

## Column One: Dominoes anyone?

Contributed by Caroline Glick , THE JERUSALEM POST  
Sunday, 24 August 2008

Russia's invasion of Georgia is exposing many aspects of the international system that the US-led West has studiously ignored since the fall of the Soviet Union. One old truth that deserves attention is that the domino-theory of international relations remains true. That theory asserts that events in one arena will foment similar events in other arenas.

Great powers are not the only ones that can cause dominoes to fall. Small states can as well. Israel's actions make this point clearly.

This week the Olmert-Livni-Barak government voted to release another 199 terrorists from prison. Israel's leaders claimed that after releasing terrorist murderers to Hizbullah last month, we have no excuse for not releasing terrorist murderers to Fatah leader Mahmoud Abbas now. If Abbas cannot match Hizbullah's achievements, they argue that he will be discredited.

But as The Jerusalem Post's Khaled Abu Toameh explained Monday, there is virtually no one in the Palestinian Authority who believes that Israel will be strengthening pro-peace forces in Palestinian society by releasing Fatah terrorists from jail. Those terrorists will merely strengthen the more radical elements in Palestinian society that are generally allied with Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

Previous Israeli releases of terrorists have shown that untold numbers of Israelis will pay with our lives for the government's idiocy. But it isn't just Israel that is impacted by Israel's mistakes. Jordan too is harmed.

Just after the government announced its decision, Jordan announced that it was releasing four jihadist murderers from its prisons. The four terrorists, who killed two Israeli soldiers in 1990, had been sentenced to life in prison in Israel. Last summer, in a "confidence-building-measure" towards King Abdullah, Israel transferred them to Jordan to complete their prison terms.

If Israel cannot deny to Fatah what it granted to Hizbullah, so Jordan cannot deny to Hamas what Israel granted to Fatah and Hizbullah. Jordan cannot be stricter with murderers of Israelis than Israel is.

Jordan's recent rapprochement with Hamas follows the same pattern. According to the Saudi Al-Watan newspaper, Damascus-based Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal is scheduled to visit Jordan in the coming days as part of a general Jordanian policy to rebuild its cooperative ties with the Iranian-controlled jihadist group. Amman severed those ties in 2006.

There can be no doubt that Hamas and its sister Muslim Brotherhood organization in Jordan constitute threats to the Hashemite regime. The Jordanian government would no doubt prefer not to have anything to do with Hamas. Indeed, it would doubtlessly be pleased if the terror group was destroyed. But Jordan cannot act against Hamas on its own. Only Israel can do that.

But Israel has refused to take any action against Hamas as it has solidified its control over Gaza and has increased its influence over Judea and Samaria. Israel's inaction has compelled Jordan to appease the Iranian-controlled terror group.

ISRAEL'S REFUSAL to acknowledge the interconnectedness of international events impacts events throughout the region. The US's strategic myopia affects events throughout the world. Recent occurrences in Pakistan bear this out.

Since the September 11, 2001 attacks the US has ignored the domestic situation in Pakistan. First it placed all its faith in Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf to act as its ally. Washington ignored Musharraf's refusal to purge the Pakistani military and powerful Inter Service Intelligence agency of its strong jihadist elements that collaborated with al-Qaida and the Taliban and provided them safe haven and allowed them to take control over the provinces bordering Afghanistan.

Then, in an about face, last year Washington attempted to advance its program of democratization of the Islamic world by pressuring Musharraf to allow open elections to Pakistan's parliament. Unfortunately, the US failed to notice that the supposedly democratic contending parties all hate America and oppose taking any action against the Taliban and al-Qaida.

Now that the anti-Western, "democratic" forces that the US has unleashed have forced Musharraf from power, the US has no allies at all in Pakistan's political and military-intelligence power structures with whom to collaborate in fighting the

Taliban and al-Qaida. Even more disturbingly, the US has no one it can trust to ensure that jihadist forces do not gain access to Pakistan's nuclear arsenal.

This latter point was made clear on Tuesday when The New York Times quoted a senior Bush administration official who noted that jihadist agents have made "steadfast efforts" to infiltrate Pakistan's nuclear laboratories. Beyond that, even Musharraf never gave the US full assurance that he was securing his country's nuclear arsenal. Musharraf steadfastly refused to give an accounting of how he spent much of the \$100 million the US transferred to him for the purpose of securing his 50-100 nuclear warheads.

Although during his first term in office President George W. Bush often warned of the danger of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of terrorist groups or transferred to them by state sponsors, this issue has been largely ignored in recent years. Administration officials have downplayed the significance of overt cooperation between the Taliban and al-Qaida and the Pakistani military and intelligence agencies. And today, Washington's refusal to contend with that cooperation is coming back to haunt it. Now the US has no easy options for preventing the rapidly collapsing nuclear-armed Pakistani governing apparatuses from falling under the influence of the Taliban and al-Qaida.

A similar situation is playing out in Lebanon. Just as the US ignored the ties between the Pakistani regime and al-Qaida/Taliban, so it has ignored the significance of Iran's control of Hizbullah and Hizbullah's control of the Lebanese government.

Since the Western-allied March 14 movement forced Syria to remove its forces from Lebanon in 2005, the US has treated its leaders as reliable strategic allies. As a consequence the US refused to understand that when Lebanese Prime Minister Fuad Saniora allowed Hizbullah to join his government in 2005, he effectively placed his government at Hizbullah's mercy and so became a proxy of Iran.

The US continued to ignore Saniora's subservience to Hizbullah during the Israel-Hizbullah war in 2006. Hoping to strengthen him, the US barred Israel from attacking Lebanese infrastructures serving Hizbullah's war machine. That US decision made it much more difficult for Israel to prevail in the conflict. And Israel's failure to defeat Hizbullah/Iran in 2006 paved the way for Hizbullah's seizure of power in May.

Just as the Taliban and al-Qaida have taken advantage of the US's refusal to acknowledge the significance of their ties to Pakistan's military and intelligence services, so Hizbullah, Iran and Syria have exploited the US's refusal to acknowledge their control over Lebanon.

One of the ways Iran, Syria and Hizbullah exploit the US's refusal to come to terms with their control over Lebanon is by making that control uncontested. To this end, Hizbullah has forged alliances with disparate groups in Lebanon and so further isolated the remaining pro-Western voices in the country.

This week Hizbullah signed a cooperation agreement with Syrian-backed al-Qaida-linked Salafists in Tripoli. This move has shocked many Western observers who have insistently argued that an alliance between Shi'ite and Sunni jihadists is unthinkable. These observers have ignored the fact that Shi'ites and Sunnis have strategic alliances throughout the region. Iran has a strategic alliance with Sunni-majority Syria. It controls Hamas. It has hosted al-Qaida commanders on its soil since at least late 2001.

To a degree, these blind observers' fiction of Sunni-Shi'ite antipathy has been abetted by the Sunnis and Shi'ites themselves. Understanding the West's interest in ignoring the threat they pose both separately and together, until this week they never made their alliances explicit. What Hizbullah's accord with the al-Qaida-linked Salafists in Tripoli shows is that both forces are now so convinced of the West's weakness, that they believe they have nothing to fear from openly collaborating.

UNLIKE EVENTS in Pakistan, which are the consequence of the nature of Pakistani society and the US's failure to acknowledge the nature of that society, the latest events in Lebanon are at least in part the consequence of Washington's impotent response to their ally Russia's invasion of the US's ally Georgia.

It is often argued that Russia fears Islamic domination no less than the West. And while Russia certainly has good reason to be concerned about jihadist, its concern has not led it to act as an ally to the West in its fight against the jihadists. To the contrary, like Iran and Syria and their affiliated terror groups, Russia views the US as its true enemy. Like them it seeks to exploit US weaknesses to advance its own position.

Russia understands that Iran's ideological foundations make it impossible for Teheran to ever reach an accord with the US. And it exploits the situation to its benefit.

Moscow built Iran a nuclear reactor. It supplies Iran and Syria with advanced weapons systems. Russia's alliance with Iran and Syria advances its interests in two ways: It weakens the US and it ensures that Russia will not be the target of

an Iranian nuclear bomb.

Just as the US's failure to back Israel's bid to destroy Hizbullah in Lebanon two years ago paved the way for this week's Hizbullah-al-Qaida pact, so the US's weak response to Russia's rape of Georgia has emboldened the Russians, Iranians and Syrians to expose their long-standing strategic alliance. Wednesday Iran condemned Georgia as a "Zionist" state due to its close ties with Israel. Russia returned the favor by defending Iran's satellite launch, and backing Iran's announced intention to build another six nuclear reactors.

Syrian President Bashar Assad capitalized on Russia's anti-US posture by visiting Moscow on Wednesday. Russia set the tone of his visit by condemning Israel for supplying Georgia with military assistance. It then allowed Assad to announce Moscow's intention to supply Syria with the sophisticated Iskander theater defense missile system which Syria has long sought.

Russia's exploitation of points of US weakness to advance its own position leaves the US with two options. Washington can try to give Russia a better offer than its enemies can. Or the US can work to weaken its enemies by confronting them while strengthening its allies and so force Russia into a cooperative posture. Today there is no deal that the US can offer Russia which can compete with what Russia receives from its alliances with America's enemies. So the first option is moot.

This brings us to option two which is simply the Cold War model of containment, based upon the domino theory of world affairs. Seeing as it already worked once, there is little reason not to return to it now. The US's decision to sign a strategic alliance with Poland was a first small step in the right direction. Diplomatic moves against Russia, like ending Moscow's membership in the G-7 and its association agreement with NATO, should already have been carried out.

But most importantly, looking ahead, both the US and Israel should take a lesson from their enemies. They must acknowledge that when they are strong and victorious, their allies are strengthened throughout the world. And when they are weak and dissolute, their allies also pay the price of their irresponsibility.

caroline@carolineglick.com

This article can also be read at <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1219218614103&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull>