. The butt of a pistol peeked out from

between the cushions. After some polite chatter, Zahar espoused the Hamas philosophy.

"From our ideological point of view," he said, "it is not allowed to recognize that Israel controls one square meter of historic Palestine," he said. That, of course, includes Israel. After the Arabs retake "historic Palestine," Zahar continued, the 4 million Palestinians who live in other states would be encouraged to return. They would retake the homes their grandparents lost during the 1948 war. Then, he allowed, "the Jews could remain living in an Islamic state with Islamic law."

Zahar offered this with a polite smile. His manner was cheerful, even serene. He could have been discussing his opinion of a movie he saw last week. From a few yards away, we could hear the plink of the pingpong ball and his children's giggles.

Later that afternoon, one of his colleagues, Ismail Abu Shanab, said he had an even better idea, described in the same earnest, genial manner: "There are a lot of open areas in the United States that could absorb the Jews." When I asked him if he were joking, he looked puzzled and shook his head slightly, as if to say: I don't understand. Israel killed Shanab, an engineer, along with several other Hamas leaders in 2003. Among them was Abdel Aziz Rantisi who told me, "We in Hamas believe peace talks will do no good. We do not believe we can live with the enemy."

Five years have passed since those interviews. Last year, Hamas waged a political campaign and won an election. Its leaders took control of the Palestinian parliament.

The movement had a chance to become a player, influence the debate, work in the open to achieve at least some of its goals. How many extremist groups are given the opportunity to step out of the shadows and take the seats of power?

The Hamas legislators ruled in the august Palestinian parliament chamber for 16 months. During that time, they passed no new laws, made no significant proposals -- did nothing but object, obstruct and complain. But is anyone surprised?

Hamas is an acronym for the Islamic Resistance Movement. For Hamas' nihilist leaders, resistance is not a strategy toward an end. Carnage is the goal.

Last week, Zahar suggested that Hamas might attack Fatah in the West Bank with suicide bombs.

More than a year in power has changed them not at all. They have proved themselves incapable of looking beyond their dogma.

Don't worry, be happy! By Caroline Glick The Jerusalem Post July 5, 2007

Any doubt that Hamas is an Iranian proxy was dispelled this week by a snippet on the Middle East Media Research Institute's blog.

MEMRI reported: "An article in the Iranian weekly Sobh-e Sadeq, circulated among the Revolutionary Guards, states that Fatah documents captured by Hamas have revealed that Egypt played a role in instigating the clashes which led to the Hamas takeover of Gaza. The article added that this is the second time Egypt has betrayed the Palestinians, the first being [the slain Egyptian president Anwar] Sadat's betrayal at the Camp David summit."

So Hamas is sharing the treasure trove of intelligence it captured during its takeover of Gaza with Iran. In the greatest intelligence victory ever accomplished by a jihadist organization, Hamas (and Iran) now possess the files of all of the Palestinian security apparatuses, and the personal papers of Fatah leaders such as Yasser Arafat, Mahmoud Abbas and Muhammad Dahlan.

Hamas sources claim that Fatah's abject surrender of the information should come as a surprise to no one. They brag that in the months leading up to their putsch, Fatah operatives were happy to sell them all the weapons and intelligence information they asked for.

Iran's use of the Fatah files against Egypt demonstrates that the emergence of Hamastan in Gaza endangers not only Israel, but regional security as a whole. Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Lebanon, the US and Israel can all expect reports to surface that will, in the best case, cause them deep embarrassment. Their governments may be destabilized and their security operations may be compromised.

No doubt this state of affairs was central in causing the Egyptians, Saudis and Jordanians to all tell Palestinian Authority Chairman and Fatah chief Abbas not to clash with Hamas but to try to forge a new accord with it.

And so Hamas's position improves by the day. On Sunday, just after Israel made its first payment of \$120 million to Salaam Fayad's Fatah government, Fayad announced that the money will go to pay salaries of PA employees in Gaza.

This tells us two things. First, it shatters the illusion of two distinct PAs - one that is bad and one that is good. By paying PA employees in Gaza, Fayad showed that from Fatah's perspective, there is only one PA, not two.

Joel Brinkley is a professor of journalism at Stanford University and a former foreign policy correspondent for the New York Times.

Second, his move exposes as a lie Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's claim that the money was going only to Fatah. Indeed, it showed that Israel is funding Hamas. After all, if Fayad weren't using Israeli money to pay the Gazans, Hamas would have to pay them out of its own pocket.

BBC reporter Alan Johnston's release on Wednesday was another win for Hamas. After Johnston's release, Britain's new Foreign Secretary David Miliband - whose mother, a Holocaust survivor, is a member of the radical anti-Zionist organization "Jews for Justice for Palestinians" and whose late father was a Communist - gushed over Hamas. Miliband said that Hamas leaders "denounced the hostage-takers and demanded Alan's release. I fully acknowledge the crucial role they have played in securing this happy outcome."

In comments to Parliament, Miliband left the door wide open to the possibility of Prime Minister Gordon Brown's government recognizing the Hamas government.

Rather than chide the British for their embrace of a movement driven by barbaric hatred for Jews and bent on Islamic global domination, the Israeli government lavished praise on the British for successfully negotiating Johnston's release and tried to make nice with Hamas. Olmert coyly suggested, "As is known, Hamas members holding [IDF soldier Gilad Schalit] are - in effect - preventing the release of Palestinian prisoners as has been agreed upon."

By thus framing the issue of Schalit's release, Olmert signaled to Hamas that Israel is interested in cutting a deal and has already accepted the Iranian-proxy's control over the outskirts of Ashkelon and Ashdod.

Hamas has other new friends - al-Qaida for instance. While just last March al-Qaida was condemning its fellow Muslim Brotherhood terrorist organization for signing the Mecca agreement with Fatah, in the al-Qaida video disseminated this week, the group's deputy commander, Ayman al-Zawahiri, praised Hamas and called for Muslims to join the terror group.

In his words, "We tell our brothers, the Hamas mujahadin, that we and the entire Muslim nation stand alongside you, but you must redress your [political] path. Muslims must join Hamas ranks and we will back them by facilitating the passage of weapons and supplies from neighboring countries."

The Olmert government's refusal to take the Hamas-Iranian threat in Gaza seriously fits well with

its overall refusal to forge any coherent policies for dealing with any of the mounting threats that Israel faces.

Last week, the Syrians celebrated the 33rd anniversary of the "liberation" of Quneitra on the Golan Heights, which Israel ceded to Syria in the cease-fire agreement that ended the Yom Kippur War. In government ceremonies, ministers in Bashar Assad's government emphasized the dictator's commitment to "liberating" the Golan.

It was also reported that in honor of the anniversary, the Syrians opened the Damascus-Quneitra road to civilian traffic for the first time since 1967. If true, it would appear that the Syrians are setting the stage for terrorist infiltration of the Golan Heights.

Radio Damascus reported Wednesday that the Syrian regime views IDF exercises in the North as a threat. This announcement can only be seen as a Syrian bid to develop a pretext for starting a war against Israel.

And what sort of war awaits us? A missile war.

While the Olmert government argues over the relative merits of overhauling and upgrading the National Security Council, and bolsters our national security by appointing Ruhama Avraham - the women of many hair colors and stylish outfits - to the cabinet, the main lesson of the Second Lebanon War is being systematically ignored.

The war showed that Israel's enemies' primary target is the home front. This understanding was supposed to propel the government to secure civilian population centers nationwide, since Syrian missiles are capable of hitting every square centimeter of the country. But one year later, not even Sderot has been reinforced and the bomb shelters in the North remain neglected. It took the Finance Ministry 11 months to release funds to purchase gas masks for the public even though it is well known that Syria has chemical weapons.

Although Olmert said that for him the last war is but "a distant memory," in Lebanon it is living history. Hizbullah is rearming so massively that even the UN has taken notice. Last week, UN General Secretary Ban Ki-moon reported to the Security Council that the Syrian-Lebanese border has been completely breached and that shipments of Iranian and Syrian arms transit the country without the slightest difficulty.

On Monday, outgoing Deputy Defense Minister Ephraim Sneh effectively told Israel Radio that the government is neglecting the security needs of Israel by starving the IDF of the funds necessary to adequately equip its forces and secure the home front ahead of a possible war with Hizbullah, Syria and Hamas. He also accused the government of mishandling the Iranian nuclear threat.

Olmert, Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, Strategic Affairs Minister Avigdor Lieberman and Transportation Minister Shaul Mofaz all lull the

public into complacency by claiming that the UN Security Council sanctions against Iran are effective, and that Israel and the US are closely coordinating their policies on dealing with the Iranian nuclear weapons program. In his interview, Sneh called their bluff.

Sneh argued that the sanctions have not prevented Iran from advancing its nuclear program and stated outright that "there is no coordination on the operational level between the Israeli and US militaries on Iran."

Sneh added that the governmental underfunding has left the military bereft of good options for attacking Iran's nuclear installations on its own.

On the other side, Teheran is mobilizing all of its resources for a war against the US and Israel. Risking its own destabilization, the regime instituted gasoline rationing last week. And this week President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad announced that Iran will soon begin rationing electricity.

Intent on ignoring the dangers, Israel's government has opted to attack those who warn of them. Case in point is its treatment of former US ambassador to the UN John Bolton. Last week Bolton told The Jerusalem Post that the Bush administration's Iran policy has failed.

In his words, "The current approach of the Europeans and Americans is not just doomed to failure, but dangerous. Diplomacy and sanctions have failed... So we have to look at: 1, overthrowing the regime and getting in a new one that won't pursue nuclear weapons; 2, a last-resort use of force."

Bolton added that there might not be enough time to bring down the regime before the Iranians acquire nuclear weapons.

Israeli officials, snug in their bubble, reacted to the interview by attacking Bolton. One official dismissed Bolton by calling him America's "Avigdor Lieberman." Another patronized, "It is possible that his comments were meant to expedite the process. We would all like to see more aggressive diplomacy."

But as Sneh made clear, not only were Bolton's remarks accurate, but also, thanks to the Olmert government, Israel lacks the means to independently address the threat of its own annihilation, and has no military coordination on the matter with the US.

To their credit, the ministers responsible for dealing with Iran are very busy with pressing concerns. Last week, Lieberman took a trip to Europe, where he tried to advance his idea of bringing Israel into the anti-Israel EU. And in light of UNIFIL's stunning accomplishments in preventing Hizbullah from rearming, Israel's "Strategic Affairs" minister also used his time to push his idea of deploying NATO forces to Gaza.

On Wednesday, Livni met with her Moroccan counterpart. Livni praised Morocco for its participation in the Saudi Peace Plan that has been disavowed by the Saudis.

Olmert the peacemaker concluded a peace accord this week between his cronies Ronnie Bar-On and Haim Ramon. He also negotiated a temporary cease-fire with his political rival Meir Sheerit. Most critically, Olmert ensured Israel's long-term security by appointing Ruhama Avraham a minister-without-portfolio in his Lilliputian government.

The local media organs, all of which moronically ignore the emerging threats, keep promising the public that the Olmert government will fall as soon as the Winograd Committee issues its final report on

the Second Lebanon War, sometime in the next few months. But there is no guarantee that this is true.

In the best case scenario, the report will merely tell us what has been clear for the past year: With or without a restructured National Security Council, our political leaders are incompetent boobs whose only concern is their personal political survival, regardless of the consequences for the nation's security.

But really, why worry? After all, Shas is happy. Lieberman is satisfied. Olmert is rock solid. And Ruhama is moved to tears.

Perhaps we should be crying, too.

Feckless in Gaza By Cliff May TownHall.com June 28, 2007

"Extremists link up with extremists." So said Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice this week upon hearing that Ayman al-Zawahri, the top deputy to Osama bin Laden, had released a message enthusiastically supporting Hamas' bloody takeover of Gaza.

Public relations-wise, Hamas' leaders are pretty savvy. So last week, even while Hamas gunmen were slaughtering their Palestinian opponents, they also were placing ludicrously disingenuous op-eds in The New York Times, The Washington Post and The International Herald Tribune. (Why the Times, the Post and the Herald Trib would give space to terrorists is another matter.)

This week, Hamas attempted to distance itself from the al-Zawahri endorsement -- while being careful not to criticize al-Qaeda. Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri said simply: "Hamas has its own program ... we want to have good relations with all Arab and Muslim powers ..."

The truth is that Hamas and al-Qaeda are -- ideologically -- connected at the hip. Both are terrorist organizations -- Hamas has been so designated not just by the U.S. but also by the European Union. Both al-Qaeda and Hamas are in the business of waging what they believe will be the final war against the infidels.

There is one distinction: Whereas al-Qaeda will fight on any battlefield anywhere it thinks it can defeat "crusaders and Zionists" -- and it is convinced it will soon accomplish that mission in Iraq -- Hamas' primary goal is more modest: to wipe only Israel off the map. In other words, al-Qaeda thinks globally, Hamas acts locally.

Eighteen months ago, Hamas defeated its rival, Fatah, in an election that was praised as a groundbreaking exercise in democracy. But ballot boxes alone do not a democratic society make.

Hamas never sincerely transformed itself into a political party. Neither, for that matter, did Fatah, which was created in 1964 also for the purpose of exterminating Israel. One point on which Hamas and Fatah emphatically agree: free speech and other basic rights are not to be extended to Palestinians who oppose them.

Even this discount version of democracy quickly broke down. Apparently tiring of palaver, Hamas -- reportedly with backing from its patrons in Tehran -- launched a civil war in Gaza. Hamas militiamen murdered the most troublesome Fatah members; they shot bullets through the kneecaps of those they considered more open to persuasion.

The "human rights community" hardly seemed to notice. The "human rights community" is not much interested in Muslim-on-Muslim violence -- or in any violence carried out in the name of Islam, except to the extent it can be blamed on the U.S. and/or Israel. (Why that may suggest a post-modern form of racism is another matter.)

Now, Hamas rules Gaza with no pretense of democracy remaining. Fatah has retreated to the West Bank where it struggles to retain control.

The sensible thing for Israel to do would be to seal its border with Gaza. At the same time, the U.S. and Europe should cut off all aid. Let Iran's ayatollahs and al-Qaeda's financiers send food, gasoline and other supplies. Surely, they could squeeze that in among the weapons and explosives they are now shipping.

But never expect sense when it comes to the Middle East. Instead, both the U.S. and Europe plan to assist Hamas, if not directly then through the U.N. Reportedly, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has "acceded" to the request of Fatah leader Mahmoud Abbas to continue supplying Gaza with food, drugs, medical services, clean water and electricity. In addition, Israel, the U.S. and the Europeans are falling all over themselves to give Abbas money.

Here's an idea: Why doesn't Olmert, hand-in-glove with Washington and the Europeans, too, if possible, make a few requests of Abbas? Instead of giving him unconditional support, why not set a few benchmarks?

Why not tell him it's time to disarm -- or at least disavow -- such Fatah terrorist factions as the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades? Why not demand that he finally end incitement to terrorism in Palestinian media, mosques and schools? How about insisting he initiate a serious campaign against corruption, the theft by his cronies of aid intended for destitute

Palestinians? And wouldn't it send a message were Abbas to state without equivocation that another generation of Palestinians should not be sacrificed in pursuit of the genocidal dream of Israel's annihilation?

"Extremists link up with extremists," Condi Rice said. And right now extremists from al-Qaeda, Hamas, Iran, Syria, Lebanon and elsewhere are

Good will? Good grief

By Cal Thomas The Washington Times

Sometimes, for those who pay attention, the stars align and produce spectacular effects in the cosmos and on earth. A similar effect can occasionally be produced through journalism.

The Washington Post's June 26 World News page featured three articles that should teach a lesson to anyone who wishes to pay attention. The top story was headlined, "Olmert makes 'gesture of good will': at summit in Egypt, Israeli leader pledges to seek release of 250 Palestinian prisoners." The story just below featured this headline: "Israeli soldier, on tape, pleads for prisoner swap: A year after capture, [Gilad] Shalit says he needs to be hospitalized." The third story's headline was "Hope dims for imminent release of BBC reporter."

Is Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert self-deluded, or merely dumb, when he promises to engage in one more in a long list of "goodwill gestures" that have produced no reciprocity from Israel's enemies? I'm leaning toward the latter.

When Israel has previously released prisoners who were captured because many of them had killed, or tried to kill, Israelis, many returned to the company of their jihadist brothers and plotted to kill again. On occasion, Israel might have received one kidnapped Israeli soldier or civilian hostage in return for freeing hundreds of prisoners, but mostly it got nothing.

During Mr. Olmert's visit to Washington last week, I asked a "senior Israeli official" if he had tried to persuade Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas to eliminate the outrageous programming on Palestinian TV, which regularly glorifies suicide bombers and calls for the killing of Jews and the elimination of Israel. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said, "I have made the request before" but without results. If Mr. Abbas will not order the cessation of anti-Semitic programming on the TV station he controls, what makes Mr. Olmert think releasing 250 Palestinian prisoners will make him more agreeable to anything intended to ensure Israel's survival?

In a telephone interview, former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told me, "Abbas doesn't have what it takes by himself" to stabilize the

linking up to humiliate and, they are confident, eventually defeat the civilized world. Isn't it time the civilized world at least stopped assisting them?

Clifford D. May is the President of the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies.

June 29, 2007

West Bank and that Jordan, along with Egypt, must serve as part of an "external scaffolding" in partnership with Israel to counter Hamas in the West Bank.

Mr. Netanyahu opposes Mr. Olmert's prisoner release idea, saying, "This is a wrong, harmful message that will not strengthen the Palestinian Authority. It will only weaken it." In Washington meetings with Vice President Dick Cheney and Sen. Hillary Clinton, New York Democrat, Mr. Netanyahu said a division of the Jordanian military should be deployed in the West Bank to bring law and order to the area. Mr. Netanyahu described Palestinian society to me as "dysfunctional" and said something must be done to "control the mobs."

Israel has made many goodwill gestures, and after each one Israel has become more vulnerable. How about a goodwill gesture from the Palestinian side, such as forswearing violence and living up to their promises?

What is wrong with Israel's leadership, and much of the leadership in the West, that it believes peace is only a matter of finding the right formula to satisfy the Palestinian side and the Arab states that seek Israel's destruction? Israel's enemies (who are mostly America's enemies, too) care nothing about goodwill, reciprocity, equality or a two-state solution to the turmoil. They want a one-state solution, which is the replacement of Israel with a Palestinian state.

Can anyone credibly argue otherwise? Is there any substance to such an argument, beyond wishful thinking?

Outgoing British Prime Minister Tony Blair recently appeared before the Parliament Liaison Committee. Though he was speaking of Iraq, his remarks could apply to the threat to Israel. Mr. Blair argued that the West needs to free itself of the habit of believing the violence we see in Iraq and elsewhere is created by the United States, Great Britain and Coalition forces: "We think we are creating this problem; we are not creating it, it is being created for us."

Perhaps Mr. Blair should move to Israel and run for prime minister there. He gets it; Mr. Olmert doesn't.

To subscribe to the newsletter, send a note to the editor's e-mail address at sheldonb@rsfchart.com, archives are at www.suburbanorthodox.org/iacn.php.

Hamas' hidden economy

By Matthew Levitt *The Los Angeles Times* July 3, 2007

Military insurrections cost money. To take over the Gaza Strip last month, Hamas had to pay salaries, procure weapons, manufacture rockets, buy help from local crime families, bribe opponents, print leaflets and banners, produce media propaganda and even order up Hamas hats and bandanas.

How did Hamas fund this Gaza coup? What of the international "economic siege" that Hamas complained of against its government? Wasn't Hamas so strapped for funds that its leaders resorted to smuggling suitcases of Iranian cash into Gaza across the border with Egypt?

Part of the answer lies in — or rather under — the city of Rafah, on the Egyptian border. Smuggling tunnels, operated primarily by Gaza clans more interested in profit than ideology, run between houses on either side of the border. Egyptian and Israeli authorities have discovered tunnels dug as deep as 98 feet below ground in an effort to avoid sonar detection. Some tunnels include air ducts, electricity and lighting, and even rails and wagons to help smuggle heavy objects. Even when the mouths to the tunnels are found and sealed, the midsections remain intact and new openings are dug to reconnect them.

For a few thousand dollars, groups like Hamas rent tunnels for a night or more to smuggle in weapons and other material, according to Israeli and Egyptian officials and press reports. Hamas was able to smuggle and pay for the weapons, despite the international sanctions regime, through a variety of means — in a textbook example of the seamless cooperation between its military, political and charitable wings.

The Hamas political bureau, headquartered in Damascus under the leadership of Khalid Mishal and Mousa Mohammed Abu Marzook, has long raised funds to arm militants in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, according to declassified U.S. intelligence. The bureau has smuggled weapons overland into the West Bank from Jordan, by sea in waterproof barrels dropped off the Gaza shore by ships launched from Syria and Lebanon and underground through the Rafah tunnels. In recent months, Iran has been funding these operations.

According to Israeli authorities, Izzidin Sheikh Khalil, a senior Hamas operative, ran the Rafah weapons smuggling operations out of Damascus until he was killed in an explosion there in 2004. (Israel is presumed to have been behind the assassination but has never claimed responsibility.)

Perhaps most disturbingly overt is the funding Hamas continues to receive through its charitable and social welfare wing. Despite being designated a

terrorist group by the United States and the European Union, Hamas, in the face of international sanctions, has successfully transferred funds into the West Bank and Gaza Strip through its charity committees and social service organizations. Mixing funds across its political, charitable and militant wings, Hamas supports its Executive Force militia and Izzidin al-Qassam Brigade terror cells under a veil of political and humanitarian legitimacy.

For example, last month Israeli authorities indicted four members of the A-Ram Charity Committee north of Jerusalem on charges of funding Hamas. According to the indictment, about \$237,000 was transferred to the A-Ram Committee in the last year by the Charity Coalition (also known as the Union of Good), described as a Saudi Arabian-based umbrella organization for groups funding Hamas.

Now that Hamas controls Gaza, it is even more critical to close the two loopholes that enabled the movement to supply and fund its Gaza coup — the Rafah tunnel smuggling and the funding through the Hamas social service network.

Only Egypt can effectively seal its border with Gaza. Cairo has sidelined Hamas diplomatically and announced its opposition to the emergence of "Islamic warlords" in Gaza. It needs to follow up on this rhetoric with a serious border patrol initiative, focused primarily on the 8-mile-long border with Gaza. It also must police the much longer border between the Sinai and Negev deserts, across which smugglers move weapons for the West Bank.

The United States and the European Union must work to avert a humanitarian crisis by helping reliable and transparent international organizations aid the Palestinians. They also should expand their designation of terrorist entities to include the long list of Hamas-controlled entities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip that receive foreign charity. Designating charity committees tied to Hamas would prompt international banks to block such transactions.

As long as its political and social wings are allowed to operate unhindered, Hamas will be able to fully fund all of its activities, including its terrorist attacks against Israelis and Palestinians alike.

Matthew Levitt is a senior fellow at the Washington Institute. Previously, he served as deputy assistant secretary for intelligence and analysis at the Treasury Department. He is the author of "Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad".