

Terrorism Relegates Politics into a Screen-saver

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By Robbie Friedmann

Last week the U.S. officially kicked off its primary season and unless something very important happens (such as the Michael Jackson trial - yes, tongue-in-cheek) attention will focus on the elections for the next 10 months. But the hate industry that produces terror does not recognize political seasons; it continues unabated manufacturing of the culture of hate and death. A recent Egyptian (our friendly ally) popular song demonstrates the fruits of this industry ("[Popular Egyptian Singer's New Song: 'Hey People It was Only a Tower and I Swear by God that They \[the U.S.\] are the Ones Who Pulled It Down,'](#)" MEMRI, Special Dispatch - Egypt, 21 January 2004, No. 647).

Indeed the Arab/Muslim view of the West has reached a rather sophisticated - and highly self-assertive - level where it denigrates the West, despises it, demonstrates a sense of superiority and a determination of mission to return to the glory days of the caliphate. This, to a large extent, has a parallel theme to the Third Reich's 1000 years of pretentious glory. Examine for example the deep ideological fervor in which a European-based Muslim ideologue indoctrinates his audience ("Tariq Ramadan's Two-Faced Islam. The West Is the Land of Conquest - The family, teachers and ideology of the most popular Muslim intellectual in Europe. A challenge for Christians. The theologian Olivier Clement reveals the danger," Sandro Magister). As a commentator suggested, the goal that drives Tariq Ramadan is that: "His problem is not the modernization of Islam, but the Islamification of modernity."

In various parts of the world - Arab, Muslim and Western - the indoctrination intensifies to levels that reflect a "new and improved" version of Nazi propaganda and indoctrination. In Lebanon there is ongoing evidence of translating its anti-Israel obsession into antisemitic vilification ("[Lebanese Member of Parliament: 'The Fall of One Jew, Whether Soldier or Civilian, is a Great Accomplishment,'](#)" MEMRI, Special Dispatch - Syria/Lebanon/Arab Antisemitism Documentation Project, 23 January 2004, No. 649). That pervasive attitude exists well beyond Lebanon as such indoctrination permeates schools and mosques world-wide ("The Roots of Hatred: Decades after Holocaust, a different antisemitism prevails," Matthew McAllester, *Newsday*, 18 January 2004).

The Syrians, despite seemingly being in the cross-hairs of the U.S., continue to live in denial as they redefine day into night and night into day. They do not deny they host terrorists; they just refuse to define them as such and prefer to imbue them with nobility ("[Syrian Writers Union Chairman: Syria Hosts Noble Fighters, Not Terrorists,](#)" MEMRI, Special Dispatch - Syria, 19 January 2004, No. 646). Even Israel proper is not immune from clerical hate as evidenced not by those - expected - in the mosques but even those in the church who see themselves in the service of Arafat ("[Sharon Caves In on Church Appointment, Supports Arafat's Man,](#)" Israel National News, 26 December 2002).

With the radical narrative now in the hands of the most vociferous clerics and with increased conversions and Islamization in U.S. prisons it appears the West refrains from demanding a complete reform of radical Islam and if there is pressure on "moderate" groups to re-take the Islamic narrative the results are not felt. The fact remains that more than two years after the 9-11 atrocity no moderate Arab/Muslim groups have issued any unequivocal condemnation of terrorism or offered criticism about the disastrous terror strategy ("[Unsettling Alliance](#)," Robert Spencer, *The Washington Times*, 20 January 2004).

Perhaps, unlike the Nazis who had a fundamentally secular ideology, the modern terrorist threats could be viewed as emanating from religious origins in large part due to the heavy reliance of the terrorists themselves on Koranic foundations. Yet the focus on the religious element may provide insight as to the narrative used for the justification of terrorism, but not a sufficient understanding of why it happens in the first place. A noted Middle East scholar suggests Arab and Islamic history as a better explaining factor as, after all, how would one explain lengthy calm periods? ("Explaining Islamic Terror," Daniel Pipes, *The Jerusalem Post*, 20 January 2004).

It appears the diplomatic moves in the Middle East have been relegated to the role of a "screen saver." Basically frozen and out of the limelight but somehow out there in the background. There is a growing understanding in the West - following more than three years of terror atrocities - that Yasser Arafat is not interested in peace but wants to destroy Israel ("Arafat's Idea of Peace is the Elimination of Israel," Peter Worthington, *Toronto Sun*, 18 January 2004).

Israel is trying to carry on the semblance of normalcy while it is subjected to an unrelenting onslaught not only of terror but threats to its very identity. This is being accomplished by challenging not only its right to exist but also by vilifying its Jewish foundation. "...the Palestinians are conducting a total war against us that encompasses nearly every facet of human life." Therefore it is important not simply to defend each preventive or offensive act that Israel or the U.S. take against terrorism, but to offer a successful counter-strategy to expose what the battle is all about. While some try to make it as a case for Israel, it has immediate application to all who are threatened by terrorism ("Israel's Case," Caroline Glick, *The Jerusalem Post*, 16 January 2004).

Another element of terrorism that has been largely ignored - and perhaps thus revealing the true power of terrorism - is that it not only goes unpunished but oftentimes it is rewarded. That is why it is important - in dealing with terrorism and international relations - not to succumb to the tendency to give in or terrorism will only increase, even further building on its successes ("[Crime Should Not Pay](#)," Moshe Arens, *Ha'aretz*, 23 January 2004).

The sympathy (latent or manifest) the West shows to terrorism - and even the tolerance of it - has gone beyond the level of absurd. Last month the Stockholm Art Museum displayed a pool of red water representing the blood of terror victims with a small boat carrying the "innocent snow-white" image of a female suicide terrorist that passed for "art." The Israeli ambassador, who was invited to the opening, unplugged the display's lights and one of the projectors fell into the pool. This was followed up by criticism even from such sources as the *Wall Street Journal* that the display was "vandalized" ("Criticize, Don't Vandalize: Israel's ambassador to Sweden chose the wrong way to make a point," Roger Kimball, *Wall Street Journal*, 22 January 2004) but the same

paper also carried an opinion that equated the ambassador's protest with a form of legitimate art thus showing understanding to this action ("Art for Politics' Sake," *Wall Street Journal*, 20 January 2004).

Yet there seem to be some awakening in viewing terror for what it is: an act of hate and destruction not of nobility or martyrdom. This from none other than a liberal west coast paper ("The Mother of All Hatreds: A new and gruesome kind of Mother's Day comes to a troubled checkpoint between Israel and Gaza," Editorial, *The Oregonian*, 16 January 2004).

But for every such awakening, and by no means are there enough, there are those who "know better." So Thomas Friedman is at it again, hard at work. Occasionally he comes up with a "cultural" explanation to demonstrate how deep is the malaise inflicting the Arab and Muslim world. Then, fully forgetting about it whenever he deals with the Arab-Israeli conflict, he becomes a professional Israel-basher. His latest foray is highly critical of U.S. policy which - in his mind - is backing the wrong side - namely Israel. He provides several reasons why Israel has to withdraw from Judea, Samaria and Gaza ("[War of Ideas, Part 4](#)" Thomas L. Friedman, *The New York Times*, 18 January 2004; *Atlanta Journal Constitution* Title: "Israeli Land Grab Undercuts U.S. Policy in Arab World") none of which has any legs to stand on.

First, he argues, Israel has to get out of the way of an Arab "buy-in" into modernization. Does he show any evidence this is actually happening or why Israel is the sole source standing in the way of Arab modernization? No - with him it is an axiom. Second, he identifies "dangerous trends" such as the Arab population explosion, Arab violence (he calls it "interpersonal violence between Israelis and Palestinians") and the "explosion of Arab media." He then incredibly states that Israeli withdrawal is "not a cure-all for this," and adds a litany of convoluted arguments that the smaller Israel becomes the stronger it will be. It is hard to know how that inverse equation works but one thing is certain: The Friedman formula is a sure bet for the elimination of Israel because it only offers its "medicine" to Israel and demands absolutely nothing from the Arabs.

According to Friedman, even if the patient dies, as long as the procedure was correct he will deem it "successful." One remains wondering what is it about his articles that make them so "insightful." His "[Part 6](#)" is fraught with the same nonsensical conjectures. Presently, Friedman's reason-on-duty for Muslims to be angry is lack of jobs (a few articles ago it was because they were "humiliated"). That must be why they are killing each other and all those whom they define as enemies in the process, particularly those who are trying to give them jobs. Two questions Friedman does not handle are: 1) could there be reasons other than "lack of jobs" for the culture of death that has motivated Arab/Muslim terror? This is a particularly important issue given that many of the leaders - from Osama bin Laden down - are not an exact manifestation of poverty or unemployment. It is also interesting to note that in other parts of the world with lack of jobs, it is not accompanied by major terror campaigns. 2) Assuming jobs will be found for all those who seek them can Friedman guarantee that the wave of violence will cease? If he cannot, perhaps he ought to change the thrust of his writings and become an art critic. Surely he can do far less damage there.

Friedman by no means has a monopoly over causing damage to good causes. He has other journalistic peers who either have come from the same professional training camp or are under

similar ideological strains or both. A colleague of his in England was recently exposed by the capable editor of the *Jerusalem Post* for twisting facts, ignoring reality and creating his own by constantly bashing Israel and defending terrorists. The obvious biases of the ever-politically-correct Middle East editor for the *Guardian* became apparent when he vociferously attacked what he interpreted as an anti-Arab comment (even if factually accurate) yet he has not refrained from making anti-Israel and anti-American comments ("The Brian Whitaker Rules," Bret Stephens, *The Jerusalem Post*, 15 January 2004).

So with the progression of the American political process, there is a natural tendency to focus on internal affairs and wish terrorism away. This is particularly so when political candidates wish to focus on domestic matters and criticize the handling of the war in Iraq as well as the war on terrorism. Yet the terrorists show no indication that they have given up their agenda, and the cost of their threats is becoming more real, more dangerous and more extensive than ever before. None of these terror acts is taking place in a vacuum or at the whim of an individual. Rather, it takes place against a backdrop of massive and intensive hateful indoctrination. To a large extent the intended victim often helps the terrorists by wishing their behavior away or by blaming the victim and glorifying the terrorists. While clearly the international law enforcement community is aware of the threat and the dangers, there is no sufficient indication that the public is. Great patience, perseverance and resilience will be needed if this battle is to be won. Time will tell but a choice it will not give us.