

OPINION and ANALYSIS

Vol 7, Number 7: 11 November 2011

**A selection of some of the more challenging and thought-provoking
local and international writings on the Middle East**

<http://www.sazionfed.co.za>

1. *Melanie Philips* "Blaming the Victim"

It is as absurd as it is malicious to blame Netanyahu for the breakdown of talks between Israel and the Palestinians. Yet this is precisely what many in the west do – principally because, unlike Israeli politicians on the left, Netanyahu is less prepared to play fast and loose with truth, justice and history while offering up Israel's throat to be cut.

2. *Aaron Lerner* A Post Palestinian State Simulation

What is a reasonable assumption regarding the goals of the Palestinians? Is it indeed the creation of a sovereign Palestinian state living side by side in peace with Israel, or is such a state no more than a step towards reaching the ultimate goal of replacing Israel with a Palestinian state spanning from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River?

3. *Julian Border* The IAEA Report: What does it really mean and will it lead to war with Iran?

The bottom line is it is not this report or the debate over weaponisation that is driving the current sense of urgency on the global stage. It is Iran's accumulation of enriched uranium, which is the potential fuel for a nuclear arsenal.

4. *Mamoun Fandy* The Future of Tyranny

For the Arab world, democracy is an illusion, but tyranny is part of its character. Thus, talking about the future of tyranny is more effective, in the sense of whether tyranny is advancing or receding, in what way, and in what field.

5. *Yisrael Medad and Eli Pollak* Media Comment: Price Tag – Israeli or Palestinian?

It is the media's job to spotlight criminal activity, but it is disconcerting when there is a lack of equal intensity for similar acts when perpetrated against Jews.

"Blaming the Victim"

Melanie Philips, Daily Mail, 9 November 2011

<http://melaniephillips.com/untitled-resource?mid=524>

One of the most egregious signs of western irrationality and bigotry over the issue of Israel is the way in which its Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is routinely scapegoated for causing the breakdown of the so-called peace process between Israel and the Palestinians.

This charge is based on the widespread fallacy that the 'peace process' has stalled because Israel keeps building more Jewish 'settlements' on 'Palestinian land'. This reasoning is not only totally wrong but utterly perverse on the following grounds:

1) The actual reason for the collapse of the 'peace process' is that Mahmoud Abbas repeatedly maintains that he will never accept that Israel is entitled to be a Jewish state, hails Palestinian terrorists as heroes for murdering Israelis and does nothing to end the incitement to murder Jews disseminated in schools, mosques and media under his control. In other words, Abbas is not a legitimate interlocutor in any civilised 'peace process' since he remains committed to the eradication of Israel. Yet Netanyahu is blamed for the impasse.

2) It is only Israel that has made concessions in this 'peace process' (as noted here). The Palestinians not only failed to deliver what was expected of them under the Road Map but now, with their UN gambit, have unilaterally reneged on their previous treaty obligations. Yet Abbas is given a free pass while Netanyahu is blamed instead for the impasse.

3) The claim that the 'settlements' are the key to resolving the dispute is ridiculous. First, they take up no more than one or two per cent of West Bank territory. Second, even when Netanyahu froze such new building for ten months as a sign of good will, Abbas still refused to negotiate. Yet this is all ignored, and Netanyahu is blamed instead for the impasse.

4) The claim that the establishment of a Palestine state would end the dispute is also ridiculous. Such a state was on offer in 1948; Israel offered to give up more than 90 per cent of the West Bank for such a state in 2000; and an even more generous offer was subsequently made by Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. The Palestinian response was in every case war and terror. Yet all this is ignored, and Netanyahu is blamed instead for the impasse.

5) Whatever land Israel may choose to give up in its own interests, under international law Jews are entitled to settle anywhere in the West Bank. There is no such thing as Palestinian land and never was. The West Bank and Gaza never belonged to any sovereign ruler after the British withdrew from Mandatory Palestine; before that it was part of the Ottoman empire. Israel's 'borders' are in fact merely the cease-fire lines from its victory in 1948 against the Arab armies that tried unsuccessfully to exterminate it at birth. It is therefore more correct to call the West Bank and Gaza disputed territory. Yet this history and law are denied and Netanyahu is blamed instead for the impasse.

6) The Jews alone have the legal – as well as the moral and historical -- right to settle within the West Bank and Gaza, a right given to them by the Great Powers after the First World War on account of the unique historical claim by the Jews to the land then called Palestine. This Jewish right to settle *anywhere in that land* was entrusted to Britain to deliver under the terms of the Mandate for Palestine – an obligation which it proceeded to break. Yet this history and law are denied, and Netanyahu is blamed instead for the impasse.

It is therefore as absurd as it is malicious to blame Netanyahu for the breakdown of talks between Israel and the Palestinians. Yet this is precisely what many in the west do – principally because, unlike Israeli politicians on the left, Netanyahu (who certainly has his flaws) is less prepared to play fast and loose with truth, justice and history while offering up Israel's throat to be cut. For this inconvenient obduracy he is branded as 'right-wing' and therefore beyond the pale and impossible to deal with.

That is presumably what lay behind the now infamous overheard exchange between Presidents Sarkozy and Obama – Sarkozy: 'I cannot bear Netanyahu, he is a liar'; Obama: 'You're fed up with him, but I have to deal with him every day!'

This exchange tells us many things, none of them good, about the attitude of the Presidents of France and the US towards the Prime Minister of the country that is in the front line of western defence. But in the UK, the Times showed this morning that it too has now drunk the Kool-Aid

over the Middle East. For just whom did it blame for this horrible exchange between Sarkozy and Obama about Netanyahu? Why – Netanyahu. Its leading article (£) opined:

‘In fact the man who should be most worried by the Cannes table talk is not either of the participants, but the object of their complaint. For what has been exposed is that the leaders of two of the most important allies that Israel has not only dislike Mr Netanyahu intensely, but distrust him too.

‘... Though trust and good personal relationships are hugely important in diplomacy, they are not everything. Israel has existential worries, and understandably feels sometimes that it can rely only on itself. But this “ourselves alone” mentality has become distorted under Mr Netanyahu into what might be called “Millwall diplomacy”, after the famously belligerent soccer fans whose slogan became “no-one likes us, we don’t care”.

‘Israel needs to win friends, not lose them; to be sustained by its allies, not to alienate them. What the conversation in Cannes shows is that, in Mr Netanyahu, Israel seems to have the wrong leader at the wrong time. This newspaper hopes that either he can change, or if not, that he can be changed.’

So the spite displayed by the Presidents of France and the US towards Netanyahu, whom they have thus kicked in the back despite the fact that he has made concession after concession to Abbas who has never resiled from his own genocidal aims, is actually all the fault of ...Netanyahu, whom the Times wishes to punish further for thus being the victim of such malice by chucking him out of office unless he too starts playing the appeasement game.

One expects to read this kind of disgusting ‘blame the victim’ approach to Israel in newspapers of the left. The Times, however, used to be a staunch friend of Israel and was thus on the right side of history. No longer, it seems. Thus the terrifying confusions of our era deepen still further as the skies darken.

A Post Palestinian State Simulation

Aaron Lerner, *inFocus Quarterly*, Fall 2011

<http://www.jewishpolicycenter.org/2497/palestinian-state-simulation>

Simulations are important tools for policymakers. And there certainly have been numerous simulations of what may happen after the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian state. The problem with simulations, however, is that they are, by their nature, driven by the assumptions made regarding the goals and interests of the various players. Of course, assumptions have to be made, but there is the danger that the outcome of the simulation may then take on a life of its own without the caveat that it is dependent on those assumed goals.

Take for example a simulation organized last May 16 by the Lauder School of Government to consider, among other things, how a nuclear Iran would act. Former head of the Israeli Military Intelligence Directorate Maj. Gen (res.) Zeevi Farkash participated in that simulation playing the role of Iranian Supreme leader Ali Khamenei. Khamenei is a “Twelver Shiite”—as is Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, and as such believes that incinerating Israel with nuclear weapons—even if followed by the incineration of Iran—would be a positive thing because the apocalyptic result would bring the return of the Hidden Imam.

But Farkash apparently maintains that deep down inside Ayatollah Khamenei actually subscribes to some sort of universal value system that considers the incineration of Iran an unacceptable outcome rather than a reasonable price to pay for the return of the Mahdi. As a result, the simulation found that Iran would only brandish its nukes for deterrence and never actually use them. As Farkash put it, "Iran would regard its bomb as a means of self-defense and strategic balance."

Was Farkash's critical assumption correct? Perhaps a more responsible approach would have been to run the simulation both ways to see how things play out in a world where the leaders of Iran genuinely believe what they claim to believe. It might have turned out that the results were so catastrophic that even if there were only a 10 percent chance that these Twelvers are true believers, policymakers would have to adjust their recommendations to account for it.

A Palestinian Simulation

What is a reasonable assumption regarding the goals of the Palestinians? Is it indeed the creation of a sovereign Palestinian state living side by side in peace with Israel, or is such a state no more than a step towards reaching the ultimate goal of replacing Israel with a Palestinian state spanning from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River? The evidence weighs heavily in favor of the latter.

Former Fatah leader Yasser Arafat made no bones about his true view of the purpose of the Oslo Agreements. He flew straight to South Africa after the May 4, 1994 Agreement On The Gaza Strip And The Jericho Area signing ceremony in Cairo where, in a Johannesburg mosque, he explained that "I am not considering this agreement more than the agreement which had been signed between our prophet Muhammad and Quraysh," known as the Treaty of Hudaibiya. Yes, Islam holds that the treaty was violated, but Arafat's audience also knew that Muhammad exploited the treaty to decimate the Quraysh tribe. And that is exactly what he did when he amassed enough strength and a treaty violation afforded him the excuse to cancel the deal.

Simply put, the agreements between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel are no more than a temporary ceasefire to facilitate preparations to destroy the Jewish state. When victory can be assured, the Palestinians will call the peace deal off, citing some kind of trumped up Israeli violation of the agreement, and proceed to the next stage in the plan. This ongoing attitude is reflected in the fact that, to this day, the PLO Charter that sets as its goal the destruction of the Jewish state has yet to be amended—this despite the December 14, 1998 Clinton-Arafat Gaza photo op hand-wave.

And as Palestinian pollsters consistently find, the Palestinian street concurs. For example, the June 22-July 8, 2011 Palestinian Center for Public Opinion poll commissioned by The Israel Project found that 66 percent of Palestinians believe: "The real goal should be to start with two states but then move to it all being one Palestinian state."

Realizing the Goal

How could the Palestinian leadership exploit the creation of a sovereign Palestinian state to realize their ultimate goal? There are two basic ways to advance the goal: One is to make life inside Israel so untenable that the Jews (who the Palestinians view as temporary foreign interlopers—no more than modern day crusaders) leave en masse. The other is to create conditions conducive to Israel being defeated on the battlefield.

A sovereign Palestinian state could readily facilitate an ongoing proxy war of attrition against the Jewish state. By facilitating, it would not openly organize and direct the hostilities. In fact, the leadership of the sovereign Palestinian state could officially take the position that it opposes the

attacks against Israel and even issue press releases against particularly high profile terror attacks. Thus, the Palestinian state could present itself as a victim of the attacks against Israel rather than as having any responsibility for them, with photo ops showing Palestinian security forces earnestly seeking for the perpetrators of the attacks.

The spin would be clear: The true purpose of the terror attacks in Israel is to undermine the ruling Palestinian leadership by evoking Israeli security activities inside the Palestinian state. The dead Israelis are just a byproduct. Israel would be urged to stand down and let the Palestinians take care of the "problem" on their own. The international observers in the area would position themselves as human shields to prevent Israeli operations in violation of Palestinian sovereignty. This while they issue glowing reports about the performance of the Palestinian security forces and recommend that they be given more weapons and other equipment.

To make matters worse, Israeli intelligence efforts against the perpetrators of the attacks would be seen first and foremost as a violation of Palestinian sovereignty. The Palestinians would use the Israeli intelligence information shared with them to ferret out the Palestinian "collaborators" who provided Israel with the information as opposed to using the intelligence to capture and close down the terrorists.

Thus, it would be possible for this war of attrition against Israel to continue essentially indefinitely. With tourism dead, an effective freeze on foreign investment and no end in sight, the Palestinians could certainly shed crocodile tears as they watch their Israeli neighbor crumble before their eyes. Yes, the deteriorating economic situation in Israel could be expected to have a significant impact on the Palestinian economy. But that is a cost measured over months or years in order to reach a goal worthy of a generation of sacrifice.

Thinking Outside the Box

Critical elements in any simulation are the assumptions regarding the secondary players. Is a "ceteris paribus" (all other things equal) approach appropriate? Less than a year ago, much of the analysis prepared for policymakers assumed that Hosni Mubarak would rule Egypt forever. Are analysts more careful in the wake of the "Arab Spring?"

It is noteworthy that many of the very same experts who insisted that policymakers did not have to take into account the possibility of a revolution in Egypt continue to base their policy recommendations on the assumption that the current leadership of Jordan will remain in power in perpetuity. Suffice it to say that the formation of a radical Muslim Jordanian state could dramatically change the scenario—in particular if the current Hashemite Kingdom fell after the creation of the Palestinian state, with Jordan's role in the state and its interaction with the state set when it was still viewed by Israel as a trusted moderating force rather than a threat.

Thus, in a world where Jordan and Egypt become unfriendly countries and decide to invade Israel—not such a far fetched idea today—the sovereign Palestinian state could function as a bridgehead for the invading Arab armies in an all-out war to destroy the Jewish state. Such an invasion could take place because it serves the interests of the leadership of the invading states or as a result of developments in Israel-Palestine that compel them to intervene. In the former case, the assault on Israel would be more a matter of domestic politics with the leadership opting to divert the rage of their masses towards Israel in order to avoid finding themselves hanging from the lamp post, rather than anything actually related to Israel or Palestine.

In the latter case, the Palestinians could manipulate events with an eye towards whipping up the Arab street to such a frenzy that the leadership feels that it has no choice but to join in the fray. To be clear: Regardless of how generous the arrangements on the ground are to the Palestinians, it would be child's play for them to come up with an ever growing series of Israeli

"crimes" and "injustices" threatening not just the Palestinians but the entire Muslim world. And with a Palestinian state created, Israel would be seen as significantly more vulnerable. The leaders of the Arab world would be considerably less deterred by fear over the consequences of joining in battle against the Jewish state.

Some Israeli analysts argue that for all practical purposes the existence of a sovereign Palestinian state has no relevance in simulations of the invasion of Israel since, in the event of foreign troop movements towards Israel, the Israel Defense Force (IDF) would simply roll through the Palestinian state as it deploys to stop the invading force before it even comes close to the Jordan River. But this optimistic assessment ignores that the Palestinians themselves will have many thousands of well-armed troops.

It is reasonable to assume, based on the gross failure of anti-weapons smuggling arrangements to date, that the "demilitarized" Palestinians will have ample stocks of anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons—not to mention rocket propelled grenades (RPGs), mortars, rockets, and more. But even if they only had their regulation assault rifles, this sizeable Palestinian force, deployed within walking distance of most of Israel's soft underbelly, could easily interfere with the IDF forces racing to the border while wreaking havoc on Israel's vital infrastructure—this as literally hundreds of well trained and equipped assault teams swarm on targets across the country.

The potential outcome in this scenario would be complete and total chaos within Israel with Israeli security forces stretched beyond their limits—torn between adequately addressing the invading armies approaching from Jordan, Egypt, or elsewhere, and devoting more forces to the task of somehow clearing out a seemingly endless wave of Palestinian assault teams. All this as literally thousands of rockets slam into pre-selected Israeli targets from southern Lebanon, the Gaza Strip, and in all likelihood from launching pads across the West Bank.

The Need for a Realistic Simulation

Is the above scenario an overly apocalyptic assessment? Perhaps. Then again, there is nothing in it that requires that the Palestinians acquire anything that they do not already have.

If the purpose of a simulation is to find comfort, then assume that the Palestinians want to live side by side in peace with Israel forever—just like the retired military Israeli intelligence head, who apparently sleeps well, is confident that the Twelvers leading Iran are faking their religious belief in the return of the Mahdi.

But if the purpose of the exercise is to make responsible policy decisions, there is no place for optimistically simplifying assumptions.

The IAEA Report: What does it really mean and will it lead to war with Iran?

Julian Border, *www.guardian.co.uk*, 9 November 2011

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/julian-borger-global-security-blog/2011/nov/09/iaea-nuclear-iran-israel1?newsfeed=true>

Tuesday's IAEA report has rekindled the global debate over what to do about the Iranian nuclear programme with a familiar array of options on the table: engage, sanction or attack. The various protagonists are familiar too. Russia is complaining the IAEA report has spoilt the chance of renewed dialogue, the US, Britain and France want a new push towards tighter sanctions, and

Israel is threatening to strike unless the international community sorts the matter out in the next few months.

There is something a little phoney about all the sound and fury. There is nothing in the report that was not previously known by the major powers. The West and Israel supplied most of the original tip-offs for the annex on weapons development, while Russia was briefed and no doubt knew one of its own scientists had been lecturing the Iranians on how to make explosive implosion devices (ostensibly for making tiny diamonds).

Furthermore, the bulk of the report is historical, referring to the years leading up to 2003. Its interpretation depends largely on whether you are a glass half-full or half-empty sort of person. On the one hand, the IAEA is confirming beyond reasonable doubt that there was a centralised, heavily funded, programme (codenamed Amad and run by a man called Mohsen Fakhrizadeh from his daintily titled "orchid office"). On the other hand, the report is also adamant that Amad was halted in 2003.

After that, the report offers evidence of lower-key computer modelling of nuclear detonations in a more diffuse, scattered manner, albeit by some of the same people. But the evidence for this is sketchier, and it is clear the UN inspectors are less confident about making assertions about the more recent period.

So again, its significance is somewhat in the eye of the beholder. However, it is clear that this is not a *race* to a bomb. If anything, it is a tiptoeing, an ambling or (as Jeff Lewis at the Monterey Institute of International Studies puts it) a moseying towards weapons capability. The new, unpublished US national intelligence estimate, apparently takes this nuanced view.

The bottom line is it is not this report or the debate over weaponisation that is driving the current sense of urgency on the global stage. It is Iran's accumulation of enriched uranium, which is the potential fuel for a nuclear arsenal. The IAEA report estimated Iran now has nearly five metric tonnes of low enriched uranium (LEU) easily enough for four bombs, if it was further enriched to weapons grade. It also has 73 kg of 20% enriched uranium - a fraction of what would be needed for one warhead but it could be turned into weapons grade much faster.

Furthermore, the Iranians are moving more and more of its enrichment work into a chamber dug under a mountain at a military base at Fordow, where it would be far harder to get at. There are now about two and half 'cascades' of 174 centrifuges there and a large cylinder of (3.5% enriched) LEU has been moved there with the intention of turning it into 20% uranium.

So Iran has the raw materials and the skills necessary to make a small arsenal, perhaps in a few months, *if* it decided to "break out", which means leave the NPT and throw out the IAEA which is carefully monitoring its uranium stocks and its enrichment activities. But that would be a huge step to take, and a step the current regime has shown it has no appetite for. Rightly so, as it would be seen by many of its neighbours as a declaration of war and simultaneously a short window of vulnerability before Iran puts its bomb together and tests it.

So the "break out" scenario is not the biggest threat. Far more worrisome is the possibility that Iran has a parallel, covert programme underground somewhere, silently spinning away while the world and its inspectors keep eagle eyes on Natanz and Qom etc. This is very hard to pull off as the whole fuel cycle has to be kept under wraps from the moment the uranium ore comes out of the ground. There is evidence that Iran has tried to do this, but also evidence that the international community has had success thwarting those efforts.

So despite the rhetoric about last chances, there is still time for a peaceful way out of the crisis. The Obama administration has no stomach nor money for another war, and its generals insist that every way they game the scenarios, America comes out the loser.

However, there remains a scenario in which the US could get drawn into a conflict involuntarily. If Israel launched air strikes on Iran but failed to finish the job, leaving much of Iran's hardware intact, Tehran could well retaliate against both Israel and the US, as it has threatened to do. That is certainly the expectation of the Pentagon's top brass.

Even if the Iranian regime was smarter than expected and did not attack US interests, Washington would be under heavy domestic political pressure to intervene to protect Israel, rather than leave it at the mercy of a wounded Iran, angry, vengeful quite capable of reconstituting a nuclear weapons programme. It is such thoughts and expectations that have led to discreet calls of late to the UK ministry of defence, asking if Britain might be free to help out if necessary over the next year or so.

The Future of Tyranny

Mamoun Fandy, Asharq Alawsat, 9 November 2011

<http://www.asharq-e.com/news.asp?section=2&id=27252>

Many people both in our region and outside it talk about the future of democracy after the “Arab Spring”, despite the fact that what is important for our region is the future and fate of tyranny, rather than the future of democracy.

For us, democracy is an illusion, but tyranny is part of our character. Thus, talking about the future of tyranny is more effective, in the sense of whether tyranny is advancing or receding, in what way, and in what field.

The talk about the future of tyranny, its manifestations, branches, and the extent of its longevity in various forms has not started yet in earnest. This is because our region is still submerged in the euphoria of the revolution and in the stories of the “Arab Spring” that have dazzled the foreigners, and hence the Arabs welcomed them as if they were the truth. This is because for many reasons, some of which we know and others we do not understand, our minds work according to the principle: what the West says about us is the truth, and what we see and do in our own countries is the illusion.

The talk of the Arabs predominantly falls either into the intellectual storm that changes with the turn of the popular tide, or along the lines of sentiments imported from other countries. In the same way, the Arabs at the end of the 1980s and 1990s used to talk about modernization and structure, issues which the Arabs had little insight into. This is because modernism in culture comes as a result of a developed society, and it is inconceivable to talk about this in a pre-modernized society. Nevertheless, the Arabs love glorifying such sentiments even if they do not understand the basic terminology.

The important point in all of this, despite my enthusiasm for change in post-revolutionary Egypt and my presence at the heart of it, is my theory that the “Arab Spring” will not represent a break from tyranny, but rather it will be an extension of it with different characteristics. Tyranny, just like a virus, can go through a mutation process and change to resist its vaccine. We are facing a state of tyranny mutation, rather than democratic change, and there are many reasons for this.

What is the future of the “Arab spring?” This is a question that preoccupies the outside world. Will the “Spring” lead to a new breakthrough, or simply a reproduction of the old status quo? This is the question.

In order to answer this question we have to dismantle the popular conceptions of the “Arab Spring.” One such conception, which is popular in the Arab world and is being analysed with vigorous momentum, relates to the belief that a revolution has occurred. The first intellectual and analytical starting point is the idea that power was previously concentrated in the hands of a dictator who possessed everything in the country, including all forces and means of wealth. This conception is the beginning of the misunderstanding. For instance, it is a misleading oversimplification to claim that a man of the ilk of Mubarak and his family were the only, or even the primary, obstacle hindering the democratic process in Egypt. The exaggerated focus on the dictator, or on the concentration of authoritarian power in the hand of one family, is the primary misconception that damages any sort of thinking to help us understand the future of the “Arab Spring”, or the future of tyranny in our region.

The concept of dictatorship in our countries has not been limited to the acts of an individual as we thought, or the result of concentrating power within the centralised government. Rather, the concept dictatorship in the Middle East is more widespread. It is something similar to water being absorbed by a sponge, represented by a network of existing family relations that are tightening their grip around the neck of society. Only by explaining power or authority as a network that is distributed throughout certain aspects society can we begin to understand. The claim that power is concentrated in one hand is the beginning of our deception and misconception.

The dictatorship in Egypt was a complete system built upon sturdy pillars, from the father at home all the way to the head of the village, the chairman of the district, the governor, up to the head of state. Society became saturated with dictatorship, and entire currents were immersed in it, whether they were Islamic or secular. Former President Hosni Mubarak, the Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood, and the chairman of the Egyptian Communist Party were all cut from the same cloth. Therefore, in order to become democratic, we need new people, but “from where can I get these people?!” [In reference to a famous ballad about an Egyptian, Adham al-Sharqawi, fighting against the injustice of British colonialism in Egypt, who was executed at the beginning of the 20th Century]

First and foremost, the “Arab Spring” did not begin yesterday, nor is Arab tyranny a sudden phenomenon in our history. The Arabs, even after the arrival of Islam, were never “ideological” people who sought to develop an intellectual vision of ourselves and the outside world. Instead, we are the people of blood relations and family ties, or “Shala” as we call it in Egypt. Our relationship with intellectual concepts is similar to the relationship between our satellite television channels and outer-space satellites.

Despite the fact that Islam was the greatest intellectual revolution in our history, we, as Arabs, have succeeded in adapting Islam to serve the tribe, the family, and the clan. Islamic history began as an intellectual revolution, and as a history of ideas and countries; however, after the beginning of the Orthodox Caliphate, it was transformed into a somewhat tribal state. The State of Islam became the Umayyad State, and after that the Abbasid, the Fatimid, and so on and so forth. This means that we now have a history of tribes instead of a history of ideas.

Has this tribal history, alongside tribal and family loyalties and the priority of blood relations over intellectual relations gone forever after the “Arab spring?” Of course not; what has happened is that the families and tribes have dressed themselves up in the cloak of revolutions in Yemen and in Libya, and in Egypt the opposition consists of tribes rather than concepts.

Naturally, after the revolution there is talk about ideologies, with reference to the Muslim Brotherhood, the Salafis and the Islamist groups. Yet all this talk alludes to the manifestation of the subject, and not its origin. If you dismantle the projects of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamist groups to their bare bones, you would find specific tribes and families against other tribes and families using Islam as a cover, and this has nothing to do with Islam other than a veneer that covers the ugly face of tribal interests.

This does not mean that tyranny is our fate, but exaggerating the achievements of the “Arab Spring” is something that needs to be reconsidered and dismantled, because whoever came out of the mosque will return to the mosque, and whoever emerged from the tribe will certainly go back to the tribe. Egypt is not exempt from this.

Media Comment: Price Tag – Israeli or Palestinian?

Yisrael Medad and Eli Pollak, Jerusalem Post, 9 November 2011

<http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Columnists/Article.aspx?id=245010>

The New York Times' linguistic blog, Schott's Vocab, defined the “price tag” phenomenon on July 24, 2009, as “attacks on Palestinians by Israeli settlers in the West Bank protesting against the actions of the Israeli army.”

Wikipedia, based on a report by Efrat Weiss on Ynet, credits Itai Zar with coining the phrase back in 2008, after the dismantling of Adei Ad on July 25 of that year. The term began appearing on the Arutz 7 website, and by 2009 it was widespread in the media in Israel and abroad.

A recent and highly-reported incident involving the term was the torching of a mosque in the Israeli Beduin town of Tuba Zanghariya in the Galilee on October 3. The headlines were strident, intensive and prominent, and lasted for almost a week.

Follow-up interviews, columns and feature stories abounded.

Three days after the mosque arson, a suspect was arrested, identified as a West Bank yeshiva student from northern Israel. Three other suspects were also arrested, all connected to the settlements, one from Bat Ayin, one from Elon Moreh, and one from Yitzhar.

All this, one may safely assume, made the public well aware that “settlers” were responsible.

Does the public, though, know the end of this story? Since then, all the suspects in the case have been released due to lack of evidence.

But that is unlikely to deter Dan Ronen who accused the settlement movement of carrying out the attack regardless of who actually carried out the attack. On October 5, he wrote, “We don't know who lit the fire. We can hope the perpetrator will be found. But the people who encouraged and poured oil on the flames are well known.”

In other words, according to Ronen, regardless of who actually carried out the attack, it's still the settlers' fault. Now that all the “settler” suspects have been released, can we expect Mr. Ronen to issue an apology? Furthermore, is it at all possible that the perpetrators had other goals in mind? Ami Dor-On suggested on the News 1 website that the act might have been a provocation by extreme Islamic elements interested in stoking the flames of hatred against the State of Israel.

The vast majority of the residents of Tuba Zanghariya are intimately involved in Israeli life, and the community has a rich history of service in the IDF going back to the days of the Palmah.

Could this have led to an Islamic Movement provocation? A FEW days later, "price tag" graffiti was found in the non-Jewish cemetery in Jaffa.

The Israel Broadcasting Authority headline screamed "Suspicion of price tag in a Jaffa cemetery." But to the chagrin of the settler bashers, however, the graffiti also included statements like "Death to the Russians," and the suspects according to police were Maccabi Haifa sports fans.

By including the "price tag" graffiti, the anonymous vandals had the media pin the blame on settlers.

As reported by Ynet, a Jaffa family was arrested in May on suspicion of preparing to bomb the Hassan Beck mosque in Jaffa and assassinate a senior Muslim cleric, all under the guise of extreme right wing activities.

One may argue that the media was merely reporting the facts as they became known, for that is its job: to report while the police investigate. But the media does not only report. It comments, distorts and accuses.

On October 28, Channel 2 news ran a 15- minute documentary that "explained" why after three years of "Jewish terror," not one case has ended with a prosecution in court (actually, this past Tuesday, Hillel Leibovitz was prosecuted for "price tag" activities).

The star of the documentary was Peace Now's Hagit Ofran, whose home this week was once again smeared with "price tag" graffiti. Reporter Noam Amit did not hesitate to mention the Jaffa case, even though the central suspects were not "settlers."

The clip was followed by the wise words of Amnon Abramowitz, who "knows" that thousands (!) are involved in price tag activities and that the security services simply do not want to find the perpetrators.

Roni Daniel prepared a long list of actions perpetrated against Palestinians and complained that these acts should be referred to as "terror" rather than "price tag," especially since some were aimed against the IDF.

The third commentator, Udi Segal, claimed that these actions demonstrate the moral bankruptcy of the settlers, who are no better than their Tel Aviv counterparts.

The fact that virtually all settler leaders have rightly and repeatedly denounced "price tag" activities did not prevent nor mitigate the harsh criticism.

It is important to state clearly that neither the slanted reporting nor the biased commentary is the real problem. "Price tag" activities are taking place and it is the job of the security services to stop them. It is the media's job to spotlight criminal activity and demand that the state put an end to it. But it is disconcerting, to say the least, when there is a lack of equal intensity and demand for punishment for similar acts when perpetrated against Jews.

Consider the following example, reported in the Basheva newspaper by Chani Luz, director of the Tadmit media review organization.

The IBA's Nissim Keinan reported that a complaint had been lodged with the police for the destruction of 1600 trees adjacent to the Jewish town of Omer. Omer regional council head Pini Badash was interviewed by Esti Perez on Israel Radio's Reshet Bet. Badash claimed that the perpetrators were Beduin. Perez retorted: "When you say Beduin, you too are generalizing and

without proof.”

Later, however, Perez interviewed MK Taleb a-Sanaa, who explained that the incident in Omer could not be separated from the fact that on the same day five Beduin homes were destroyed by the Israeli authorities. Perez did not seem bothered by this “price tag” attack, apparently because the perpetrators weren’t “settlers.” Nor did she demand that the Israeli Arab leadership learn from the Jewish leaders’s example and roundly condemn such acts. Even worse, the same item was hardly mentioned by most media purveyors.

Following the Tuba Zanghariya events, graffiti was scribbled at what many believe to be the burial site of the talmudic High Priest Elazar in the Samaritan town of Awarta. The gravestone was chiseled in two places. Yet hardly anyone knows of this, since the media apparently does not find such acts against Jewish holy places to be sufficiently reprehensible.

Even if Jews were responsible for the mosque torching, does this justify the rioting that followed? The media took pains to present the efforts of Israel’s leadership to placate the residents and denounce the acts. Yet the same did not take place when Joseph’s Tomb in Nablus was desecrated by Palestinian security forces two years ago.

We would want to think that fair and balanced media reportage on criminal activity, irrespective of who perpetrates it, would significantly contribute to its reduction.

Perhaps, on the other hand, Israel’s biased media encourages, in its own way, those people who are violent under the guise of a “price tag.” Shouldn’t the media at least demand of all sides, with equal intensity, to speak against violence of any kind? Fair and balanced media reporting on criminal activity would significantly contribute to its reduction.

***NOTE: The views expressed in certain articles are not necessarily those of the
SAZF***

South African Zionist Federation

Tel : (011) 645-2505

Fax: (011) 640-6758

E-mail: froma@beyachad.co.za

Website: <http://sazionfed.co.za>

PBO NUMBER: 930014277