

Whose War on Terrorism is it?

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By Robbie Friedmann

The lucky near-hit experienced by the Israeli passenger jet taking off from Mombasa is now carefully studied for its (forever obvious) implications for international aviation ("Al Qaeda Strikes Again: What we can do about missile attacks on civil aircraft and car bombs," Jonathan Stevenson, The Wall Street Journal, December 2, 2002). The (fairly obvious) conclusions actually raise a troubling question, namely, how is it that as long as "international implications" are not so imminent, the world does not really care about victims elsewhere? One lesson that has gone unnoticed is the Kenyan victims represent what terrorism truly reflects: According to them, there are no "innocent victims," and there are also no "innocent bystanders" as the terrorists will go on causing damage wherever they find it expedient to do so.

Increasingly - yet not sufficiently - there is an understanding that Israel's war and America's war are one and the same ("Report From the Promised Land," R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr., American Prowler 12/4/02) but there is still the sense that any Israeli reaction might "inflare the Arab streets" even further and currently this is still seen (erroneously) as counter to the U.S. interest in its "own" (narrow?) war on terrorism ("[Israel's War Is Like America's. With a Difference](#)," James Bennet, The New York Times, December 1, 2002). It is due to this (fallacious) working assumption that encourages the US and other countries to call for Israeli "restraint" ("[Concern and Caution: U.S. Urges Israeli Restraint After Kenya](#)," Steven R. Weisman, The New York Times, December 3, 2002).

This could have been rather fascinating had it not been so puzzling. An untested "conception" (dogma, paradigm, framework, philosophy, take your pick) is hard at work assuming that in order to minimize the likelihood of a "flare-up" - which is planned anyway - Israel should remain "out of the picture." Very few voices are heard suggesting the opposite: Namely, that since Israel is a target anyway, why not let her defend itself - in coordination with the U.S. - so that a victory over terrorism will see to it that Israel is in the victors' camp and thus will no longer be a target for terror. After all, there is a difference between the scope of involvement and the principle of not getting involved at all. Currently this approach of leaving Israel "out of the equation" sends a message that it is "ok" for Israel to be at the receiving end of terrorism. This is wrong not only for Israel but for the U.S. and anyone who is truly concerned about fighting and eradicating terrorism. This notion of a false "conception" is well illustrated by (mis)perceptions we had for years about possible Iraqi involvement in terrorism ("Another mistaken 'conceptzia,'" Laurie Mylroie, The Jerusalem Post, Dec. 3, 2002).

The danger with the dogmatic approaches to world realities lies in the high cost in life and property when the error is exposed. The current volcanic wave of hate, vilification, dehumanization and incitement that is directed from the Arab countries against Israel and Jews often has western targets as well, but because it is mostly in the Arabic media and mostly focused on Israel it is widely ignored by western media and by western leadership.

The level of vilification is annihilatory in nature and precludes the possibility of any meaningful

peace in the near or even distant future ("Not Just Anti-Semitic Lies!" Ehud Ya'ari, Jerusalem Report, December 16, 2002). Thus, the Hamas terrorist group (whose operatives are referred to as "militants" in western reports) displays on its web site images and messages that are so crude they make it impossible to interpret in any other way than what they were meant to convey ("We shall knock on heaven's doors with the skulls of Jews" - Hamas, Itamar Marcus, Palestinian Media Watch Bulletin, December 2, 2002).

While scapegoating clearly takes place against the Jews - how convenient a target they provide - the dangers now far surpass the dangers of the Tzarist regime, the Communists and the Nazis. Under those regimes, Jews were indeed convenient targets being disenfranchised minorities. But targeting the State of Israel and Jews worldwide and the State of Israel is nothing short of genocidal in intent, meaning, and action. The Hamas wants to knock on the gates of heaven with skulls of Jews and the Saudi Interior Minister has (again) blamed Jews for the 9-11 atrocity despite the clear cut evidence of who the perpetrators were: 15 Saudis under the leadership of OBL ("Saudi interior minister blames Jews for 9/11 attacks," The Associated Press, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, 12/6/02): "Who Committed the Events of September 11... I Think They [the Zionists] are Behind these Events... [Arab] Mass Media Should Condemn Terrorism, Warn Arab Nationals of it, and Let Our Voice be Heard by the World... It is Impossible that 19 Youths, Including 15 Saudis, Carried Out the Operation of September 11" ("[Saudi Minister of Interior, Prince Nayef Ibn Abd Al-Aziz](#)," MEMRI, Special Dispatch -Saudi Arabia, December 3, 2002, No. 446). This is the kind of person who comes home to find his wife in bed with his best friend and the friend denies the scene saying "who are you going to believe? Your eyes or your best friend?" And then he responds, "Of course, I will believe my friend..."

The Saudis have adopted a two-pronged PR tactic. On one hand using outright lies with respect to the perpetrators, and on the other hand lying as to their own role in financing terror whether through charities or direct contributions/assistance ("Saudis defend anti-terrorist role, target cash flow," Bob Deans, The Atlanta Journal Constitution, December 4, 2002).

However, for anyone willing to be deceived by these tactics, all they need to do is read the intent of the extremists as expressed by high Saudi official clerics who lay claim to Rome which symbolizes both the Holy Seat, the center of (Catholic) Christianity, and hence the core of the "infidels" who represent the West and anything that Islamists extremists object to ("[Leading Sunni Sheikh Yousef Al-Qaradhawi and Other Sheikhs Herald the Coming Conquest of Rome](#)," Special Dispatch - Jihad and Terrorism , December 6, 2002, No. 447).

In other words, nothing serves as better proof that if Jews are their first target, the Christians are not far behind. Interestingly enough, this may not necessarily be obtained by force but by ideology: "... The Prophet Muhammad was asked: 'What city will be conquered first, Constantinople or Romiyya?' He answered: 'The city of Heracles will be conquered first' - that is, Constantinople... Romiyya is the city called today 'Rome,' the capital of Italy. The city of Heracles [later to become Constantinople] was conquered by the young 23-year-old Ottoman Muhammad bin Morad, known in history as Muhammad the Conqueror, in 1453. The other city, Romiyya, remains, and we hope and believe [that it too will be conquered]....This means that Islam will return to Europe as a conqueror and victor, after being expelled from it twice - once from the South, from Andalusia, and a second time from the East, when it knocked several times on the door of Athens...I maintain that the conquest this time will not be by the sword but by

preaching and ideology..."

However, it is not the kind of preaching that remains at the ideological level but rather one that actively preaches hate, vilification, dehumanization and incitement, and from this the leap to violent action is very short and direct. So while intensive PR campaigns are trying to create "positive" images for the Saudis and distinguish between them, Palestinians, Iraqis, and the like, Al-Qaida has announced the establishment of its Palestinian branch ("[Al-Qa'ida-Affiliated Web Site Warns of Attack During Id Al-Fitr, December 5-6, and Announces Palestinian Branch of Al-Qa'ida](#)," MEMRI, Special Alert - Jihad and Terrorism, December 4, 2002, No. 5).

Whether Palestinian, Saudi, Iraqi, Syrian, Egyptian, or others affiliated with them, they do not rely only on the success of non-violent ideology. They are clearly the students of Hitler's "Final Solution" not (Mahatma) Gandhi's non-violence. Indeed, Al-Qaida, the Palestinians or their supporters are not exactly conducting an open seminar on morality and ethics. Rather, they go directly for the jugular: kill, kill, and kill. And then kill some more. Indeed, that is why suicide bombing should not be defined as such because those committing suicide are not supposed to take others with them. It should not be called homicide bombing either because that term should be reserved to the occasional, not habitual, murderer. These are serial killers and therefore they have nothing else on their mind than genocide and thus should be called genocidal killers ("Suicide, homicide or genocide?" Steven Zak, The Washington Times, December 4, 2002).

The PR campaigns - ineffectively conducted by the Saudis - and the propaganda campaigns - far more effectively conducted by many others affiliated with them or supporting them overseas or somewhere on the political spectrum at home - are tirelessly trying to make the point that "Islam is not a violent religion." To which Dennis Prager responded that, "Of course, the great majority of Muslims are peaceful -- so what?" And Charles Krauthammer adds that it is not religion as such but what people do in its name that matters ("Violence and Islam," The Washington Post, December 6, 2002), quoting Salman Rushdie: "The Islamic world today is being held prisoner not by Western but by Islamic captors, who are fighting to keep closed a world that a badly outnumbered few are trying to open...And the majority remains silent." And Krauthammer correctly adds: "Until they speak, the borders of Islam will remain bloody." So at best the discussion focusing on religion may not be very helpful.

It appears that in the guise of science some proponents of "objectivity" have lost their sound judgment (pun intended particularly when the case in point involves a licensed clinical and political psychologist) - assuming, of course, they ever had it. In a lengthy treatise we are warned that "experts...failed to comprehend, or even read, his (Osama bin Laden) actual words" and with a conclusions based on OBL's own words: "The road to safety begins by ending the aggression." The implication here is clear: The West is the aggressor ("Misinterpreting Osama's Message: Erring on the Side of Danger," Diane Perlman, AlterNet, November 21, 2002). This line of "thought" is nothing but contorted logic that has been dressed with the straightjacket of someone who is an apparent victim of the Stockholm Syndrome. What is nothing less than astonishing about this approach is the absolute denial of aggression and violence on the part of the actual perpetrators. Indeed, she has not only misinterpreted Osama's message, she has misunderstood it.

Indeed, the misplacement of blame is evident in a most recent statement by a Canadian

governmental aide who called president Bush "a moron" and was rewarded by her prime minister to remain in her job. This was most aptly treated by Mark Steyn as an opposite case of "Loose Lips Sink Ships" ("All the Liberals have to offer are loose lips," National Post, November 28, 2002). Namely, those who use their lips do so because they have no ships to lose or put at risk. How ironic that this situation applies so well to many Middle East experts, pundits, or former presidents, who spare no words in mis-analyzing, mis-attributing blame, and misreading intent and reality alike. They are not risking their reputations, salaries, or positions. On the contrary, apparently they are able to enamor themselves to those audiences they rarely dare to criticize or truly understand.

The difference here is one of scope not principle. By the same token that Middle East analysts operate in a climate of professional interests, so nations have national interests and act according to them. One that perhaps has raised national interests to a level of prostitution is France. Having economic and other interests (sphere of influence) in Iraq, France has been sitting on the fence for years keeping all the options open (with regard to supporting the US in a possible campaign against Iraq) except the one where they could get stuck on the fence because they have sat on it for too long ("Choosing between friend and foe," Amir Taheri, Arab News, Opinion, 1 December 2002).

Encouragingly, there are some fairly strong voices that come from not necessarily expected corners that interject the much needed sanity into this theater of absurd. Oriana Fallaci came out again with a very strong article that is reminiscent of Emil Zola's *J'accuse* (see more on the [Dreyfus Affairs](#)). Like Zola, Fallaci accuses a number of countries, societies, and cultures for actively cultivating and promoting anti-Israeli and antisemitic sentiments ("I Stand with Israel: I Stand with the Jews," Corriere della Sera | December 2, 2002): "I defend their right to exist, to defend themselves, to not let themselves be exterminated a second time. And disgusted by the antisemitism of many Italians, of many Europeans, I am ashamed of this shame that dishonors my Country and Europe. At best, it is not a community of States, but a pit of Pontius Pilates. And even if all the inhabitants of this planet were to think otherwise, I would continue to think so."

Her position is echoed by a Canadian columnist who states that "There's no haven for Jews. Not within Israel and not without" ("Latest attack on Jews brings a deafening silence," Rosie Dimanno, Toronto Star, Dec. 2, 2002). And she puts the current terror against Israel in an accurate context: "But this is a new generation of global terrorism and Israel's enemies like the West's enemies no longer stand out in a crowd. In many parts of the world, they are the crowd. Islamist pretenders, fomenting hatred in the masses, have made sure of that. And they are like cockroaches, scurrying out of the geopolitical cracks in Saudi Arabia, in Yemen, in East Africa, in the Philippines, in Indonesia, even in America and Canada. They kill Jews. They kill Americans. They kill Australians who had the temerity to push rampaging Indonesian paramilitaries out of East Timor, a predominantly Catholic fledgling state. They kill Kenyan dancers and civil employees. They kill French engineers. They blow up skyscrapers and bring down airplanes. They do all this with Allah's name on their lips. And some day, I fear they'll come for you." If the strong stand expressed in her article provides a welcomed reaffirmation, some of the letters in response to her article represent exactly what is so troubling in this world, not the least is the support that terrorists receive ("Call for sympathy insults Muslims;" and "Column contributes to Muslim-bashing"). Isn't it amazing how little it takes for them get insulted but how quickly they would deny that right to anyone else?

And after the establishment of the Campus Watch web site (worth visiting on a regular basis) another web site was launched to draw attention to the indoctrination on campus under the guise of curricular teaching at the undergraduate level ("Students Fight Back," Stanley Kurtz, National Review, December 2, 2002).

It is awfully disappointing to find out that universities that once stood for universalistic education in the pursuit of truth and a marketplace of ideas (tested and re-tested scientifically) now have become temples of dogmas, intolerance and single track "realities." If universities display this kind of pasquinade why should we be surprised by what the media feeds us? To an extent, the media can cause a great deal of damage but at least those readers, viewers, and listeners have choices to make and could do some "comparative shopping." The irony is that this is becoming increasingly more difficult to do in universities because comparative shopping may not be so acceptable by those in power, the professors who grade the students. Yet, one does need to be constantly on guard as to what is being made available on various media outlets that are considered "respectable" and "reputable" and the problem does not necessarily lie in reporting (or not reporting) facts but in how these facts are framed and in what context they are brought to the consumer. Thus under the false pretense of neutrality (namely, political correctness) realities are shaped that are absolutely unwarranted ("Morally neutral reporting is dishonest reporting," Dennis Prager, Townhall.com, December 3, 2002).

Therefore, we are now facing a multitude of dilemmas and challenges. Not only is there a threat of real danger to our lives and livelihood, this is further exacerbated by the blurring of terms of reference, by purposefully clouding concepts of justice, truth, and the sense of who is right. Moreover, a debate is developing internationally that is guided by narrow national interests and is accompanied by effective propaganda campaigns on one hand and misplaced political agendas that are untenable yet vociferously arguing against "the war." If we are to accept these claims then we have deserved all the terror against us because we are the perpetrators and the aggressors. This is sheer lunacy.

Relativism has a place, but not there. Relativism needs to be employed not to compare who is "more right" or who is "more of a victim." That is futile and doomed to failure. Relativism has a purpose when two absolute values clash. When homeland security clash with civil rights, mature societies understand that no single value can survive as if the other one is not present. Safety has to be provided but rights should not be abused. But rights cannot be guaranteed at a heavy cost not only to privacy but to human lives. If mega terror occurs fingers will be directed at those "responsible" for abrogating the safety of the public. And if no terror occurs (not very likely) the fingers will point to the abrogation of rights. However, it is imperative to have these two values coexist in support of each other or else there is no meaning to the term "policing freedom."

Finally, if this is **our** war against terrorism then we need to win it on all fronts including the psychological one. President Bush may have not used the term "crusade" wisely early on but he was quick to discard it. Yet, the US has retreated from its original code name for the current war on terrorism and changed it from "infinite justice" (to which Muslim groups "objected") to the more neutral "enduring freedom." If we want our freedom to persevere and prevail we need to be wise but also firmly stand on our right to define our terms of reference. That is what we have to protect or else nothing else is left.