

# In Case You Missed...

Some of our special stories in July focused on the heightened tensions between Israel and Iran, the press corps going soft on Mitt Romney's deceptions, the Left's failed electoral tactics, and tragic cases of American gun violence.

["Mourning Shamir: The Moral Dilemma"](#) by Marc H. Ellis, discussing how Israel's supporters should view the passing of a terrorist. (July 2, 2012)

["Shamir's October Surprise Admission"](#) by Robert Parry, recalling a blunt confirmation by the late Israeli prime minister. (July 3, 2012)

["How Scalia Distorts the Framers"](#) by Robert Parry, challenging how a right-wing justice depicts the Commerce Clause. (July 4, 2012)

["Did Reagan Know about Baby Thefts?"](#) by Robert Parry, questioning how much President Reagan knew about his Argentine "death squad" allies. (July 6, 2012)

["The Enigma of Yasser Arafat"](#) by Kathleen and Bill Christison, remembering the Palestinian leader whose death was back in the news. (July 7, 2012)

["The Silence on Global Warming"](#) by Robert Parry, noting how politicians and pundits avoid linking the extreme weather to global warming. (July 9, 2012)

["The Mystery of Arafat's Death"](#) by Ray McGovern, examining the questions raised about how the Palestinian leader died. (July 10, 2012)

["The Battle over the Constitution"](#) by Beverly Bandler, warning about the Right's distortion of the founding document. (July 10, 2012)

["The 'America-Held-Hostage' Narrative"](#) by Robert Parry, wondering why the press downplays the Republican sabotage of the economy. (July 10, 2012)

["Mitt Romney: The New Teflon Man"](#) by Robert Parry, observing how the "independent fact-checkers" bend over to give the Republican a breather. (July 12, 2012)

["Bohemian Grove and Reagan's 'Treason'"](#) by Robert Parry, recalling a strange Republican alibi involving the rich man's retreat. (July 13, 2012)

["The Romney 'Fact-Checking' Scandal"](#) by Robert Parry, criticizing "fact-checkers" who aid Mitt Romney's cover-up of his role at Bain Capital. (July 14, 2012)

["Romney's 'Fact-Checker' Cover-up"](#) by Robert Parry, reporting on Washington Post's Kessler's response to criticism. (July 16, 2012)

"The Plot that Killed Gandhi" by Jim DiEugenio, looking back at how the world lost a non-violent leader. (July 17, 2012)

"Harassing the Whistleblowers" by Ray McGovern, explaining the importance of honest scientists at the Food and Drug Administration. (July 17, 2012)

"Reviving the Rendition Debate" by Nat Parry, noting how an international conference put the focus back on U.S. rendition. (July 18, 2012)

"Romney's New Lie" by Robert Parry, exposing how the GOP presidential hopeful bought into a right-wing distortion. (July 18, 2012)

"Advantage to Mr. Romney" by Robert Parry, observing how the Republican candidate survived early attention on his business questions. (July 20, 2012)

"Batman in an Age of Polarization" by Lisa Pease, drawing social messages from the controversial action movie. (July 21, 2012)

"America: A Nation of Wildebeast" by Robert Parry, commenting on how gun violence continues to cull the national herd. (July 22, 2012)

"Will Downing St. Memo Recur on Iran" by Annie Machon and Ray McGovern, worrying whether Iraq history will repeat on Iran. (July 23, 2012)

"Finally, Fact-Checking Romney's Lie" by Robert Parry, observing the belated response by "fact-checkers" to Romney's "you didn't build that" distortion. (July 23, 2012)

"The Vanity of Perfectionism" by Robert Parry, recalling how the Left's past electoral strategies have made matters worse. (July 27, 2012)

"Caro's Flawed Tale of LBJ's Rise" by Jim DiEugenio, critiquing a much-touted account of President Johnson's ascension to the White House. (July 28, 2012)

"Romney Ups the Ante on Israel" by Robert Parry, describing the Republican's bid to peel away Jewish voters with tough talk on Iran. (July 30, 2012)

"A Persian Gulf Hotline Proposed" by Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity," suggesting a way to avert an unnecessary conflict. (July 31, 2012)

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## Israel's Culture of Hate

The failure to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has inevitably stoked animosities on both sides. But recent acts of violence and ugly comments inside Israel reveal that a culture of hatred and bigotry is taking root, warns ex-CIA analyst Paul R. Pillar.

By Paul R. Pillar

Two incidents last week underscored how broadly and deeply in Israeli society runs a streak of hatred against Palestinian Arabs.

In one, seven Israeli teenagers, including two girls, one 13 years old, were arrested for what witnesses described as an attempted lynching in West Jerusalem of several Palestinian youths, one of whom was beaten unconscious and was still hospitalized this week. In the same hospital was one of the victims of the other incident: the Palestinian driver of a taxi that was firebombed near a West Bank settlement.

As with violent crimes elsewhere that involve hatred against particular ethnic, racial or religious groups, and for those eager to highlight commonalities between Israeli and American society, this unfortunately has to count as one of them, given the history of hate crimes in the United States, the specific manifestations of such hatred are varied. They range from full-blown terrorism to less violent actions.

The unofficial resort by Israelis to force and violence against Palestinians has in recent years been most associated with West Bank settlers. (For an excellent analysis of this particular brand of Israeli terrorism, see the recent article on the subject by Daniel Byman and Natan Sachs.) As the assault in West Jerusalem demonstrated, however, the problem is not limited to settlers or to the occupied territories.

Also as with hate crimes elsewhere, there are multiple causes and explanations. Large-scale violence earlier this year against African migrants in Tel Aviv demonstrated that Palestinians or Arabs are not the only targets of Israeli hatred. That in turn suggests that one of the roots of what we are seeing is a generalized bigotry not unlike what we unfortunately have seen in the United States.

But the very relevant and distinctively Israeli circumstance that has the most power to give rise to widely held hateful attitudes is the unresolved conflict with the Palestinians. As a conflict that dates back to before the founding of Israel and that has accounted for so much of the violence that has been inflicted both on and by Israelis, it could not help but have that power.

It is not just a few radical settlers or violent teenagers who have gotten into a habit of regarding all Palestinians as dangerous aliens, as the enemy or as terrorists. The rightist Israeli governments of recent years, by making it quite apparent that they see no place for free Palestinians in a peaceful picture with Israel, have reinforced a nationwide tendency to view Palestinians as something less than human beings with inalienable human rights.

And that tendency leads to a legitimization of violence against them. In speaking critically about the effects of such legitimization, Professor Gavriel Salomon of Haifa University notes, "Suddenly it's not so terrible to burn Arabs inside a taxi."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has publicly condemned the latest violence, as he has earlier instances of it. But serious questions remain about the official posture toward the unofficial violence. Israeli policing of anti-Palestinian violence has been at best spotty.

Former chief of staff of the Israeli Army Dan Halutz has stated that Israeli authorities have not done enough to crack down on the anti-Palestinian terrorists and vandals among West Bank settlers. "If we wanted," said Halutz, "we could catch them and when we want to, we will."

There also is incitement through inflammatory remarks by religious leaders associated with the Israeli government or governing parties. For example, the government-paid chief rabbi of settlements in Hebron and Kiryat Arba, in speaking at a conference last year, described Arabs as "wolves" and "savages."

The chief rabbi of Safed, also paid by the Israeli government, told reporters last year that "Arab culture is very cruel," that "a Jew should chase away Arabs," and that "expelling Arabs from Jewish neighborhoods is part of the strategy."

Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, the spiritual leader of the Shas Party, which is part of Netanyahu's governing coalition, has said in sermons that Palestinians are "evil, bitter, enemies" whom God ought to "perish from this world," that "it is forbidden to be merciful" to Arabs, that Arabs are "evil and damnable," and that "you must send missiles to them and annihilate them."

One wonders what Israeli government officials think of such remarks when they or

others attempt to call to account Arab leaders for anti-Israeli invective voiced by anyone in their constituencies.

Amid an atmosphere fed by such comments, one does not need to look, as some Israelis are in searching for explanations for the latest incidents involving perpetrators so young, at such things as deficient parenting.

Nimrod Aloni of the Institute for Educational Thought in Tel Aviv notes that a teenager acting as a member of a lynch mob “cannot just be an expression of something he has heard at home.” Aloni continues, “This is directly tied to national fundamentalism that is the same as the rhetoric of neo-Nazis, Taliban and K.K.K. This comes from an entire culture that has been escalating toward an open and blunt language based on us being the chosen people who are allowed to do whatever we like.”

Although the non-resolution of the conflict between Israelis and Arabs is the biggest single contributor to hatred on both sides of that conflict, Israel also has a built-in vulnerability to exhibiting ethnic and religious intolerance, as a state that is defined in ethnic and religious terms.

The line between zealous patriotism and ethnic or religious bias is in greater danger of becoming blurred. And so Rabbi Yosef of Shas can say, “The sole purpose of non-Jews is to serve Jews. . . . Goyim [non-Jews] were born only to serve us. Without that, they have no place in the world, only to serve the people of Israel.”

Nearly all of the rest of the world, including the assembled leaders of Arab states, has accepted Israel, and its status as the primary homeland of Jews, as legitimate. Hatred emanating from Israel will, of course, not be accepted as any more legitimate than hatred emanating from anyplace else.

As with other conflicts, the bigots, haters and terrorists on both sides will, tragically, play off of each other.

**Paul R. Pillar, in his 28 years at the Central Intelligence Agency, rose to be one of the agency’s top analysts. He is now a visiting professor at Georgetown University for security studies. (This article first appeared as a blog post at The National Interest’s Web site. Reprinted with author’s permission.)**

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## Murderous Art

The rash of mass shootings in America speaks not just to the absence of rational

gun laws, but also to a culture that glorifies violence, in the reality of endless warfare and in the fantasy of entertainment. While some response must come through politics, other action can come from individuals, says Michael N. Nagler.

By Michael N. Nagler

Until recently I didn't even know there was such a thing as white supremacist music. Wade Michael Page knew; the "domestic terrorist" who killed six people at the Oak Creek Sikh temple in Wisconsin had played in a neo-Nazi band called "Definite Hate" and started one called "End Apathy" in 2005.

So Page, when you think of it, has something in common with his immediate predecessor in mass murder, James Holmes, who perpetrated the Aurora, Colorado, shooting two weeks earlier. Despite their differences, in his case also a form of contemporary "art," namely the Batman film, played some role in the buildup to his murderous violence.

Shortly after the Wisconsin tragedy I happened to pass the local movie house whose posters line the sidewalk. One, cleverly combining sex and violence, was an extremely offensive, larger-than-life, depiction of a naked woman being groped from behind by a robotic zombie.

As any advertiser will tell you, you can sell anything if you connect it, sub-rationally, with one of our deep desires. In this case (as in most) the desire is designed to unite people and create life; but what it's "selling," ironically, is a culture of violence and death.

Mind you, we're not talking about a red-light district in Vegas; this is the main street of a smallish American town. Schoolchildren walk by these posters every day, mostly without adult supervision. What must they be thinking?

What are we thinking? The day after the Aurora shooting four victims of the previous day's terror came to pay respects to the dead and wounded: *all four wearing Batman tee shirts!* I guess people will cling to their culture without ever asking where it's taking them.

If I were a typical follower of today's media, what would I understand about the Aurora shooting? That he drove a white Hyundai, that he purchased exactly 6,000 rounds of ammunition (all totally legal), and dyed his hair bright red. What I would *not* understand, what I would find it hard to think about in that welter of details, is, *why is our country having an epidemic of mass murders? Sixty of them since 1982.*

That is the real question, after all; and even to ask it is to spot a very good candidate for the answer: we have a popular culture that's filling our minds with violent images, and news media that distract us from understanding it. A culture that smears over the distinction between fantasy and reality (when Holmes, playing the Joker from the Batman series, started his attack many thought it was part of the movie), and journalism more interested in lurid details or bland statistics than their meaning.

If the philosopher Epictetus is correct in his observation "The only thing that you can control, and you must therefore control, is the imagery in your own mind" we have defaulted on our most important responsibility as human beings, the care of our own minds.

There is a bright side. We can get it back. There is nothing to prevent you and me from stemming the flow of violence into our minds, as far as possible, and thinking for ourselves. If journalists, or lawyers, need to ask, what was it about this particular person that led him to do this particular thing, looking for reasons in those who have left all reason behind, we needn't join that exercise in futility. Instead, we can look at our own vulnerabilities, and power.

I would not underestimate the potential impact of each of us, you and me, taking back responsibility in this way. We are not talking about bodies or votes here, where numbers really are important, but ideas and images, which have a power of their own.

Clearly, if we want to be free of these murderous rampages we will have to face one very awkward fact: that the people who do these killings are part of us. They have crossed the line between fantasy and physical reality, but that line is getting blurrier all the time for all of us (look at "Stars Earn Stripes," NBC's new war game reality show where celebrities play soldier).

The mental world of fear and darkness they live in is only an extreme form of the world we've created all around us, and therefore within us.

Mind, I am not against art. I taught comparative literature at Berkeley for 40 years. But stirring up our crudest animal drives is not art. Driving ourselves into prisons of mental isolation is the opposite of art, a perversion of its purpose.

When an FBI spokesperson was asked why the agency did not keep closer tabs on an obvious lunatic like Wade Michael Page, he replied, there are "thousands of them" in the white supremacy movement (not to mention others). Will we ever be secure trying to guess who is about to go over the edge? No, but we will be if

we can create a new, sane culture. And while legislation may come in handy at various stages of that process, this is something we can only begin one mind at a time.

**Michael Nagler is professor emeritus of Classics and Comparative Literature at UC, Berkeley and the author of *The Search for a Nonviolent Future*.**

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