**GAZA WAR: WESTERN MEDIA, STATES DON’T GET IT:**

**ONLY FORCE CAN DETER TERRORIST WAR CRIMES**

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**WESTERN MEDIA ELITES JUST DON’T GET THE MIDDLE EAST**

*Barry Rubin*  
*Jewish Press*, November 18, 2012

The elite currently in power in the Western mass media is never going to comprehend the Middle East. There is a problem with bias, for sure, but the big problem is the impenetrable ignorance of the
very people who are entrusted with explaining the region to others. They insist on imposing their own misconceptions on the situation while ignoring the evidence.

Consider Janine Zacharia. What a distinguished resume: Jerusalem bureau chief and Middle East Correspondent for the Washington Post (2009-2011); chief diplomatic correspondent for Bloomberg News (2005-2009) and before that five years working for the Jerusalem Post in Washington DC and another five years working for Reuters and other publications from Jerusalem. Right now she’s a visiting lecturer at Stanford University in communications.

Surely, such a person must understand the region’s issues and if anyone isn’t going to have an anti-Israel bias in the mass media it would be her. And she isn’t anti-Israel in a conscious, political sense. Indeed, she obviously views herself as being sympathetic. Rather, it is her assumptions that make her type of views inevitably anti-Israel and more broadly inevitably destructive of U.S. interests on other issues.

So here’s her article in Slate. The title is “Why Israel’s Gaza Campaign is Doomed.” Not, why this response is the best of a set of difficult options; not why the world should support Israel; not why Hamas should be removed from power with international support but why Israel is wrong and stupid to fight. “Doomed” is a pretty strong word.

The subhead—adapted from Zacharia’s text—is “Benjamin Netanyahu’s decision to bomb Hamas militants will leave Israel more isolated, insecure, and alone.” Not the decision of Israel’s unanimous leadership including first and foremost its military and defence experts but that of a prime minister who now plays a role for the American media most closely approximated to that held by former President George W. Bush.

And by defending itself against an onslaught of rockets—120 in one week—Israel will be worse off even though by the way every Western country I’m aware of has supported Israel. Why will Israel be more isolated, insecure, and alone? Because the unspoken assumption of the Western media elite is that anyone who uses force, even in self-defence, ends up worse off.

It is quite reasonable to state that the campaign will not end the problem. Everyone in Israel and in Israel’s leadership and all the generals and Netanyahu know this very well. They also know that a country that does not defend itself and maintain its credibility and deterrence is going to end up doomed, isolated, insecure, and alone.

They also know that the best that can be expected given this situation is to force Hamas to deescalate for two or three years before the next round. One of the goals of the operation is to destroy the large military stockpiles—especially longer-range missiles—that Hamas has accumulated since 2009. Thus, Hamas will have to start all over again to smuggle in weapons. The next time they start a war it will be from a far weaker position than if they had not taken such losses….

[For Zacharia:]

–The “Palestinian militant groups” want to drag Israel into an all-out war. Therefore, she reasons, Israel is foolish to engage in such a war. But the other side wanting a war that Israel prefers to avoid has been a common feature of Israeli history as in 1948, 1967, and 2006….

–The other side consists of “militant groups.” The problem with avoiding the word “terrorist” is not that it sanitizes those attacking Israel but that it downgrades their ideology and intentions. Hamas openly declares it will destroy Israel and commit genocide against Jews generally. Terrorism is a tactic….
The fault is with Israel. It doesn’t have a proper diplomatic policy, you see, because there’s no willingness to talk to Hamas. Does Hamas [not have a] character of its own? Might it have an ideology and goals of its own? Might Hamas be to Israel what al-Qaida is to the United States?

If one actually knew anything about Hamas—and Israelis have three decades of experience in studying, fighting, and dealing with it—the idea of a negotiated solution would be ridiculous….Yet Zacharia is blaming Israel for not being good enough to negotiate a deal with a group whose televised children’s shows call for the physical extinction of Israel, the mass murder of its inhabitants, and future careers for kiddies as suicide bombers.

Hamas is fighting even more radical groups in the Gaza Strip and therefore it must be moderate or at least potentially so. That isn’t really true. Of course, Hamas cracks down on groups that attack its own rule or prove to be inconvenient. But far more often it cooperates with Islamic Jihad and even al-Qaida affiliated groups. These attack Israel with Hamas’s cooperation and forbearance and then Hamas can claim innocence, thus waging war and claiming it isn’t doing anything at all….

Israel can “put pressure” on Abbas and the Palestinian Authority, which rules the West Bank, and end the attacks from the Gaza Strip permanently. Yet anybody—much less a journalist who spent years dealing with the Middle East—should know that Abbas has zero influence in the Gaza Strip….

In other words, what Zacharia writes—and this is common throughout Western academic, media, and governmental circles—is completely absurd. The solution not being taken up is to overthrow Hamas just like the Taliban was overthrown in Afghanistan…But there is zero support in the West for bringing down Hamas. President Barack Obama helped bring a pro-Hamas regime in Egypt. And the man who never pressured Abbas pressured Israel to reduce sanctions on the Gaza Strip, thus helping Hamas remain in power so it can continue firing rockets at Israel.

I do not expect the mass media to improve nor do I have any hope of educating the journalists who write this kind of thing. They are not going to change….Equally, the governments who follow this kind of line will have no effect—at least no positive effect—on regional problems. The new feature of the last few years is that the U.S. government has contributed to making things much worse.

And that’s why there will be no “permanent end” to this rocket war madness or all of the other varieties of madness that are getting worse in the region. It is the policy of those people who do not understand what they are talking about or dealing with who are doomed. They are the ones who need a new policy.

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**ISRAEL’S JUST WAR**

Jonathan Kay

*National Post*, Nov 19, 2012

This is the third time the world has seen this tragedy performed. Act I was in 2006, during Israel’s Lebanon War with Hezbollah. Act II played out in 2008 and early 2009, with the first Gaza War. And now Act III is being performed, once again in Gaza.

In all three instances, the pattern has been the same: A militant group provokes Israel through kidnapping, bombardment or terrorist attacks. When Israel’s collective tolerance reaches its limit, the IDF returns fire with its larger arsenal. In 2006 and 2008, Israel followed up with a ground invasion.
The media coverage also follows a predictable pattern. In all three cases described above, international reports generally were fairly balanced until such time as Israel actually exercised its right to self-defence. At that point, reporters began turning the struggle into a David-vs-Goliath narrative that ignores the morally essential question of who started the conflict.

As the conflicts dragged on, even the terrorists’ most hideous tactics — deliberately targeting civilian population centers — were re-imagined as heroic gestures of defiance. Great attention has been paid to the cheers of glee that always rise up among Arabs when some feeble trophy — destroying an Israeli house, or spreading temporary panic in the southern part of the country — is won.

The missile sites and rocket-launching cells that Israel destroys, on the other hand, receive relatively scant attention. Hamas and Hezbollah minders have little interest in taking a BBC or CBC reporter to see the wreckage of Iranian-made munitions….

Given the close confines of Gaza, and the cynical manner by which Hamas stores and operates its weapons near civilian areas, it is a tribute to Israel that the body count is not higher in the current conflict. But that is no comfort to the Arab parents, siblings and spouses who have seen their loved ones killed by Israeli weapons. This includes the surviving members of the Dalu family, whose two-storey home was demolished on Sunday, killing 12 at one blow. However this war came about, and whatever the religion of the victims, that is a hideous human tragedy, full stop.

Such examples show that Gazans are double victims — politically enslaved to warmongering Hamas Islamists, and also physically endangered when Israel inevitably retaliates. Even in death, these victims are exploited in lurid funereal displays that feature the corpses of young children held aloft by shrieking cadres as propaganda totems for the benefit of YouTube.

All wars are hell — which is why Hamas and Hezbollah, were they led by rational and humane men instead of unhinged anti-Semites, wouldn’t start them. What needs to be remembered — despite all the emotional power that the image of even one bloodied Arab child musters in the eye of the observer — is that Israel has done everything in its power to cut through the fog of war, and focus its firepower on missiles and militants.

Remember, too: Were Israel truly to unleash its firepower in the manner of, say, Bashar Assad against his own people (37,000 dead and counting in Syria — as opposed to about 100 in Gaza during the current campaign), then all of Gaza would be a smoking ruin, and a million desperate Gazan refugees would be streaming into Egypt.…

Hamas no doubt will invent reasons to claim “victory” when the current conflict ends. But perhaps once all the bodies are buried, they will have time to reflect on how cruel and ultimately pointless their campaign against Israel has become.

But if they don’t, Israeli generals will be ready to do this all over again a few years from now, in Act IV. Israel can’t make Palestinian terrorists stop hating Jews. But they can teach them hate’s consequences as many times as it takes. Don’t blame Benjamin Netanyahu if they’re slow learners.

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IN SUPPORT OF A GROUND OFFENSIVE

Efraim Inbar and Max Singer

Mid East Forum, November 19, 2012
For nearly a week, Israel has been under attack from terrorist elements in Gaza, primarily Hamas. As the Israeli air force and navy respond with surgical, targeted strikes on Hamas facilities, the government is weighing the possibility of ordering a ground offensive too.

In our view, an armored push into Gaza in order to deal the Hamas military wing a decisive blow is necessary. From a strategic, long-term perspective, Israel cannot avoid confronting Hamas head-on, and must take action sooner rather than later. For Israel to restore quiet to its borders and ensure its survival in the new Middle East, Arab governments and terror organizations must feel that it would be a mistake for them to militarily challenge Israel. Israel must demonstrate that even in the face of great political pressures it is strong enough and willing, when necessary, to take vigorous action.

While strong Israeli action carries serious risks, strength and victory also bring many benefits. In the current and developing environment Israel has no safe or good choices; it will have to take dangerous actions. Acting later will be more dangerous than acting now, and sooner or later Israel will be forced to act.

For some time, we have advocated the need to respond to attacks from Gaza with a large-scale military operation. We said that if no such action was taken, the attacks against Israel would surely increase, and indeed they have. Gaza is small enough for Israel to destroy most of the infrastructure and the leadership of Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and the other terrorist organizations that are based there. The goal of such a ground offensive would be to restore deterrence and signal an Israeli determination to battle the rising Islamist forces in the region. By acting sooner in Gaza, Israel will also greatly reduce the missile retaliation it would face if and when it strikes Iran's nuclear facilities.

Current political conditions seem to weigh in Israel's favor for an incursion into Gaza now. Hamas is politically weakened, and most of the Arab world is busy with pressing domestic issues, or with other crises such as Syria. Today we can again say that attacks on Israel will surely further increase if the IDF does not now take the drastic and dangerous action involved in a full-scale military invasion of Gaza. A smaller operation, akin to Cast Lead, will create at most another short postponement of attacks on Israeli civilians and will be followed by further escalation….

If Israel tries to "accommodate" the current nasty diplomatic environment, it will gradually see its security eroded. Instead, Israel must boldly protect its interests and make sure that its enemies are afraid of potentially devastating consequences. As long as they believe that political pressures prevent the Jewish state from harming them, these enemies will inexorably and assuredly increase their attacks on Israel. This is due partly to natural strategy and partly to the temptation in each country to seek internal political gain by acting against Israel. With growing Muslim Brotherhood power, and the growing partial rivalry between the Brotherhood and Salafi jihadists in Egypt, the political pressure on Cairo to act against Israel will grow….

It is likely that Israel will face very great pressure, even from the US, to desist from such an operation. Israel should resist such pressure. It should explain to the US administration and to the public what its objectives in Gaza are – the destruction of the military organizations that are threatening and attacking Israel – and the necessity of staying in Gaza for the weeks required to achieve these objectives, which will postpone the next crisis as long as possible….

Of course, a ground offensive runs the risk of getting bogged down in the Gaza quagmire and of costing Israel unexpectedly heavy troop losses. Obviously, the IDF needs to develop and effectively execute a plan designed to avoid these pitfalls. Our point is that from a strategic, long-term perspective, Israel cannot wait any longer and must confront Hamas head-on.
The bottom line is that Israel is surrounded by enemies who will spare no efforts to kill as many Israelis as possible. Israel cannot respond effectively to each small attack, and the only way to prevent small attacks is to make the enemies believe that they cannot tell when Israel will respond to a small attack with a blow that the enemy is really afraid of. What the enemy is afraid of is the loss of power, and perhaps some of the terrorist leaders are also afraid of being killed. Therefore, an escalation of conflict via a ground operation, an idea that most of the international community opposes, is nevertheless necessary.

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HAMAS USES PALESTINIAN CHILDREN AS HUMAN SHIELDS

*InfoLive.TV, Jan. 1, 2010*

A short film presenting visual evidence of the long-standing Hamas tactic of exploiting civilians as human shields, and civilian buildings as cover for terrorist attacks. Footage shows examples of Palestinian terror groups hiding behind the Palestinian civilian population in order to launch attacks against Israeli targets.

“The parties to the conflict shall not direct the movement of the civilian population or individual civilians in order to shield military objectives from attacks or to shield military operations…”

Geneva Convention

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**ON TOPIC**

**Should Israel Agree to a Cease-fire?:** Robert Spencer, *Front Page Magazine*, Nov. 20, 2012—In all negotiations that may transpire, Israel will insist that the rocket attacks from Gaza must cease. But no cease-fire or previous negotiated settlement of any kind has ever accomplished this; why will this one be different? For that matter, no state has ever successfully reached a negotiated settlement with an enemy who had vowed to destroy it; why is Israel constantly expected to be different?

**The ‘Kids’ Behind IDF’s Media:** Allison Hoffman, *Tablet Magazine*, November 20, 2012 —The government still has to generate the talking points, what we want to achieve, and then we turn it over to the
kids, and they translate it into this new language of social media,” said Daniel Seaman, deputy director general of the Ministry of Public Information and Diaspora Affairs, who ran the government press office during Operation Cast Lead. “I say it’s magic.”

When did Hamas become secular?: Hanin Ghaddar, *Now Lebanon*, November 19, 2012—The Syrian opposition can resist Assad as much as they want, but their cause will not be recognized by these leftists as long as some Islamists have joined them. Meanwhile, Hamas and Hezbollah can be as Islamist as they want; they will be forgiven, as long as they resist, or say they are resisting, Israel.

Who wants to defeat Hamas?: Neville Teller, *Jerusalem Post*, Nov. 20, 2012 —Writing from Gaza during Israel’s current “Pillar of Defense” operation, one particular journalist from the UK called Hamas “the elected government in Gaza.” The idea that somehow Hamas is a legitimate administration has found widespread acceptance. Yet nothing could be further from the truth.

Palestinian State 2.0: Asaf Romirowsky: *YNet News*, November 1, 2012—While a functioning Palestinian State remains desirable, the fact that Palestinian leadership has refused to directly negotiate with Israel and uses bodies like the UN to endorse a "virtual" state that has no viable infrastructure is telling. Is the Palestinian goal a state of their own, or just the erasure of Israel, to be followed by what?

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