



# NEWS REVIEW

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## From Bush to Obama

Editorial | *The Jerusalem Post* | 20 January

As we, from 6,000 miles away, watched Barack Obama take the oath of office, promising America's friendship to all those who seek peace, the extraordinary enthusiasm of Americans for their new president, together with the optimism that he can begin to meet the challenges their country faces, draws our admiration and our affection.

The first time the name Barack Obama appeared in the pages of *The Jerusalem Post* was on July 28, 2004, in a report on the Democratic National Convention which nominated John Kerry. Our correspondent noted that "Barack Obama, a candidate for US Senate from Illinois, has become a star of the Democratic Party" and was scheduled to address the convention. The next day we reported that Obama "energised the crowd with an indictment of the Bush administration's decision to wage war in Iraq."

Obama was elected to the Senate that November. And by the time he made his first trip to Israel in January 2006, the junior senator was already being touted as a possible presidential candidate. He declared his candidacy in Springfield, Illinois, in February 2007, won the Democratic nomination and went on to defeat John McCain to become America's first African American president.

One Hebrew tabloid headlined a front-page picture of Obama in English: "Good luck." In truth, beyond wishing the new president well, Israelis are apprehensive over whether he will be not just supportive, but empathetic toward Israel - like George W. Bush.

Yet Israel had plenty of ups and downs with Bush, too.

Shortly after al-Qaida's attack on September 11, 2001, Bush sought support to build an anti-terrorism coalition by emphasizing - Palestinian suicide bombings notwithstanding - that a Palestinian state living alongside a secure Israel was part of his vision of a Middle East peace. He quickly dissociated the war on Islamist terror from Israel's war against Palestinian terror. His administration initially resisted isolating Yasser Arafat; it even opposed Operation Defensive Shield.

Bush eventually figured out that before the Palestinians can create a state they needed an institutional infrastructure and civic-minded technocrats. His administration recruited Salaam Fayad to be the PA's finance, and later prime minister. Bush will go down in history as the first US president to explicitly call for the creation of a Palestinian state, while urging the Palestinians to reject Arafat's violent ways.

His administration proposed a "road map" aiming to settle the conflict by 2005. In it, the Palestinians committed to an unconditional cessation of violence. Israel promised to dismantle settlement outposts erected since March 2001.

Bush opposed the security barrier. He found nice things to say about the EU-funded Geneva Initiative promoted by Yossi Beilin and Yasser Abd Rabbo, which would have driven Israel back to the 1949 Armistice Lines while obfuscating a resolution of Arab claims for a "right of return." Though Bush supported disengagement only reluctantly, out of this tentative backing came, potentially, his most important contribution to Israel's security: His April 2004 letter to premier Ariel Sharon acknowledging that "it is unrealistic to expect that the outcome of final status negotiations will be a full and complete return to the armistice lines of 1949."

In 2007, in the wake of the Iraq War and the need to rebuild support for the US in the Arab world, Bush repackaged the road map as the Annapolis process, setting December 2008 as the new deadline for ending the conflict.

It was under Bush's watch that the disastrous 2003 National Intelligence Estimate was issued, taking the wind out of efforts to isolate Iran. Not only didn't Bush "solve" the Iran nuclear crisis - perhaps because he had overstretched US military resources in Iraq - he also reportedly blocked Israeli efforts to go it alone.

The lesson in all this? Israelis would be wise not to panic at the first sign of turbulence in Jerusalem-Washington relations. American interests in the Middle East are not always in harmony with Israel's. But we have every reason to expect that Obama will support the Jewish state in its quest for defensible borders and genuine acceptance by its neighbours.

He knows that this can happen only if Iranian and Arab extremists - charter members of that very "far-reaching network of violence and hatred" he warned against in his inaugural address - are sidelined.

## Broadsheet no place for narrow minds

**Michael Ronaldson | The Australian | 21 January**

If anti-Semitism is truly the oldest hatred, the hallmark of this noxious ideology is the enduring nature of its bigoted beliefs. Business columnist Michael Backman recently dredged up the most venerable of anti-Jewish biases in the place where they should be least expected: the opinion page of *The Age*. What Backman wrote was an appalling piece that did not deserve a berth in one of Australia's signature newspapers.

The Roman historian Tacitus wrote 2000 years ago that "impious and abominable" customs of the Jews made them "feel nothing but hatred and enmity for the rest of the world". Backman wrote last weekend that Israelis are known for being "rude and arrogant".

The New Testament Book of Thessalonians accused the Jews of murdering Jesus, and being "hostile to all men". Backman appeared to endorse that theological indictment when he wrote that Christian anti-Semitism was the Jews' "punishment for the death of Jesus".

Backman's opinion column didn't miss an opportunity to tick the box of every ethnic stereotype in the Jew-hater's handbook. We are all aware of the folk tale that Jews are inclined to be tight-fisted. But then again, the same is said about my Scottish ancestors.

Yet in his obsessive piece, Backman tried to legitimise this generalisation by asserting that Israelis are known for arguing "over-trifling amounts of money even though they clearly have means". Such an unsophisticated argument serves only to demean the person who makes it.

Backman even seeks to lay responsibility for jihadi terrorism directly at Israel's doorstep. The al-Qa'ida attack on 9/11? That is attributed to "Israel's utter inability to transform the Palestinians from enemies into friends". And don't you dare blame the death of 88 Australians in Bali on Amrozi and the other Jemaah Islamiah terrorists who actually built and placed those bombs. In Backman's eyes the true onus of guilt should be hung around the neck of all Israelis.

I can only imagine the anger felt by Jews on reading such a disgraceful allegation.

In the world according to Backman, the true cause of terrorism is resistance to terrorism. I am reminded of Winston Churchill's famous definition of an appeaser as "someone who feeds the crocodile in the hope of being eaten last". And the columnist neglects to explain how Israel is supposed to befriend a Hamas government whose covenant incites the murder of every Jew on the face of the earth.

As a business writer whose geographic specialty is Asia, Backman makes no claim to any particular expertise on the subjects of Middle Eastern history or politics. And just as fools rush in where angels fear to tread, he shows no hesitation about venturing forth with opinions that are rife with incomprehension and errors of fact.

Backman succumbs to the myth that the Jews of the Arab world were well treated by their Muslim neighbours before the Zionists came along to wreck this idyllic existence.

But serious students of the region tell a different story. The dean of Middle East scholarship, Princeton's Bernard Lewis, described the 18th and 19th centuries as "the lowest point in the existence of the Jews in the Muslim lands". And there is a vast array of evidence that documents the pogroms and persecution that afflicted Jewish communities from Morocco to Mesopotamia long before modern Zionism emerged.

For many decades, Israel's enemies have been beating their ploughshares into swords in a vain attempt to destroy Zionism, the national movement for Jewish sovereign self-determination. Time and time again, those same enemies spurned compromise, choosing instead a path of war and terrorism.

And while this has been a tragedy for Israel, it has been a catastrophe for those who should have gained the most. In Gaza, for example, the international community offered billions of dollars in aid after the unilateral Israeli withdrawal in 2005. For the first time in history, the Palestinians had a real opportunity to build the institutions of a civil society, free from foreign domination. Instead, the election of the Hamas Government turned Gaza into a rocket-launching pad and imposed a strict version of Sharia legal code that invoked crucifixion and stoning as punishments.

The Age has apologised for its "error" in running the Backman column. But that is too little, too late.

There are no winners in the Middle East situation. And few of us can know or comprehend the fear felt by both Palestinians and Jews alike. Israel is not without its faults. But Backman shows that one cannot despise the world's only Jewish state without much of that hatred rubbing off on the Jewish people as well.

I have great respect for The Age, but in this instance an apology is not sufficient. Instead, Backman's services must be terminated immediately.

[Liberal senator Michael Ronaldson represents Victoria in the Australian Parliament]

## Apologists for evil

**Editorial | The Australian | 21 January**

**Blaming Israel for terrorism completely misses the point**

Good for The Age's editor, Paul Ramadge, for apologising in print for the anti-Israeli rant by columnist Michael Blackman, which appeared in the paper last weekend. But no amount of apologising can disguise the obvious: if Blackman's beliefs are not held by senior staff at the paper, why did his piece appear? Some of Blackman's ideas are easily dismissed, such as his suggestion that Israelis are arrogant. Like the rest of humanity some are, some aren't. Some of his examples are less eccentric than inane, such as his statement that the peaceful Parsees of India are interested in the welfare of others, where Israelis are not. Some of his suggestions are outright offensive, such as his statement that while Israel has a right to defend itself from rocket attack, it has brought the Gaza crisis on itself by oppressing the Palestinians. And some are egregiously incorrect, such as his argument that Muslim hatred for Israel had nothing to do with religion. Nonsense. Hamas terrorists attacked Israel from Gaza until Israel's armed forces stopped them because Hamas is committed to the destruction of the Jewish state of Israel - no ifs, no buts.

But Blackman's rhetoric is less ridiculous than reprehensible in the way he argues that the Israelis

treats Palestinians. "Israel's utter inability to transform the Palestinians from enemies into friends has imposed big costs on us all. We have paid for Israel's failure with bombs on London public transport, bombs in bars in Bali and even the loss of the World Trade Centre in New York," Blackman wrote.

Undergraduate, ill-informed nonsense. There is no doubting the rage of millions of Muslims all over the world at the condition of the Palestinians. But this is a convenient cover for Islamic terrorists who hate everybody, including Muslims, who do not share their evil interpretation of the honoured religion of Islam. And the terrorists will use any explanation that is convenient to justify their ideologically driven killing. Osama bin Laden used to say US bases in Saudi Arabia affronted his faith, but he did not call off al-Qa'ida when the US left the kingdom. And, short of every Jew leaving the country, there is nothing Israel can do to placate Hamas and its allies. There is no evidence that Blackman hates Jews, but people who do will endorse his arguments and continue to cloak their anti-Semitism in a faux concern for the Palestinians.

What is most alarming about the way this nonsense appeared in The Age is that it demonstrates the accepted wisdom among Australians who believe that in supporting Hamas they are barracking for the underdog. This is the equivalent of thinking fondly of the Confederacy because it fought the evil US army. Whatever the intellectually immature editors at The Age who published Blackman's piece think, Islamic terrorists want to kill all the Israelis, and then start on everybody else whose opinions annoy them.

## The "Youth Bulge" Phenomenon

**Gunnar Heinsohn | Hudson New York | 15 January**

As the world decries Israel's attempt to defend itself from the rocket attacks coming from Gaza, consider this: When Hamas routed Fatah in Gaza in 2007, it cost nearly 350 lives and 1,000 wounded. Fatah's surrender brought only a temporary stop to the type of violence and bloodshed that are commonly seen in lands where at least 30% of the male population is in the 15-to-29 age bracket.

In such "youth bulge" countries, young men tend to eliminate each other or get killed in aggressive wars until a balance is reached between their ambitions and the number of acceptable positions available in their society. In Arab nations such as Lebanon (150,000 dead in the civil war between 1975 and 1990) or Algeria (200,000 dead in the Islamists' war against their own people between 1999 and 2006), the slaughter abated only when the fertility rates in these countries fell from seven children per woman to fewer than two. The warring stopped because no more warriors were being born.

In Gaza, however, there has been no demographic disarmament. The average woman still bears six babies. For every 1,000 men aged 40-44, there are 4,300 boys aged 0-4 years. In the U.S. the latter figure is 1,000, and in the U.K. it's only 670.

And so the killing continues. In 2005, when Israel was still an occupying force, Gaza lost more young men to gang fights and crime than in its war against the "Zionist enemy." Despite the media's obsession with the Mideast conflict, it has cost many fewer lives than the youth bulges in West Africa, Lebanon or Algeria. In the six decades since Israel's founding, "only" some 62,000 people (40,000 Arabs, 22,000 Jews) have been killed in all the Israeli-Arab wars and Palestinian terror attacks. During that same time, some 11 million Muslims have been killed in wars and terror attacks -- mostly at the hands of other Muslims.

What accounts for the Mideast conflict's relatively low body count? Hamas and their ilk certainly aim to kill as many Israelis as possible. To their indignation, the Israelis are quite good at protecting themselves. On the other hand, Israel, despite all the talk about its "disproportionate" use of force, is doing its utmost to spare civilian deaths. Even Hamas acknowledges that most of the Palestinians killed by Israeli air raids are from their own ranks. But about 10%-15% of Gaza's casualties are women and minors -- a tragedy impossible to prevent in a densely settled area in which nearly half the people are under 15 and the terrorists hide among them.

The reason for Gaza's endless youth bulge is that a large majority of its population does not have to provide for its offspring. Most babies are fed, clothed, vaccinated and educated by UNRWA, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. Unlike the U.N. High Commission for Refugees, which deals with the rest of the world's refugees and aims to settle them in their respective host countries, UNRWA perpetuates the Palestinian problem by classifying as refugees not only those who originally fled their homes, but all of their descendents as well.

UNRWA is benevolently funded by the U.S. (31%) and the European Union (nearly 50%) -- only 7% of the funds come from Muslim sources. Thanks to the West's largesse, nearly the entire population of Gaza lives in a kind of lowly but regularly paid dependence. One result of this unlimited welfare is an endless population boom. Between 1950 and 2008, Gaza's population has grown from 240,000 to 1.5 million. The West basically created a new Near Eastern people in Gaza that at current trends will reach three million in 2040. Within that period, Gazans may alter the justifications and directions of their aggression but are unlikely to stop the aggression itself.

The Hamas-Fatah truce of June 2007 allowed the Islamists again to direct all their energy on attacking Israel. The West pays for food, schools, medicine and housing, while Muslim nations help out with the military hardware. Unrestrained by such necessities as having to earn a living, the young have plenty of time on their hands for digging tunnels, smuggling, assembling missiles and firing 4,500 of them at Israel since 2006. While this gruesome activity has slowed the Palestinian internecine slaughter, it forced some 250,000 Israelis into bomb shelters.

The current situation can only get worse. Israel is being pushed into a corner. Gazan teenagers have no future other than war. One rocket master killed is immediately replaced by three young men for whom a martyr's death is no less honorable than victory. Some 230,000 Gazan males, aged 15 to 29, who are available for the battlefield now, will be succeeded by 360,000 boys under 15 (45% of all Gazan males) who could be taking up arms within the coming 15 years.

As long as we continue to subsidize Gaza's extreme demographic armament, young Palestinians will likely continue killing their brothers or neighbors. And yet, despite claiming that it wants to bring peace to the region, the West continues to make the population explosion in Gaza worse every year. By generously supporting UNRWA's budget, the West assists a rate of population increase that is 10 times higher than in their own countries. Much is being said about Iran waging a proxy war against Israel by supporting Hezbollah and Hamas. One may argue that by fueling Gaza's untenable population explosion, the West unintentionally finances a war by proxy against the Jews of Israel.

If we seriously want to avoid another generation of war in Gaza, we must have the courage to tell the Gazans that they will have to start looking after their children themselves, without UNRWA's help. This would force Palestinians to focus on building an economy instead of freeing them up to wage war. Of course, every baby lured into the world by our money up to now would still have our assistance.

If we make this urgently needed reform, then by at least 2025 many boys in Gaza - like in Algeria - would enter puberty as only sons. They would be able to look forward to a more secure future in a less violent society.

If the West prefers calm around Gaza even before 2025, it may consider offering immigration to those young Palestinians only born because of the West's well-meant but cruelly misguided aid. In the decades to come, North America and Europe will have to take in tens of millions of immigrants anyway to slow the aging of their populations. If, say, 200,000 of them are taken from the 360,000 boys coming of age in Gaza in the next 15 years, that would be a negligible move for the big democracies but a quantum leap for peace in the Near East.

Many of Gaza's young - like in much of the Muslim world - dream of leaving anyway. Who would not want to get out of that strip of land but the international NGOs and social workers whose careers depend on perpetuating Gaza's misery?

[Mr. Heinsohn heads the Raphael Lemkin Institute at the University of Bremen, Europe's first institute devoted to comparative genocide research]

## For Israel, every day is Groundhog Day

Thane Rosenbaum | The Jerusalem Post | 14 January

There are only two things a nation can always depend on, good or bad: its people and its history. Except, of course, in the case of Israel.

No other country has devoted its entire history to defending against its enemies and, even more absurdly, asserting its very right to exist. For such an otherwise tiny nation - a democracy with little in the way of natural or strategic resources - Israel has surely received a disproportionate share of global condemnation.

Just imagine if France, England or Iceland or, heaven forbid, rogue nations like Syria and Iran, had spent its entire existence justifying its nationhood. No respites or shifts in sympathy - nothing but global denunciations around the clock.

With Israel the situation is actually even worse. The Jewish state has repeatedly been denied its history - as brief as these past 60 years have been. Israel's back-story is instantaneously forgotten as soon as the events take place. Whenever the rest of the world judges Israel, which is quite often, the factual record of the Middle East is deemed irrelevant to the present moment. A new line gets drawn and past history is erased.

Nothing that happens to Israel can serve as justification for what it must do in response. What every other nation would legitimately regard as its sovereign right and duty if ever placed in the same situation is routinely denied to the Jewish state. The three wars initiated against it, the threats of annihilation from its neighbours, the suicide bombers that have invaded its buses, pizza shops and Passover Seders, the kidnapping and mutilation of its soldiers and, most recently, the rocket attacks launched by Hamas during a purported cease-fire all totally vanish like a Middle Eastern mirage, as if these murderous events never happened.

The twisted absurdity of this dilemma - the whitewashing of Palestinian crimes in order to cast Israel as the aggressor and undermine its moral authority - is that Israel lives in a perpetual state of Groundhog Day. Each day begins anew, disconnected from the day before, and yet bizarrely repeated. Israel stands isolated, its actions unprovoked and without context.

We've all seen this movie: Israel is the occupier; the reasons for the occupation are ignored. Israel fires missiles, launches ground attacks, seals borders and erects walls. Israel's military incursions have resulted in the tragic loss of civilian lives. Hamas men are not terrorists, but peace lovers, tragically misunderstood humanists and humanitarians. In this false parallel universe, the Jewish dead are never remembered as having once been alive.

The fact that the Palestinian people, historically, have demonstrated little interest in nation building and an extreme fondness for terrorist activities has, outrageously, been left out of the grand narrative of the Middle East.

Without historical background and an honest retelling of events, and subject to such a patently hypocritical double standard, Israel is an easy and convenient target for condemnation whenever it acts in retaliation for the loss of Jewish life.

In this frustrating and enduring game of bait and switch, Israel is always left holding the body bags. Retaliation is a legally and morally necessary response to lethal provocation. It's not possible to have one without the other unless a country has no interest in its future and there is no pride in its people.

It's quite simple: Without rocket attacks from Hamas, Israeli soldiers wouldn't be in Gaza right now. Israel happily abandoned Gaza several years ago. If Israeli citizens were safe from Hamas and Hizbullah instead of being its victims, Israel would have no reason to hunt down and disable these terrorist operations, and no innocent Palestinian or Lebanese would lose his life as a shield for terrorist murder.

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The moral disequilibrium that the world applies to the Middle East is that all Jewish life is dispensable and undeserving of tears. Palestinian deaths, meanwhile, are tragic and senseless beyond dimension.

All death is tragic, and each country's history - the back-story behind its nationhood, survival instincts and collective grief - must be respected and valued equally. Indeed, one of the reasons why Israelis have embraced the reality of a Palestinian state is, in part, because there has been an evolving awareness of Palestinian pain and historical legitimacy.

When will Palestinians, and a good many nations of the world, grant Israel the same courtesy?

[The writer is an American novelist, essayist and law professor. He is the author of 'The Golems of Gotham' and 'The Myth of Moral Justice']

### Hamas Fathers: Candy and Killing

Dr. Simone Gordon | Arutz Sheva | 20 January

I find it utterly amazing that the international community sees fit to consider the arrest of senior IDF officials for their part in defending their country, but does not see fit to arrest for similar actions those who terrorize in the name of ideology.

In watching the events of the last three weeks as portrayed by the international media, I cannot help but remember the front page of the *New York Times* "Sunday Magazine" section shortly after 9/11, at a time when the country and the world was traumatized by the enormity of the terrorist attacks against a country foreign to the attackers. Startling and horrifying was the image of children, less than three years old, with bullet belts around their waists being encouraged to crawl on their bellies, with the accompanying message from their fathers that when they came of age, they too would become the next generation of suicide bombers; that they would be rewarded with martyrdom for their actions.

Fatherhood is a privilege; and as I watched the unfolding of events in Gaza, I could not get that image out of my mind. Fatherhood is translated into ideology, and ideology takes place through indoctrination, even if that means indoctrinating children under the age of three to grow up and kill. And reinforcement is given through "sweets" when those around are starving.

Children are taught to associate candy with killing, a powerful message indeed. These same children have now come of age; and it is now not just bullets, but mortars and rockets.

Where is the international outcry against indoctrinating children, even while they are still in the womb, to espouse an ideology that encourages murder? I am sickened by photographs of children being rewarded by their fathers to the accompanying message that murder for a cause will bring them rewards in heaven. While the international community is busy railing about Israel's war crimes, their deafening silence on the indoctrination of children is outrageous.

In all cultures, the father son relationship is sacred. But in the world of terrorist fatherhood, instead of being taught to love your neighbour as yourself, young children are taught that they can earn their place in heaven not through peace, love and understanding, but by murdering their neighbours, and wiping those neighbours' country off the face of the earth.

How in the world will we ever maintain a sustaining peace if this indoctrination continues? The rockets might stop, but the message will not die. My soul cries, for them and for us. As long as children are indoctrinated into an ideology that calls for the universal murder of "the other", and approves plowing those "others" into the sea, we will have no peace.

The issue is not the peace agreements or the pseudo-truces; the issue is when terrorists are going to value their children above their hatred.