

Graffiti for intellectuals



SIMON SAYS



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By Si Frumkin

DEMOCRACY IS WONDERFUL!!

Democracy is wonderful?

"Beware of what you wish for – for you may get it" is a warning that is ignored more often than not. As rational beings we develop theories, study probabilities and then make decisions based on assumptions that we believe to be correct. And then, as rational beings we are surprised, disappointed and angry when the results are not what we had expected.

The most recent disappointing examples are the smashing victory of Hamas in free and fair elections, increasing internecine violence in Iraq and Iran's ongoing development of nuclear capability.

I must admit that I was full of admiration for George W. Bush's policy of democratization that he so enthusiastically embraced. I believed with the President - and with Natan Sharansky - that democracy is the way for Middle Eastern nations



Proud Hamas display

to gain liberty, equality, freedom that would lead to security, peace, mutual tolerance and renewal. I too was convinced that if only the Syrians, Saudis, Egyptians, Iranians and all the rest could see the benefits of democracy in Iraq, then they too would want some of it and an irreversible process of liberalization and democratization would begin.

I was wrong. I chose to disregard the lesson of Algeria where free elections in 1991 would have turned over power to the radical Islamic Salvation Front party. There the army intervened to cancel the elections and assume dictatorial power.

I chose to disregard the more recent elections in Turkey where the people removed the entrenched secular and pro-

Western parties and voted in an Islamic government. Admittedly, it is a self-described moderate one, yet one of its first actions was to deny transit and over flight privileges to U.S. forces during the first few months of the war against Iraq thus effectively preventing us from opening a second front.

I also chose to disregard the obvious fact that an example of a successful democracy already exists in the Middle East – Israel. A tiny country in an area with no oil or anything else of much value built a successful economy, absorbed millions of refugees, defended itself in series of debilitating wars while preserving and sustaining a functioning democracy and enjoying a standard of living that rivals most European countries. Wouldn't common sense and self-preservation

dictate that neighboring countries should try to emulate the Israeli experience, especially since Israel is eager to share, teach and help?

And I also believed, along with the State Department mavens, that elections in Iran would bring out the disillusioned younger voters and change the Iranian political scene towards more democracy and away from medieval religious authoritarianism. It didn't happen – the people again voted for fundamentalist Moslems who are the ideological soul brothers of the Taliban.

Rationality doesn't work in the Middle East. Appeals to common sense and self-interest fall on deaf ears. Cultures that worship death, mothers who are proud of their sons who blow

themselves up to kill innocents, Iraqi "insurgents" who blow up school buses filled with Iraqi children and attack hospitals staffed with Iraqi doctors ministering to Iraqi patients, the tens of thousands who turn out in the streets to burn churches and pledge mass murder in response to innocuous Danish cartoons – they are not rational, their thought processes are alien to us, and we cannot continue planning our foreign policy in the hope that they may decide to change.

The Hamas victory and the increase in Iraq violence have managed to define the two main schools of thought on what our future Middle East policy should be. On one side are the "realists" like Brent Scowcroft, a Washington insider and former National Security Adviser both to Clinton and the elder Bush. He believes that we should continue cooperating with the established Middle East rulers in order to preserve the status quo and protect U.S. vital interests i. e. the flow of oil. Another influential voice in the realist camp is the influential political commentator and analyst Fareed Zakaria who in his 2003 book warns against the risk of popular elections by populations that have no experience and no background or habit of self-governance.

The other point of view comes from the democracy-promoters who enthusiastically support the establishment of democracy as an assurance of future security for the region and the U.S. They excuse/explain Hamas' victory as simply a response against pervasive corruption rather than a desire by the

average Palestinian to destroy Israel. They also theorize that the victory was a surprise for Hamas itself, that it had only hoped for a role of opposition without the responsibility of governing and that now it would be overwhelmed by problems and have less opportunity to plot Israel's destruction. There is also the belief that Hamas would fail to deliver on promises of good government and a better life for the voters and will be turned out in future elections if any are allowed to take place. Finally, they cite "democracies do not go to war with



each other" mantra that would indeed be relevant to existing democracies but isn't really applicable to a state ruled by a terrorist organization.

National policy is usually based on the assumption that for reasons of self-preservation, a state will not go to war against an enemy that can destroy it. Israel's nuclear capability has been a deterrent against states that would like to see Israel destroyed but which know full well that this would result in their own demise. It is, however, futile to speculate whether the threat of destruction would prevent a fanatical Hamas leader or an Iranian fundamentalist from attacking Israel at the risk of total annihilation of their own state. One of the Iranian mullahs has said long before the current nuclear impasse that the 180 million strong Moslem world could afford to absorb a nuclear attack while Israel's 5 million Jews could be forever wiped out by just one atomic bomb.

(Please see **DEMOCRACY, PAGE2**)

It has been nearly 13 years since Samuel Huntington published his seminal essay "The Clash of Civilizations?" in Foreign Affairs. As works of academic prophecy go, this has been a real winner — up there with George Kennan's epoch-making 1947 essay "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," which laid out the rationale for containment of the Soviet Union.

"In this new world," wrote Huntington, "the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations.... The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future."

The other great think-piece of the post-Cold War period was Francis Fukuyama's "The End of History." Published in 1989, before the fall of the Berlin Wall, it argued that liberal democracy had conquered, once and for all, rival ideologies such as fascism and communism. But Fukuyama went from seeming prescient to seeming over-optimistic within just a few years. In particular, Bosnia's civil war showed how history might actually resume with a vengeance in some post-communist societies.



By contrast, Huntington's vision of a world divided along ancient cultural fault lines has stood up much better. Indeed, the Bosnian war was a good example of what Huntington had in mind, because it was a conflict located precisely on the fault line between Western Christianity, Orthodoxy and Islam.

Muslims were the losers in Bosnia. But Huntington's point was that in other respects, Islam was an ascendant civilization, not least because of the high birthrates prevalent in most Muslim societies. The terrorist attacks of 9/11 were interpreted by many Americans in Huntington's terms; this was an attack on America's Judeo-Christian civilization by the fanatical followers of a prophet spurned by both Jews and Christians.

Also ascendant, Huntington argued, was Confucianism, the civilization of China. This forecast, too, has been vindicated by the seemingly unstoppable growth of the Chinese economy.

Huntington's model makes sense of an impressively high proportion of the news. When young Muslim men riot in protest against Danish cartoons, it looks like another

case of clashing civilizations. Small wonder many congressmen are baffled by the Bush administration's willingness to let a Dubai-based firm take over terminal operations at six U.S. ports: wrong civilization.

Strife between Nigerian Muslims and Christians? Chalk up another one to Huntington. Trouble in the Caucasus? That's two. Darfur? Three, and counting.

And yet, for all its seductive simplicity, I have never entirely bought the theory that the future will be dominated by the clash of civilizations.

For one thing, the term "civilization" has always struck me as much too woolly. I know what a religion is. I know what an empire is. But, as Henry Kissinger might have said, whom do I call when I want to talk to Western civilization? Anyone who crosses the Atlantic on a regular basis quickly learns how vacuous that phrase has become.

As for "Judeo-Christian civilization" (a phrase popularized by Bernard Lewis), I don't remember that being a terribly harmonious union in the 1940s.

The really big problem with the theory, however, is right in front of our noses. Question: Who has killed the most Muslims in the last 12 months? The answer, of course, is other Muslims.

I've been predicting for some time that Iraq could end up being like Lebanon to the power of 10 if the civil war already underway there should escalate. Last week's bomb attack on the Shiites' Golden Mosque in Samarra may be the trigger for precisely that escalation. The point is that Iraq's "clash" is not between civilizations but within Islamic civilization — between the country's Sunni minority and its Shiite majority.

Now, Huntington is too clever a man not to hedge his bets. "This article does not argue," he wrote back in 1993, "that groups within a civilization will not conflict with and even fight one another."

But he went on to say: "Conflicts between groups in different civilizations will be more frequent, more sustained and more violent than conflicts between groups in the same civilization." Sorry, wrong. It's well known that the overwhelming majority of conflicts since the end of the Cold War have been civil wars. The interesting thing is that only a minority of them have conformed to Huntington's model of inter-civilization wars. More often than not, the wars of the "new world disorder" have been fought between ethnic groups within one of Huntington's civilizations.

To be precise: Of 30 major armed conflicts that are either still going on or have recently ended, only 10 or 11 can be regarded as being in any sense between civilizations. But 14 were essentially ethnic conflicts, the worst being the wars that continue to bedevil Central Africa. Moreover, many of



those conflicts that have a religious dimension are also ethnic conflicts; in many cases, religious affiliation has more to do with the localized success of missionaries in the past than with long-standing membership of a Christian or Muslim civilization.

In reality, the problems of the Middle East have little to do with a clash of civilizations and a lot to do with the Arab world's "civilization of clashes" — the propensity of its political culture to resolve disputes by violence rather than negotiation. The same applies a fortiori to sub-Saharan Africa.

The future, therefore, looks more likely to bring multiple local wars — most of them ethnic conflicts in Africa, South Asia and the Middle East — than a global collision of value systems.

Indeed, my prediction would be that precisely these centrifugal tendencies will tend to tear apart at least one (and maybe more) of the very civilizations identified by Huntington.

In short, for the "clash of civilizations," read the "crash of civilizations." Ω

(DEMOCRACY contd.) Iran is very much aware that North Korea is probably immune from attack because of its allegedly operational nuclear weapon. Iran too wants to be in a position of being able to blackmail the West into concessions in exchange for appeasement.

In brief, I would be reluctant to simply wait and hope for the best, relying on good behavior by Hamas or Iranian mullahs. I hope that someone in Washington has the good sense and the influence to steer our nation on the correct path and that in the end, God will bless America, just as He had done in the past.

Meanwhile, it would be good to remember, during the noise and the outrage at the Dubai port authority controversy that Dubai is a part of the United Arab Emirates where we have major air bases. The planes stationed there have the ability to easily reach targets that just may soon have to be reached in order to prevent a nuclear holocaust. →

NEEDING TO WAKE UP, WEST CLOSES ITS EYES

By Mark Steyn, Chicago-Sun Times, 2/26/06

In five years' time, how many Jews will be living in France? Two years ago, a 23-year-old Paris disc jockey called Sebastien Selam was heading off to work from his parents' apartment when he was jumped in the parking garage by his Muslim neighbor Adel. Selam's throat was slit twice, to the point of near-decapitation; his face was ripped off with a fork; and his eyes were gouged out. Adel climbed the stairs of the apartment house dripping blood and yelling, "I have killed my Jew. I will go to heaven."

Is that an gripping story? You'd think so. Particularly when, in the same city, on the same night, a Jewish woman was brutally murdered in the presence of her daughter by another Muslim. You've got the making of a mini-trend there, and the media love trends.

Yet no major French newspaper carried the story.



Paris burning

This month, there was another murder. Ilan Halimi, also 23, also Jewish,

was found by a railway track outside Paris with burns and knife wounds all over his body. He died en route to the hospital, having been held prisoner, hooded and naked, and brutally tortured for almost three weeks by a gang that had demanded half a million dollars from his family. Can you take a wild guess at the particular identity of the gang? During the ransom phone calls, his uncle reported that they were made to listen to Ilan's screams as he was being burned while his torturers read out verses from the Quran.

This time around, the French media did carry the story, yet every public official insisted there was no anti-Jewish element. Just one of those things. Coulda happened to anyone. And, if the gang did seem inordinately fixated on, ah, Jews, it was just because, as one police detective put it, "Jews equal money." In London, the Observer couldn't even bring itself to pursue that particular angle. Its report of the murder managed to avoid any mention of the unfortunate Halimi's, um, Jewishness. Another British paper, the Independent, did dwell on the particular, er, identity groups involved in the incident but only in the context of a protest march by Parisian Jews marred by "radical young Jewish men" who'd attacked an "Arab-run grocery."

At one level, those spokesmonsieurs are right: It could happen to anyone. Even in the most civilized societies, there are depraved monsters who do terrible things. When they do, they rip apart entire families,

like the Halimis and Selams. But what inflicts the real lasting damage on society as a whole is the silence and evasions of the state and the media and the broader culture.

A lot of folks are, to put it at its mildest, indifferent to Jews. In 2003, a survey by the European Commission found that 59 percent of Europeans regard Israel as the "greatest menace to world peace." Only 59 percent? What the hell's wrong with the rest of 'em? Well, don't worry: In Germany, it was 65 percent; Austria, 69 percent; the Netherlands, 74 percent. Since then, Iran has sportingly offered to solve the problem of the Israeli threat to world peace by wiping the Zionist Entity off the face of the map. But what a tragedy that those peace-loving Iranians have been provoked into launching nuclear armageddon by those pushy Jews. As Paul Oestreicher, Anglican chaplain of the University of Sussex, wrote in the Guardian the other day, "I cannot listen calmly when an Iranian president talks of wiping out Israel. Jewish fears go deep. They are not irrational. But I cannot listen calmly either when a great many citizens of Israel think and speak of Palestinians in the way a great many Germans thought and spoke about Jews when I was one of them and had to flee."

It's not surprising when you're as heavily invested as the European establishment is in an absurd equivalence between a nuclear madman who thinks he's the warm-up act for the Twelfth Imam and the fellows building the Israeli security fence that you lose all sense of proportion when it comes to your own backyard, too. "Radical young Jewish men" are no threat to "Arab-run groceries." But radical young Muslim men are changing the realities of daily life for Jews and gays and women in Paris, Brussels, Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Oslo and beyond. If you don't care for the Yids, big deal; look out for yourself. The Jews are playing their traditional role of the canaries in history's coal mine.

Something very remarkable is happening around the globe and, if you want the

short version, a Muslim demonstrator in Toronto the other day put it very well:

"We won't stop the protests until the world obeys Islamic law."

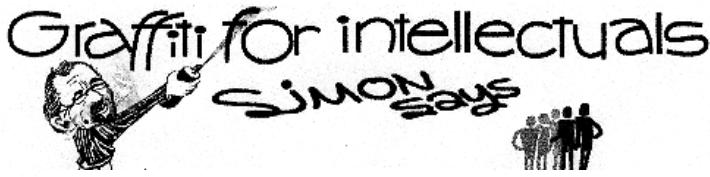
Stated that baldly it sounds ridiculous. But, simply as a matter of fact, every year more and more of the world lives under Islamic law: Pakistan adopted Islamic law in 1977, Iran in 1979, Sudan in 1984. Four decades ago, Nigeria lived under English common law; now, half of it's in the grip of sharia, and the other half's feeling the squeeze, as the death toll from the cartoon jihad indicates. But just as telling is how swiftly the developed world has internalized an essentially Islamic perspective. In their pitiful coverage of the low-level intifada that's been going on in France for five years, the European press has been barely any less loopy than the Middle Eastern media.

What, in the end, are all these supposedly unconnected matters from Danish cartoons to the murder of a Dutch filmmaker to gender-segregated swimming sessions in French municipal pools about? Answer: sovereignty. Islam claims universal jurisdiction and always has. The only difference is that they're now acting upon it. The signature act of the new age was the seizure of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran: Even hostile states generally respect the convention that diplomatic missions are the sovereign territory of their respective countries. Tehran then advanced to claiming jurisdiction over the citizens of sovereign states and killing them -- as it did to Salman Rushdie's translators and publishers. Now in the cartoon jihad and other episodes, the restraints of Islamic law are being extended piecemeal to the advanced world, by intimidation and violence but also by the usual cooing promotion of a spurious multicultural "respect" by Bill Clinton, the United Church of Canada, European foreign ministers, etc.

The I'd-like-to-teach-the-world-to-sing-in-perfect-harmonee crowd have always spoken favorably of one-worldism. From the op-ed pages of Jutland newspapers to les banlieues of Paris, the Pan-Islamists are getting on with it. Ω



Celebrating a burned synagogue



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HAMAS: NO PEACE, NO RECOGNITION!

Khaled Abu Toameh, J'lem post, 2/26/06

Palestinian Authority Prime Minister-designate Ismail Haniyeh on Sunday denied that Hamas was prepared to make peace with Israel, saying he had been misquoted by The Washington Post.

Haniyeh said his comments had been misunderstood. He said he was not referring to a peace agreement, only a "political truce."

"I didn't talk about recognizing Israel during the interview with the newspaper," Haniyeh told reporters in Gaza City.

"I only said that when Israel withdraws to the 1967 borders, including Jerusalem, and releases all the prisoners and detainees, then we would be able to talk about a long-term *hudna* [truce]."

Haniyeh was quoted by the Post on Saturday as saying Hamas would establish "peace in stages" if Israel would withdraw to its 1967 boundaries. It was the first time Hamas has been quoted as seeking peace with Israel.

Salah Bardawil, a spokesman for Hamas, said his movement has a recording of the interview which clearly shows that Haniyeh did not make the statements that were attributed to him.

"Haniyeh, in response to a question, said that if Israel met all of Hamas's conditions, he would be prepared to consider "peace in stages." According to the spokesman, when the reporter pressed for further clarifications, Haniyeh explained that he was talking about a long-term truce with Israel.

Hamas leader Mahmoud Zahar said his movement would not cave in to pressure to recognize Israel. "Why should we recognize Israel?" he asked. "Has Israel recognized the Palestinian people or the right of return for the refugees?"

In response to reports that PA chairman Mahmoud Abbas was considering resigning because of threats by the US and the international community to boycott the PA following the Hamas victory in last month's parliamentary election, Haniyeh expressed hope that Abbas would remain in his position.

"I don't think he will resign," Haniyeh said. "Hamas will stand behind Abbas in the face of the new challenges. We want to work together with Abbas and the Palestinian Authority because we believe

in dialogue."

Abbas's recurring threats to resign drew sharp criticism from some Palestinian political analysts. One of them, Ibrahim Abrash, mocked Abbas's threats, noting that in the past four years he has threatened to quit at least four times.

"These repeated threats damage Abbas's reputation," he said. "These threats make us depressed and confused." ±

And finally—a one finger (you know which one) salute to our media who spare no effort to keep us informed about what is really, really, truly important!

