

The Piranha Bully: The *Right* to Lie and Murder

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By Robbie Friedmann

Prior to and even after the military operation in Iraq charges were made in the U.S., Europe, and the Arab world that it was "perpetrated to take over the oil fields." Yet, the same voices did not blame Russia, France and Germany for not wanting to go to war for the same reason. Therefore, it is helpful to view the realities of the oil market not in domination terms but rather in terms of market forces. A recent study ("[Oil: Who's over a Barrel?](#)," Eliyahu Kanovsky, Middle East Quarterly, Spring 2003) suggests that supply or control of oil has been replaced by another pivotal factor, that of revenue: "Burgeoning populations, flat revenues, and massive deficits have undermined the social contract that has guaranteed domestic stability in the oil era. Nothing on the horizon will change the negative equation. The real oil crisis is not one of supply but of revenue, and it is the security of the producers themselves that has been eroded. This is bound to increase their dependence on the United States, as the guarantor of their continued survival." In fact, the study argues that terrorism is far more dangerous than the (low) potential of an oil shortage. This, in turn, has important implications for U.S. policy, as it is now free from the threat of oil as a weapon of mass extortion.

The *shocker* this week was the news that France helped wanted senior Iraqi officials flee the country ("France helped Iraqis escape," Bill Gertz, *The Washington Times*, 6 May 2003) thus holding on to its earned reputation of blatantly acting against U.S. interests. First reported by Debka File that Saddam might be in Syria ("Is Saddam in Syria?," DEBKAFfile War Diary - Day 15, 3 April 2003) and that France was instrumental in helping smuggle Iraqi officials from Iraq via Syria to France and other European countries, it now reports that based on intelligence files found in Iraq, the U.S. is actively seeking to expose the ties that Chirac and his family had with Saddam and his regime. There is also sufficient information about the head of the International Atomic Energy Commission in Vienna, Dr. Mohammed ElBaradai, to demand his removal ("Washington Targets Chirac and ElBaradai," DEBKA-Net-Weekly, 7 May 2003).

Despite politicians' buzz implying that the U.S. can focus on one issue at a time, the current administration is proving that it can handle several conflicts at the same time and that the operation in Iraq and the war on terrorism are not mutually exclusive ("Is Graham Crackers?--II: The battle of Iraq pays dividends in the war on terror," Brendan Minter, *The Wall Street Journal*, 6 May 2003).

There is a growing element of Arab critics who are dissatisfied with the performance of Arab media, and are increasingly willing to place the blame where it belongs instead of using the Arab tradition of pointing to anyone but themselves. This may be infrequent and not thorough enough, but each of these occasions is more likely to bring about additional - much needed - criticism. Sheikh Al-Ansari, a religious scholar in Qatar, chastised Arab media for being deceptive and aligning itself with the Saddam regime, arguing that the Arab satellite stations were wrong in describing the Allies as savages (with the noted exception of Kuwait), and criticizing Arabs for developing the paranoid mind-set that others are conspiring against them ("[An Arab Intellectual](#)

[in Qatar: 'Arab Media's Conduct During the War is Indicative of a Deeper Malaise'](#)," MEMRI, Special Dispatch - Reform in the Arab and Muslim World, 9 May 2003, No. 503).

Even from inside religious circles in Iraq, voices of relative moderation are heard seeking to somehow *survive* the current American operation in Iraq and see it (as do the Americans) as temporary. A Friday sermon in a Baghdad mosque is fairly conciliatory although between the lines one can read accommodation on one hand together with a condescension that is derived from a sentiment of superiority on the other ("[Friday Sermon in Falouja Iraq](#)," MEMRI, Special Dispatch - Iraq, 6 May 2003, No. 500).

And in other parts of the Arab world similar voices are heard ("[A Tunisian Intellectual on The Arab Obsession with Vengeance](#)," MEMRI, Special Dispatch - Reform in the Arab and Muslim World, 4 May 2003, No. 499) suggesting that the missiles falling on Baghdad prove that the world is moving forward while the Arab world is regressing in the opposite direction. Yet the attack is perceived as having the potential to force the Arab world to open up to democracy, and the author blames "the tribal Arab culture of vengeance" that "transmuted their defeats into a fixated, vengeful mentality" and on "the neurotic tenacity of an 'all or nothing' policy and its consequences."

However, unlike the critical outlook offered from the Persian Gulf, Tunis, or even the fairly conciliatory position from the Baghdad clergy, the American Arab community is banking on American politically correct sentiments to bash anyone who dares criticize unacceptable behavior when displayed by Arabs and Muslims. In this case, their opposition is to the appointment of Daniel Pipes to the board of the United States Institute of Peace. But as an editorial suggests ("Daniel Pipes, peacenik," *The Jerusalem Post*, 7 May 2003): "Approval of the Pipes nomination would signal that America takes militant Islam at its word and will maintain relentless war against this breeding ground of terror. The presence of Pipes on the USIP board would also bolster moderate Muslims in America who have seen their faith hijacked by terrorists."

This appointment is important given the many voices that are still vehemently anti-American and anti-Israel. These voices come from diplomatic circles as well as being supported by various advocacy groups. The latest such venom comes at a time when diplomatic pressures are again being put on both Israel and the Palestinians to reach some accommodation. Yet the Palestinians continue with their terror campaign and their emissaries spew hatred and incitement to violence, as if they are not the subject of intense international efforts to reform ("[Palestinian Diplomat in Morocco on the War in Iraq, Zionism, and Israel](#)," MEMRI, Special Dispatch - Palestinian Authority, 7 May 2003, No. 501).

They continue with the big lie technique, claiming that "Israeli agents looted Baghdad's museums and banks"; lay imaginary and groundless claims such as "we must liberate occupied Iraq, Palestine, and Moroccan cities under Spanish rule"; continue to falsify history, stating "the establishment of the State of Israel is unjustified" and "Zionism was not founded by Jews, but by western colonialists"; and view the American president as if he, rather than Saddam Hussein, is the tyrant ("Bush's fate will be no different from the fate of the tyrants who preceded him.") One could only remain stupefied as to the audacity and arrogance of terrorists who, when having the

best chance at establishing a state, are trying to cut the hand that is working so hard at building it for them. This could be understood only against the backdrop of extreme unwavering demands that include entitlement to murder, theft, claims to property which is not theirs, while at the same time expecting the annihilation and destruction of the opponent who is perceived to be the intended victim. Precisely the "all or nothing" attitude so openly criticized by the Tunisian intellectual.

As Secretary Powell is visiting the Middle East, the Palestinians are readying themselves for yet another general strike and the assessment is that for psychological or organizational reasons the terror of homicidal bombings will continue ("Suicide bombing is here to stay, professor predicts in new paper,," Richard Allen Greene, JTA, 8 May 2003). If Powell needs any proof of how difficult his mission is all he needs to do is watch another recently produced and broadcast Palestinian video clip ("Director of Palestinian Children's Aid Association: We teach our children to reach Shahada," Itamar Marcus, Palestinian Media Watch, Multi-media Bulletin, 6 May 2003).

As Israel has sat tight for the second time in a decade while the U.S. was actively engaged in military operations against Iraq, it has been relegated again to a *friend* that has to be tolerated but not necessarily be proud of. Sort of the teenager who brings a not-very-attractive date to the party but who is *very nice* as if that is going to make an impression ("A matter of honor," Steven Zak, *Jewish World Review*, 1 May 2003). Yet in international affairs, being *very nice* should matter much more than being *attractive*. After all, Israel has actively aided the U.S. strategically, intelligence wise, and with essential training providing tangible value as an ally.

The fact remains that the U.S. saw fit to resolve the Iraqi problem before it decided to take on the Arab-Israeli conflict (yet again). The fact also remains that the pundits and diplomats who predicted that if the Arab-Israeli conflict will not be resolved prior to Iraq, that situation will pose a tremendous danger to the West ("Let's be positive about 'destabilization',," Mark Steyn, *The Jerusalem Post*, 7 May 2003).

It is nothing short of fascinating to contrast two opinions on the future of the Middle East and Israel. One by a *New York Times* popular, and sharp-tongued, award-winning columnist who tends to confuse victim with perpetrator, equates terror with victimization and jumps on any opportunity to bash Israel under the guise that he cares about her future ("[Fathers and Sons](#),," Thomas L. Friedman, *The New York Times*, 11 May 2003). Friedman writes, "This is a critical moment. For the first time, the Palestinians have produced a prime minister, Mahmoud Abbas; a finance minister, Salam Fayyad; and a security chief, Muhammad Dahlan, who understand how badly the Palestinian Authority lacked proper institutions and how disastrous for the Palestinian people was the Arafat strategy of suicide terrorism and double talk with Israel." Audiences do not applaud the actors and director prior to the completion of the play and these *leaders* have yet to produce something other than the fact that they were associated with terror for decades. And Friedman seems to care more about the miscalculation and the damage to the Palestinians by their own choice of terrorism than showing any sense of understanding to those victimized by it.

The other opinion, given by an editor of a U.S.-published Pakistani newspaper, seems to understand the dynamics of the conflict far better ("Moderate Muslims and the road map,"

Tashbih Sayyed, *The Jerusalem Post*, 7 May 2003). He absolutely opposes the establishment of a Palestinian state on grounds it is a sure formula for the destruction of Israel. He states also, "By helping establish a Palestinian state the U.S. is undoing all its successes in the war on terror since 11 September 2001." Indeed, it seems that when it concerns Israel, the U.S. strays from its own policy against terrorism, undertaken since 9-11 and in the war against Iraq, as if somehow Israel has to tolerate terrorism and have its hands tied behind its back while fighting this vicious menace.

Friedman may be an influential pundit but he is no longer credible. His opinions may be derived out of threat and intimidation by terrorists or perhaps by Saudi money. If his opinions are completely independent, perhaps he ought to have his next lunch with Sayyed, so as to be helped in gaining a far deeper understanding of the complexity of the problem and potential solutions, and to stop mouthing off groundless and preposterous mantras that are short of guaranteeing Israel's safety, U.S. interests, and a sense of justice.

Sayyed is joined by many others who see problems not with the idea of wanting peace in the Middle East but in a *Roadmap* that misses the reasons for why peace is not there to begin with. Even for those who wish to move forward with the *Roadmap* there is an understanding that not much has changed with the appointment of *leaders* who are only semi-independent while Arafat is breathing down their necks from his pictures hanging on Palestinian walls and from his position as *president*. As long as he is around he will do all he can to sabotage the American/quarter initiative ("The Roadblock on the Road Map," Charles Krauthammer, *The Washington Post*, 9 May 2003). Frankly, even without him a great deal of evidence needs to be visible to prove any tangible change.

Indeed, as soon as the joint press conference between the new Palestinian Prime Minister and the American Secretary of State had started, the latter made reference to the importance of adhering to the principles enunciated in U.S. President George W. Bush's speech of 24 June 2002 ("President Bush Calls for New Palestinian Leadership,," The Rose Garden).

In that speech, President Bush called "on the Palestinian people to elect new leaders, leaders not compromised by terror. I call upon them to build a practicing democracy, based on tolerance and liberty... And when the Palestinian people have new leaders, new institutions and new security arrangements with their neighbors, the United States of America will support the creation of a Palestinian state whose borders and certain aspects of its sovereignty will be provisional until resolved as part of a final settlement in the Middle East." And how did the Palestinian Prime Minister respond? By placing a *demand* to release Arafat from his travel restrictions because it is *unacceptable* for the Palestinians. Clearly if anything has changed in the Middle East, it is the decorum and words but not the substance.

This new prime minister offers hope only to those who ignore their own words and the lessons of history. The same day this meeting took place political fanfare was marred by the sad reality of still another terror attack on Israelis, killing one. Indeed some question the blaring contradiction between principles espoused in the June 24 speech and the forcing of the Roadmap which deviates from that policy ("An incredulous about-face," Ron Dermer, *The Jerusalem Post*, 9 May 2003): "More importantly, a genuine peace process would be able to reap the benefits of the

tailwind caused by the forces of freedom that are beginning to blow through the region. Instead, by veering from President Bush's June 24 vision, a tragic Oslo peace process is now returning as a farcical road map. Sadly, more time will be wasted and more lives will be lost before we set out on a genuine road toward peace." Hence the calls for sticking to the June 24 speech rather than to the Roadmap ("June 24 in retrospect," Bret Stephens, *The Jerusalem Post*, 8 May 2003).

One uncorroborated report actually claims the Roadmap has been taken off the table and other *more real* agenda items have replaced it - such as a possible deal with Iran, Syria and Lebanon ("Middle East Road Map - A Useful Cover Story: Road map is lost on his way to Middle East,," DEBKAFfile Exclusive Report, 10 May 2003): "the regional context of his trip swelled in importance, its focus switching from the Israel-Palestinian conflict to U.S. relations with Iran, Syria and Lebanon - a higher priority in the post-Iraq war period. This switch generated the Bush administration's decision, as leaked in Washington Saturday, to put aside the Roadmap for now and press instead for Israeli and Palestinian steps to ease the tensions between them. The leak, released when Powell was airborne, followed President George W. Bush proposal to establish a Middle East free trade area within a decade."

It is mortifying to see a bully hiring a lawyer to defend his actions. But that is what Hamas has done when it hired Stanley Cohen to represent it ("[Stanley Cohen: Terrorist Mouthpiece,](#)" Michael Tremoglie, FrontPageMagazine.com, 17 December 2002). Appearing today on Fox News he defended the right of Hamas to raise money in the U.S. for its *charitable activities*. For those unfamiliar with Hamas' declarations of and penchant for terror activities they would immediately rush - based on Cohen's position - to nominate Hamas for a Nobel Peace Prize, recommend it join the U.N. as a champion of human rights and perhaps even get reparations for not killing as many Israelis as it could have.

And indeed, the Palestinian bully is busy cheating, stealing, lying, pretending, inciting, killing, and unashamedly manipulating public opinion, including the outrageous suggestion that their victim is the *actual bully*." Not much has changed since Bob Dylan wrote his poem about Israel in 1983 except that more people died ("[Neighborhood Bully,](#)" Bob Dylan, - From album *Infidels* - 1983):

"The neighborhood bully been driven out of every land,
He's wandered the earth an exiled man.
Seen his family scattered, his people hounded and torn,
He's always on trial for just being born.
He's the neighborhood."

The real piranha bully is now ready to pull out its latest trick: appearing to accept the Roadmap without complying with its basic policy stipulations. It will then wait for the first opportune moment to victimize again, the same way that Oslo was a Trojan Horse. No other than the late [Palestinian leader Faisal Husseini](#) stated rather unequivocally shortly before his death in May 2001, in an interview with an Egyptian newspaper: "We must distinguish the strategies and long-term goals from the political-phased goals which we are compelled to accept due to international pressures...The ultimate goal is the liberation of all historic Palestine. Oslo had to be viewed as a Trojan horse." This Roadmap has the serious risk of reintroducing this horse. The

June 24 policy offers the Palestinians a state they have not earned, but at least it also offers clear stipulations that terror is no longer acceptable. If the current talks will prove that President Bush has a better chance of succeeding with terrorists where his predecessors failed remains to be seen. He has certainly taken up a challenge with not many odds in his favor. The question still remains whether his good intentions for peace might not result in sacrificing Israel in the process.

It is imperative to view the fight against terror on the basis of a universalistic principle that does not distinguish between various perpetrators (Al-Qaida, Hamas, Islamic Jihad) and various intended victims (Israel, the U.S., the West). Any attempt to cloud such distinctions will end up backfiring and eroding the principle that countries use to justify their fight against terrorism. Therefore, terrorism should not be rewarded under any circumstances, or terrorism has won. No opportunity should ever be given to any bully to have a free hand or they have won too.