

Whither Hamas Pragmatic Politics or Militant Rejectionism - Tikun Olam

Tikun Olam תיקון עולם

Promoting Israeli democracy, exposing secrets of the national security state

Whither Hamas? Pragmatic Politics or Militant Rejectionism?

January 27, 2006 By Richard Silverstein 2 Comments

The NY Times quotes this interesting and perceptive comment from a Palestinian political scientist about what the future might hold for both Hamas and Fatah:

Hisham Ahmed, a political scientist at Birzeit University who has written books about Hamas, called the vote “an historic moment in every sense,” but he emphasized that “these results don’t reflect the real size of Fatah and Hamas in the society,” because they are distorted by anger at Fatah, preoccupation with internal issues and a complicated voting system.

If Mr. Abbas and the world handle the situation intelligently, Mr. Ahmed said, “it could mark the beginning of the end of Hamas as an ideologically pure force and a beginning of a reformed Fatah.” But if it is handled badly, he said, “the radicalization of Palestinian society will continue.”

I can’t help but thinking what might’ve happened if the Israelis HAD released Marwan Barghouti from prison so he could take over the Fatah list and election campaign. As it is, the only gesture they made was allowing him to broadcast two interviews for Arab media the day before the election. As I wrote in my blog, it was too little too late to help Fatah. They needed Barghouti there on the ground if he was to turn things around. I wonder if Ehud Olmert might rethink Israel’s refusal to free him. If Olmert does wish to have a Palestinian negotiating partner that is not Hamas, Barghouti seems to be the man who can do it. He could reform Fatah (as Ahmed suggests above), throw out the Old Guard and transform the party into a competent, transparent opposition force that is ready to govern if and when Hamas falters. Notice I said “could,” not that he “would.” For I don’t know for sure whether Barghouti would succeed at this task. But he seems the Palestinian figure most likely of being able to accomplish it.

The Times article also quotes that Israeli blowhard-pontificator, Yossi Klein Halevi. And as usual, he doesn’t disappoint (I mean that ironically):

“For Israelis, this is the definitive end of the illusion of a comprehensive peace,” said Yossi Klein Halevi, a senior fellow at the Shalem Center, a policy research organization in Jerusalem. “There is no more credible hope of Palestinian moderation. For Israelis, it will only confirm what the last five years of terror have taught them: that the war is not about settlements, but about Israel’s right to exist.”

The Palestinian Authority as a serious negotiating partner no longer exists for Israel, Mr. Halevi said. “Now the era of the pretend peace process is also over,” he said, and Israel will continue to act unilaterally to set its own borders, build the separation barrier between itself and the Palestinians and, in time, continue the process of unilateral withdrawal from more West Bank settlements — so long as it can ensure that a Hamas-dominated Palestinian Authority will not use that territory to launch rocket or other attacks on Israel.

To which I say, horseshit! And furthermore, it's not about "Israel's right to exist," it's about the Occupation stupid (to paraphrase James Carville)! Jerks like this only muddy the waters with their stupid verbal drivel that passes for political analysis. Lord, spare us from smart people (too smart by half) like this! You can be sure that just about anything out of Halevi's mouth is utter rubbish. To know the truth on any particular Mideast subject he's bloviating about, take precisely the opposite position from his own and you'll be right on the money. Keep in mind this guy started out as a JDL/Betar true believer when he was a kid. That tells you something about his politics (though he's too sophisticated to profess such views now that he's got such a good gig at The New Republic-an.)