

# It is Terrorism Stupid

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By Robbie Friedmann

The attacks on American Coalition forces in Iraq are very similar - if not identical - to attacks Palestinian terrorists carry out against Israel. Strike at soft targets, strike at civilians where available (convoys, aid workers) and cowardly strikes at U.S. military personnel. But these attacks reflect more than anything the asymmetry of culture. The clashes of values and the misinterpretations of one by the other. American compromise and the reluctance to use force (on the ground) are interpreted - wrongly - as weakness. Thus it emboldens the terrorist gangs (not "rebels" or "militants") to carry out even more attacks ("The Road to Iraq's Riots: Paying for Weakness," Ralph Peters, *New York Post*, 6 April 2004).

A reputed Middle East scholar confirms the tradition of barbarism and mob behavior that has roots in many hundreds of years of power struggles in that area ("History's Terrible Harvest," Fouad Ajami, *U.S. News & World Report*, 12 April 2004). Others characterize this tradition as "Occidentalism," a concept not limited to Islamists ("From Tolstoy to the Taliban: Islamism is fundamentally different from other forms of 'Occidentalism,'" Tunku Varadarajan, *The Wall Street Journal*, 8 April 2004). That may explain the nature of the enemy but not why it is currently on the rise or why it failed miserably to "protect" Iraq against the Coalition invasion yet now is engaged in a "nuisance" war that has little chance of succeeding against a far stronger power.

That is exactly why this is not an *intifada* - a popular uprising. In a country of 25 million inhabitants, to have a few thousands (at best) using terror tactics against an organized army is to carry out a carefully calculated campaign at weakening not the occupying armies but the resolve of the governments that sent them and the citizens who vote for them. That is why Japanese and other civilians (and apparently a few soldiers) were kidnapped, but that is also why the daily toll of dead American soldiers is expected to have an impact back home to weaken the determination of the U.S. to stay the course. This is amplified even more by the timing of an election year and the possibility of influencing its results a-la Madrid. Therefore the one party that benefits from an American "quagmire" is Iran, which has an increasing political, security, economic and religious influence and presence in Iraq ("[Iran's Role in the Recent Uprising in Iraq: Reports in the Arabic media reveal the role of Iran in the current disturbances in Iraq initiated by Moqtada Al-Sadr and his followers](#)," MEMRI, Special Dispatch - Iran/Iraq, 9 April 2004, No. 692).

According to an Iranian defector, "Iran Spends \$70 Million a Month on Activity in Iraq" and has at least three "training centers" for terrorists. Iran is aided (and aids) Syria and Hizbullah as well as (indirectly) the Palestinian Hamas and Islamic Jihad in maintaining pressure on Israel (and indirectly on the U.S.) by inflaming other regions in the Middle East and thus attempting to draw the U.S. into an even deeper level of involvement, hoping it does not have enough of a political stamina to use the necessary means to overcome the current difficulties ("Wider War," Ralph Peters, *The New York Post*, 9 April 2004).

To some extent the Iranian calculations are not without merit. Israel has not used its force in the last three and a half years to the extent it should have, and the latest apparent "cease-fire" agreement in Fallujah to be followed by an American retreat from the city is epitomizing the weakness the Iranians and their surrogates are counting on. Without a doubt such a retreat will only bring in additional attacks, certainly not tranquility let alone peace. What Iran is not counting on is American resolve and the ability to self-correct a course that is not working out. The gangsters in Fallujah have been given a chance. Not too many will be given in the future.

Despite early warning signs of international terrorism, most Western countries ignored its scope and relegated it to a local "conflict" between the Palestinians and Israelis or to localized disgruntled groups in Europe and elsewhere. This despite other terror attacks by groups such as Bader Meinhof, the Japanese Red Army and many others. The 9-11 Commission's examination of how the U.S. "missed" possible warnings on 9-11 is not expected to yield any tangible results - which will not let the finger pointing rest - because the view on the need to fight terrorism has never seeped into a national priority outside perhaps some Hollywood thrillers ("Everyone Failed to Fight Terrorism. Both Houses," Martin Peretz, *The New Republic*, 1 April 2004).

Historically, Israel - and her few friends - "grasped earlier than others that a new and ugly presence had burst on the world scene. The murder of random civilians, a reversal of the progress made in the rules of war after 1945, seemed primitive. But the terrorism employed by the Palestinian movement relied on quite sophisticated economic and political underpinnings. The Palestinians had the support and assistance of governments--and not just Arab governments--and the help of a wide array of extremist movements: The Palestinians moved vast amounts of cash around, some from the United Nations and Europe, and even some from the United States. They received technical training from a whole variety of states, military material and explosives, fake diplomatic immunity, passports and straightforward ideological support at international jamborees--like the one at Durban, which was pointedly organized by Mary Robinson, then U.N. high commissioner for human rights, now a professor at Columbia University" (and an invited speaker at Emory University's Commencement on 10 May).

It is no surprise Israelis have developed a justified sense of cynicism that evolved from years of external (and some internal) criticism of Israel's actions, placing blame on its offensive *and* defensive acts, and from being the lightning rod for any conceivable concocted grievance against its very existence. By no means did this start with the recent Arab violence and the vitriolic rhetoric associated with it. The last 122 years of history of that area - that began with Jewish rejuvenation there - have been marred by Arab massacres of Jews long before there was a viable State of Israel. What typifies the modern terrorist challenge is the linguistic abuse that designates the perpetrator as an angelic innocent "freedom fighter," "militant" or "activist" and the victims as "terrorists." But this is not only in the eyes of the perpetrators. They succeeded in harnessing the world media to consistently apply different language when it comes to Israel, thus creating a distinction between "real terrorists" (those against the U.S. and Europe) and "activists/militants" (when it comes to those who act against Israel). ("[Satire: The Mass Media Guide on How to Become an 'Activist'](#)," Steven Plaut, *FrontPageMagazine.com*, 19 March 2004).

It is not often that an editor of a respected Israeli newspaper sounds like an alarmist when it comes to Israel's future, but it appears that the enough-is-enough attitude is increasingly sinking in and with it the understanding that no matter what Israel does it is not going to change the parameters on the ground or the basic "grievances" of the Islamists and their collaborators. Indeed, deprived of its strength Israel could be subject to another Holocaust. It is interesting that such an editorial would mention the Jewish Holocaust only indirectly by providing an example of an even more rapid killing machine, the atrocities of Ruanda ("...And the world was silent -- when Rwanda bled, too: Israelis can rely only on their own strength to escape the genocide that was wreaked on Rwanda's Tutsi ten years ago," Amnon Dankner, *Ma'ariv*, 9 April 2004).

The same vile conduct now seen in Iraq has been the daily "menu" for Israel for decades. If anything, the threat has only increased with the one difference noted by Dankner: Israel is more able to defend itself today than ever before and eventually the ones to lose from this battle will be the terrorists, but not before inflicting heavy costs on free nations ("Abominations," Martin Peretz, *The New Republic*, 5 April 2004).

But this is not a local skirmish. This is war comprised of numerous battles in numerous fields in a zero-sum-game setting. The Arabs/Islamists use media in more savvy ways than does the West and its official organs are allowed to get away with vile propaganda that no free society should tolerate. Indeed, there are signs that some of this propaganda has reached the shores of free nations with the increased antisemitic acts not only in Europe but also in Canada. They are inspired by religious rulings issued by clerics in "ally" nations such as Egypt ("[Former Al-Azhar Fatwa Committee Head Sets Out the Jews' 20 Bad Traits As Described in the Qur'an](#)," MEMRI, Special Dispatch - Egypt/Arab Antisemitism Documentation Project, 6 April 2004, No. 691). This in turns fuels the content of schoolbooks so that Egyptian children receive a double dose of clerical and "educational" antisemitic indoctrination ("Egyptian Textbooks Exalt Jihad, Demean Jews," *World Tribune*, 4 April 2004).

To be fair to the Islamists (not that one really needs to), they did not invent the technique of the "big lie;" they just perfected what the Nazis have done. Following the negative press the Palestinians received in three recent cases where juveniles were used as suicide bombers (all intercepted in time) they now suggest that Israel has "planted" these children as propaganda devices ("Blaming Israel for Child Bombers?" Itamar Marcus and Barbara Crook, *National Post*, 8 April 2004, Palestinian Media Watch Bulletin 9 April 2004). What they are doing is beyond lying: They are projecting evil unto another because it "does not look good" in the same manner that the atrocity in Iraq "did not look good."

So when Palestinians commit suicide atrocities they dance in the streets; when they get flack for it, they deny it. The same way clerics in Iraq condemn the mutilation of bodies but not the killing itself. When Israel actively defends itself they attack (in the full sense of the word) Israel's right to do so. When Israel takes defensive measure like building a security fence the Palestinians suggest this deprives them of an equal opportunity employment as terrorists to reach their targets. In short, they help flame a Western sentiment that Israel should not be allowed to even defend itself ("[Israel is Not Allowed to Defend Itself](#)," Ze'ev Schiff, *Ha'aretz*, 7 April 2004).

This crude and effective big Arab lie is complimented by a far more sophisticated linguistic propaganda machine that is purely antisemitic, but at the same time denies it is so in intent. Many faculty on American campuses who have initiated/signed divestiture petitions against Israel are now hanging their criticism on "Israeli policy" yet their tone, intent, calls for action and rhetoric have nothing but the desire to demolish Israel word-by-word, petition-after-petition and demonstration after demonstration. And like the U.N., the wide majority of their activities are directed solely at Israel. One shudders to think what this group will do without Israel to bash. Surely they will then complain they have been deprived of the mere pleasure of bashing her and turn to another target ("[Antisemitism Denial](#)," Edward Alexander, FrontPageMagazine.com, 9 April 2004).

Perhaps it is little wonder that reputed observers are not only calling to increase the Israeli campaign against terror but to shy away from the concept of the "limited conflict" by which only the response to terror - not terror attacks - is limited ("Keep the Gloves Off," Ehud Ya'ari, *The Jerusalem Report*, 19 April 2004): "The debate now under way...deals with the argument that it is precisely the credo of limited conflict that is dragging out the bloodshed over time, while this current intifada has in fact been an 'all-out confrontation' from the start, with only the means used to fight it limited for the time being. As for Hamas, it has no limitations. Its terrorists have tried in the past to add cyanide and other poisons to their explosives. They planned to bring down the Shalom Tower in Tel Aviv. They send women and children as suicide bombers, and they are striving to pull off a mega-attack, which they already attempted in Ashdod. It is impossible to contend with such danger in a hesitant, halting manner. It is time to take the gloves off."

In all likelihood this observation reflects voices in the Israeli Defense Forces that seem to be awakened to the need to view limited conflict and low intensity conflict differently than they did to date. Given the cost to Israel in human lives one wonders why this change is being jelled for so long ("[Israel's Security Doctrine and the Trap of 'Limited Conflict](#),'" Colonel (Res.) Yehuda Wegman, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 1 March 2004).

Indeed the need to take the gloves off receives further validation not only vis-a-vis Hamas alone but also with respect to the new emerging axis between Hamas and Arafat's terror organization ("[Arafat's Hamas Honeymoon](#)," Joel Mowbray, FrontPageMagazine, 9 April 2004): "The halt in attacks by Hamas from September 2003 to January 2004 was the direct result of the threat to the lives of its leadership, together with the construction of a defensible physical barrier in the form of the security fence. This situation stood in direct contradiction to the concept of attrition, which had guided the thought and actions of the heads of the security services and the IDF up to that point. This situation is bitter proof once again of the validity of Israel's traditional security doctrine, which requires those in charge to apply force - the IDF - to provide defense together with achieving a decision as rapidly as possible against any type of war that may be waged against the State of Israel...the necessity of having the IDF able to bring about a military decision in every type of war remains as valid as ever."

That all of this is highly relevant to Israel is not new. But this is by no means simply a parochial - if understandable - view. It is undoubtedly also highly relevant to the U.S. because the target is similar, the enemy objectives are similar, the tactics are similar (if not identical) and are part of a larger strategy; together this creates a connected whole rather than a disjointed set of events

("Like It or Not, Israel's War With Hamas Is America's, Too: America's terror war and Israel's are not separable," Jonathan Rauch, *The Atlantic Monthly*, 7 April 2004): "... the war on terror really is a war, and not a police action. Second, America's terror war and Israel's are not separable, however much we might wish they were...What is clear, however, is that what America is doing against al-Qaeda and what Israel is doing against Hamas are the same kind of thing, and that thing is not 'extrajudicial killing' or 'terrorism,' but war. Denying that the war is a war has consequences among them, reluctance to do what is necessary to win. A clever combatant knows that wars are won by many means (many of them nonmilitary) but that killing the other guy before he kills you is one of them."

Increasingly evidence of the cancerous Islamist malice is found all over the world with plots intercepted one after another. Plots intercepted in Israel are a matter of daily routine. But when deadly chemicals are involved in a plot against British targets it adds an even more sinister element to the "globalization" of terror ("'Very Nasty' - Potential Bomb Plot Involved Deadly Chemical," Brian Ross and Christopher Isham, ABC.com, 5 April 2004).

The evidence is mounting for those who wish to see it. A Jewish school was bombed in Montreal, Canada, yet attribution of blame ignored the Islamist component of it and the incident itself received little attention outside of Canada ("[Omitting the Islamist Element](#)," HonestReporting Communique: 7 April 2004). Reporters for the "objective" Arab TV network Al-Jazeera, and for the less pretentious Hizbullah TV station Al Manar, were caught aiding terrorists - not exactly part of their job description, unless they and their bosses define their job as making the news, not only reporting it ("Al-Jazeera, Al-Manar Reporters Aided Terrorists," Margot Dudkevitch, *The Jerusalem Post*, 8 April 2004).

The 9-11 Commission heard of Osama bin Laden's plan to attack inside the U.S.; now we hear of Al-Qaeda intentions to destroy Rome ("Al-Qaeda Suspect Urges Rome's Destruction: Magazine says videotapes were confiscated in February," Reuters, 2 April 2004). One can only wonder what security plans the Vatican is putting in place. Perhaps a refresher course for its Swiss Guard? Pity on the poor expert (a retired navy commander) who suggested on TV last week that Jesus is revered by the Muslims and hence Christian sites are not likely to become targets on Easter. As if it mattered that most of the Madrid victims were Christian but murdered on a non holy day.

The U.S. continues to declare Saudi Arabia an ally, but such public declarations fly in the face of what is increasingly becoming known about the Saudi plots against the U.S. Indeed some are not hesitating to levy the serious charge that the Saudis comprise nothing less than a "Fifth Column" in American universities - and beyond ("[The Saudi Fifth Column On Our Nation's Campuses](#)," Lee Kaplan, *FrontPageMagazine*, 5 April 2004). "From Riyadh to Ramallah to the Ivy League, the Saudi Wahhabi lobby and money machine is funding the goals of radical Islam and undermining America's efforts to prosecute the War on Terror...This network is embedded deep within our system of higher education, including many of our most prestigious universities. The Saudis have steadily infiltrated American educational institutions, using vast infusions of money to turn the American educational system against U.S. support for Israel and in favor of the Saudi vision of a global Muslim state in which not only Jews, but Christians and all infidels will have subordinate status to the followers of the 'true faith.' At the same time they look to affect

American policy in the Middle East and public opinion in the U.S. in a way to aid their Wahhabist goals."

Being at the receiving end of vilifying and hateful rhetoric has been commonplace for Jews for two millennia. For Americans such verbal fodder is familiar from World War II but mostly from the Cold War era and the open competition with communist regimes around the world. Now an all encompassing threat that has been punctuated by actual terror deeds is replacing it ("Jews, Americans Top Targets in 'Qaeda' Document," Firouz Sedarat, Reuters, 2 April 2004): "A strategy paper posted on a Web site sympathetic to al-Qaeda lists Jews, Americans and Britons as main targets, and calls on militant cells worldwide to 'turn the infidels' lands into hell' '....The document, describing targets militants should hit, portrays itself as "diplomacy written in blood, decorated with body parts and perfumed with gunpowder'."

Instead of realizing who the enemy is ("[Former Terrorist Speaks](#)," Alyssa A. Lappen and Jerry Gordon, FrontPageMagazine, 2 April 2004), respected media outlets in the U.S. tend to view terrorists and victims alike. The Atlanta paper provided an atrocious title for an article by an Arab writer who praises Sheikh Yassin, portraying his terrorist successor and the prime minister of Israel as two of a kind ("Sharon and Rantisi Two of a Kind," Mona Eltahawy, *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 6 April 2004). This is tantamount to suggesting that Churchill and Hitler are two of a kind, or Bush and bin Laden are two of a kind. Those who suggest that are doing nothing short of aiding and abetting terrorists.

NGOs like Human Rights Watch add insult to injury by further elevating terrorists to victim and demonizing victims as aggressors for defending themselves ("Human Rights Watch Can't Take the Heat," Gerald Steinberg, *The Jerusalem Post*, 7 April 2004): "NGOs such as Human Rights Watch and the U.N. frameworks in which they operate were founded in the shadow of the Holocaust with the goal of ensuring that such brutality is never repeated; but since then, they have lost their way. Under the leadership of Roth and Stork, and the adoption of a heavily anti-Israel political agenda, HRW has betrayed the principles of its founders and become a potent force in the exploitation and destruction of human rights. The record speaks for itself."

Clearly, Arab "anger" succeeded in intimidating its Western targets. Perhaps because in the West we interpret the term anger differently. Because we believe in grievances, in legitimate ways to express them and even in the potential legitimacy to their anger. We then project this onto killers who are "angry" when they are not allowed to kill and we tend to "understand the root causes" for their anger - by blaming their victims - and ascribe to them "justifications" for and condone their killings ("A World Obsessed with Arab Anger," *Arizona Republic*, Craig Weiss, 4 April 2004). Yet, "If the West is going to win the war on terror, we need to stop becoming distracted with what may or may not enrage Arab radicals, and start focusing on the most effective way to defeat Arab terrorists. Israel's targeted killings of terrorist masterminds is a good start."

Against this backdrop guess who is coming to dinner at the White House? None other than the leader of one of the most hostile countries in the world to both Israel and the U.S. ("[Egyptian Professor at American University of Cairo Reacts to U.S. Reform Initiative & Claims there is No Conclusive Proof' Arabs & Muslims were Behind 9/11 - U.S. May be Responsible](#)," MEMRI, Special Dispatch - Egypt/U.S. & the Middle East, 11 April 2004, No. 693). Mubarak's

Egypt - a self-declared U.S. "ally" - issues daily articles, religious rulings and propaganda that has dwarfed the Nazi propaganda machine and not only against Israel. Yet Mubarak is coming to the U.S. with a shopping list that one would think is required for Egypt's survival as a U.S. ally ("Mubarak Comes to Washington With a Long Shopping List," *World Tribune*, 5 April 2004 ). Yet who is going to attack Egypt? Malta? Sudan? Chad? Saudi Arabia? Certainly not Israel. So one remains wondering - or perhaps even knowing - that this shopping list is more aggressive than defensive and in the Middle East a target for Egypt is Israel. Not today. But when the right moment comes.

Disjointed reports from a hotel in Baghdad under fire, or from a destroyed convoy celebrated by an ecstatic mob provide tidbits of news but not even a shallow understanding of how one event is connected to another. Who are the puppets and who pulls the strings; what are the interests in the area and who is sending terrorists on their evil missions? It is therefore imperative to understand how the seemingly different terror acts are somehow connected, if not organizationally then as part of a social movement. Places we rarely hear about or know little about are now subject to terror, not unlike what we see in Gaza and Fallujah: For example Islamists in Uzbekistan use rather similar tactics against the government. Thus, the actions, the propaganda, the media perceptions and portrayal of events (real or imagined) all play into what (has been for a while and) is becoming a world war with unprecedented scope and danger. Not understanding the role that terrorism plays is not merely stupid and shortsighted - it could be more than costly. There is no 100% success against terrorists in the sense that all terror attacks can be prevented, but there is clearly victory at the end of the war. We just need to want it.