

Israel: Hypocrisy and double standards

JAMIL M. IQBAL

But this is a people robbed and spoiled, but they are all of them snared in holes, and they are hid in prison houses; they are for a prey, and none delivereth; for a spoil, and none saith. Restore. Who among you will give eat to this? Who will hearken and hear for the time to come?

Isaiah 42:22-23

Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.

Samuel 15:3

BEN-GURION, the architect of the Israeli state, once mentioned in a letter to his family: "A Jewish state is not the end but the beginning ... we shall organise a sophisticated defence force – an elite army. I have no doubt that our army will be one of the best in the world. And then I am sure that we will not be prevented from settling in other parts of the country, either through mutual understanding and agreement with our neighbours, or by other means."

This is a part of the philosophical vision of Zionism. The vision of Zionism held little room for Arab aspirations right from the birth of Zionism at the end of the nineteenth century. The specific "Arab ideologies" developed by the Zionist parties to deal with those Palestinians ranged from almost total oblivion to political program for cooperation and coexistence. This vision was added to the general belief that the opposition and hostility of the Arabs to Zionism was

irreversible, and that coexistence between Jews and Arabs was totally impossible.

During the early years of the state, Ben-Gurion stated that "the Arabs cannot accept the existence of Israel. Those who accept it are not normal. The best solution for the Arabs in Israel is to go and live in the Arab states – in the framework of a peace treaty or transfer."

The Israel-Arab problem goes back to the beginning of Zionist colonization. It is not true that the Zionist came into Palestine as "agents of British imperialism" with the creation of the Mandate after the First World War. What is true is that they came as conscious junior partners of British Imperialism: they would ensure continued British domination of the country, they proposed, if they were in turn given a free hand to take it over from the indigenous Arabs. Chaim Weizmann, who became Zionism's world leader and later first president of Israel as the shrewd architect of this symbiotic relationship, is quite candid about this in his autobiography. No wonder Weizmann blurted out in 1919 that Zionism aimed to make Palestine "as Jewish as England is English."

Keeping these two paragraphs in mind let us see the hypocrisy and double standards played by the Israeli ruling class in escalating the war in Lebanon. In an article in Marxist.com website it clearly revealed that back in March 2004, the Israeli newspaper Maariv pointed out that there were ties between Ariel Sharon and the family of certain Elhanan Tennenbaum. Tennenbaum had been kid-

napped by Hizballah back in 2001 and kept captive for more than three years. Tennenbaum, who was a reserve army colonel, was also a self-confessed drug dealer. To get him freed, Sharon ordered the release of more than 400 Palestinian prisoners, in spite of opposition from members of his own government who held the position that to go ahead with such a deal would encourage more kidnappings.

Sharon denied that he struck the deal because of his links to Tennenbaum's family. Rabin faced a similar situation in 1994 when a 19-year-old Israeli soldier, Nachson Waxman, was kidnapped. Rabin considered negotiating but then rejected the idea and the young soldier was killed with the three Palestinians that were keeping him captive when the house he was being held in was stormed by an Israeli commando group.

The Israeli ruling class plays double standards; when it is one of their own they are prepared to make any concession necessary, when it is just an ordinary soldier they come out with the hard line position that concessions only encourage more attacks.

The case of Tennenbaum's release clearly shows that if the Israeli government had wanted to, they could have avoided sending the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) into the Gaza Strip over the past few weeks. They could have negotiated and then released a number of Palestinian prisoners. No Palestinians would have been killed, no power stations would have been bombed, no houses, roads and

bridges would have been destroyed, and the young Gilad Shalit would be free. Instead they seem to prefer risking that Gilad ends up like his predecessor Nachson Waxman.

It is also revealed by Yoshi Swartz of Marxist.com that on June 25 when Palestinian armed groups launched a guerrilla attack on an army tank posted on the Israel-Gaza border; they killed two soldiers and took Corporal Shalit prisoner. This happened in spite of the fact that the army had been informed by the Shin Beth, the Israeli security services, that such an action was about to take place.

This "willful blindness" more than likely indicates that the generals were looking for an excuse to attack Gaza, and thus sacrificed the tank team. The soldiers were ordered not to return fire but to try to escape. The two soldiers were killed and Shalit was captured during this "escape." One thing however must be said about the generals: they most likely did not plan that Shalit should be captured. From their cold-blooded class point of view it would have been better if all three soldiers had been killed in the attack. This would have given them the excuse to attack the Palestinians without having to deal with the awkward question of whether to negotiate to get the soldier released.

In any case, they then proceeded to escalate the whole situation. Yoshi Swartz reports that the reason for the Israeli government to refuse to negotiate to save the life of Shalit has nothing to do with the protection of Israeli people. It has every thing to do with its plan to topple the Hamas

government and punish the Palestinians for having elected Hamas instead of Israel's choice, the corrupted pro-US group of Abu Mazen, who has shown time and again his readiness to collaborate with the rulers of Israel against his own people.

In the recent intensification of bombing in Lebanon it seems, according to different sources in Israel, that the Israeli military carried out some acts of provocation. Al-Manur, the Hizballah TV station, claims that Israeli jeeps actually entered Lebanese territory just before the kidnappings. Al-Manur has been quite reliable in its news reporting and so there may be some truth in this claim. It would indicate that the Israeli army chiefs were looking for an attack that would give them the justification for counter-attacks.

All these attacks, counter-attacks and military fear by Zionist Israel help strengthen the age-old Zionist thesis that the Palestinians were not a people with national aspirations and rights but simply Arabs who could live anywhere in vast expanses of the Arab world. Ben-Gurion in 1948 wrote that "history has proved who is really attached to this country and for whom it is a luxury which can be given up. Until now not a single [Jewish] settlement, not even the most distant, weak, or isolated, has been abandoned, whereas after the first defeat the Arabs left whole towns like Haifa and Tiberias in spite of the fact that they did not face any danger of destruction or massacre."

It is mostly ignored that the large majority of the Palestinians who fled their homes did not leave the country. Like many Jews caught in the same circumstances, they evacuated battle areas and moved to safer places. It was near impossible for the Palestinians to return to their homes in Palestine as they were taken by the term "infiltration" by the Zionist leadership.

It was the refugee problem that bedeviled relations between Israel and the Arab states. Far from stabilizing Israel, as was so ardently hoped by the Zionist leadership, the expulsion and the creation of a refugee nation were to contribute to continually escalating frictions. For many years the Israeli leadership ignored the fact that the politically deprived, homeless Palestinians living in impossible conditions in refugee camps were evolving a radical nationalist movement. This movement, characterized by desperation and terrorism, has become a detonator for internal Arab conflict and a major cause for the Arab-Israel tension.

In the early 1960s, Golda Meir, then Israel's fourth prime minister, claimed that repatriation of the Palestinian refugees would mean the placing of a time bomb inside Israel. She ignored the danger that the time bomb, if not defused, would explode at Israel's doorstep, which it did in 1967. By a strange twist of fate, it was again Golda Meir who, after 1967, justified Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza – including the time bomb of a half-million Palestinian refugees – with

the argument of "security." Now a state has been set up and is a reality. Thanks to the Zionist capitalists with the blessing of the imperialist, Britain and USA. A people have declared that they want to live under their own national destiny. They have taken a blank check made out to the right of self determination and have signed their name on it: Israel. Invading their defenses and threatening their independence came the reactionary onslaught of some of the most backward and reactionary kingships and dynasties of the world, the semi-feudal oppressors of the Arab people.

We, as socialists, advocate a different course, a socialist plan to achieve a viable life for the peoples of Palestine, Jewish and Arab, and which could meet with the opposition of the rulers of both peoples, the Zionist capitalist and the Arab dictators. We advocate that the workers, land workers and peasants of both communities, joining their strength from below in common struggle, launch a united struggle for independence from their common master, the US and British imperialism; and that they fight for the creation of a free, democratic Palestine based on universal suffrage and a fully democratic constituent assembly.

It is unfortunate that in the present crisis, Nasrallah, the Hizballah leader's only aim is to break the backbone of the Israeli people. He has no concept of class divisions in society. If instead of the reactionary that he is he were to have a Marxist

approach, i.e. to appeal to the ordinary working people, to target the military but not the civilians and so on, he could actually have an impact. Were there a different leadership – on both sides – the situation would be a very different one.

First the Zionist leadership and then the Arab reactionary kingship opposed the partition of Palestine, because they too had an alternative. Their alternative was the complete conquest of Palestine and the subordination of the other people, by force of arms if necessary. This was their reactionary, chauvinistic alternative to partition – one that is in opposite pole from our socialist plan.

The national antagonism between Jew and Arab does not stem from the interests of the exploited, but from the interests of the top rulers. In such a joint struggle for national liberation, the already strong tendencies toward Arab-Jewish cooperation from below could flower, the Arab workers could be torn away from the ties with Arab money masters, the Jewish workers could cut loose from the chauvinistic aims of the Zionist leadership, and a united democratic Palestine achieved, in which both peoples could live with full national rights assured.

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Politics, politicians and graft

JAHANGIR BIN ALAM

THERE is no denying that a tranquil political atmosphere is the sine qua non for any country to prosper and achieve its development objectives. This needs participation of honest, sincere, principled and dedicated politicians in the political arena.

The political atmosphere of Bangladesh has been vitiated so much that these days honest and dedicated politicians have become a rare species. Politics these days is considered as a business proposition by majority of its practitioners. The situation was not so bad until mid 1975. The first parliament of the country had only two recognized businessmen namely MR Siddiqui of Chittagong and Matur Rahman of Rangpur as its members. But they were well educated and seasoned politicians.

In the olden days, politicians as well as members of the parliament used to come mostly from professions like legal practice, teaching, medical practice, journalism, trade unionism, and sometimes from the landed gentry who used to practice principled politics and were rarely seen to compromise with the principles they stood for. However, there were some exceptions.

Most of the yester year politicians used to keep welfare of the country and its people in mind while involving themselves in politics. Whereas, the majority of the present day politicians have no principle. They keep on changing party allegiance for self-aggrandizement and fulfillment of their personal ends and gain power through whatever means possible. The tragedy is that they are not ashamed of their deeds.

The rot originally started before independence of Bangladesh back in 1958 after the army chief of

Pakistan, General Ayub Khan usurped state powers through a military coup. In independent Bangladesh it started soon after the brutal and undemocratic political change over in August 1975 followed by imposition of martial law.

In order to consolidate power and to give his government a civilian facade, the then military ruler first made a mockery with the people in order to legitimise his power though holding a referendum in which he was the lone candidate. Thereafter, he floated his own political party by allying some disgruntled politicians devoid of any political clout and some opportunist members of the then civil society. Ironically it included a few from the political party that was in power before the changeover.

In doing so, money collected through questionable means was used for distribution of favours and all the state machinery including various intelligence agencies of the state were used. Money from the national exchequer was also used for the purpose. In the process, the floodgates of corruption were opened which kept on flowing during entire period of the first military and quasi-military rule till 1981. Money from nationalised commercial banks was virtually doled out to favoured ones in the form of bank loans that subsequently gave rise to a new phenomenon popularly known as "loan default culture."

It cannot be said that the first democratically elected government of the country was free from corruption. Corruption was there, but it was in a much lesser degree compared to what one can see now. It could not engulf the entire society as it has today because of the existence of a functional parliament and vocal opposition outside the parliament at that time. Most of the ministers, parliamentarians, political activists

and government officials of that time barring a limited few were not dishonest. Majority of the dishonest and corrupt politicians and officials kept on changing their colours after every change over, democratic or otherwise. It is not difficult for a dispassionate analyst to verify the above observations.

However, the biggest mistake of the first democratically elected government was, introduction of one party system of government in the country through a constitutional amendment which facilitated the conspirators to take over state power in August 1975 through brutal killing of the country's founding leaders. It may, however, be noted here that the new system could not see the light of the day as the changeover took place before it was introduced.

Cronies of the then military ruler including the so-called ministers and pseudo parliamentarians elected during the period through questionable elections were allowed to amass enormous wealth and gain muscle power by resorting to corrupt practices backed by the powers that were. Taking advantage of the situation, unscrupulous government officials, businessmen and trade union leaders joined the bandwagon. Honest politicians and government officials were silent spectators.

After the brutal assassination of the first military and quasi-military ruler in May 1981, a civilian, who was the vice-president at that time, was elected as the president of the country through a managed election under the tutelage of the then army chief who a few months later, usurped state power by staging a military coup.

Opposition political parties of the time were too meek to challenge the new ruler and one section even extended tacit support. Following

the footsteps of his predecessor, the second military ruler also created his own political party in the same manner. Dishonesty, cronyism and corruption were the hallmarks of that regime. Corruption was allowed to spread its tentacles in almost all the areas of administration.

Although parliamentary system of democracy was reintroduced in 1991 as a result of a popular upsurge spearheaded by the united movement of all the major opposition parties and student organisations, corruption, graft, nepotism and favouritism, instead of evaporating, rooted firmly, thereby eating into the vitals of the country's social fabric. In the process, the bureaucracy lost its neutral stance and a section of its members in league with the powerful section of the ruling political parties started running after grafts in order to fulfill their selfish ends to the detriment of the national interest.

The scenario started changing a bit after a newly elected government came to power in 1996. But after about three years of its incumbency, things started running anticlockwise. No wonder why Bangladesh continued to rank first among the most corrupt countries of the world for the last five consecutive years according to Transparency International's corruption perception index.

Under the said circumstances, one can only hope that good sense will soon prevail upon the movers and shakers of our national destiny in order to rid the country from the current impasse and ensure a peaceful transition power through timely holding of a universally acceptable election due in early 2007. Let us hope for the best.

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Pakistan under the microscope

JOSEPH MICHAEL PEREIRA

THERE was much satisfaction often bordering on euphoria at the Pakistan PM's office and in certain other corridors of Islamabad after the IMF certified that Pakistan's GDP per capita at current prices was \$854 as compared with \$770 for India. Thus measured, Pakistan is about 11% ahead of India. However, no effort was made to explain that Pakistan's superior position was only seemingly and largely due to its much higher rate of inflation, and, possibly, an over-valued Pakistan rupee.

A better appreciation of the situation will come from the fact that at constant prices Pakistan's per capita GDP at \$555 is behind India's \$584 by 5%. The gap widens further in purchasing power parity terms. Pakistan's purchasing power parity GDP per capita is around \$2,803 as compared with \$3,569 for India. This indicator places India as much as 27% ahead.

Why is this so? The answer, as suggested earlier, is inflation and to a lesser extent an over-valued rupee. Pakistan's inflation rate was 7.4% in 2004, 9.1% in 2005 and 8.4% in 2006. India's, by contrast, was 3.8% in 2004, 4.2% in 2005 and 4.8% in 2006. Consequently, the GDP deflator index was also higher at 154 for Pakistan as against 130 for India. Another telling indicator is the purchasing power of the US dollar in each country. Here too, Pakistan is at a discount. The implied purchasing parity conversion rate is PKR 18.03 for Pakistan as compared to INR 9.53

for India. The "greenback" purchases 30% more in goods and services in India than it does in Pakistan, and the gap is widening.

Clearly, once its economy picked up much larger quantum of money started flowing into it from within and abroad. Inflation followed as growth and inflation usually go hand in hand. Pakistan is, thus, faced with the dilemma of controlling inflation without inhibiting growth. India and Bangladesh have handled this issue in a far better manner and Pakistan may well take a lesson or two from them in this area. Be that as it may, its government says its budgetary and socio-economic policies are geared toward fighting inflation. How successful these are only time can tell.

Having got this issue out of the way, let us concede that despite the October 2005 earthquake, and the significant increase in prices of crude oil, Pakistan has moved ahead. If the size of its budget is a measure of growth and potential, it is doing well. Unfortunately, the fruits of progress are not equitably distributed. The government says that percentage of population living below the poverty line has fallen substantially. Perhaps, this may be so. However, the extent of poverty and the disparity in incomes may have grown especially in certain pockets of Pakistan's economic powerhouse, Karachi. The rich clearly look richer here while the poor seem to be where they were, if not worse off. Rising income disparities may well become Pakistan's next major concern after inflation.

Another area of growing concern is the inability of Pakistan's

exports to pick up. Its exports for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2006 amounted to \$16.5 billion. This represents an increase of \$2.1 billion or 14.4% over last year's level of \$14.4 billion. The absolute increase is slightly more than that achieved last year of \$2 billion. Thus viewed, the performance is somewhat disappointing.

Apparently the cost of doing business, as of production, has increased significantly in the recent past in Pakistan and this has impacted severely on the export competitiveness of commodities and textiles. Also the poor performance of agriculture and large scale manufacturing has reduced the exportable surplus. This is proving to be a major obstacle in the effort to rapidly increase exports. The government is cognizant of this fact and has fixed less encouraging export targets for the current fiscal year. The export target is to be \$18.6 billion. This will represent an increase of 13% on the export level attained in the preceding fiscal year and is a reflection of the ground realities.

With a growth rate averaging more than 7% over the last three years and a current GDP per capita of \$854, the economy of Pakistan is at the stage of take-off. However, at the micro-level, there remain many black spots and weak areas such as the poor state of infrastructure, education and health and the continuing emphasis on guns over butter. Belatedly and reluctantly, efforts are now in place to redress the imbalance.

The government is making special efforts to develop infrastructure and higher education so

that the country can meet the challenges of the modern age. Health is not, it seems, as yet an immediate priority, as is not primary and secondary education. While the change in respect of infrastructure and higher education is to be welcomed, it has quite a long way to go before Pakistan catches up with India and even Bangladesh in many areas, as the gini, human development, and quality of health systems indexes will confirm.

Last available data indicates that the gini index was 41 for Pakistan, 33 for India and 32 for Bangladesh. A higher gini index, it must be remembered, denotes greater inequality in family income. In human development also, Pakistan lags behind with an HDI of 0.497 as against 0.509 for Bangladesh and 0.596 for India. The most damning indicators are the ones that measures quality of health systems and education. With regard to health systems, Pakistan ranks at 122 compared with 112 for India and 88 for Bangladesh. About the spread and quality of education, any comment is better left unsaid.

It is in Pakistan's fate and, perhaps, even in its genes, to compare itself with India at most times. Pakistanis feel a sense of elation when ahead and become truly despondent when behind. Given the size of the Indian nation, the largeness of its population and its economy and the growth path it has taken in the recent years, despondency will only increase, if it continues in this vein, and, more importantly, growth rate and development will suffer further.

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Appointment in Damascus

ROBERT BAER

IN March I ran into an old friend in Damascus, a Syrian businessman close to President Bashar al-Assad. I asked him what he thought would happen in Lebanon. "It's not Syria's problem anymore," he told me. "You threw us out. We gave Lebanon to Iran."

I never thought forcing Syria out of Lebanon had been a good idea. The Lebanese government left in charge was weaker than the one that had been powerless to stop the civil war in 1975. Brutal as its rule had been, it was Syria that put an end to that war with the 1989 Taif accord. Syria kept Hezbollah in check, limiting its parliamentary representation in the 1992, 1996 and 2000 elections. With the Syrian Army gone, I feared, Lebanon would again become a divided and dangerous country.

To be sure, Damascus is hardly a benign influence. It arms Hezbollah and harbors violent Palestinian groups. Still, when Syria controlled Lebanon, Damascus was the closest thing America had to a return address for Hezbollah's terrorists. This was never clearer than during the 1985 hijacking of TWA Flight 847. When passengers were about to be executed on the tarmac of Beirut International Airport, President Ronald Reagan

appealed to Syrian President Hafez al-Assad, who ordered his commanders in Lebanon to gas up their tanks and prepare to crush the militia. Hezbollah released the hostages.

There were other occasions. In 1987, after Hezbollah kidnapped ABC correspondent Charles Glass within sight of a Syrian checkpoint, the Syrian Army pulled Hezbollah members out of their cars and beat them. Glass was soon free. When the group kidnapped two UN employees in 1988, along with others, Assad threatened to arrest Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah, a cleric close to Hezbollah, and hang him. Hezbollah quickly let the captives go. In July 1982, a Lebanese Christian militia kidnapped the Iranian charge d'affaires, two other Iranian diplomats and a Lebanese journalist. In hopes of an exchange, Iran's Republican Guards arranged to kidnap David Dodge, the acting president of the American University of Beirut, and smuggle him across the border to Syria and thence to Tehran. Washington protested to Assad, who was furious. Unless Iranian authorities freed Dodge, he told Tehran, Syria would expel the Republican Guards from Lebanon. Needless to say, Dodge soon arrived unharmed in Damascus.

As I say, like Saddam Hussein in Iraq, it was the Syrians who kept the lid on Lebanon. So the idea of Damascus' handing its Lebanon portfolio to Tehran sounded like trouble. What happens next, I asked my Syrian contact. He shrugged, then dropped a bombshell. During Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's visit to Damascus in January, he claimed, the Iranian president had met a shadowy figure in the terrorist world named Imad Mughniyah, the man widely suspected of kidnapping Dodge and killing US Navy diver Robert Stethem during the TWA hijacking, among other bloody episodes.

I'd heard this story before. The Mossad was big on it, but I've never quite believed it. The point is that my source did. Essentially, he was telling me he feared that Lebanon was spinning out of control -- with dangerous consequences for everyone, including his own country. Freed from Syria's restraint, Hezbollah might soon be hijacking planes and kidnapping people again. If backed by Iranian radicals, it could go even further.

At the time I didn't imagine the full-scale war that has since erupted. But in retrospect, it's hardly surprising. Western diplomats may now seek a cease-fire and send in international peace-

keepers. Israel may create an ethnically clean "buffer zone" along its northern border. But does anyone really believe the violence will stop? Will Iran prove a better safety valve than Syria? Not likely.

When the last Syrian tank rattled across the border last year, Syria fell back on a policy of trying to seal itself off from the chaos it could see building around it in Iraq and Lebanon. Bashar al-Assad especially fears the sort of crisis his father confronted in February 1982, when an insurrection backed by the Muslim Brotherhood broke out in Hama. Assad senior contained it by flattening the town with heavy artillery. Combing through the rubble, the Syrians were astonished to find that the rebels' weapons had come from Lebanon. With no strong central government, it had become a failed state, an open arms bazaar and a haven for terrorists the world over. Today Syria sees history repeating itself, only worse.

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'We are at war'

Israel's Vice Prime Minister Shimon Peres, the last of his country's founding fathers, has served in every position from prime minister to minister of Defense. Recently, while in the United States to lobby for support for Israel's war against Hezbollah, he spoke with Newsweek's Lally Weymouth.

Weymouth: Is it true that you were the only person in the Israeli cabinet to raise objections to this operation?

Peres: After two weeks, I forgot everything. We are at war and have to be united. I'm not going to make an account of who was right and who was wrong.

Is the operation going according to the original plan or has it expanded?

We are using more ground forces and have reduced the bombing.

Have you been surprised by the strength and tenacity of Hezbollah?

Not their strength but the strangeness of this operation. Nobody understands why they started to attack, what the purpose of the attack was and why they are using so many rockets and missiles. We knew they had them but were surprised they used them.

How long will it take to get a cease-fire?

If the cease-fire is just a declaration, it will remain a piece of paper. Somebody must make sure that Hezbollah does not return to the south of Lebanon.

Did the Iranians order this?

They are behind it. (Javier Solana (secretary-general of the European

Union) visited Tehran on July 11 and got a totally negative response (on restraining their nuclear program), and Hezbollah struck [Israel] on July 12.

What does Israel have to show after three weeks of this operation?

What Israel has to show is a great performance of the people. We never experienced having 100 to 150 missiles and rockets every night falling at random. And over a million people living in the shelters, keeping (up) their morale. It's quite a demonstration of unity and determination. I think in spite of everything, we are weakening Hezbollah. It's not a confrontation with an army, so we can't have a victory in a military sense. I see it as three confrontations: one is an attempt to destroy Israel ... The second is about Lebanon ... They want to de-Lebanize Lebanon -- to transform it from a multicultural country into a Shiite country under the spell of the Iranians. And the third -- the real confrontation -- is between the Arabs and the Iranians for the hegemony of the Middle East. It's not a surprise that countries like Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan stood up openly against Hezbollah.

But that was in the beginning. They may have changed their rheto-

The roads and airports you bombed can be repaired.

Yes, but they can be bombed again.

Many believe that force will not work in the long run.

In the long run, we want to see Lebanon governed by Lebanese. We want the Lebanese Army to stop being an army that doesn't participate in the defense of its country. They are 80,000 soldiers, and they will be thickened by an international force.

Reportedly, the Syrian Army is now on the highest state of alert.

But they are not the best army in the Middle East. Since the Russians stopped supplying them with modern arms, they have an obsolete arsenal of weapons. The Syrians cannot fight alone. They need an ally. They cannot fight without Egypt, but Egypt doesn't want to fight.

Do you feel that the military gains you have made have been offset by the damage to Israel's image?

Hasn't this war strengthened Hezbollah's image in the Arab world?

We could do without it, yes. It's building and destroying (Hezbollah) at Israel. We shall not permit Hezbollah to come back to (the) southern border between Israel and Lebanon.

The second is to stop the firing of missiles and rockets. The third is to release our two soldiers that were taken hostage. And the fourth is to get control over their arsenal of rockets and missiles.

How can you stop the rockets and missiles coming in from Syria and Iran?

We bombed the road from Syria to Lebanon and the runways (at Beirut international airport) so Iranian planes will not bring in resupplies.

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