

William Greider

Israel Takes a Stupid Pill

By [Larry C. Johnson](#), [Booman Tribune](#). Posted [July 17, 2006](#).

Unlike the Egyptian and Syrian armies in 1973, Hamas and Hezbollah will not easily fold and cannot be defeated in a seven-day war.

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A Lebanese man looks at buildings that were attacked by Israeli air strikes in the Hizbollah stronghold of southern Beirut July 16, 2006. (Reuters/Adnan Hajj)

Apparently not content to let the US do a self-immolation act in the Middle East by itself, Israel decided to set itself on fire by

invading Lebanon. Burn baby burn? Like George Bush, Israel's Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert, never served in a combat unit and launched military operations without thinking

the matter through. In fact, Olmert reportedly never even served in the military. I raise this because there is one simple question Israel cannot answer about the current operations-what is their strategic military objective. Olmert has somehow persuaded the Israeli military to ignore strategy, think tactically, and in the process become really stupid. The events in the next several weeks will expose as myth the canard that you can secure a nation by killing terrorists. No you can't.

Killing "terrorists" has a place in policy but it is not a strategic military objective. It is a tactical objective and may serve political purposes, but achieves little in terms of securing Israel. Israel is attacking targets in Lebanon like a drunken sailor in a bar fight. Flailing about, causing significant damage, hitting innocent bystanders, and generally making a mess of things. This is not the Israeli

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military that pulled off the brilliant and daring raid at Entebbe.

What about Hamas and Hezbollah?

They are not terrorists. They carry out terrorist attacks, but they are not terrorists. They are something far more dangerous. They are a fully functioning political, social, religious, and military organizations that use terrorism tactics, but they are far more formidable than terrorist groups like Al Qaeda or the Basque Terrorist Organization. They do have the resources and the personnel to project force, sustain operations, and cannot be easily defeated. Unlike the Egyptian and Syrian armies in 1973, Hamas and Hezbollah will not easily fold and cannot be defeated in a seven day war. If that is the assumption among some Israeli military planners it is a crazy fantasy.

While most folks in the United States buy into the Hollywood storyline of poor little Israel fighting for its survival against big, bad Muslims, the reality unfolding on our TV screens shows something else. *Exodus*, starring Paul Newman, is ancient history. Hamas and Hezbollah attacked military targets; kidnapping soldiers on military patrols may be an act of war and a provocation, but it is not terrorism. (And yes, Hezbollah and Hamas have carried out terrorist attacks in the past against Israeli civilians. I'm not ignoring those acts, I condemn them, but we need to understand what the dynamics are right now.) Israel is not attacking the individuals who hit their soldiers. Israel is engaged in mass punishment.

How did Israel respond? They bombed civilian targets and civilian infrastructure and have killed many civilians. Let's see if I have this right.

The Arab "terrorists" attack military units, destroy at least one tank, and are therefore terrorists. Israel retaliates by launching aerial, naval, and artillery bombardments of civilian areas and they are engaging in self-defense. If we are unable to recognize the hypocrisy of this construct then we ourselves are so enveloped by propaganda and emotion that, like the Israelis, Hezbollah, and Hamas, we can't think rationally. We can only think in terms of tribalism and revenge.

Iran, meanwhile, is sitting in the catbird's seat. They have a well-trained and highly competent surrogate force in Hezbollah. Hezbollah's successful attack on Friday on an Israeli naval vessel is a reminder that Hezbollah is not a bunch of crazy kids carrying RPGs and wearing flip flops. I would be willing to wager that at least one Iranian military advisor was helping Hezbollah launch the missile that hit the Israeli ship. But Iran is doing more than simply engage in tit-for-tat. They are thinking strategically.

The events unfolding in Iraq and Lebanon are going Tehran's way. The United States is being portrayed in the world media as a government that tolerates and excuses attacks on civilian populations. The perception becomes the reality and the ability of the United States to rally support among the Russians, the Chinese, and even the French becomes more impaired. We need the international community to deal effectively with nuclear proliferation in North Korea and Iran. Now, we will be bogged down trying to defend Israel from an angry international community.

In the past, the United States had enough credibility on both sides and kept enough of a distance during these blood fueds so that we could intervene and prevent the fighting from escalating into a gigantic war. It appears that there is no one in the Bush Administration who can step up and intervene to calm the situation. Hell, with John Bolton and Elliot Abrams leading the charge, we are Israel's enablers.

Former Senator Fred Thompson played a U.S. Navy Admiral in *The Hunt for Red October*. While speaking about escalating tensions as the United States and the Soviet Union chased a renegade submarine, he said: "This business will get out of control. It will get out of control and we'll be lucky to live through it."

Those words are relevant today. Let's hope and pray they don't come to pass.

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Great Article

Posted by: monkeyinchief on Jul 17, 2006 12:33 PM [\[Report this comment\]](#)

It's refreshing to see someone put the situation in a strategic perspective. What's bothered me from the begining is that Hezbollah knew exactly now Israel would react because of the similar situation in Gaza only a few days before. Hezbollah would have only made their provocation if they believed the Israeli response would work to their advantage.

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It is a sad day when

Posted by: Joe Ox on Jul 17, 2006 12:50 PM [\[Report this comment\]](#)

When a country is attacked and they must measure their response with an eye toward who they will alienate, how everyone around the world will feel, and how it may damage the battle of public relations.

As an individual, if my family member is murdered, I have no legal right to go and kill the killer. But, once discovered, the killer will be brought to justice by the police, either executed or imprisoned. In the case of battling Arab terrorists, who are the police? Who can Israel call to enforce the law here? Who would step in and see top it that crimes are punished? Imagine members of your family kept being killed, week after week, and you were just told to sit tight and not do anything. You call the police and they say you had better not react, you will irritate the killers and create generations more

killers. At some point I think you might just start to shoot back, maybe even wrecklessly.

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» [Its a sad day when an eye for an eye is the norm.](#) Posted by: ezilla

» [RE: Its a sad day when an eye for an eye is the norm.](#) Posted by: andrewgirma

» [RE: Its a sad day when an eye for an eye is the norm.](#) Posted by: andrewgirma

» [RE: It is a sad day when](#) Posted by: esactun

» [RE: You said](#) Posted by: deo508

» [RE: You said](#) Posted by: codingguy

» [RE: It is a sad day when](#) Posted by: andrewgirma

» [Are you really THAT out of your mind?](#) Posted by: Whistler

Re: Joe Ox

Posted by: kenhymes on Jul 17, 2006 1:21 PM [[Report this comment](#)]

Joe, your analogy is full of holes. Israel is not a person, it's a country. Countries that are attacked in criminal ways (and let's remember that unlike the Palestinian suicide bombers, Hezbollah has recently largely attacked military targets), never get the right to bomb civilian areas indiscriminately. It's a war crime when the US does it, it's a war crime when Israel does it.

Anyway, why does the country with the largest military and best airforce in the region get to play the defenseless victim? Every country of any size can point to someone in the world who hates them and says threatening things about them, and Israel is far from alone in being attacked with illegal terror tactics (ask Pakistan and India and Colombia and many others how things are going). The Holocaust was one of the vast tragedies of the 20th Century (on a short list that should include the genocide of 3 million Vietnamese, the mass purges of Stalin and Mao, and the Armenian massacres - if I've missed something, make your own list), but it cannot be used forever as a justification for every stupid and evil thing successive Israeli administrations decide to do.

You know that the vast majority of victims have been Palestinians, not Israelis. Some suicidal jihadist blows themselves and a few other people in a market or cafe (a horrible evil thing, and there's no explaining it, not enough compassion in the world, for those whose family members are killed or

mained), and Israel's response, over and over again (like the US military in Iraq) is to bomb civilian areas and threaten and humiliate people who have nothing to do with the conflict. Thus increasing the base of indirect support for the extremists, rather than isolating them by treating a crime as a crime. You cannot ignore that there is racism and indifference to human suffering at work here. Collective punishment is both a moral and legal crime, and it is a tactical error of the worst kind.

It has never worked and it never will work. It's degrading the democracy, the civil discourse, and the humanity of both of our nations. Justifying this kind of disproportionate violence with "common sense" analogies about individual situations is of no help whatsoever, and masks the ethical and tactical issues in a fog of B.S.

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» [RE: Joe Ox](#) Posted by: deo508

» [RE: Joe Ox](#) Posted by: andrewgirma

Monday morning armchair quarterbacks are a dime a dozen.

Posted by: Sojourner on Jul 17, 2006 2:59 PM [[Report this comment](#)]

Lose the sympathetic history of Israel's enemies. We all know there are no saints in the near East.

If you can make the case that Israel only opts for violence and does not try diplomacy, I will listen. But you can never make such a case. The fact that diplomacy never works without an iron fist in the velvet glove is something we all know.

The glove is lovely. The fist is ugly. So what else is new?

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» [RE: Monday morning armchair quarterbacks.](#) Posted by: Ghoulman

» [See my comment below: He hit me first. No, he hit me first. This ain't no kids' fight.](#) Posted by: Sojourner

» [RE: Monday morning armchair quarterbacks are a dime a dozen.](#) Posted by: IanA

» [RE: Monday morning armchair quarterbacks are a dime a dozen.](#) Posted by: EncinoM

» [RE: Monday morning armchair quarterbacks are a dime a dozen.](#) Posted by: codingguy

» [That you believe there are saints in the near East makes you a True Believer.](#) Posted by: Sojourner

» [RE: Opinions are like liars, everyone is one to someone](#) Posted by: deo508

[» RE: Opinions are like liars, everyone is one to someone](#) Posted by: codingguy

[» RE: Opinions are like liars, everyone is one to someone](#) Posted by: IanA

Regarding those military targets

Posted by: Jasem on Jul 17, 2006 3:01 PM [[Report this comment](#)]

From what I have seen in the news, Hizbollah killed 8 Israeli civilians in a rocket attack. That is not a military target. Why does Hizbollah target civilians and don't you think it would be cleverer (if they had to hit anything) to just hit military targets? Then they wouldn't look like such a big bunch of assholes on the world scene. Or do they not even care what people think. And what do you think all this overreacting by the Israelis is about? What's their plan, really? Not the Ilad Shalit story please, some insight if anyone might humour me.

P.S. America sucks balls.

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[» RE: egarding those military targets](#) Posted by: sondjata

[» RE: egarding those military targets](#) Posted by: Pickles78

The events unfolding...in Lebanon are going Tehran's way

Posted by: Jasem on Jul 17, 2006 3:12 PM [[Report this comment](#)]

How do you figure that?

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[» RE: The events unfolding...in Lebanon are going Tehran's way](#) Posted by: Ghoulman

Frackin' brilliant article!

Posted by: Ghoulman on Jul 17, 2006 3:32 PM [[Report this comment](#)]

especially this bit... *The Arab "terrorists" attack military units, destroy at least one tank, and are therefore terrorists. Israel retaliates by launching aerial, naval, and artillery bombardments of civilian areas and they are engaging in self-defense. If we are unable to recognize the hypocrisy of this construct then we ourselves are so enveloped by propaganda and emotion that, like the Israelis, Hezbollah, and Hamas, we can't think rationally. We can only think in terms of tribalism and revenge.*

Though I could do without the Tom Clancy reference. Blech! :p

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[» selective thinking](#) Posted by: AdamBaum

» [RE: selective thinking](#) Posted by: Ghoulman

» [RE: We gave them democracy, a chance to vote, and they elect Hamas! Propoaganda at it's best](#) Posted by: deo508

» [RE: selective thinking](#) Posted by: codingguy

» [RE: selective thinking](#) Posted by: IanA

» [RE: selective thinking](#) Posted by: EncinoM

» [RE: selective thinking](#) Posted by: Shehova

» [RE: selective thinking](#) Posted by: EncinoM

» [RE: selective thinking](#) Posted by: IanA

» [RE: selective thinking](#) Posted by: codingguy

» [RE: selective thinking](#) Posted by: deo508

Millions of unemployed men and women ready to die in jihad? Right?

Posted by: Sojourner on Jul 17, 2006 3:47 PM [[Report this comment](#)]

Does anyone deny that Isreal's enemies are eager to die in battle? Does anyone deny that dying in battle brings no special 'spiritual' reward to Jews?

Stop treating the near East as if it were a kids' fight, where Tommy says that Johnny hit him first, but Johnny says that Tommy hit him first. We all know that when either one gets hit, they will hit back.

Where does the 'god's eye' perspective about who is right and who is wrong come from? When did any of the participants in the war ask for outsiders' opinions, because they would listen to that?

I learned long ago to stay out of other people's wars. Anyone who doesn't sucks the Stupid Pill big time.

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I think America is taking the stupid pill given by Dr. Izrael

Posted by: deo508 on Jul 17, 2006 5:31 PM [[Report this comment](#)]

This is a pretty interesting article. But if the Izrael Lobby didn't have such a firm grip on the throats of U.S. politicians then we would not be having thbis discussion, and probalby ot the wars we are in. America is taking the stupid pill. We, our politicians, have put the interests of a foreign nation ahead

of our own.

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» [RE: I think America is taking the stupid pill given by Dr. Izrael](#) Posted by: codingguy

Look on the Bright Side.

Posted by: douglashoyt on Jul 17, 2006 6:41 PM [[Report this comment](#)]

In a trillion years, no one in this universe will get a damn.

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» [RE: Look on the Bright Side.](#) Posted by: Pickles78

» [RE: Look on the Bright Side.](#) Posted by: deo508

» [RE: Look on the Bright Side.](#) Posted by: codingguy

Let's have a fair fight.

Posted by: humanity101 on Jul 17, 2006 7:06 PM [[Report this comment](#)]

Let Russia, China, and Iran supply Hamas and Hezbollah with sophisticated weapons the way the U.S. supplied the Taliban with stinger missiles to shoot down Soviet planes. The world needs another super power to balance things out. Imagine if Hamas and Hezbollah have fighter jets, tanks, warships, cruise missiles etc... I would assume they would be more accurate in taking down the Israeli's government buildings, the homes of their ministers etc... and at least appear to avoid civilian targets. At this point, I would assume the militants would acquire personal vehicles, body armors etc... to protect themselves and not blowing themselves up in order to kill their enemies. When you are being occupied, oppressed and humiliated daily, anything goes. When the situation gets desperate, humanity, ethics, morality etc... goes out the window. Of course any act of destruction of human lives must be condemned, but throwing more fuel into the fire would not make it stop. You can make a bigger fire, but in the end, you get burned too. Those Isrealis who support their military's destruction of the Lebannese deserve no sympathy. They deserve it. Let them kill each other. Until someone learns the lesson, history will keep repeating itself.

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» [RE: Let's have a fair fight.](#) Posted by: deo508

Typical Alternet droppings

Posted by: zelosfsu81 on Jul 17, 2006 8:44 PM [[Report this comment](#)]

Has anybody ever questioned why ALTERNET begins blogs with articles from only one point of

view? This method is anti-democratic, anti american, and anti-progressive(even though i'm sure theythink they are). Sad excuse for left wing politics. Shame on ALTERNET. The articles are ALL diatribes and do not represent any thing close to true journalism.

ALL these altnet bloggers feed of alternets hatred and then attack dissent by name calling. FOX watcher or likudniks or bushies, or IDF blah blah blah. The scariest thing to me is that the Left has now become a training ground for the regrowth and perpetuation of antisemitism. How bizarre is this being that the Jews have always headed progressive liberal leaning movements. This development is similar to the history of the NAACP. Jews begin organize and champion the NAACP and then are turned on when israel comes into the picture. Antisemitism is alive and strong and seems to find its way into the most peculiar of places. VIVA altnet, viva ANTISEMITISM - Death to the dissenting voice!! Death to Israel death to America!!! Death to the world!!!

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» [RE: Typical Altnet droppings](#) Posted by: yellow

» [RE: Typical Altnet droppings](#) Posted by: codingguy

» [attention CODINGGUY](#) Posted by: zelosfsu81

» [RE: Typical Altnet droppings](#) Posted by: zelosfsu81

» [RE: Typical Altnet droppings](#) Posted by: yellow

» [RE: Typical Altnet droppings](#) Posted by: lanA

» [Many on left working with islamic fundamentalists](#) Posted by: Bobsays

» [RE: Many on left working with islamic fundamentalists](#) Posted by: lanA

» [Sorry but the Zionist Propaganda no longer works](#) Posted by: Whistler

What does 'terrorism' mean, anyhow?

Posted by: thoughtcriminal on Jul 17, 2006 10:19 PM [[Report this comment](#)]

I suppose now would be a good time to rehash the last few thousand years of MidEast history and solve all the problems of the past - for example, the founding of Israel is a mixed story, involving a few fascist elements as well as a Marcus Garvey-style "Return to Africa" type movement - but that's the confused history of the 20th century. You can't change the past, but you can work towards a livable future.

Oddly enough, right before this latest warfare broke out, Hamas had drafted a proposal to recognize the state of Israel - apparently something various people on all sides didn't want to see happen. Bush and his 'hands-off' approach, Sharon's deliberately provoking an intifada by his antics on Islamic holy

sites, endless intrigue, lies and propaganda efforts - and here we are, ready for more slaughter. Maybe if all that Afghani opium is air-dropped in small packets over the region, people will stop fighting for a while - that's my peace proposal.

For now, let's just try and define what is meant by 'terrorism' - a tricky proposition. Violent attacks on civilian populations to achieve a political end - that's a pretty good definition, right? That's what Tel Aviv cafe suicide bombers are hoping for, in their twisted states, isn't it? However, this definition means that many Western countries are deeply involved in terrorist activity. If the bombs are delivered by plane instead of by hand, does that suddenly mean it isn't terrorism? Collective punishment is therefore terrorism - attacking a civilian population for political purposes. Why isn't that a good definition of what terrorism is? Only because it means that the 'good guys', in Disneyland parlance, are terrorists just like the 'bad guys' are, and the corporate media lives on a steady diet of Disneyland morality plays - what does oil have to do with war?

Like an emotionally disturbed individual, Israel's response has been completely overblown and it's not encouraging to see a country that has a hefty stockpile of nuclear weapons acting in a unilateral and poorly considered manner - they must have learned that tactic from watching the US invasion of Iraq - and what can we say about it now? Israel will just claim that they are taking pre-emptive action to protect themselves, as Bush did. That Yale party boy never learned that actions have consequences - I think it's his parent's fault.

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Second guessing

Posted by: raccon on Jul 17, 2006 10:45 PM [[Report this comment](#)]

Another great second guess of Israel's strategies and tactics. But that is all it is--total speculation. Time will show how effective this strategy is in forcing Lebanon to take control of its own territory. Israel is sending a clear message to Lebanon that they must continue the task of taking control of their own country away from Syria, Iran and their surrogates. The goal is simple. Israel will not allow attacks on their soil by anyone. I would really hesitate to second guess their strategy. They have had over 50 years of fighting for survival to perfect it. And by the way, Syrian tanks were in the city of Dan in Galilee in 73 shortly after the beginning of their surprise attack and I heard it from the locals that it was touch and go that the IDF was able to push them back up the Golan. I know some guys with burns on their backs from that war that might disagree with your assessment about how easy the Syrians and Egyptians were defeated. Nobody folded. It was bitter, terrible fighting that cost many lives on both sides. The seven day war was in 67.

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Second guessing again

Posted by: raccon on Jul 17, 2006 11:12 PM [[Report this comment](#)]

And it wasn't a seven day war--it lasted six days (in 67).

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Left needs to become consistent humanists and humanitarians

Posted by: Bobsays on Jul 18, 2006 2:58 AM [[Report this comment](#)]

I think what holds the left back is this: it can't help the temptation to fall in for some good old fashioned anti-imperialist rhetoric (like some sad sack who can't help doing some internet gambling). Just because islamic fascists use anti-imperialist rhetoric, it doesn't make them progressive or even anywhere close to the continuum of progress for human civilisation.

The progressive position is to support the integrity of national borders, to oppose any entity that uses violence to violate this, to fight hard for international institutions with teeth and integrity (not the corruption festival that is the UN), to always oppose terrorists who kill innocent civilians (rather than publish reams of excuses for that behaviour).

There are many on the left who are consistent on this issue: the unsung heros and heroines out there who are doing good work around the world. But always we hear from the hot heads, the hypocrites, the veiled war mongers.

As for the state of Israel, the progressive position is to support its right to exist. It is also the progressive position to support any initiative that gives Palestinians the dignity and the right to a homeland. When attacked, Israel has a right to defend itself. Israel does not have the right to go beyond that, as it has done on many occassions (and maybe doing now).

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[» RE: Left needs to become consistent humanists and humanitarians](#) Posted by: colinmeister

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