

Analysis: Terror's Predictable Spontaneity

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In some sense, the latest terrorist attack in Jerusalem was predictable - not in the method, the time, or specific location, but from the constant pattern for over sixty years. Throughout this period, whenever violent attacks against Israelis were contained on one front, another front was immediately opened, often involving a different form of violence.

The cease-fire agreements after the 1948 Independence War were followed by the beginning of infiltrations by Fedayeen based in Jordan and Egypt, who attacked Israeli civilians nearby. And a few years later, when these avenues were closed, the attacks shifted to the West Bank, and from there to Lebanon. More recently, when the suicide bombing campaign (misnamed "the second intifada") was halted by IDF operations such as Defensive Shield and the construction of a security barrier, the rocket barrages started from Gaza. And the shaky cease-fire in Gaza that was declared last week was also the signal for a new and different form of violence against Israeli civilians.

As this history shows, the "armed struggle" has been the dominant strategy used to promote the objective of reversing the establishment of a Jewish State. It's just that the names of the organizations have changed - Fatah, the PLO, Aksa Martyrs Brigades, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and perhaps now some new label - but the strategy of terror remains. Similarly, while the assumed motivations and justifications shift, including the addition of "occupation" or the settlements that followed the 1967 war, the basic approach of terror has been constant.

As the latest attack in Jerusalem seems to demonstrate, the perpetrators do not necessarily require an organization for training, weapons, or instructions. Palestinians have been raised on the armed struggle, and many are capable of reading the signals and acting on their own, with whatever weapons are most readily available. This may be a rifle, a suicide belt filled with explosives, or, as in this recent case, a bulldozer.

The steady flow of incitement in media plays a central role in this process, including Palestinian television programming preaching the virtues of martyrdom and the glory of fighting the Zionist enemy. As a result, the isolated action may appear to be spontaneous, but the foundation and preparations are never far away.

Palestinians have also learned that the United Nations and the powerful groups claiming to promote human rights rarely respond to such attacks in contrast to the consistent and predictable condemnations of Israeli attacks. In the Second Lebanon War, and in recent months, the Gaza rocket attacks, the statements and campaigns by Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and many other groups focused primarily on accusing Israel of

"collective punishment" and "war crimes" in its reports (the fact that these legal terms are distorted beyond recognition in this context is generally ignored). Thus, Palestinian violence has the double impact of killing Israelis while also contributing to the demonization of Israel.

One response to this history and strategy of terror is to accept or at least acknowledge a minimal level as the price for freedom and sovereignty. In each wave, Israel has prevailed after paying with the lives of some of its citizens. Perhaps this is the best that can be expected until there is a historic shift in Palestinian and Arab public opinion that includes the acceptance of Israel's legitimacy.

To help defeat this strategy, a greater emphasis should be made on ending incitement (particularly from European governments that fund the Palestinians) and on halting abuse of international legal rhetoric to condemn legitimate Israeli responses.

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