

Israel's Hamas

Hamas is largely an Israeli Creation

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The victory of Hamas in the January 2006 elections ultimately serves Israeli interests. It provides a justification for Israeli military actions directed against the Palestinian people. It is the culmination of a process initiated in the 1970s

The Bush administration's most recent Middle East caper followed a trajectory we have become familiar with. Eschewing the usual "Israel is our greatest ally" windbagery, the administration for once issued Israel a mild reproof to balance the standard demand that Yasir Arafat crack down on violence. Israel responded by telling the Americans where they could shove it. Israeli government spokesmen - aka most of America's pundits - threatened to do to Bush what they did to his father when he had the temerity to insist that Israel not violate U.S. policy by using U.S. funds to build settlements on occupied land. As was to be expected, Bush beat a hasty retreat and professed himself satisfied with Israel's actions. It was all Arafat's fault again. He was not cracking down on terror...

The mantra that Arafat crack down on terror has always been a fraud. Who is to do this cracking down? Obviously, Palestinian police, security forces and courts. But they are the chief target of Sharon's murderous onslaught. Sharon's strategy today is the same as it was in Beirut in 1982. He wants to destroy and discredit the Palestinian Authority so as to ensure the Palestinians are left without a credible leadership. Chaos and anarchy on the West Bank would then provide Israel with the justification it needs to drive out the indigenous population and render the territory governable.

This has been longstanding Israeli policy. Starting in the late 1970s Israel helped build up the most fanatical and intolerant fundamentalist Muslims as rivals to the nationalist PLO. The terrorist organization Hamas is largely an Israeli creation. A UPI story last year quoted a U.S. government official as saying: "The thinking on the part of some of the right-wing Israeli establishment was that Hamas and the other groups, if they gained control, would refuse to have anything to do with the peace process and would torpedo any agreements put in place."

The PLO has long been aware of Israeli strategy. In their 1989 book, *Intifada*, Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari write that Fatah "suspected the Israelis of a plot first to let Hamas gather strength and then to unleash it against the PLO, turning the uprising into a civil war..."

[M]any Israeli staff officers believed that the rise of fundamentalism in Gaza could be exploited to weaken the power of the PLO...”

According to Robert Fisk, Israeli support for Hamas continued after the signing of the Oslo accords. One can be pretty sure that this strategy received strong encouragement from Washington, which has also seen the advantage of financing and supporting the most vicious and narrowminded Islamic terrorists on account of their antinationalist and antisocialist credentials. Hamas also served Israel’s purpose admirably by suggesting to the American public that the conflict in the Middle East pitted democratic Israel against all-or-nothing fanatics who wanted to drive the Jews into the sea. Israel’s refusal to surrender conquered land and its continued building of settlements in violation of innumerable UN resolutions could then all be justified as perfectly reasonable responses to an implacable enemy.

It helped to conceal the fact that it was Israel that refused to compromise. In February 1970 Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser declared, “It will be possible to institute a durable peace between Israel and the Arab states, not excluding economic and diplomatic relations, if Israel evacuates the occupied territories and accepts a settlement of the problem of the Palestinian refugees.” Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir dismissed the offer.

Next came Anwar Sadat’s peace offer of Feb 4, 1971. He announced before the Egyptian parliament “that if Israel withdrew her forces in Sinai to the passes I would be willing to reopen the Suez Canal; to have my forces cross to the East Bank...to make a solemn declaration of a cease-fire; to restore diplomatic relations with the United States and to sign a peace agreement with Israel...” Israel’s response was the same as before: no return to pre-1967 borders and the establishment of a settlement on occupied Egyptian territory at Yamit, near the Gaza Strip.

In 1977 Sadat took the extraordinary gamble, knowingly risking his life, of flying to Jerusalem in the hope of persuading Israel to respond to his magnanimity and sign a comprehensive Middle East peace treaty. Though the Israelis refused to make any concessions on the Palestinian issue, their apologists have been smugly congratulating themselves ever since for their amazing generosity in withdrawing from occupied Sinai and even destroying the settlements they had built there. Even these “concessions” were fiercely resisted in Israel by, among others, Golda Meir.

Twenty years later, Ehud Barak’s hopelessly inadequate offer at Camp David was vehemently denounced by the Safires and Krauthammers as “appeasement.” It set the stage for today’s insanity.

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