

Terror and the Rhetoric of Peace

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By Robbie Friedmann

In a futile attempt to avoid excruciating complexities, Western media and even some leaders tend to view the Middle East in broad categories and so it is with *leaders*. While Yasser Arafat has been marginalized by George W. Bush, there is a tendency to view Arafat's appointed *prime minister* Abbas as a viable substitute despite apparent weaknesses he brings to the table. Yet an examination of how Abbas is viewed by Palestinians shows that the power and presence of Arafat is casting a giant shadow over him ("Who is the leader of the Palestinian Authority - Arafat or Abbas?" Itamar Marcus, Palestinian Media Watch Bulletin, 5 June 2003).

Indeed, the Palestinians' masterful practice of speaking out of both sides of their mouth (in any language) is evident as they seem to say most of the right things in a carefully orchestrated public event (as in Aqaba or the White House Lawn in 1993) yet they continue to glorify terror ("PA Sends Mixed Messages on Terrorism," Itamar Marcus, Palestinian Media Watch Bulletin, 5 June 2003).

For example, the winning ten entries in a Palestinian letter writing contest, that claimed one million entries (a tremendous exaggeration), specifically defined Israel - not the *West Bank* and Gaza - as a target for Palestinian aspirations. "I will dream of the sea at Jaffa and the sunshine in Lod", glorified *martyrdom* and "One day I will buy a weapon and I will blow away the fetters", demonstrated hostility towards America, and promoted hate and violence ("The Winning Entries in the Palestinian Authority's Children's Letter Writing Contest," Itamar Marcus, Palestinian Media Watch Bulletin, 1 June 2003).

Some leading commentators in Israel who are not suspect of conservative leanings are half begging and half threatening the Palestinians not to miss yet another opportunity for peace ("[An open letter to our Palestinian cousins](#)," Yoel Marcus, *Ha'aretz*, 4 June 2003): "You will wrestle with the same problem that Israel faced on the eve of statehood: becoming a state with one government and one army. Don't let Arafat sabotage your efforts...When opportunity knocks, don't slam the door."

Yet, there is still a segment in Israel that believes in good intentions on the part of the Palestinians and bad intentions on the part of Israel to the extent that it actually absolves the Palestinians of any responsibility and only blames one political element in Israel - the *right*. Unlike the Roadmap that demands action to stop terror on the part of the Palestinians, this group arrogantly demands action only from Israel and does not even put the need to cease terror on the table, simplistically blaming it all on the *settlements* as if they existed in 1967 or 1948 ("To my brothers and sisters on the right," Yitzhak Frankenthal, *Ha'aretz*, 1 June 2003).

The scope and nature of hatred, vilification, and incitement coming out of the Arab world is of an unprecedented magnitude, which serves as a bad omen for things to come if remained unheeded. The dangers of antisemitism are not only threatening the future of Israel and the

Jewish people (as is exceptionally illustrated in the "Pipeline of Hatred") but also the United States. While the Egyptian president accorded President Bush the proper hospitality at the Sharm-a-Sheikh conference, his official Egyptian press in the week preceding the conference described him as a war criminal and compared Americans to Nazis; not exactly the rhetoric expected from an *ally* that received about \$2 billion in U.S. support ("[Egyptian Columnist Compares U.S. with Nazi Germany](#)," MEMRI, Special Dispatch Series - No. 508 29 May 2003).

And the Palestinians have outdone their teachers by describing Bush as the *head of the snake* ("[President Bush is The Head of the Snake... America is Sinking Deeper and Deeper in a Putrid Swamp, and Will Extricate Itself from it Only as a Defeated, Stinking Loser](#)" - MEMRI, Special Dispatch Series - No. 517, 5 June 2003). In this sense the Middle East at least shows clearly which came first: the chicken or the egg. The Palestinians are the chickens following the direction and the atmosphere engendered in the eggs hatched by Arab countries and not vice versa. The Arab leaders at Sharm-a-Sheikh have actually admitted that they have been supporting terrorism thus far by pledging not to continue to do so. Promises, promises. This is probably the most diplomatic *nolo contendere* type declarations ever made (of course with the exception that there was an *indirect admission of guilt* but *without acceptance of punishment*).

With increasing emphasis on establishing a *Palestinian state* a pointed editorial draws attention to the need for the Arabs to recognize not just Israel but the viability of a Jewish state ("How about a Jewish state?" The *Jerusalem Post*, 3 June 2003): "Destroying Israel remains a critical plank of the militant Islamic agenda, and Palestinian statehood has for decades been seen by the Arab world as a means to that goal. If militant Islam is America's target, it should be focusing on destabilizing Iran and demanding up front that the Arab world speak, not just of Israel, but a Jewish state. Then we will know that we are on our way to a new Middle East, rather than more of the same." Yet the negotiating positions of the parties involved also points out how intractable, if not irreconcilable, the situation is ("Understanding the Negotiating Strategies," Barry Rubin, The *Jerusalem Post*, 2 June 2003).

Yet, the rapid adoption of the Roadmap by the Palestinians and their Arab masters and handlers raises serious concerns as to what the Roadmap augurs for Israel. It was noted that after a recent suicide bombing in Israel the Palestinians referred to the site as *occupied Afula* despite the fact that it is within Israel's 1967 boundaries. If this Roadmap points to the direction of a so-called cease fire which will give the terrorists sufficient respite to rearm and plan new attacks (which is highly likely) and if incitement is not stopping (and it is not) then this Roadmap becomes nothing more than Oslo II ("How about a non-Oslo Approach?" Charles Krauthammer, The *Jerusalem Post*, 1 June 2003). Indeed, some see it as disastrous for Israel ("Recipe for Disaster," Arthur Cohn, The *Jerusalem Post*, 3 June 2003).

In what could have been a real comic treat - had it not been so tragic - Israel is expected to introduce *confidence building measures* to convince the Palestinians that Israel's intentions towards them are genuine. Yet it is Israel that needs to build its confidence because it is under an existential threat from the Palestinians and other Arab states as well as from a wide majority of the area residents who were polled revealing their negative attitudes toward a possible peace with Israel ("Build Our Confidence," Saul Singer, The *Jerusalem Post*, 4 June 2003).

The Palestinians and their Arab supporters are able to perpetrate terrorist acts, get international support for them, and then deceive many about their intentions - this despite their very own declarations that openly call for the destruction of Israel. Whether directly or via a series of sophisticated euphemisms such as the old "secular democratic state," the "two state solution," or the demand for the "right of return," the picture that emerges in the last few weeks is clear: Terrorism pays and such behavior is handsomely rewarded and Israel is the prize ("[The same deception, the same delusion](#)," Israel Harel, *Ha'aretz*, 7 June 2003).

In fact, one analysis suggests that all the tangibles have been reaped by the Palestinians while all they have offered is empty rhetoric to stop terror and incitement, which they already pledged to do in 1993 and violated as soon as it was stated; yet they were able to resell the same used car for double the price in Aqaba ("Shades of Oslo," Charles Krauthammer, *The Washington Post*, 6 June 2003): "Now, forcing the unilateral surrender of Israel might be a policy, if it promised peace. But the first round of unilateral concessions, from 1993 to 2000, yielded nothing but the establishment of a terror base in Palestine -- a *Trojan horse*, as Faisal Husseini called it, from which the bloodiest Palestinian violence has been launched....Bush, having taken his friend Sharon to the cleaners, needs now to make sure that Abbas keeps his word."

It appears that the recent political moves to enhance the establishment of a Palestinian state result in legitimizing and adding another rogue regime while threatening the existence and viability of the only democracy in the Middle East - Israel. There is little doubt as is seen in numerous commentaries that rewarding terrorism will continue to pose serious risks to Israel as well as to the U.S. ("This Plan is Too Dangerous for Israel," Morton Klein, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 2 June 2003): "Under these circumstances, for President Bush to forge ahead with his Roadmap for the creation of a Palestinian Arab state would mean creating a new terrorist state that will endanger Israel - even though the President has pledged to eliminate terrorist states, not create new ones." Another policy is offered to the administration instead: "What a powerful message it would send to terrorists and their supporters if, instead, he had announced that the United States is suspending all relations with the PA terrorist regime, and withdrawing support for creation of a Palestinian Arab state, until the PA arrests terrorists, confiscates their weapons, outlaws terror groups, and ends anti-Jewish incitement."

A valuable lesson - relying on Greek experience and views - about the meaning of wars dispels many myths about them ("[The Current Crisis Through the Eyes of the Greeks](#)," Victor Davis Hanson, *The Middle East Forum*, 6 May 2003). Wars are not rare and they are not due to material grievances or socioeconomic disparity. They break out because the attacker expects "acceptable costs in relation to the benefits of fulfilling his objectives, whether rational or irrational, perceived or actual." The outcome of wars depends on personal leadership, tactics, logistics, weaponry as well as determination and support. Wars do not truly end "until the reasons they were fought are extinguished." Affluent societies are reluctant to enter into a war situation to an extent that they may jeopardize their own viability.

Israel received a major strategic boost from the U.S. by the elimination of the Iraqi threat. Yet from the frying pan of that threat, Israel is finding itself in the fire of Palestinian statehood and growing de-legitimation and international threat from the Arab League and all this while terrorism has not gone away. The developments in the Middle East have one very likely

possibility: The Palestinians will miss this opportunity again and if they do the angered and disappointed party this time will be the Bush administration. Clearly, the Palestinians would not want to stand in his cross hair if they are planning to deceive him again (and they are). With Hamas playing the *rejectionist* to Abbas there is a lot more ball to be played in the Palestinian court until its air goes out or it simply explodes.