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opinion דעות

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Hamas Victory



Troops shutting gate at Kissufim crossing during pullout Photo: AP

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Fruits of disengagement

More than 80 percent of Palestinians credit Hamas terror with pushing Israel out of Gaza

Yaakov Amidror

Essentially, Hamas [won](#) this election because it presented Palestinian voters with a less corrupt alternative than the existing Palestinian Authority, and one that could point to concrete achievements: A strong social network (called "Da'avah" in Arabic) that provides civilian services rather than steal them, and a successful terrorist network that brought about Israel's complete exit from the Gaza Strip.

The groundwork for these two achievements was laid by Israeli decisions.

The Oslo accords brought a corrupt group to power; a group that did everything it could to get rich on the public purse. It cheated its people and destroyed everything that was good about a Palestinian society that made initial strides, huge by Arab standards, towards building a "civil society."

In hindsight, it was a terrible mistake to accept these people as partners to the diplomatic process, and to allow them to gain a foothold on the ground and to impose them on the Palestinians.

20-20 hindsight

Today, more than a decade after Arafat and his security forces arrived in Judea, Samaria and Gaza, we can say conclusively that the experiment has been rejected – Arafat's cronies have been humiliated in democratic elections.

What would the result have been if Rabin's Israel hadn't buckled to the world view of Shimon Peres and Yossi Beilin? There's no way of knowing.

But it is clear what the Oslo concept brought us: Bloodshed (more than 130 Israeli deaths in the month before Operation Defensive Shield in April, 2002) and a Hamas government.

Disengagement and Hamas

But we must admit that Israel itself contributed greatly to Hamas' electoral success by pulling out unilaterally from Gaza. Flight at a time of war and abdication of basic principles at a time when terror continued unabated brought tremendous success to those responsible.

And so instead of approaching the elections humiliated and degraded because of the unqualified failure of their policy to bear fruit in Judea and Samaria – Hamas members became Palestinian heroes.

More than 80 percent of Palestinians believe Hamas and its terrorism forced Israel to withdraw from Gaza. What Israel's believe is "determination" is interpreted in Gaza as "weakness."

One of Hamas' most predominant slogans in Gaza was, "Four years of terror brought more than 10 years of talks." From the Palestinian point of view, this was a true and successful slogan. It emphasized the failure of the Israeli government and the success of Hamas.

Not so bad?

One had to hear Dr. Robert Satloff, the executive director of The Washington Institute, address the Herzliya Conference last week in order to understand just how badly – from an American point of view – the Israeli government erred in all its preparations for the possibility that Hamas would take part in the Palestinian elections.

He said Israel, the United States and Egypt squandered a historic opportunity to prevent the domination of radical Islam over the Palestinian elections. Turns out the same arrogance that brought about unilateral disengagement, as described by the state comptroller, also set the tone for the government's steps with everything related to the Palestinian elections.

This is the time for Israel to signify, via its actions and behavior, the complete rejection of Hamas as a terrorist group and that no one will negotiate with it.

I wouldn't be surprised if we started to hear explanations about how its "not so bad" that "Hamas will moderate when they take power," that "we're already hearing new voices emanating from that camp," and that "the ones who carry out terror attacks are not the same ones as those sitting in government."

In short, once again we have engaged in self-deception – of the same sort that was given red-carpet treatment following Oslo. But now, instead of interpreting Arafat, they are interpreting Hamas. And all in order to sell us the same deception, wrapped up in easy-to-digest packaging.

The surprising thing is that most of us will even buy the story and will want to believe them.

Local, international fallout

Locally, this sort of approach could even negatively influence our struggle against the existence of terror commanders in Damascus and efforts to disarm Hizbullah.

In the wider arena, we are likely to pay for this in the strategic realm as well, when many countries make point to our wishy-washy approach to Hamas when justifying nuclear concessions to Iran.

If Israel fails to act strongly to impose a total ban on Hamas, it will open up a Pandora's Box that will be impossible to predict just where it will lead.

Several days ago Iran's president met with Hamas leaders in Damascus. The deal signed between radical Sunnis and radical Shiites is nothing new.

Most of their efforts are directed against Israel. In this case Israel must not give up even a little of its ability to defend itself.

This is the reason it is important to bring the issue of "defensible borders" back to the public debate - first of all here in Israel.

The issue is critical for our survival here.

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