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Hamas, Son of Israel The Israelis birthed and nurtured their Islamist nemesis

Amid all the **howls of pain** and **gnashing of teeth** over the **triumph of Hamas** in the Palestinian elections, one fact remains relatively obscure, albeit highly relevant: Israel did much to **launch Hamas** as an effective force in the occupied territories. If ever there was a clear case of "**blowback**," then this is it. As Richard Sale pointed out in a piece for UPI:

"Israel and Hamas may currently be locked in deadly combat, but, according to several current and former U.S. intelligence officials, beginning in the late 1970s, Tel Aviv gave direct and indirect financial aid to Hamas over a period of years. Israel 'aided Hamas directly – the Israelis wanted to use it as a counterbalance to the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization),' said Tony Cordesman, Middle East analyst for the Center for Strategic [and International] Studies. Israel's support for Hamas 'was a direct attempt to divide and dilute support for a strong, secular PLO by using a competing religious alternative,' said a former senior CIA official."

Middle East analyst Ray Hanania **concurs**:

"In addition to hoping to turn the Palestinian masses away from Arafat and the PLO, the Likud leadership believed they could achieve a workable alliance with Islamic, anti-Arafat forces that would also extend Israel's control over the occupied territories."

In a conscious effort to undermine the **Palestine Liberation Organization** and the leadership of **Yasser Arafat**, in 1978 the government of **then-Prime Minister Menachem Begin** **approved the application** of **Sheik Ahmad Yassin** to start a "humanitarian" organization known as the Islamic Association, or **Mujama**. The roots of this Islamist group were in the fundamentalist Muslim Brotherhood, and this was the seed that eventually grew into Hamas – but not before it was amply fertilized and nurtured with Israeli funding and political support.

Begin and his successor, **Yitzhak Shamir**, launched an effort to undercut the PLO, creating the so-called **Village Leagues**, composed of local councils of handpicked Palestinians who were willing to collaborate with Israel – and, in return, were put on the Israeli payroll. Sheik Yassin and his followers soon became a force within the Village Leagues. This tactical alliance between Yassin and the Israelis was based on a shared antipathy to the militantly **secular and leftist** PLO: the Israelis allowed Yassin's group to publish a newspaper and set up an extensive network of charitable organizations, which collected funds not only from the Israelis but also

from Arab states opposed to Arafat.

Ami Isseroff, writing on MideastWeb, **shows** how the Israelis deliberately promoted the Islamists of the future Hamas by helping them turn the **Islamic University of Gaza** into a base from which the group recruited activists – and the suicide bombers of tomorrow. As the only higher-education facility in the Gaza strip, and the only such institution open to Palestinians since Anwar Sadat closed Egyptian colleges to them, IUG contained within its grounds the seeds of the future **Palestinian state**. When a conflict arose over religious issues, however, the Israeli authorities sided with the Islamists against the secularists of the Fatah-PLO mainstream. As Isseroff relates, the Islamists

"Encouraged Israeli authorities to dismiss their opponents in the committee in February of 1981, resulting in subsequent Islamisation of IUG policy and staff (including the obligation on women to wear the hijab and thobe and separate entrances for men and women), and enforced by violence and ostracization of dissenters. Tacit complicity from both university and Israeli authorities allowed Mujama to keep a weapons cache to use against secularists. By the mid 1980s, it was the largest university in occupied territories with 4,500 students, and student elections were won handily by Mujama."

Again, the motive was to offset Arafat's influence and divide the Palestinians. In the short term, this may have worked to some extent; in the longer term, however, it backfired badly – as demonstrated by the results of the recent Palestinian election.

The Hamas **infrastructure** of mosques, clinics, kindergartens, and other educational institutions flourished not only because they were lavishly funded, but also due to being efficiently run. Sheik Yassin and the future leaders of Hamas acquired a reputation for "clean" governance and good administrative practices, which would greatly aid them – especially in comparison to the PLO, which was **widely perceived** as corrupt. Indeed, "**clean government**" – and not the necessity of armed struggle – was the main theme of their successful election campaign.

The response of Israel and the U.S. has been **shock, horror** – and a **stated refusal** to deal with any government dominated by Hamas. U.S. congressional leaders – who unhelpfully **passed a resolution** prior to the Palestinian poll that demanded Hamas be banned from running – are now **calling** the entire "peace process" into question. Yet no one acknowledges that the victory of the Suicide Bombers Party demonstrated, in practice, an ancient principle expressed, I believe, by no less an authority than the Bible (**Galatians 6:7**):

"Be not deceived. God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

This "**blowback**" principle applies to Hamas not only insofar as Israel was involved in funding and encouraging Mujama, but also, after the consolidation of Hamas as an armed group, due to Israeli **military policy**. The much-touted "**withdrawal**," which amounts to Israel giving up Gaza while **strengthening its hand** elsewhere in the occupied territories, has been **grist** for the radical Islamist mill, as has the **Wall of Separation** and the **attempt** to quash the vote in East Jerusalem. Israel's relentless offensive against its perceived enemies – first Fatah, now Hamas and Islamic Jihad – has created a **backlash** and solidified support for fundamentalist extremist factions in the Palestinian community.

Likewise, the victory of Hamas will embolden the **ultra-Zionists** in Israel, who similarly mix a **fanatic theology** with faith in a military "**solution**" to the Palestinian "**problem**." The electoral victory of Hamas was only a few hours old before Benjamin "Bibi" **Netanyahu** went on television explaining why any concessions to the Palestinians – including the Gaza pullback – only served to embolden the most radical elements, such as Hamas.

The stricken **Ariel Sharon** lies in his hospital bed, **unconscious** – while his unilateral "land for peace" **plan** suffers from a **very similar condition**. Sharon's newly-formed **Kadima Party** is the big potential loser in all this, with Netanyahu's Likud **looking to** gain bigtime. The irony is that, as defense minister, it was Sharon who helped **conceive and oversee** the Village Leagues scheme that did so much to implant and empower Hamas. Like some Middle Eastern version of **Dr. Frankenstein**, he wound up being struck down by his own monstrous creation.

There is a lesson in there, somewhere, though it isn't one the Israelis or their American sponsors seem capable of learning just yet.

The **idea** that voting is some kind of panacea that will cleanse the Middle East of a self-defeating radicalism is an illusion that died a painful death with the election victory of Hamas. It had earlier suffered near-fatal convulsions with the **ascension to power** in Iraq of a Shi'ite fundamentalist coalition **closely tied to Iran**. The **bitch-goddess** of capital-D Democracy is a fickle and often **perversely cruel deity**, whose **worshippers** have been hit with a one-two punch as **they seek** to transform an entire region according to the canons of their **peculiar dogma**.

NOTES IN THE MARGIN

More on Hamas and the "**blowback**" effect from **Robert Dreyfuss**, one of my favorite writers, in **this podcast** interview with the **History News Network's Rick Shenkman**.

Maybe **this is why** the president and his supporters often refer to the "war on terrorism" as if it will go on forever.

David Frum, former presidential speechwriter and *National Review's* resident neocon **commissar of political correctness**, **cheers** Jacques Chirac's **threat** to nuke hundreds of thousands of innocent human beings. Frum's only worry is that Chirac's nuclear sabre-rattling won't be believed. On the other hand, it would be all too believable if the prime minister of Israel – who has his finger hovering over the nuclear button – were to make such an explicit threat. Which puts Iran's ambition to go nuclear – the real subject of Frum's outburst – in perspective.

Be sure to check out the theory and practice of Republican **Leninism**, and go to **Jane Hamsher** – **where else?** – for **the latest in Fitzology**.

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