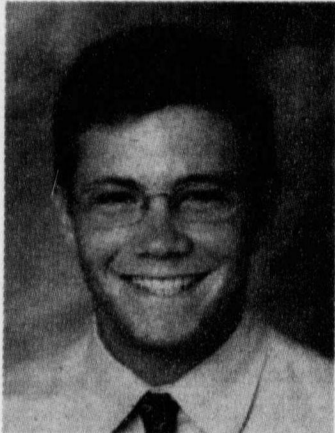


Parting Thoughts

Anti-War Amnesia

By Michael Hirshman
Staff Writer



It is ironic that many anti-war activists highlight the sufferings of Iraqis today as evidence that the American-led Coalition should never have invaded Iraq. While such activists continually harp on the latest car bombing or detainee abuse allegation, they have chosen to blithely forget Iraq's recent history. Why the selective amnesia? Because, as much as they don't like to admit it, the American-led invasion overthrew one of the bloodiest tyrants of the modern era. By never mentioning Saddam Hussein's brutal rule, opponents of the war pretend that violence in Iraq is a new phenomenon caused only by the policies of the Bush administration.

In Fairhrehheit 9-11, Michael Moore includes scenes of Iraqi children in a playground and a bustling street to illustrate Iraq before the American led intervention. The implication is that Iraq was a happy, prosperous, and peaceful country, like Sweden perhaps. The reality could not be more different. During Saddam's 24 years in power, he tortured, starved, and brutally murdered hun-

dreds of thousands of his own civilians. In total, Saddam slaughtered nearly the same fraction of the Iraqi civilian population as Hitler had exterminated in Occupied Europe.

To put the present violence and instability in Iraq into context, one cannot willfully ignore Iraq's recent history. The abuses at Abu Ghraib prison were unconscionable, but they pale in comparison to the gas attack which murdered over ten thousand Kurdish civilians in Halabja in 1988. Iraqi security forces today may be corrupt and inept, but they no longer commit crimes like the systematic hanging of two thousand human rights activists in 1998. The Shiites may be suffering disproportionately in the dozens of car bomb attacks, but they are no longer starving in the tens of thousands like they were in 1991. This is not to condone the violence that continues to plague Iraq. Each death of an innocent should be prevented if at all possible. However, anti-war activists who portray the deaths of innocent Iraqis as a new phenomenon are deliberately ignoring history.

Perhaps anti-war activists have an argument when they assert that American interests have not been sufficiently advanced to warrant the number of US soldiers killed. However, they have no argument when they try to assert that overthrowing Saddam Hussein was not good for the Iraqi people. If they really believe overthrowing Saddam was such a bad thing, why not put him back in power today? I take it that Saddam would have no objection.

Are Palestinian Terrorists Attacks and the Israel Military Response Morally Equivalent?

By Michael Hirshman
Staff Writer

On 9/11, al-Qaeda terrorists struck the United States in the most deadly terrorist attack in history. Not long after, our military intervened in Afghanistan to overthrow the Taliban and pursue al-Qaeda. The aim was to destroy al-Qaeda, and prevent it from launching further attacks.

Despite this focus on al-Qaeda and its sympathizers, innocent Afghans were killed in the crossfire. Still, most American recognized that these unintentional civilian deaths were unavoidable in pursuing terrorists who deliberately murdered civilians. They had few qualms about the American course of action even though it resulted in far more Afghan civilian deaths than American casualties on 9/11.

This moral clarity has been obfuscated in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The actions of Palestinian terrorists and the Israeli military's response are regarded by some as morally equivalent. In the words of MIT Professor Noam Chomsky, "suicide bombers are terrorists, and so are the far worse Israel crimes that we [the United

States] carry out." While some critics are not so strident, they nevertheless condemn with equal measure Palestinian terrorist and Israeli counterterrorist efforts.

However, it is ludicrous to equally condemn both sides. The deliberate murder of innocent civilians and the unintentional deaths of civilians in dis-

had repeatedly justified Palestinian suicide bombings in Tel Aviv, they loudly proclaimed condemned the carnage in London. Is the murder of innocent civilians okay in Israel but reprehensible in England (or for that matter everywhere else)?

The failure of some (primarily those on the left) to comprehend the nature of the Israel counterterrorism struggle remains a major obstacle to peace. Israeli soldiers go to great lengths (and significant personal danger) to minimize potential civilian casual-



ties in pursuing terrorists. The terrorists themselves recognize this. They often deliberate hide in civilian population centers because they know the Israeli reluctance to pursue them in areas crowded by civilians.

Harvard Law Professor Alan Dershowitz noted, "When the Klu Klux Klan perpetrated similar outrageous attacks, although on a far smaller scale, there was universal condemnation. No one condemned equally the deliberate bombings by the Klan and the occasional overreactions by the FBI. Yet there are those who seek to justify the current anti-Jewish outrages as the work of freedom fighters."

To illustrate the perversity of this double standard, one only has to look at the reaction of some Palestinian activists in England after the July Bombings. While they

ties in pursuing terrorists. The terrorists themselves recognize this. They often deliberate hide in civilian population centers because they know the Israeli reluctance to pursue them in areas crowded by civilians. Diplomat James Bennett put it, "The Palestinians have mastered a harsh arithmetic of pain.... Palestinian casualties play in their favor, and Israeli casualties play in their favor."

As Americans in the post 9/11 era, we have to recognize the nature of the threat faced by Israel and the reality of its response. In our own pursuit of terrorists, we would do well to learn from the Israeli counter-terrorism effort.

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