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Blinkered Politics:
The US Approach to Arabs and Muslims

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Abstract

Much like a draft horse of a bygone era, prevented by fixed blinkers from sideward glances, the US trudges through current crises in the Middle East its attention fixed in one direction. Pulling a cart laden with the policies and prejudices of a single country and people, it ignores all others or reduces them to trivia. Those citizens who dare decry such policies are repulsed as naive, if not as traitors. Such is the tyranny of the majority against which no less a thinker than Tocqueville warned.

This attitude weakens the US economically and runs against its self-interest, but remains ascendant. My goal here is to buttress these claims, to indicate how the US has come to pursue policies so harmful to itself, and to suggest how others - especially Arabs and Muslims - might help the US draft horse lose its blinkers and learn to look around in praiseworthy freedom.

Introduction

The events of September 11, 2001, say George W. Bush and his followers, justify all-out war against terrorism and transforming select regimes in the Middle East. Equally spurious are the reasons offered for the ill-conceived invasion of Iraq, cruel treatment of persons seized abroad and imprisoned secretly, infringement of constitutional rights to privacy for US citizens, refusal to allow foreign nationals with unorthodox political views entry to the US, and, currently, support of Israel's vicious, inhumane, and criminal assaults upon the civilians of Gaza and Lebanon. Americans killed in battle since 9/11 now surpass the victims of that day, and the toll of Iraqi civilians is perhaps 100 times as large. To all this, the American public is astonishingly compliant. Why are such unjust policies so readily endorsed? More important, how might those affected help turn them around? To answer these two questions is my goal here.¹

A Refusal to Accept Responsibility

For official Washington, the World Trade Center attacks show hatred for the American way of life and freedom, not disagreement over US policy and its blind support for Israel in oppressing Palestinians and usurping their land. Thus Mayor Rudy Giuliani could pretend publicly to reject a \$10 million gift from a benefactor who dared raise that issue at the award ceremony - even while banking the gift privately. Israel and its policies may not be criticized in the US, not in public fora nor in university class-rooms.

Elected officials who dare censure Israel find sources of funding evaporate as they face election challenges from opponents backed by the all-powerful AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee). Professors deemed unfavorable to Israel are attacked on a web-site then pursued by e-mails to university officials demanding that the culprits be fired.² Congress is now debating a bill to require "balance" in courses concerning the Middle East, that is, mandated representation of the Israeli point of view. Not academic freedom, nor the spirit of inquiry, but a pressure group's sense of what is needed to protect Israel is supposed to guide the syllabi of future university courses. Moreover, Jewish pressure groups are already preparing to counter expected criticism on university campuses over Israel's attacks upon Lebanon - the goal is pro-Israeli propaganda, not analysis of the conflict between Israel and its Arab neighbors.³

The same censorship is to be found with respect to the media. There is no Robert Fisk of American journalism, and the clear, objective voice of the *Christian Science Monitor* hardly compensates for the biased reporting of the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. Most daunting are the articles of the editorial page staff and columnists of these newspapers with their bias against Arabs and Muslims. Moshe Yaalon, retired

lieutenant general of the Israeli Defense Forces and IDF chief of staff from 2002-05, now a "distinguished military fellow" at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, was not challenged when he falsely contended in the *Washington Post* that Israel had committed no war crimes against the Lebanese or Palestinians.⁴ Such lies and distortions find no counter in the American press, and so US citizens hew willy-nilly to the dominant pro-Israeli line without ever pausing to ask how that position serves the US national interest. Ironically, for a balanced account of such issues, one must turn to the Israeli press.⁵

Freedom of discussion is so limited in the US that an article critical of the Israeli lobby and its influence upon American foreign policy could be published only in the *London Review of Books*. I refer, of course, to the famous Mearsheimer and Walt article,⁶ reaction to which and subsequent attempts to silence even its foreign and inter-net appearance only proved the very point they were trying to make. Yet the issues raised by the article cut to the very core of current US foreign policy.

These days it is not even possible for foreigners suspected of opinions critical to the US or its Israeli allies to enter the US. Some instances actually make the news: Professor Tariq Ramadhan's revoked visa and Sir Zaki Badawi's refused entry to the US despite his status as an advisor to Queen Elizabeth and invitation to give a prominent address to the UN. Far too many others receive no attention - to wit, the handcuffing, harsh interrogation, and eventual refused entry to some 80 Iranian academics and intellectuals who arrived with visas on US soil in mid-August to participate in a conference on improving US-Iranian relations.

In sum, a new mentality pervades all aspects of life in the US. Americans - or at least those who shape opinion in the US - are intent upon using America's super-power status to achieve a new world order, one that accords special place to Israel in the Middle East and seeks to impose a particular version of democracy upon Arabs and Muslims. "Particular," for it rejects the will of the people if they dare vote for religious parties. And it is a version that can accommodate non-democratic rulers deemed useful for the US. According to this imperialist mentality, not Muslim and Arab resistance to indiscriminate American support for Israel and its subjugation of Palestinians plus occupation of their territory in defiance of UN resolutions, nor resentment over the US invasion and destruction of Iraq, but envy for American freedom is at the root of current problems.⁷

Don Quixote to the Rescue

Don Quixote's vivid imagination pales in comparison to that of George W. Bush and his neo-conservative fellow knights. Full of pride over the demise of a Communist regime, they rush to the

conclusion that they have defeated Communism and declare a new war on terrorism. But the enemy is not an idea. Nor are those accused - Hamas and Hizballah - the real terrorists.

A well-fed, comfortably sheltered, financially sufficient, and generally complacent individual has difficulty imagining why anyone would sacrifice life or limb to harm others. But one struggling to nourish self and family, forced to live in a hovel, without prospect of employment, insulted and harassed day after day along with parents and children by foreign usurpers intent on driving him or her from ancestral lands, and void of hope that politics as usual will put an end to such misery - such a person may well conclude that to die so as to harm the oppressor is worthwhile. Sadly, although there are no smart bombs and maybe no smart bombers, there are all too many who "smart" from despair.

More must be said. If terrorism consists in aggression against innocent civilians, then bombing, shelling, and assassinating the same by state action is as much terrorism as the act of any suicide bomber. For a guerilla to fire a rocket against civilians is no more an act of terrorism than for a soldier to shell civilians on a beach or in their homes. Pre-emptive war, targeted killings, collective punishment, and destruction of civilian infrastructure are not part of self-defense. They are illegal acts condemned by international treaties. Israel has long engaged in such actions, but raised them to criminal levels in Gaza and Lebanon since June 2006. In the midst of it all, George W. Bush vaunted the new order he was helping usher in and eagerly furnished Israel with weapons to decimate civilians. While cluster bombs may not qualify as weapons of mass destruction, they are nonetheless horribly inhumane.

These reflections justify terrorism by the oppressed no more than by the oppressor. Both are to be condemned. But apartheid walls and violence intent upon extirpating all suspected of such acts will not achieve security. It will come about only by a just righting of deep-rooted, decades-old wrongs - one that includes a real stake in society for the dispossessed and disenfranchised.

According to Condoleeza Rice, the goal of US foreign policy is to fight terrorism by spreading freedom and democracy.⁸ In practice, however, it consists in subjecting - by persuasion or coercion - all others to the will of the US. This follows from the erroneous and excessive reaction of George W. Bush and his advisors to the events of 9/11 and their decision to wage war against an idea - terrorism - rather than against the individuals who have declared their opposition to US policies. Along the way, the US has come to rely unduly upon Israel and to model its actions in Iraq on those Israel follows with Palestinians - even

to the manner in which those detained in Abu Ghraib prison were treated. Relying too much on the fallacy that Israel is the sole democracy in the Middle East, the US has accepted Israel's notion that the sole path to success there is the subjugation of all other nations - especially Syria and Iran. This policy, called deterrence by those in Israel who espouse total war against their neighbors, deserves another name: unjust, foolish aggression.⁹

The tales of knight errantry that have put such strange notions into the head of our Don Quixote come from the insidious writings and whisperings of many who have gained the ear of those in power and of the public: Bernard Lewis, Steven Emerson, Daniel Pipes, Richard Perle, Charles Krauthammer, and William Kristol. They are not members of a cabal, much less of a conspiracy. But they share in opinions about promoting a strong Israel and successfully advance them in ways that demand serious attention. The same holds for lesser figures occupying positions of power at various levels throughout the US government and in the offices of think-tanks and the media: Paul Wolfowitz, Elliot Abrams, Douglas Feith, Abram Shulsky, Hillel Fradkin, and others. Their voices drown out the sober thinking of Patrick Buchanan and push reporters such as Anders Strindberg to the sidelines.¹⁰ Because of their prestige and power, the US public has never given serious attention to the one proposal that might resolve the impasse in the Middle East, the Abdullah Peace Plan of 2002. As Prince Turki al-Faisal noted in a speech that received all too little attention, it is "the most comprehensive peace plan" offered to date to Israel, namely, "the end of hostility and normalization of relations in return for total Israeli withdrawal from Arab occupied territories, including Jerusalem."¹¹ Ariel Sharon's response to the plan was the destruction of Jenin, and George W. Bush seems as unaware of this plan as of other matters counter to his unique vision for a new Middle East.

A Return to The Right Path

In sum, US foreign policy today consists in determination to reshape the world in its image by whatever means available.¹² It invades, controls, and threatens other nations at will by its might. To sustain its military forces, it eludes previously honored contracts and returns troops to danger zones over and over without regard for their preparedness or well-being. In retaliation for the deaths of a small number of people, not all of whom were American citizens, it has struck out blindly against myriads of citizens of other countries or abetted its chief ally in such acts. It demonstrates thereby the extent to which it prizes American lives over others. Dispassionate examination of that policy reveals it to be based on two false premises. First, that might makes right - obviating the need to question what is just.¹³ The second is untenable racism. The same can be said of

Israeli foreign policy. Neither is likely to change soon, but it is important to identify the flaws in both and suggest how the opinions supporting them might be refuted or altered.

Of immediate importance is providing an accurate portrait of Islam and explaining why it is perfectly reasonable for Muslims or any other fair-minded persons to criticize US and Israeli policies as they relate to both. However foolishly erroneous a term it is, "Islamic fascism" was not coined by George W. Bush. Public policy institutes and universities are all too happy to invite would-be specialists to hold forth on Islam and speculate on why it alone among the Abrahamic faiths incites to violence.¹⁴ Yet there is no paucity of well-qualified spokespersons who can provide clear, honest analysis of this and other phenomena having to do with Islam. Muslim social scientists and humanists need to work together so that such a message comes to the fore. To begin with, they must reach beyond parochial organizations and publications to speak to the world in which they live, in the terms used by professional analysts, to explain themselves as Muslims and their faith in all of its aspects.

Much has been and is being done, to be sure. Praises must be heaped upon CAIR (Council on American-Islamic Relations), FAIR (Forum against Islamophobia and Racism), IIIT (International Institute of Islamic Thought), the Minaret of Freedom, and CSID (Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy), as well as many others, for their tireless efforts in explaining and defending Islam and Muslims in their respective communities. Through them much has been accomplished. But more is needed.

Permit me, nonetheless, a minor rebuke: for an organization as powerful and wide-reaching as AMSS to hold its annual conference on the same week-end as that of the prestigious American Political Science Association is counter-productive. The political scientists attending AMSS have a more pressing duty, namely, contributing to the proceedings of the APSA. The same holds with respect to annual meetings of other professional organizations. The voices of those able to present a correct picture of Islam and of Muslims will be heard only when qualified scholars, who are intimately familiar with Islam, participate actively in such fora.

Clear, dispassionate studies of Islam and of the political, economic, and social problems faced by Muslims around the world are also needed. They must be published in newspapers, journals, and books distributed to non-Muslim as well as Muslim audiences. No longer can anyone opposed to lies and bias stand apart from the wider Western world, especially not as long as Muslims continue to be part of it. Now an intelligent exposition of the faith and practice as well as of the political aspirations of Muslims as Muslims is all-important.

At the same time, Arabs - Muslim as well as Christian - must

begin to promote their many achievements. Arab culture in all its richness and breadth must be brought to the attention of those who have been ignorant of it heretofore.

The opinions about Islam, Muslims, and Arabs that now hold sway have been formed slowly and affected by many events - most unforeseen. But the dangers of allowing those opinions to continue to dominate without challenge affect the world and ourselves more than ever before. That is why it is time to put scruples aside, to accept mingling intellectually and socially with those whose ideas and habits are repugnant, and to enter the fray as scholars, opinion-makers, and concerned fellow-citizens.

At the moment, it is not clear what the future will bring in the way of a *modus vivendi*. A melting-pot society that seeks to do away with the different opinions and habits with which we were raised no longer seems possible or even desirable. Yet it is not clear how we might live as members of separate communities or *milal* and still come together as fellow citizens in pursuit of common interests. Finding a way out of our current dilemma, a path to mutual understanding, security of life and limb, and some degree of human bliss will not be easy.

Clearly, George W. Bush - but also all of us - have much to learn from that astute and ever irreverent political sage from Baltimore, H. L. Mencken. We, as well as those who so threaten our lives, must come to appreciate the wisdom of his observation that "for every complex problem there is a simple solution . . . and it is wrong."

NOTES

1. Thucydides' account of how speech was transformed during the sedition in Corcyra is all too apt for our times, especially his observation that the cause of such distortion "is desire of rule out of avarice and ambition, and the zeal of contention from those two proceeding." See *Thucydides: The Peloponnesian War, the Thomas Hobbes translation*, ed. David Grene, intro. Bertrand de Jouvenel (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1959), Bk. 3, sect. 82; also sects. 70-85.

2. For example, when I defended Prof. Sami al-Arian against the charges for which he was indicted and explained how the programs of WISE benefitted academics, in an exchange on a restricted list-serve, Martin Kramer denounced me on Campus Watch, albeit somewhat abashedly (www.campus-watch.org/article/id/557). Above a picture of me that I had never before seen was pasted one of the Lidd bus-bombing, suggesting it was my doing. Calls for my dismissal were numerous, heated, and clearly orchestrated. Fortunately, administrators at the University of Maryland adhered to the principle of academic freedom.

Equally deplorable are the tactics of David Horowitz, the founder of www.FrontPageMag.com, especially his list of those professors whom he deems "the 101 most dangerous academics in America."

Consider, too, the case of Douglas Giles as another instance of how free speech about the Middle East and US foreign policy has disappeared from the university class-room. An instructor on world religions at Roosevelt University in Chicago, Giles was forbidden by his department head to permit student questions about Palestine and Israel or mention in class, textbooks, or examinations that might bring criticism upon Judaism. A student asked about Palestinian rights, another complained, and Giles was dismissed. Henry Porter, "Comment: The Land of the Free - But Free Speech is a Rare Commodity," *The Observer*, August 13, 2006. <http://observer.guardian.co.uk/comment/story/0,,1843543,00.html>

3. In "Campus Groups Brace For Anti-Israel Campaign," *The Jewish Week*, August 11, 2006, Gary Rosenblatt reports that "Jonathan Kessler, the leadership development director at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, which organizes pro-Israel activities at universities around the country . . . and a number of other American Jewish leaders and educators said they are bracing for a surge of rallies, protests and campaigns against Israel's military conduct in Lebanon." To counter criticism of Israel, they plan to emphasize "Hezbollah's responsibility not

only for Israeli deaths with missiles aimed at civilians but Lebanese casualties as well, since the terror group positions itself among the populace." They "had to scramble to re-frame the focus of their attention from the Palestinian conflict to the war with Hezbollah over the last several weeks. AIPAC's long-planned four-day training seminar for 350 student activists from around the country, held July 23-26 in Washington, was 'recalibrated' only days before . . . so as to reflect the current conflict. . . . The main goal of the conference . . . was to deliver the college campus as an asset to the pro-Israel community, primarily by engaging in political activity."

4. *The Washington Post*, August 3, 2006, p. A27. Yaalon excused the Qana atrocity by asserting, against all available evidence, that "after launching missiles at Israel, the terrorists rushed inside a building. When Israel fired a precision-guided missile to strike at the terrorists, scores of civilians, including children, were killed." Not only did *The Washington Post* publish this mendacious account without comment or disclaimer, but followed it up with a front-page article that depicts Yaalon as conscientiously trying to limit collateral damage in Israeli targeted killings. Laura Blumenfeld ("In Israel, a Divisive Struggle Over Targeted Killing," *The Washington Post*, August 27, 2006, A1 and A12-13) examines in detail the argument between Yaalon and his colleagues over the size bomb to be used in their 2003 attempt to kill Hamas leaders at a meeting in a Gaza apartment building. In the August 3 article, Yaalon had argued that Israel's concern not to harm civilians sometimes works against its military goals: "We knew that a one-ton bomb would destroy the three-story building and kill the Hamas leadership. But we also knew that such a bomb would endanger about 40 families who lived in the vicinity. We decided to use a smaller bomb that would destroy only the top floor of the building. As it turned out, the Hamas leaders were meeting on the ground floor. They lived to terrorize another day." Neither Yaalon nor Blumenfeld say anything about how many civilians were killed in this particular action. Nor does either acknowledge the civilians killed in other targeted killings. In passing, Blumenfeld mentions the 2002 bombing of a Gaza apartment building that resulted in the deaths of 15 civilians, 9 of whom were children - an event that surely affected the 2003 decision. Yaalon, however, said nothing of this incident in the earlier article. The juxtaposition of the two articles and the common theme that links them causes one to wonder what standards of journalism guide the editors of *The Washington Post*.

5. In "Nasrallah Didn't Mean To," *Haaretz*, August 17, 2006, Amira Hass provides needed background to Yaalon's white-wash of

Israel's aggression in Lebanon: "the claim that 'they' (Hezbollah and the Palestinians) cynically exploit civilians by locating themselves among them and firing from their midst . . . is made by citizens of a state who know very well where to turn off Ibn Gvirol Street in Tel Aviv to get to the security-military complex that is located in the heart of their civilian city; this claim is repeated by the parents of armed soldiers who bring their weapons home on weekends, and is recited by soldiers whose bases are adjacent to Jewish settlements in the West Bank and who have shelled civilian Palestinian neighborhoods from positions and tanks that have been stationed inside civilian settlements."

6. John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, "The Israeli Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy," Harvard University, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Faculty Research Working Paper Series, March 2006, RWP 06-011.

7. For a contrast, see John L. Esposito, "It's the Policy, Stupid: Political Islam and US Foreign Policy," *Harvard International Review*: <http://hir.harvard.edu/articles/1453/>. Moreover, the essays by Michael Scheuer, Peter Bergen, and Antony T. Sullivan in "9/11/06, Five Years on: A Symposium," *The National Interest* (September/October, 2006 [no. 85]): 20-35 offer a novel, thought-provoking analysis of the factors leading up to 9/11, especially the political ones. Although Alexis Debat and Nikolas K. Gvosdev try in their co-authored piece to buttress the idea that 9/11 resulted from envy about what the US has achieved, Scheuer clearly depicts the political reasons for the attack; unfortunately, his "might makes right" remedy is difficult to defend on any but narrow "America-first" grounds. It is cleverly countered by Bergen's compelling, deeply sensitive analysis. By far, however, Sullivan's vivid account of al-Qaida's potential to wreak havoc and thus counter US military adventures abroad makes the most powerful case for reconsidering the origins of 9/11.

8. See Condoleezza Rice, "A Path to Lasting Peace," *The Washington Post*, August 16, 2006, p. A13. Contending that the responsibility for Israel's most recent attack upon Lebanon lies with Iran and Syria while Hezbollah merely serves their purposes, she claims "for the past month the United States has worked urgently to end the violence that Hezbollah and its sponsors have imposed on the people of Lebanon and Israel" then insists that "while the entire world has spent the past month working for peace, the Syrian and Iranian regimes have sought to prolong and intensify the war that Hezbollah started." In other words, the US Secretary of State is unable to blame Israel in any way for the damage wrought by this war or even to see how Israel blew the original *causa belli* out of proportion. Yet any fair-minded

person must understand that while a soldier may be put out of action by being killed, wounded, or taken prisoner, he may never - qua soldier - be "kidnaped." Seizing elected officials and cabinet officers, as Israel has done with 45 members of Hamas, does qualify as kidnaping, however.

9. Alan Hart develops the background to the thesis in a speech for the International Institute of Strategic Studies, August 10, 2006, "The Beginning of the End of the Zionist State of Israel?" <http://mparent7777.livejournal.com/11313638.html>. Hart argues that Hizballah's capture of the IDF soldiers was merely a pretext for a war long-planned, one designed to occupy and annex Lebanon up to the Litani River, and that Israel repeatedly seeks out regional confrontation so as to keep tension and fear of attack high among citizens and soldiers. Indeed, this is the means by which it maintains the deterrent power of the IDF. Meyrav Wurmser, director of the Hudson Institute Center for Middle East Policy and Israeli-born spouse of David Wurmser, a Middle East adviser to Vice-President Cheney, adds to Hart's contention. "The bottom line is that Israel's gripe is not with Lebanon; it [is] with Syria and Iran," she writes in *National Review Online (NRO)*, then draws the obvious consequences: "Given the explosive nature of the situation, Israel ought not let its adversaries define the battleground. Rather, it ought to carry the battle to them."

10. See, for example, his "Hizbullah's attacks stem from Israeli incursions into Lebanon," *Christian Science Monitor*, August 1, 2006: "Since its withdrawal of occupation forces from southern Lebanon in May 2000, Israel has violated the United Nations-monitored 'blue line' on an almost daily basis, according to UN reports. Hizbullah's military doctrine, articulated in the early 1990s, states that it will fire Katyusha rockets into Israel only in response to Israeli attacks on Lebanese civilians or Hizbullah's leadership; this indeed has been the pattern." Most important, Strindberg understands that "the fundamental obstacle to understanding the Arab-Israeli conflict is that we have given up on asking what is right and wrong, instead asking what is 'practical' and 'realistic.' Yet reality is that Israel is a profoundly racist state, the existence of which is buttressed by a seemingly endless succession of punitive measures, assassinations, and wars against its victims and their allies. A realistic understanding of the conflict, therefore, is one that recognizes that the crux is not in this or that incident or policy, but in Israel's foundational and persistent refusal to recognize the humanity of its Palestinian victims. Neither Hizbullah nor Hamas are driven by a desire to 'wipe out Jews,' as is so often claimed, but by a fundamental sense of injustice that

they will not allow to be forgotten."

11. In a speech sponsored by the New American Foundation in Washington, DC, on July 31, 2006, Prince Turki began by firmly castigating Hamas and Hizballah: "Saudi Arabia holds firmly responsible those who first engaged in reckless adventure under the guise of resistance. They have brought much damage and danger to the region without concern for others." "However," he added, "these unacceptable and irresponsible actions do not justify the Israeli destruction of Lebanon or the targeting and punishment of the Lebanese and Palestinian civilian populations. These actions are without consideration for international pacts, conventions, and norms. This is not the way of peace."

12. Almost every analyst recognizes that the war in Lebanon had a broader goal. Vali Nasr of the Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, and adjunct senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations surmises that its goal was to emphasize to Iran the depth of US determination "to bring it into compliance on the nuclear issue." Because the war "not only failed to subdue Hizballah militarily, but has made it politically stronger," Nasr urges "US objectives and interests would be better served by giving Iran a vested interest in stability . . . including [it] in a new regional security framework [while continuing] to demand that Iran curb its nuclear activities, abandon support of terrorism, and respect the democratic aspirations of Iranians"; see "After Lebanon, there's Iran," *Christian Science Monitor*, August 9, 2006. In "Israel's Broken Heart: Final Reckoning," *The New Republic Online*, August 15, 2006, Yossi Klein Halevi also notes that Israel had "an unprecedented green light from Washington to do whatever necessary to uproot the Iranian front line against Israel," then goes on to lament its failure to have succeeded.

13. The problem with "might makes right" is that it can easily turn on the perpetrator. As Jean-Jacques Rousseau noted so well, "the despot is master only as long as he is the strongest; as soon as he can be overthrown, he has nothing to say against such violence. The riot that ends up strangling or de-throning a sultan is as juridical an act as those by which the day before he disposed of the lives and goods of his subjects." See *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, anti-penultimate paragraph; also *Social Contract*, Bk. 1, chap. 3.

14. Consider the announcement accompanying a lecture by Shmeul Bar, "Conflict with the West: Religious Drivers and Strategies of Jihad" at The Heritage Foundation on August 17, 2006: "Dr. Shmuel Bar, Director of Studies at the Institute for Policy and

Strategy, Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya, joins us from Israel to discuss the close relationship between religion and politics in Islam - and the predilection of radical Islamic organizations towards religious motivation - which makes it difficult to draw a picture of the political and military strategies which drive them as distinct from religious convictions. The use of religious authority through fatwas (Islamic rulings) of Islamic scholars to justify the very act of jihad and to regulate its scope and constraints is a pivotal force for motivation of the foot soldiers of the jihad, but also a serious consideration for the leaders. The use of apocalyptic rhetoric for motivation of followers is not easily distinguished from the real expectations and practical plans of radical leaders. Join us as Dr. Bar explains the strategic concepts of Islamic terrorists and the resulting ramifications for U.S. policy toward the Middle East and for coalition forces currently on the ground."

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