

# It's Good to Be a Terrorist (with apologies to Mel Brooks)

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By Robbie Friedmann

In the comic movie "[History of the World Part I](#)" Mel Brooks plays King Louis XVI who mischievously says "It's good to be the king!" Yasser Arafat must have seen this scene and paraphrasing Brooks tells himself several times daily that "it's good to be a terrorist," fully meaning it. In legal language: Crime does pay.

After some persistent discussion on Arafat's private fortunes, *Forbes Magazine* has ranked him among the rich despots in a company that may not find it pleasant to have him in their midst ("[Billionaires: Kings, Queens & Despots](#)," *Forbes*, 03.17.03). Estimated at having amassed at least \$300 million, his new finance "minister" argued that these funds belong to the Palestinians and not to Arafat.

He certainly feels good enough being a (rich) despot to send Saddam Hussein a warm holiday greeting ("[Holiday Greetings from Yasser Arafat to Saddam Hussein](#)," MEMRI, Special Dispatch - Palestinian Authority/Iraq, February 26, 2003, No. 475). And of course in addition to bestowing blessings on Saddam he is also asking for his help by using all the hollow Palestinian rhetoric: "Any kind of support and assistance from you in these difficult times will enable us to continue our persistence and resistance until we put an end to the occupation, in all its manifestations, of our holy Al-Quds [Jerusalem] and the Islamic and Christian holy shrines, and exercise our legal and lasting rights, based on international legal resolutions, and most importantly our rights for self determination, for repatriation, and for establishing our independent state with its capital Al-Quds Al-Sharif [Jerusalem]."

The greatest help actually came from president Bush who earlier in the week spoke about the necessity to help the Palestinians establish a state provided they will relinquish terrorism. Instead of expressing gratitude and showing civility they have repaid the president by declaring the U.S. as the "enemy of Islam." This from an organization that not so recently marketed itself as secular ("PA defines USA as an enemy of Islam," Itamar Marcus, *Palestinian Media Watch Bulletin*, February 27, 2003).

Yet it is an organization that relies on the "holy" when convenient (the genocidal suicide bombing clearly are a case in point). Even opposition *martyrdom* in Egypt is based on how negatively it affects the Palestinians and the "glorious Arab nation" not that killing is inherently unacceptable. Moreover, Israel is still referred to as the "*nemy*" This from an opposition paper in an Arab country that has a peace treaty with Israel ("[Egyptian Opposition Daily Condemns Suicide Martyrdom Operations](#)," MEMRI, Special Dispatch - Egypt/Reform in the Arab and Muslim World, February 25, 2003, No. 474).

Given that President Bush has spoken on behalf of a Palestinian state it might be worth examining the rhetoric around the Palestinian narrative and one of the best debunkers of it comes from an Arab-American journalist who exposes the Palestinian hollowness, deception, and real

objectives ("[An unconventional Arab viewpoint](#)," Joseph Farah, WorldNetDaily.com, February 24, 2003). He aptly compares Hollywood with the Palestinians as both are experts in myth-making and he has experience in covering both: "The common denominator is that they both deal in the realm of unreality. They both rely on myths. In fact, the imagination of the Arabs in crafting fables, reinventing history and fictionalizing facts would make Oliver Stone blush." An additional valuable lesson in history is provided by Chuck Chriss ("What is the history of other countries in the Middle East? " Jewish Internet Association, 2-23-2003) and an illustrative details are available at Palestine Facts.

The connection between the Palestinians and Iraq has been made several times mostly by those who tried - unsuccessfully - to delay action against Iraq until the Palestine problem has been *solved*. The latest drive in that direction is evident in a joint British-Norwegian suggestion that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is "an equally important precondition for long-term peaceful development in the region." Of course, the underlying assumption is that Israel is to blame for the situation with only passing mention of Palestinian terrorism ("Straw creates direct link between Iraq, Israel," Douglas Davis, The Jerusalem Post, Feb. 23, 2003).

Indeed, President Bush's speech this week proved that the road to Jerusalem goes through Baghdad and not the other way around ("The road to Jerusalem leads through Baghdad," Zalman Shoval, The Jerusalem Post, Feb. 28, 2003). While it became evidently clear that U.S. policy is to first liberate Iraq and clean it from its current despotic regime and only then to deal with the Palestinians, it is also clear that there will be a road to Jerusalem. Namely, if according to Bush "terrorism will cease" and people will "trust each other enough" then the two-state solution is his goal. And he has sent one clear political message to the Palestinians by his determination to arrest The Florida professor suspected of supporting terrorism ("Politically correct terrorists" Caroline B. Glick, The Jerusalem Post, Feb. 28, 2003).

This is extremely important given the tendency in the previous administration and current presidential aspirants to tolerate terrorism or look away when those responsible are reachable. The latest such example is the "understanding" that Democratic candidate Kerry shows toward the legitimate *plight* of terrorists ("John Kerry's 'Complaints': What does he find *legitimate* about terrorism? " Editorial, The Wall Street Journal, February 24, 2003).

However, unless Bush has a plan to replace the Palestinian leadership the same way he has for Iraq, there is no reason to expect that any changes will take place to evidence a willing shift from strategic terror to genuine peace. Short of that, any overtures towards the Palestinians will be perceived as the victory of terror and will reward them for their violence. Unless the Palestinians will be disabused from adhering to strategic terror as a way of life (and death) no substantive change will come other than incentive for further terror ("[The Other War](#)," William Safire, The New York Times, 02-24-2003).

And the road to Baghdad is not such a freeway as the U.S. would have liked it. Willing coalition partners have to be financed (Turkey) and even then the legislative procedure is so cumbersome to an extent that if successful it might be too late to deploy U.S. forces there in a timely manner as is evident from the Turkish parliament's speaker vetoing the deployment of U.S. forces ("Turkish Official Nullifies Approval of G.I. Presence," The Associated Press, The New York

Times, 3-1-2003). And then there are the classical obstructionists like France, Germany, and Belgium ("Europe's Monomania," George Will, *Jewish World Review*, Feb. 24, 2003).

It has gotten to such a level that for the U.S. the facts on the ground are starting to become more important than the opinions of those who object to the necessary action. Indeed, The Bush administration shows its displeasure by third-tier administration sending arrows at those who are putting obstacles and are trying to delay action in any way possible ("[Top Bush aide savages 'selfish' Chirac](#)," David Rose, *The Observer*, February 23, 2003).

The preparations of a campaign against Iraq continue in high gear as Saddam's brinkmanship offers new creative ways for nerve-straining international complications as he declares one day to [a pathetic TV anchorperson](#), that he will not destroy his missiles (which comprise only a small component of his weapons of mass destruction) only to be followed by a *reversal* later in the week that he is ready to do so. The French and the Chief U.N. Inspector react to this - expectedly - as an "important development" simply because it might delay or even prevent a war.

And coinciding with one of the expected time frames for an attack on Iraq is an announcement of an anticipated mega-terror attack ["[Islamist Website: An Imminent Terrorist Attack \(Possibly by Al-Qa'ida\) Within "About Ten Days" \(Apparently in the U.S.\)](#)]" MEMRI, Special Alert - Jihad and Terrorism Studies, February 26, 2003, No. 7). Where the author on the Islamic web site claims that the attack is imminent ("the train of death is on its way... nothing will stop its riders").

Later in the week a London-based Arab newspaper suggested that a large attack on American interests is expected in Asia. Of course this could include anything from Singapore to Israel ("[London Islamists Anticipate Large Operation by Al-Qa'ida to Coincide with the War in Iraq](#)," MEMRI, Special Alert - Jihad and Terrorism Studies, February 28, 2003, No. 8). In the meantime a key Al Qaida operative, Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, has been nabbed by Pakistani security in Islamabad ("[Pakistani Police Arrest Suspected Sept. 11 Mastermind](#)," FoxNews, 03-01-2003). Perhaps he is one terrorist who found out it is no longer good to be one.

Despite the urgent need to hear strong Muslim opposition to terrorism and the grand Jihadist designs that the extremists have for the West, once in a while such a voice in the wilderness is heard. One Muslim academic added his voice to castigate OBL and Saddam in no equivocal terms ("Islam Says Otherwise," Muqtedar Khan, *The Washington Post*, February 16, 2003): "I conclude by calling upon you and your al Qaida colleagues, and Mr. Hussein, to surrender to an international court and take responsibility for your actions and save thousands of other innocent Muslims from becoming the victims of the wars you bring upon them."

However, rarity of criticism in the West is not the staple of current politics. The opposite is the case in the U.S., Europe and Israel ("[Israel's Leftist Fifth Column](#)," Steven Plaut, *FrontPageMagazine.com* | February 25, 2003):

"The pro-Saddam Left in the US and in Europe has long been little more than a fifth column, composed of people who despise their own countries. The Israeli Leftists have followed in their footsteps, have even led the campaign to indict their own Prime Minister for manufactured "war crimes", all this with horrendous results for their country."

How misguided are the opponents of action against Iraq is well articulated by Amir Taheri, an Iranian-born Paris-based journalist who mocks Rev. Jackson and his co-marchers in London ("Reverend Jackson, let me speak!" Amir Taheri, *The Jerusalem Post*, Feb. 20, 2003) who were so self-absorbed with their march objectives that they were not willing to discuss the real plight of oppressed Iraqis who truly understand who Saddam Hussein is better than the weekend marchers could ever do. As Taheri expresses his hopes "...when Iraq is liberated, as it soon will be, the world will remember that it was not done in the name of Rev. Jackson, Charles Kennedy, Glenda Jackson, Tony Benn and their companions in a march of shame."

But perhaps the most eloquent commentary on the misguided criticism was provided not directly against the dubious merit of the so-called anti-war marchers. The point of the morality of war is made in the context of not winning it. From one with past left leanings who protested against the war in Vietnam comes the statement that "It was not fighting the war in Vietnam that was immoral. It was losing it. Or rather, it was immoral to fight it if there was reason to believe it could not be won." Yet the writer offers the best lesson from Vietnam to the situation in Iraq ("[The immorality of losing](#)," Hillel Halkin, *Jewish World Review*, Feb. 21, 2003): "If the American public decides that its government is pursuing a wrong-headed and overly costly policy in which Europe refuses to join as a partner while sniping from the sidelines, the chances of this policy's success will be smaller, and those of America leaving before the job is done will be larger. The result might then be an Iraq freed of Saddam, but still run by thuggish generals or Islamist extremists who would rearm at the first opportunity. A war that ended this way would not have been a war worth fighting. It would indeed have been immoral --- and the immoralists would include, paradoxically, the very people who are now marching against it."

With developments getting into higher gear there are perhaps three obvious lessons. First, the detractors do not have a case but learning from their previous historical mistakes is not evident from their behavior. By now it should be fairly clear that the protesting brigades and certainly the not-so-naive organizers would always be available, not so much against the war as they would be against their government. Right or wrong they will always define it as wrong. Indeed, examine the site of an animal advocacy group (the same one that protested to Arafat that his people used a donkey who accidentally exploded in a genocidal attempt against Israelis) which now features a comparison of the Holocaust experienced by the Jewish people equating it with holocaust perpetrated on animals (PETA). Not a problem with loving animals and wanting to protect them but assuming they do so because they are living creatures why not treat human beings like animals as well? We deserve that much from such groups. The sad reality is that this proves the point that no matter how clear cut a threat is, and how clean the moral ground for self-defense is, there will be those objecting to it and they will always explain it away.

Second, there is now a two-week window for the operations to begin and it appears very likely they indeed will. Any continuing procrastination will cost the U.S. and its allies dearly in terms of the momentum they have and the dynamics of the protest and the international politics of the Franco-German bloc might be successful in shifting the pendulum. Such an outcome will not only be detrimental to the objectives of the war but disastrous for U.S. policy and leadership position and will indeed be most costly for Israel as well. In short, time is starting to run out.

Third, the U.S. has wisely relegated the Palestinian problem to its true size and proper priority. It remains to be seen to what extent after a successful campaign against Iraq the U.S. will look at the Palestinians as a *grieving* and *deserving* party. That is a sure formula to guarantee a life-time quagmire for the U.S. in that region because everywhere the Palestinians have been (Jordan, Lebanon, Tunis, Kuwait and Israel) they have managed to wreak absolute havoc. The best policy the U.S. can adopt is embedded in the lines of President Bush calling on the Palestinians to abandon terror. The question remains as to what processes and structures are going to be put in place to guarantee that this will be done. The formula of "land for peace" has become for the Palestinians the practice of "piece after piece" (of Israel). The Palestinians will have to prove for a very long period of time that they have truly relinquished violence before they will be a partner for any discussions on any arrangement. Therefore a Palestinian state as promoted by the Palestinians and by the Europeans is a formula for disaster for the Israelis and the Americans and eventually for the Europeans and the Palestinians as well. Far more creative solutions incorporating Arab responsibility and accountability will have to be devised by deviating from the cliches of the past in order to achieve real progress.