

## Israel vs Hezbollah

Saturday, 26 January 2008

The deteriorating situation in the Middle East has revealed new facts about the players involved. Historically, none of the US presidents had supported Israel all the way like the current administration has. His Secretary of State talked about a "new Middle East."  
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Standing beside the Israeli Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert, she said that the time had come for a new Middle East. Although she did not elaborate as to what this new Middle East was, it is horribly foreboding. A new Middle East was crafted with the creation of the state of Israel in Palestine in 1948.

The effect of that creation has been so horrible that the Muslim world that is has not yet fully recovered from its after effects. The Middle East has been embroiled in incessant terrorism marked by several fully-fledged wars. In spite of the overwhelming military might of Israel, the Muslim world by and large has not officially recognized its creation.  
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In spite of the earth shattering bombardment of Beirut, Israeli land invasion from the south, total helplessness of all the Muslim governments, dislocation of millions of Lebanese civilians and horrific loss of human lives, no Muslim country has condemned Hezbollah. And this also is the first time that so many missiles have been fired into Israeli cities (Saddam had fired a few scud missiles into Israel in the first Gulf war). Heretofore, all the action or at least predominantly most of it had occurred on the Arab land.

Meanwhile, the Shiite strength keeps on increasing as proved by Hezbollah's stand against Israel. Although many Muslim countries may have criticized Hezbollah, none has condemned it. They are ambivalent in their reaction because the Sunni population under their rule supports Hezbollah's stand against Israel. Even during the crisis of Lebanon, immediate cease fire was called for but Hezbollah was not condemned.

During a joint press conference with the Lebanese Prime Minister, President Bush was asked that how he would get Arab nations to apply pressure to stop the fighting in the Middle East if allies like the Prime Minister won't condemn Hezbollah? And what exactly was the position of the Mr. Prime Minister on Hezbollah?  
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President Bush hedged around the essence of the question and closest that he came to it was "that we want a sustainable ceasefire. We don't want something that's, you know, short term in duration." Prime Minister, al-Maliki, completely ignored the question but said, "The important thing here is what we are trying to do is to stop the killing and the destruction. And then we leave the room and the way for the international and diplomatic efforts and international organizations to play the role to be there."

However, in his statement in a press conference inside the fortified Green zone in Baghdad he said, "The Israeli attacks and air-strikes are completely destroying Lebanon's infrastructures. I condemn these aggressions and call on the Arab League foreign ministers' meeting in Cairo to take quick action to stop these aggressions. We call on the world to take quick stands to stop the Israeli aggression,"

Under these circumstances, the vision of a "new Middle East" is fundamentally flawed. How much more wars have to be fought and how much more devastation has to still occur, before Israel becomes a universally recognized state in the Muslim world? Or, perhaps the new outbreak is the prelude to the clash of civilizations conceived and branded by Huntington. According to Newt Gingrich, these hostilities are part of the World War III. May God prove him wrong.

The present political scenario of the Middle East is a very dangerous one and can easily get out of hand (if it hasn't already) by a small misstep or inadvertent slip. It is highly important for all parties to reconcile their differences to end these difficult times.