

Commentary...

PeaceCom

Jerusalem Post Editorial

Is there any place left on earth where one's nostrils can escape the WorldCom stench? From Clinton, Mississippi, where WorldCom is headquartered and thousands are being laid-off, to Israel, where local telecoms are jittery about the effects of the scandal on their ability to attract capital, the collapse of America's second largest long-distance telephone company is having its effect. As well it should. A \$3.8 billion corporate fraud is surely the economic equivalent of smuggling a dirty bomb into the country in a carry-on bag. Smuggling it through, that is - and having security personnel mistake it for a can of tuna fish.

Indeed, of everything that's remarkable about this tale, not the least of it is the simplicity of the scam. No Enron-like front companies here; WorldCom Chief Financial Officer Scott Sullivan allegedly simply shifted billions in operating expenses to the capital expenditure side of the ledger, where they would not show up in the company's profit statement. To provide a bit of extra camouflage, Sullivan sprinkled his liabilities across several property accounts, which apparently was enough to fool WorldCom's erstwhile accountants, Arthur Andersen. But the plainly more competent KPMG spotted the ruse almost immediately. This was \$3.8 billion hidden in the glove compartment of the corporate car.

We will not waste more ink on Mr. Sullivan's not-too-clever shenanigans, except to say that we must all be grateful that truth is seeing daylight. The much bigger story is what WorldCom, one of the great boom-time creations of the 1990s, tells us about the age from which we have just emerged - the age of new technologies, the new economy, the new economics and, we would add, the New Middle East.

For a while, WorldCom rode the crest of a broadband revolution that did indeed bring vast benefits to the world. But WorldCom did so on a tide of almost utopic expectations for the economy - "Dow 36,000," "Nasdaq 10,000" and all that. These expectations, in turn, were based on a new economics, which held that such ordinary benchmarks as turning a quarterly profit were less important than gaining market share. And so it went for a few years, with companies giving away their products at a loss in the hope that the markets would reward their generosity with higher stock valuations.

Meanwhile, the WorldComs of the world borrowed billions to finance buying sprees and build overnight empires. It was a race to the bottom, in which ever more credulous markets all but demanded the complicity of the very people who should have been minding the store, especially accounting firms. Hence Arthur Andersen. Hence Scott Sullivan.

Now consider the Middle East peace process. Here, too, we were told that everything we thought we knew about the nature of Arab regimes and about their intentions no longer held true. Yasser Arafat, too, wanted to trade in his olive trees for a Lexus. Here, too, the people who should have been our protectors - Israel's leaders, above all, but also America's - were signing their names to the fantasy. As a result, we were willing to act as if the old gravitational forces of the region no longer applied. And whenever we felt Earth's gravitational tug, we simply acted as if we could still fly. Terrorist incidents, from the 1996 Tel Aviv bus bombings to the gun battles that erupted over the Temple Mount tunnel, were treated as "the price of peace," rather than as damning indications of Palestinian intent.

In other words, the peace process, like the economy of the 1990s, got trapped in a bubble. When caution was required, we chose instead to reinvest our energies in the process. Instead of checking our books, we spoke of our dreams. In the meantime, the process, like the markets, became overvalued. It was bound to crash.

The collapse of WorldCom - along with Enron, Tyco, ImClone and the rest of the new economy's wunderkinder - marks our return to a world in which facts cannot forever be ignored. The collapse of the peace process, along with the

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West's stark encounter with the reality of radical Islam and pan-Arabism, in a sense amounts to the same thing. It has not been a happy experience. But at least American capitalists, and Israeli citizens, once again are standing on firm ground. (Jerusalem Post Jun 30)

Far-off Palestinian Reforms

By Evelyn Gordon

Under the current circumstances, it is hard to imagine any serious candidate challenging Arafat.

US President George W. Bush deserves credit for being the first world leader to understand that a Palestinian dictatorship would foment war rather than peace, and for consequently making Palestinian democracy, rather than merely Palestinian statehood, his goal.

Unfortunately, however, he has staked his vision on a false premise: that it is possible to hold free and fair elections for a new Palestinian leadership within the next few months.

Anyone who wants to understand just how impossible this is should read Dr. Daniel Polisar's chilling article in the latest edition of the Shalem Center's journal, Azure (www.azure.org.il/13-polisar.htm). Polisar is a leading expert on Palestinian democracy (or the lack thereof): From 1993 to 1996, he headed the independent monitoring organization Peace Watch, the only Israeli body accredited by the Palestinian Authority as an observer of its 1996 elections.

The article describes the methods used by Yasser Arafat to prevent free elections in 1996. All of the same problems still exist.

The first problem is the absence of a free press. From the moment Arafat entered the territories in 1994, he embarked on a systematic - and successful - campaign to intimidate the relatively free press that had hitherto existed. Any failure to follow PA orders drew sanctions.

In July 1994, for instance, Palestinian police banned distribution of the daily A-Nahar in Gaza and severely limited it in the West Bank because, the PA said in an official statement, the paper's editorial line "contradicts the national interest of the Palestinian people."

In November 1994, police banned distribution of Al-Quds for five days because it reported that a Hamas rally attracted 12,500 supporters, when Gaza police chief Ghazi Jibali had ordered it to put the number at under 5,000.

In December 1995, Al-Quds editor Maher al-Alami was incarcerated for a week because he ran a story on page 8 that the PA had ordered him to run on page 1.

In April 1995, after the weekly Al-Umma wrote an editorial attacking the PA police, police raided its offices, confiscated the contents and torched the building.

In May 1995, an Al-Watan editor was sentenced to two years in prison for "libeling the Palestinian National Authority and its security apparatus."

By January 1996, every paper still publishing regularly was toeing the Arafat line. Moreover, Arafat had started several new media organs to sing his praises: He established official radio and television stations that answered directly to him, while forbidding private radio and television stations; and Arafat loyalists established two "semi-official" dailies, Al-Hayat al-Jadida and Al-Ayyam.

Today the situation is unchanged: Every major Palestinian media organization either willingly does Arafat's bidding, or has been intimidated into doing so. Under such circumstances, how could any opposition candidate obtain the exposure and name-recognition necessary to compete?

Another problem is the PA security apparatus.

The various Palestinian police forces have some 50,000 members - giving the PA what Amnesty International termed "possibly the highest ratio of police to civil population in the world," of roughly one policeman for every 50 people. These are further augmented by semi-official militias such as Fatah-Tanzim and the Al-Aksa Martyrs Brigades.

All the security services, whose core personnel are Arafat loyalists from outside the territories, answer directly to Arafat (or, following the latest "reform," to a handpicked Arafat loyalist, Abdel Razak al-Yahya). Over the

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past eight years, these forces have ruthlessly intimidated any potential foci of opposition to Arafat - political opponents, the judiciary, human-rights activists - via the same tactics applied to the media.

When a state security court judge resigned in 1995 to protest the court's undemocratic procedures, for example, he was immediately arrested and interrogated.

Though international monitors could keep these forces from repeating their 1996 tactic of intimidating voters during the actual balloting, the PA police would have free rein both before and after the election.

Under these circumstances, it is hard to imagine any serious candidate challenging Arafat: Even if he were not deterred by threats or violence beforehand, who would want to take over a government whose armed forces answer to the previous chairman? And how many people would risk voting for an opposition candidate knowing that the results will be made public by locality - and localities where the opposition wins will be vulnerable to retribution from Arafat's thugs?

A third problem is the economic patronage system. The bloated civil service established by Arafat has always been the PA's primary employer - but thanks to the economic collapse caused by the intifada, it is now virtually the only one. The reforms envisioned by Bush necessarily include streamlining: An economy cannot function when there is one ministry director-general for every 19 (!) workers, or when the chairman's signature is needed for outlays as trivial as a telephone or a trip to Jordan.

But today, when many civil servants are the sole source of income for their extended families, it would require uncommon courage and self-sacrifice to vote against perpetuating these jobs.

Finally, in an economy where the private sector was always minuscule thanks to the dominance of PA-sponsored monopolies, and has now virtually ceased to exist, no opposition candidate could raise the funds needed to mount an effective campaign.

It is impossible to rebuild an entire economy, dismantle a 50,000-strong private army and reestablish a free press in the six months remaining until the tentatively scheduled elections in January 2003. Yet without these measures, new elections have no hope of producing anything but the same old leadership. (Jerusalem Post Jul 2)

An Indictment of the Arab World Jerusalem Post Editorial

Yesterday might very well come to mark a turning point in modern Arab history. For the first time in recent memory, a group of prominent Arab intellectuals held up a mirror to Arab society, courageously offering a precise description of what they saw, warts and all. Not surprisingly, the picture they painted, particularly with regard to political freedom and social development, was both unflattering and deeply disturbing.

The findings of the intellectuals came in the form of a survey that was commissioned by the UN and was co-sponsored by the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, an institution established by members of the Arab League. Those overseeing the study included prominent Arab personalities, such as Thoraya Obaid, a Saudi national who serves as executive director of the United Nations Population Fund, and Mervat Tallawy, an Egyptian diplomat in charge of the Economic and Social Council for West Asia. As Rima Khalaf Hunaidi, a former Jordanian deputy prime minister involved in preparing the report, described it to The New York Times, "It's not outsiders looking at Arab countries. It's Arabs deciding for themselves."

The bottom line, according to the survey, is that the Arab world is "richer than it is developed." Though the standard of living and life expectancy rates have risen throughout much of the Arab world in recent decades, the report concluded, intellectual life and political freedom remain stultified. Arab women are denied opportunities to advance themselves educationally or professionally, with approximately half of them still unable to read or write. Through its repression of women, stated the report, "the Arab world is largely depriving itself of the creativity and productivity of half its citizens."

The survey also examined how the Arab world has closed itself off to positive outside influences, in the process preventing the cross-border exchange of ideas that is so much a part of Western life and development. Use of the Internet in Arab countries remains relatively low, as many governments clamp down on it out of fear that it will undermine their monopoly on information. Other creative areas, such as filmmaking and writing, are both in decline in the Arab world, the report stated, and little effort is being made to translate foreign books into Arabic. "The whole Arab world translates about 330 books annually, one-fifth the number that Greece translates," the report noted. Even more astonishing, the survey found that the Arab world has translated as many books into Arabic during the past 1,000 years as Spain translates in just one year.

Coming as it does just a week after US President George W. Bush's speech on the Middle East, the report could not have been more fortuitous. For, by decrying the utter lack of democracy in the Palestinian Authority-controlled

areas, and underlining the urgent need for civil and institutional reform, Bush has done what no other American president before him dared to do: He focused international attention on the lack of democracy in the Arab world. It was a theme he touched upon, albeit more broadly, in a June 1 speech at West Point, where he told graduating cadets that "when it comes to the common rights and needs of men and women, there is no clash of civilizations. The peoples of the Islamic nations want and deserve the same freedoms and opportunities as people in every nation. And their governments should listen to their hopes." The report by the Arab intellectuals complements Bush's message, providing trenchant and detailed confirmation of the president's concerns.

To be fair, it should be noted that there have been a few lone voices over the years who have bravely waged their own battles to pry open the Arab world and inject it with greater freedom and liberty, such as Prof. Fouad Ajami of Johns Hopkins University, or Iranian author Amir Taheri, who shortly after September 11 wrote in The Wall Street Journal that "the Muslim world today is full of bigotry, fanaticism, hypocrisy, and plain ignorance - all of which serve as breeding grounds for criminals like [Osama] bin Laden." Others, such as Saad Eddin Ibrahim, one of Egypt's leading pro-democracy activists, have been willing to risk life and limb for the sake of principles that many in the West take for granted. Indeed, Ibrahim has been on trial since last year for producing a film about voter fraud in Egypt's 1995 parliamentary elections.

The importance, then, of the Arab intellectuals' report is that it provides a credible opening that will enable others to step forward and speak out for greater democracy in the Arab world, which remains the last bastion of despotism and dictatorship on the globe. For too long, the international community has been willing to look the other way as basic freedoms and human rights were trampled upon throughout North Africa and the Middle East. The men and women who toiled over the report have provided a damning indictment of Arab society, its ills and tribulations. One can only hope that their plea will not go unheard. (Jerusalem Post Jul 3)

Israel Shouldn't Fence Itself In By Michael B. Oren

High fences may make good neighbors, but they can also create elusive and hard-to-punish enemies. This is a lesson Israel would be well-advised to recall. Desperate to block deadly terrorist attacks, many Israelis have pinned their hopes for safety on constructing a formidable high-tech fence separating them from the Palestinians in the West Bank. But while the fence may inhibit suicide bombers and gunmen from reaching Israeli targets, it will also render Israel increasingly vulnerable to other, potentially more devastating, forms of aggression.

Regardless, it will certainly frustrate Israel's ability to retaliate. Operations such those Israel is today conducting in Ramallah and other West Bank cities will become increasingly difficult to mount. On the diplomatic level, the fence will seriously erode Israel's position by granting the Palestinians a semblance of sovereignty without requiring them to pay a price in terms of ending the conflict or even clamping down on terror.

Advocates of the West Bank fence point to the example of the Gaza Strip, where the erection of a security fence has indeed reduced the number of terrorist infiltrations into Israel. The fence surrounds Gaza on three sides -- the fourth is the Israeli-patrolled sea -- so that all movement in and out can be monitored. The West Bank, by contrast, can only be sealed hermetically along its border with Israel. Palestinians will continue to enjoy access to the Arab east -- to Jordan, Iraq, and Syria -- and to the agents of Saddam Hussein and the arsenals of Iran.

Unlike the West Bank, with its rocky hills, ravines, and terraces -- perfect terrain for terrorists -- Gaza is sandy and flat and easily surveyed. Gaza is Israel's shortest border, a mere 20 miles. The West Bank, Israel's longest border, winds for nearly 300 miles.

Israelis would be wise to shift their attention to Lebanon as an example of the hazards of a West Bank fence. For years, Israeli forces crossed the Lebanese border with impunity in pursuit of Hezbollah terrorists. But after its hasty retreat from Lebanon in May 2001, Israel marked the border with a fence. Within weeks, Hezbollah had moved an estimated 10,000 Katyusha rockets right up to the base of that fence. All of northern Israel, including Haifa, came within missile range. Then Prime Minister Ehud Barak dismissed the danger, however, claiming that if the terrorists struck again, Israel could easily retaliate.

Yet when Hezbollah launched dozens of Katyushas into Israel, attempted to shoot down Israeli planes, and even kidnapped and purportedly killed three Israeli soldiers, Mr. Barak could do nothing. In seeking to defend itself with a fence, Israel had created a border that the international community considered inviolate. The fence hemmed in Israel and provided de facto immunity for Hezbollah.

The Lebanese experience is almost certain to be duplicated on the West Bank. No sooner will Israel complete its fence than Palestinian terrorist organizations will establish themselves openly along its length. From there, terrorists can fire Qassam rockets and mortars at Israeli settlements and neighborhoods, even shoulder-fired missiles at approaching civilian aircraft. Yet when Israel tries to strike back with air or ground forces, it will likely find itself condemned by the international community just as it was in Lebanon, only this time for violating a Palestinian dominion demarcated, ironically, by its own fence.

In addition to the security dangers it will generate, the West Bank fence is likely to undercut Israel's negotiating position while substantively strengthening the Palestinians'. Insisting that the fence in no way constitutes its western border, the Palestinian Authority will nevertheless arrogate sovereign rights east of the fence. The Palestinians will acquire the first-stage state promised them by President Bush, but without fulfilling the president's demands for democratic reforms and the total cessation of terror.

It is understandable that a nation so relentlessly and cruelly struck by terror will grasp at any possible solution. The West Bank fence, however, threatens to create more problems than it solves and to further compromise Israel's security. The Palestinians will gain a diplomatic advantage that they do not yet merit -- one that they will certainly exploit at Israel's expense.

History is rife with examples of physical barriers -- Hadrian's Wall in Britain, China's Great Wall -- that proved more effective in restricting their builders' maneuverability than in blocking hostile incursions. Israel cannot afford to make that mistake. In striving to keep terrorists out, Israel must not fence itself in. *The writer, senior fellow at the Shalem Center in Jerusalem, is the author of "Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East" (Oxford University Press, 2002).* (Wall Street Journal Jul 2)

Prime Minister Sharon Must Say 'Enough Is Enough' By Isi Leibler
Lo and behold, the Peres, Ramon, Ben-Ami, and Beilin people considered Bush's speech 'unbalanced'.

Woe to the people of Israel if their elected representatives are a true reflection of the electorate. The public has become so accustomed to the appalling behavior of its politicians that it seems to have become immune to outrage.

At present, the problem is principally centered on a group of Labor ministers and MKs who are unable to come to terms with the reality that the Oslo Accords were a cruel hoax and that Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat is an outstanding con man.

The successors to the great Labor Zionist movement of David Ben-Gurion - which headed 20 out of 29 governments since Israel was established - have marginalized themselves to the fringes of political life. Many lifelong Labor supporters have defected from the party in disgust.

Today, radicals who still occupy the dominant role in the party are behaving almost as though they were members of Matzpen, the loony leftist group which sympathized with Palestinian terrorism in the 1970s. Their behavior is also reminiscent of that of the members of Mapam - the Marxist antecedent to Meretz - which refused to recognize the evil of Stalinism even when Jews were being murdered at the height of the Soviet anti-Semitic purges. When Mordechai Oren, one of their own leaders, was arrested in Czechoslovakia on trumped-up charges of espionage, Mapam still refused to believe that a Communist party could behave in such a manner.

Now the contemporary counterparts to those discredited Marxists of the past are the apologists for Arafat.

Former ministers such as Yossi Beilin and Shlomo Ben-Ami have no qualms about making statements which provide encouragement to our enemies and undermine the morale of a people under siege.

Beilin, the previous minister of justice, backed by substantial funds provided by European countries opposed to the Israeli government, actually consorts with those who endorse the killing of fellow Israelis, and actively lobbies foreign governments to take up positions against the policies of his own democratically elected government.

In most countries, such scandalous behavior, especially at a time of war, would be considered treasonous. It stands in stark contrast to the behavior of American politicians who, in the wake of September 11, set aside partisan politics and united behind their president.

Beilin could also have taken a cue from Menachem Begin, who, as an outspoken leader of the opposition, never criticized the government when abroad, stressing that divisions in Israel were not for export and had to be resolved within the country.

This bizarre political environment was highlighted during US Vice President Richard Cheney's visit to Israel in March. Foreign Minister Shimon Peres argued with Cheney, urging him to avoid publicly humiliating Arafat. Cheney had to terminate the discussion by stating: "I respect the foreign minister, but disagree with him on this situation."

More recently, at last week's Jewish Agency Board of Governors meeting, Peres insisted that we are obliged "to give credit to Arafat for having been courageous enough to endorse the Oslo Accords."

That remark was made a few days after the country had endured most horrific casualties from Arafat's Al-Aksa homicide bombers.

Even the "moderate" head of the Labor party, Defense Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, feels impelled to make statements and gestures to promote his personal political agenda, irrespective of the damage he may be causing. Immediately following US President George W. Bush's speech last Monday, he released a plan for resolving the ongoing crisis in Israel, using the hostile east Jerusalem Arabic media as the vehicle.

This infuriated Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, who was aware that the initiative was motivated solely by a desire to score points against Labor MK Haim Ramon, Ben-Eliezer's rival for the party leadership.

Sharon rightly observed that it was "not fitting" for a senior government minister at a time of war to unveil his diplomatic vision to Israel's enemies before presenting it to his own people and the government.

Such appalling deviations from rationality and acceptable civic-political behavior pale in comparison, however, to some of the reactions on the part of Labor politicians to the Bush speech.

For the first time in Israel's history, the leader of the most powerful country in the world spelled out the truth. Instead of employing the customary rhetoric about "cycles of violence," or other statements creating moral equivalence between perpetrators and victims, Bush clearly stated that Israel is entitled to defend itself against those seeking to destroy it and murder its citizens. And though he endorsed the Palestinian right to a state, he did so conditionally: demanding that the Palestinian people elect leaders who are not tainted with terrorism and that their governing bodies undergo genuine reform.

There is little question that today, the overwhelming majority of Israelis enthusiastically endorse that formulation.

Lo and behold, however, the Peres, Ramon, Ben-Ami, and Beilin people considered the speech "unbalanced." Peres was even "dismayed and frustrated" by Bush's call for the ousting of Arafat, describing it as a "fatal mistake."

A few days later, on a BBC program, Peres reiterated his willingness to continue working with Arafat as a partner for peace if he adopted reforms. When our foreign minister publicly expresses his willingness to cooperate with Arafat after the president of the United States calls for his ouster, the time has arrived for the prime minister of Israel to say enough is enough.

But the prize for the crossing of red lines must go to Knesset Speaker Avraham Burg. It is axiomatic that in Western parliaments, the speaker rises above the political party fray. Indeed, all of Burg's predecessors endeavored to be apolitical, regardless of their affiliation.

From the day of his election, however, Burg created a political fiefdom, using his office to torment former prime minister Ehud Barak on one hand and enthusiastically joining the campaign to demonize Prime Minister Sharon on the other.

He felt no constraints in initiating independent political forays. Despite the fervent opposition of the prime minister and the Knesset majority, he pulled every lever to address the bogus Palestinian Legislative Council in Ramallah - even while the killings of Israelis had already become a daily occurrence.

When his efforts failed, Burg discovered a new vehicle through which to ingratiate himself with his radical Left colleagues, by assuming the role of promoter of the so-called Saudi Peace Plan. He - the former chairman of the World Zionist Organization and Jewish Agency - even tried to sell the Saudi plan to Diaspora Jewish leaders by promoting it at a World Jewish Congress conference in Brussels. At that meeting, he misled his audience by denying that the Palestinian right of return was a crucial component of the plan.

Now, when most Israelis - and Jews the world over - are relieved that for the first time an American president has pointed a finger at the man who "traffics with terrorists," Israel's Knesset speaker tells that president that his speech may be nice, but that "you won't be coming to the funerals."

He also told Israel Radio that despite his fervent opposition to Sharon, he would have suggested to Bush that he mind his own business should he ever be inclined to tell Israelis to reject their own prime minister.

This hint of an analogy between Arafat the terrorist, and Sharon, the democratically elected prime minister of Israel, is repugnant.

For someone whose own election to the Labor Party leadership was disallowed because more Druse voters supported him than were on the electoral rolls, it is perhaps somewhat grotesque for Burg to extol Arafat's virtues as an elected leader. After all, Hitler was also democratically elected. Does that mean that the Allied demands for unconditional surrender and the trials of Nazi war criminals were wrong?

Should we be expected to come to terms with a future transparent

Palestinian government that reelects Arafat, or new leaders who still believe that the eradication of Jewish sovereignty through the blood of their children is more important than peace?

Bush told the Palestinians that if they want a state, they should replace those of their leaders who are contaminated with terror. If they don't, they get no state. Does the speaker of the Knesset consider such a proposal to be unbalanced, unfair, or undemocratic?

In light of such remarks, it is not surprising that Burg also calls for greater European involvement in the Middle East and an end to the "occupation."

Burg's outrageous behavior makes him unfit to hold office. He should resign or be dismissed.

Sharon is heading a country at war. His political and military strategies enjoy the support of the vast majority of the public. Let him therefore now take decisive action by demanding the dismissal of those who undermine his administration from within and thus neutralize the impact of the unrepresentative noisy splinter groups.

If he acts with strength, he will achieve unity and raise the morale of the nation. Perhaps he will even revisit outdated concepts such as patriotism and solidarity, rather than indulging fringe elements whose governmental style is that of a banana republic. (Jerusalem Post Jul 2)

The writer is the senior vice president of the World Jewish Congress.

Is Democratization in the PA Possible? By Yossi Olmert

Arafat has to go, but that's not enough.

Last Monday, US President George W. Bush called for the democratization of the Palestinian Authority. This is clearly a noble sentiment, but is it a realistic expectation? The answer, as sad as it may sound to many of us, is "no" where the leadership is concerned. With regard to Palestinian society at large, however, it may be a different story.

In the first place, the principle on which Bush based his speech is right: Democracies are more likely to make peace with one another than non-democratic entities. In fact, they are less likely to engage in armed conflict in the first place.

The first peace agreement in the Middle East, between Egypt and Israel, was achieved only after Egyptian president Anwar Sadat embarked on a process of internal reforms, including democratization and economic freedom (as opposed to his predecessor, Gamal Abdel Nasser, who controlled a strict socialist-centralist economy) and ultimately the shift away from the Soviet bloc to the American orbit.

Sadat's visit to Jerusalem and the subsequent peace treaty that emerged were thus a natural, almost inevitable, outcome of a strategy of change towards democracy, economic freedom and peace.

When one compares this with the performance of Hafez Assad's regime in Syria, it is evident why we do not yet have peace with our northern neighbor. Former prime minister Ehud Barak was willing to surrender everything on the Golan Heights to Syria, and still the Syrians refused to make peace. This is no doubt because they did not cherish the notion of an open Syria, conducting normal relations with a democratic Israel.

Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat, like the Assads in Syria and Saddam Hussein in Iraq, can rule his people through the use of totalitarian methods, and with a machinery of more than 10 security and intelligence agencies - exactly as in the other dictatorships around us. He learned the methods from them, but he perfected the system.

The PA under the terrorist Arafat has the largest per-capita ratio of armed and security people in the world. Those who call upon Arafat to change all this are asking him to do the impossible: to willingly give up his dictatorial regime. This will not happen, regardless of external expectations and pressures. Bush is not naive, and yet he openly calls for the replacement of Arafat. That may be a step in the right direction, but it is far from sufficient. It is becoming increasingly clear that, behind the scenes, the Americans and the Israelis are pondering the pros and cons of an action designed to remove Arafat once and for all from the political arena, and with him Hamas leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin.

Time is running out, and action is needed now - not tomorrow, not next month, and not in a few months. The sooner Arafat is out, the greater the chances there will be for instituting genuine change in Palestinian society. This is because there are many Palestinians who are well-versed in the basic principles of Israeli democracy. They know us, appreciate our democratic system, and are eager to imitate us. In the years following the signing of the Oslo Accords, they were pushed aside, simply because even the Israelis cared nothing about the internal situation in the PA. All the Israelis cared about was pleasing Arafat and enhancing his image as a man of peace - the only one with whom we could do business.

Arafat, like every other dictator, wasted no time, and created the totalitarian monster called the PA. Israel's awakening came too late, after almost 1,000 casualties since Oslo. Therefore, no one should be surprised that the US's

awakening came so late. But finally it did, and the time has come to make good on this awakening and put an abrupt end to what is left of the PA.

Only when the PA is ousted, and Hamas and Islamic Jihad soundly defeated, will there be real hope. It remains to be seen whether a different group of Palestinians - those committed to democracy - will surface, and start making changes within their society (albeit with generous American and European economic assistance), and in cooperation with Israel. (Jerusalem Post Jul 1)

The writer is a Middle East specialist and Likud party activist.

Thanks, America, We Needed Your Patriotism By Nissan Ratzlav-Katz

Thank you, America. As an Israeli, I want you to know what I appreciate about you most at this time.

I don't mean only the foreign-aid packages, joint projects, or military supplies. Nor do I even mean the timely vetoes in the United Nations Security Council or walking out of the Durban Conference on Racism, when it ceased to be "on Racism" and became "for Racism against the Jews." I don't mean the U.S.A. taking an Israeli astronaut into outer space on a NASA flight. In fact, I don't mean only that which involves U.S. government institutions.

I don't mean merely the private American ventures, either, like McDonald's or Microsoft. I don't mean the exporting, slowly, of your fantastic customer service-oriented business culture. I don't even mean the many private investments in Israeli firms and technologies. I don't mean the idea of do-it-yourself stores or shopping malls. I don't even mean the exporting of some of the world's best classic rock 'n' roll music. I certainly don't mean the outdated reruns of *All My Children*.

I don't just mean the hundreds of Jewish and Christian pilgrims willing to visit Israel at the best of times and the worst of times. I don't mean the many cultural events with the ubiquitous participation of American entertainers. I don't mean the American basketball players on our National League teams. I don't even mean the famous Israelis who were born or bred in America, like former Prime Minister Golda Meir, former Defense Minister Moshe Arens, basketball-star Tal Brody, singer Achinoam Nini (Noa), or Rabbi Shlomo Riskin.

I don't even mean the huge pro-Israel rallies in cities across America, most notably in Washington, D.C. Nor do I just mean the overall support for Israel among Americans and their congressional representatives.

At this time, I am most thankful to America for its patriotism.

Every Israeli reporter stationed in America since that terrible September 11 has commented on Israeli television or radio about the incredible patriotism of the American people. American flags everywhere. Flag pins on every lapel. Patriotic themes appeared in every media outlet. Every store, every religious institution, every school had patriotic signs up. Every caller and every host on radio talk shows felt the need to verbally wave the flag, too. Ceremonies, ecumenical, and otherwise, were created out of whole cloth, just to express patriotism and unity of purpose. It was awesome to behold. Domestic anti-American sentiment was given its fair hearing relative to its size — i.e., virtually none.

You should know, all of it made a deep impression here. We have the distinction of being one of the world's most self-critical nations, even more so than you, Americans. I think, however, seeing the outpouring of American patriotism did something to us. At first, it was just a vague sense of change. Average Israelis commented to one another wistfully, "If only we had the patriotism of Americans." And then, we had it. Sure, the soldiers refusing to serve in the IDF initially got an inordinate amount of press that might be expected from the Leftist media, but, when push came to shove, the story of the more than 100 percent response to army-reserve duty call-ups (meaning that Israelis who were not called for duty went to volunteer anyway) captured the domestic media's attention. Today's Israeli media talking heads are more likely to ask challenging questions of foreign reporters and politicians who come here with prejudices against the IDF or against the unity government's policies.

It seems to me that this year, starting after Passover through our Independence Day and until today, there are many more Israeli flags out there. Seven out of ten cars sport at least one Israeli flag. Most homes, also, are flying the Jewish Star and Stripes. And have you noticed the little Israeli-flag lapel pin worn by our prime minister nowadays? I am convinced that it is due to the inspiration of American politicians in the wake of September 11.

So, in short, thank you America for being yourselves: patriotic, confident, proud and determined. We needed that. (National Review Jul 3)

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