Taxi Wars

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By Robbie Friedmann

The coalition forces fighting in Iraq, mainly from the U.S., are experiencing a different kind of war. This is not a battle between conventional forces with uniform and weapons adhering to military strategies, but one where Iraq's official army is inactive (and being decimated). It is one where *resistance* is less in the battlefield and more in civilians' homes, where Saddam's goons threaten families so that youngsters and adults are forced to *fight* for fear of their lives. It is not a battle and not a war, but a campaign of terror that the Iraqis have no chance of winning. Iraqis bomb or rain missiles on themselves, shoot at their civilians, burn oil fields, threaten a "Jihad," commit suicide bombings in a taxi against regular coalition forces and broadcast old videos of Saddam Hussein. As with Israel, every soldier who falls or becomes a POW turns into a national agony and perspective of the overall progress in the war is lost in favor of the specific latest Iraqi atrocity that is broadcast all over the world by "embedded" reports. Therefore, the best option for the coalition forces is the demand for an unconditional surrender. That is the only acceptable way to stop the war. ("[Help Iraqis Arise](#)," William Safire, *The New York Times*, March 27, 2003).

Perhaps because of raised expectations, the war is not over yet and coalition forces have casualties, mostly not from combat. Fighting wars as if they are video games is nothing but dreaming. I remember well when on October 7, 1967, a day after the Egyptian-Syrian Yom Kippur surprise attack on Israel, during the new graduate students' reception, one of the professors requested to turn on the TV to watch the news "before the Israelis finish the war." The assumption was that all future wars would be measured by the timeline of the 1967 Six Day War (and Israel had hundreds of casualties in that war). While the 1973 Yom Kippur War ended in a decisive Israeli victory it was costly, considered a psychological loss, and it lasted three weeks (until October 25) when the U.S. pressured Israel for a cease-fire (thus preventing the destruction of Egypt's army).

Now pundits expected a "cake-walk" and when it was not over in a day or two reports about "disasters," "setbacks," and "quagmires," started to emanate from armchair pundits ("History or Hysteria? Our vulture pundits regurgitate rumor and buzz," Victor David Hanson, *National Review*, March 28, 2003). Yet, "The commentators need to listen to history. By any fair standard of even the most dazzling charges in military history the German blast through the Ardennes in spring 1940, or Patton's romp in July the present race to Baghdad is unprecedented in its speed and daring, and in the lightness of its causalities. We can nit-pick about the need for another armored division, pockets of irregulars, a need to mop up here and there, plenty of hard fighting ahead, this and that. But the fact remains that, so far, the campaign has been historically unprecedented in getting so many tens of thousands of soldiers so quickly to Baghdad without losses and its logistics will be studied for decades."

Like Safire, Hanson recommends unconditional Iraqi surrender as the best strategy: "When this is all over ... besides a great moral accounting, I hope that there will deep introspection and sober public discussion about the peculiar ignorance and deductive pessimism on the part of our elites.

In the meantime, all we can insist on is absolute and unconditional surrender no peace process, no exit strategy, no U.N. votes, no Arab League parley, no EU expressions of concern, no French, no anything but our absolute victory and Saddam's utter ruin. Unlike in 1991, commanders in the field must be given explicit instructions from the White House about negotiations: There are to be absolutely none other than the acceptance of unconditional surrender."

Moreover, when this war is over, there will be new alignments, new sides and new collective memories ("Taking Sides: The Iraq war will divide the world--for the better," Daniel Henninger, *The Wall Street Journal*, March 28, 2003). "It is going to establish divisions for a generation -- in relations among nations, in voting patterns. Long-term claims to moral standing are at stake. Among families and friends, these matters will never come up again, but like villagers in occupied France, no one is ever going to forget either. These are not the destructive divisions so often worried over by instinctive moderates and multilateralists. These are constructive divisions, which are driving the world's people toward making a decision about what they believe in, why they believe in it and what kind of world they want to live in."

Part of the problem is that the Western media is filled with irrelevant *balancing* reports about the *mood of the Arab street* ("Hussein support wide in West Bank: Streetwise Arabs see tough survivor," Charles A. Radin, *Boston Globe*, 3/24/2003). Likewise, there was a radio interview about an (ungrateful) American-educated Saudi family that "now hates America" ("War Sours Many Saudis on U.S. Motives," Morning Edition, NPR, Mar. 28, 2003). These add little to our understanding of what happens, why it happens, or what might really happen given certain circumstances (such as an American victory). There was not much in the western press about the mood in the "Nazi streets" during WWII.

In the meantime, public and private media have a lot to be desired. It is not merely the incompetent reporting of Geraldo Rivera (who announced that he was going on a helicopter with the marines to "kick some butt"), but also the public and private media's flagrant biases in lieu of what is supposed to be professional and factual reporting. In an interview with New York Times' Jerusalem Bureau Chief, James Bennet, Terry Gross uncritically accepted his statements and made assumptions about the *realities* in the Middle East without questioning the merit of what Bennet opined ("Interview: James Bennet Discusses the Current State of Affairs Between Israel and Palestine and the Impact War Would Have on the Region," Terry Gross, Fresh Air, National Public Radio, March 12, 2003).

Gross, for example, showed more concern about Arafat's "mental health" (as if being a professional terrorist is a legitimate and sane profession) than to families of victims of terror when she asked Bennet to assess the impact of Arafat being "confined to such a small area for so long" and then asserts (straight out of the Tom Friedman school) that "...Sharon himself has been very active in building the settlements" implying that this is the reason for terrorism. This despite the fact that Arafat has been deemed irrelevant by all, including the Palestinians and that there is no current *active* building of *settlements*.

Baathist-socialist Iraq is *suddenly* showing its religious colors with a Baghdad preacher barking the call for Jihad ("Friday Sermon in Baghdad," MEMRI, Special Dispatch - Iraq/Jihad and Terrorism Studies, March 28, 2003, No.487): "Oh Mujahideen-believers! We have sworn Jihad

before Muhammad... We are the army of Allah. We who are fighting against those who are fighting us. Oh Mujahideen-believers everywhere... The evil has arrived. The Satan and his army. The Mujahideen have declared Jihad for the sake of Allah to bring down the banners of the infidels and those full of hatred... Raise the banner of Islam. Raise the banner of Jihad. This war is not different than the war of the polytheists against the Prophet. The criminal Bush declares before the whole world, as the polytheists had declared in the Battle of Badr [the first battle won by Prophet Muhammad against the polytheists]: 'The world will recognize the strength of our army...'"

When the lion roars the mouse opens his mouth and the Palestinian sermons do not lag far behind ("Friday Sermon on Palestinian Authority Television," MEMRI, Special Dispatch - Palestinian Authority/Jihad and Terrorism Studies, March 25, 2003, No. 486): "...Allah drowned Pharaoh and those who were with him. Allah drowns the Pharaohs of every generation. Allah will drown the little Pharaoh, the dwarf, the Pharaoh of all times, of our time, the American President. Allah will drown America in our seas, in our skies, in our land. America will drown and all the oppressors will drown... Oh, people of Palestine, Oh, people of Iraq. The Crusader, Zionist America, has started an attack against our Iraq, the Iraq of Islam and Arabism, the Iraq of civilization and history. It opened a Crusader Zionist war against Iraq. If Iraq is defeated, if the nation [of Islam] is defeated in Iraq - this will be our last breath of life..."

The Palestinian sentiments spew directly from the mosques to their TV and newspapers. Their identification with "our Iraq" is evident in street demonstrations and cartoons depicting Iraqi power over the U.S. and the UK by capturing allied soldiers as POWs ("Iraqi eagle with soldiers in its talons, Itamar Marcus, Palestinian Media Watch Bulletin, March 25, 2003; see cartoon). Interestingly - and shockingly - enough, Palestinians also have active support from international organizations that are strictly prohibited from aiding and abetting terror ("Red Cross Harbors Terrorist," Arutz Sheva, March 27, 2003).

If it is *expected* that such venom will come from Iraq (and it is tolerated by *us* when it comes from the Palestinians), continuously alarming sings are being written on the walls (of Egyptian newspapers) from *unexpected*corners. A former Egyptian war minister claims "President Bush's actions are like Hitler's" that his ideas resemble Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and that "Guantanamo is like Auschwitz" ("Former Egyptian Minister of War Compares President Bush and His Policies to Hitler and Nazism," MEMRI, Special Dispatch - Egypt, March 23, 2003, No. 485). Whether he believes in it or whether he is making these comments for the sake of propaganda does not change the vile realities: The perpetrator is crying that he is the *victim,* that it is the judge who is to be blamed for the crime, and that it is criminal to prevent him from committing further crimes. Absurd? The cruder the charge the more acceptable it becomes. Coming from former supporters of Nazis and current propagators of vile antisemitism, it is indicative of what the U.S. is to expect from its Egyptian *ally* (and others like it) in the future.

This perverse reality is perhaps best illustrated by a mother whose daughter was murdered by Palestinian terror ("The ugly truth: Occasionally, as in these perverse times, the *victim* may be the bully. He may also be a liar -- or even a murderer," Frimet Roth, *Jewsweek* March 19, 2003) and who desperately attempts to redefine who the true perpetrator and the true victim are.

The recent Iraqi embarkment on religious fervor demonstrates its power to mobilize masses even

for a lost cause. Rarely do we take a closer look at the foundations upon which terrorism blossoms. The 9-11 atrocity forced us to take a closer look. While drawing the line between good and evil may be somewhat helpful the *why* was missing from such discussion and it was left to an intuitive understanding that we are just *very different.* What these differences are and how unbridgeable they are can be found in a must-read article on the philosophy of terror that provides the exact foundation that feeds radicalism. The article points to an urgent need for this battle to be fought not only with armies and coalitions, but also in the field of ideas. This is perhaps one of the most relevant sources published since the 9-11 atrocity and by virtue of its publication date it is evident how late we are in comprehending what it is that wants to do away with us and why, as well as what needs to be done to successfully cope with it ("[The Philosopher of Islamic Terror](#)," Paul Berman, *The New York Times*, March 23, 2003).

Berman focuses on the roots of Al-Qaida, Islamism and Pan-Arabism illustrating that despite the deep divide between them they were fairly united against what they perceived to be an external threat: "The Islamists and the Pan-Arabists tried to cooperate with one another in Egypt in those days, and there was some basis for doing so. Both movements dreamed of rescuing the Arab world from the legacies of European imperialism. Both groups dreamed of crushing Zionism and the brand-new Jewish state. Both groups dreamed of fashioning a new kind of modernity, which was not going to be liberal and freethinking in the Western style but, even so, was going to be up-to-date on economic and scientific issues. And both movements dreamed of doing all this by returning in some fashion to the glories of the Arab past. Both movements wanted to resurrect, in a modern version, the ancient Islamic caliphate of the seventh century, when the Arabs were conquering the world."

It took the U.S. 12 years and 17 U.N. resolutions to realize that diplomacy, boycott, sanctions, and appeasement will not make a dictator less of a threat to his own people, to his neighbors and to the rest of the world. For a variety of reasons the world is still not at that stage vis-a-vis the Palestinians. It is worth looking at a model that shows the extent to which the Palestinians reflect the Iraqi reality ("Iraq as a model for Palestine," Chuck Chriss, JIA, 3-23-2003). In a sense they actually pose no less of a danger because they have a history to foment any area they have been in such as Jordan, Lebanon, Kuwait, all areas they were kicked out from by their very own *brethren*.

Yet the world is expecting Israel to appease the bloodthirsty terrorists by giving in to their hallucinatory and megalomaniacal demands. The U.S.' strongest ally, Tony Blair, is already making deals with France and clearly is pushing for the implementation of a Roadmap that will reward Palestinians for their terror tactics. Yet, the Palestinians seem to demonstrate not only against Israel but also against the U.S. and the UK. ("[Iraq And Straw; Israel And Road Map](#)," Arutz Sheva, March 27, 2003). This justifiably raised the ire of some commentators ("Kofi Annan's Offense," *The Washington Post*, Charles Krauthammer, March 28, 2003): "The way to win hearts and minds is not to try to appease those who wish us no good but to stay in Iraq and use the authority of the victor to build a decent and open society. We will not win the propaganda war with words. We will win it by overthrowing Hussein and exposing the nature of his barbarism -- and the shame of those who supported him and tried to shield him from the just fate American and British soldiers are trying to visit upon him today."

Yet the push is so strong that President Bush seems to have acquiesced to it. Not clear whether Bush realizes the danger that is lurking from the establishment of a Palestinian state or whether he might be satisfied with short-term solutions, the fact remains that rewarding Palestinians for terrorism will only beget more terrorism. Palestinians have been openly calling for suicide bombings against the U.S.; they should be dismantled of their corrupt terroristic regime in the same way as Iraq is or else the region will erupt again in a few short years ("Bush's Choice: Powell or the Prophets?" Michael Freund, *Jewish World Review*, March 26, 2003).

Some sources who understand the Arab world have consistently warned against too lenient an approach that might backfire at the West because it ignores the character of the enemy ("Remember our enemies," Joseph Farah,*WorldNetDaily.com*, March 27, 2003).

Indeed, from those who were very close to the negotiations with the Palestinians, it became clear that the Palestinians did everything they could to sabotage any efforts at diplomatic solutions in the same way the Iraqis did for more than a decade ("Straight From The Horse's Mouth," Arutz Sheva, March 27, 2003).

Therefore, writers like Joseph Farah are among the very few whom question repeatedly the wisdom of creating a Palestinian state ("Why a Palestinian state now?" *WorldNetDaily.com*, March 24, 2003), vigorously rejecting the idea on several grounds: "Because we are creating a future crisis. We are creating a future terrorist state. We are creating a future Iraq - but one a lot closer to ground zero, which is Israel."

Indeed proponents of a Palestinian state need to be disabused from the *roadmap* leading to it. This is not only because there is reason NOT to let them have a state but also because there is NO reason to let them have one. On the idealistic front it is difficult to oppose an innocuous drive for self-determination. The problem lies in the exact fact that self-determination for the Palestinians is predicated on the absolute destruction of Israel. Rewarding terror will be perceived by the Palestinians as another reason to continue with their current strategy and no international guarantees will be worth the paper on which they are written.

It is self-evident that if the Palestinians will ever agree to void their demand to the "right of return" (a big if) they may not declare and end to the conflict. If they will declare an end to the conflict (an even bigger if) it will be a matter of less than a decade for them to lull many to a false sense of peace before they will then make claims (anew) for *territory* and *rights.* In the same fashion that the Oslo Accord proved to be a *Trojan Horse* so would any other arrangement with the Palestinians under their current regime. This is a depressing thought, yet it is sobering in its sanity and reality and it behooves nations and leaders to cope with this problem before it turns itself into a greater disaster than it already is. A *hand-picked* prime minister is not the solution. Nothing short of a total regime change for the Palestinians is acceptable. How to bring this about in conjunction with a people of whom 80% are supportive of genocidal bombings and who violently demonstrate against the countries offering them a state is a challenge for true leaders. Perhaps, as with Iraq, nothing short of unconditional surrender - or rather nothing short of a revolution where the formula of *peace for peace* guides the relationship -- should be acceptable.

It is therefore astounding to see how criticism directed at leading democracies who became targets of terrorism and are potential subjects to weapons of mass destruction is blind to flagrant

transgressions when committed by dictators and religious fanatics. If *they* do it we can *expect* and *understand* it. The problem is with the *it*, which becomes so blurred when terror and threat of mass destruction are confused with legitimate defense. Funny things democracies. Some are better than others and many *judge* themselves and others unrealistically ("Democracies and double standards," Bret Stephens, *The Jerusalem Post*, Mar. 20, 2003): "World opinion holds the US and Israel to a higher standard than other countries. This is a patent double-standard that harshly penalizes the occasional sins of the good guys while indulging the manifold sins of the bad guys. It also reeks of racism. It is only to be expected when an Arab state does something atrocious, but when Israel misbehaves, well, that is a matter for the Security Council. All the same, perhaps it is just as well. The world may hold the US and Israel to a higher standard, but so do Americans and Israelis themselves. It is this that has made both nations not only powerful but exceptional. And it is this that, when all is said and done, proves their critics wrong."

It is not only how democracies judge each other. There is a growing concern that, whether based on foolish naivete or purposeful malice, the anti-war coalition is opening a second front at home ("The Second Front," David Horowitz, *FrontPageMagazine.com*, March 24, 2003): It would be unwise not to take the threat posed by this organized attack on American policy and American security seriously. The misnamed *anti-war* movement is led and organized by leftist vanguards who proclaim their solidarity with terrorist states, including North Korea, Cuba and terrorist organizations in the Middle East. One banner raised by activists in San Francisco read, "We Support Our Troops When They Shoot Their Officers." This is nothing but sedition. Some are so driven by *peace* that they also call for killing of Jews to make the world a better place (see Photo 5 on the slide show). They must have adopted *Killing them Softly* as their *national* anthem.

Even the pseudo-intellectual facade of the anti-war movement has been easily shattered when the concentrated genius at Harvard demonstrated its low-level of intelligence recently ("What I Saw at the Walkout: The intellectual bankruptcy of Harvard's peaceniks," Jason Steorts, *National Review*, March 22, 2003): "Harvard's high-minded intellectuals recite their usual litany of complaints about capitalism, about globalization, and above all, about George W. Bush. Yesterday's protest was an exercise in many things: Vanity, condescension, evasion, arrogance, and smug self-righteousness. But it failed miserably as an effort at persuasion. This should come as no surprise to those of us who recognize that war is tragic, but who also know that life under tyranny, or life overshadowed by the danger of apocalyptic slaughter, is more tragic still." More cogent arguments actually suggest that the reasons war did not end up as quickly as expected serve to strengthen, not weaken, the case for the war ("Not in their name," Saul Singer, *The Jerusalem Post*, March 28, 2003).

If some called the selective *anti-war* demonstrators who are supportive of killing American officers and Jews, the *second front* others are even more explicit ("The enemy within," Ann Coulter, *Townhall.com*, March 28, 2003). In a scathing rebuke of several reputed media outlets such as the *New York Times* and MSNBC, Coulter maintains that, "*The Times* subscribes to Arab-style proclamations in defiance of the facts. Like Saddam Hussein, the truth for them has no meaning. They say whatever honor commands them to say." As if "We're losing this war!" and "The Elite Republican Guard is assembling outside New York City!"

And others lament that the lack of support (or the active objection) to the U.S. war effort is also prevalent in the heart of the image-making industry that thrives on fiction to an extent that it does

not distinguish between it and reality ("The Little People: On Oscar night, Hollywood thanks everyone but the troops," Michael Medved, *The Wall Street Journal*, March 26, 2003).

So against this backdrop of a vulnerable democratic society we can also add the infiltration of the military chaplaincy with radical elements trained by Islamist extremists ("Terror Indictments: Muslim linked to Al-Arian trained military chaplains," Mary Jacoby, *St. Petersburg Times*, March 27, 2003).

There is little doubt that the U.S. will prevail and win. There are questions as what the outcome will mean for many who did not wish to walk in the current trail. Those who have opted to be on the wrong side will suffer the consequences in the decades to come. A strong and determined U.S. has never been a better source for guaranteeing freedom and prosperity around the world sometimes against the *best judgment* of those eventually freed by the U.S.