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A journalist, a statesman and a soldier

By [Ari Shavit](#)

It's clear who was wrong: The people of Military Intelligence who did not see it coming and the Shin Bet who did not emphasize enough what it saw coming; the leftists who believed up to the last minute in the false promise of unilateral withdrawal; the Americans who turned democratization into a religion, and the Europeans who turned Abu Mazen into a model; the Israeli elite who in the past year were once again struck by the glib, pretentious and disconnected-from-reality hubris that is amazingly similar to the glib Oslo era.

But who was right? When the herd mentality once again took over the Israeli political body, who kept their sanity? Ami Ayalon was right on some points. A few weeks before the Hamas victory he anticipated it. In the same way so did a few others who warned about the threat of Palestinian extremism resulting from the disengagement. Thus, Yossi Beilin, Ehud Barak, and Yoek Bin Nun, as well as Ephraim Halevy and Moshe Arens and Shlomo Gazit and Uzi Dayan and Uzi Arad and Giora Eiland, were also right. However, in a more profound and deeper way, there were three unusual Israelis who had the intellectual courage to counter the past year of consensus.

The first among the sober was Uri Avnery. While all of Israel cheered when Arafat died in November 2004, Avnery warned about the gates of hell opening up. As a national-revolutionary personality, Avnery understood that there was no chance that the man in the gray flannel suit, Abu Mazen, would be able to replace the revolutionary in the kaffiyeh, Abu Amar (Arafat). Avnery knew back then that Arafat was the last blockade against bin Laden, and that after he went, the fighting Palestinian youth would find a genuine alternative in the identity proposed by radical Islam.

The second sober person was Benjamin Netanyahu. The years 2002-2005 were very bad years for Bibi the politician. He made a mistake nearly everywhere. When he should have obeyed he rebelled, and when he should have rebelled he obeyed. When he should have raised his voice he fell silent, and when he raised his voice he should have stayed silent. But Bibi's failure as a politician cannot blur the correctness of Netanyahu the statesman. While lawyers Ehud Olmert and Dov Weissglas rolled around an historic move without understanding its significance, Netanyahu understood very well. While the Sharon gang grew drunk with its success, the son of the historian kept his eyes wide open. Netanyahu proved that his understanding of history is far greater than anyone else in Israel's current leadership.

But the most righteous man of all in the last two years was the man Israel insisted on not listening to: Moshe "Boogie" Ya'alon. Unlike

Avnery and Netanyahu, Ya'alon did not foresee anything because of ideology. He saw what he saw because he looked at the conflict as it is and because he was honest with himself. From this observation point, and integrity, he reached the conclusion that the Israeli military victory of the disengagement could lead to a diplomatic defeat. He reached the conclusion that a sweeping unilateral withdrawal could undermine Israel's strategic situation and strengthen the powers that want to eradicate it. As opposed to the disengagement chief of staff, the chief of staff in the war against terror did not know how to build a consensus around him. He did not know how to win over the media and the blessings of the power centers in Israel. But the events prove Ya'alon was right.

Seemingly, there is nothing in common between the three, Avnery, Netanyahu and Ya'alon. One is a leftist, the other a rightist and the third remains a cipher. One is a journalist, another a statesman and the third is a soldier. Nonetheless, they have some things in common. The three are lone wolves. The three are unloved. The three are motivated by complex inner truths that sometimes make them be misunderstood, slandered and denounced.

But now, with Israel bent over the rubble and trying to shape out of it some new picture of reality, it should listen to the three. Each in their own way is right. Each of them represents some dimension of the truth that must be understood. The Hamas victory teaches us that in recent years not only did we make a mistake, but we lived a lie. Now, with caution and modesty, we have to make a new way to the difficult truth.

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