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A Strategy for Peace with the Palestinians

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A Strategy for Peace with the Palestinians

Max Singer

INTRODUCTION

This paper is an analysis of how Israel and other countries can pursue peace between Israel and the Palestinians. It starts with the assertion that peace must remain Israel's permanent goal. Peace on Israel's terms means an end to the Arab world's long-term effort to eliminate Israel, establishment of long-term arrangements for the Palestinians, and Palestinian acceptance or recognition of Israel as a Jewish state. Not only is continuing war dangerous and costly in lives, it has a profound economic and moral cost as well. Israel must also be committed to pursuing peace, to be true to its inherent character and to the desires of a large majority of Israelis. The goal cannot be "peace now" because it is not necessarily in Israel's power to achieve it now, as peace depends on the Palestinians as well. There are many factors from within the Palestinian community that prevent peace from being a realistic option in the near future, as this paper discusses in length. That being said, Israel must decide what the reasons are that peace is temporarily impossible and do whatever it can to remove the barriers to peace.

The international diplomatic community seems to have an immense desire to see negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, though no realistic and coherent argument has been made for the value of such negotiations under current conditions. That such negotiations cannot currently bring peace does not imply that there must not be any negotiations; it implies that peace should not be an expected outcome. It should be understood that a failure to start negotiations is not a failure to achieve peace; it might even help the cause of peace.

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The current diplomatic consensus is that Israel is preventing peace because it refuses to make the concessions that the Palestinians demand before they are willing to negotiate. This is the thinking behind the consensus view that, even though Israel is proposing to negotiate and the Palestinians are refusing to negotiate, it is Israel that stands in the way of peace. This view works against peace because it fails to recognize the reality of the Palestinian community's position and encourages it to continue its policies of engaging in acts of non-military, though not non-violent, war on Israel, and rejection of peace.

Those who blame Israel for the lack of peace – including a small but prominent minority of Israelis – deny that the Palestinians' essential requirement for peace is Israel's elimination. Disagreement whether that is the fact explains why so many people who Israelis think are "anti-Israel" are actually "pro-Israel" in their motivation – even if their actions harm Israel. These people, including some Israelis and many Jews in other countries, genuinely want to achieve peace because peace is what Israel needs. They challenge Israel's policies because in their advocacy for peace they don't deal with the fact that now the Palestinians' essential goal is the elimination of Israel and that peace will not be possible until they change that goal.¹ Nor do they deal with the fact that peace is not the goal of Iran or of the Muslim Brotherhood, for both of whom peace between Israel and Palestinians would be a major defeat. Especially in the US, Israel's main potential danger comes from people who try to help Israel achieve peace, but their misunderstanding of Middle Eastern realities leads away from, rather than towards, peace.

The key question is the meaning of "peace," Israel's fundamental goal. This goal comes from Israel's unique history. From its birth, Israel, unlike almost any other country, has had neighbors whose stated policy is to eliminate it and have made numerous violent and diplomatic efforts to do so. For Israel, "peace" means that the Palestinians give up what has been their goal from the beginning, the elimination of Israel from the region.² If that goal is not given up, Israel's existence is still in question and any agreement would only temporarily change the conditions of its struggle to survive.

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The Palestinians may be willing to make a form of peace agreement with Israel if it does not rule out continued Palestinian struggle to change Israel from being a Jewish and democratic country. But such an agreement would not be the peace that Israel and the world seeks or needs. It would be a false peace in which the Palestinian effort to destroy Israel would continue, but with some agreed-upon limits on the measures the Palestinians could use against Israel. No such limits are reliable, however, particularly against such a deep-seated and widely supported goal as the elimination of the Jewish state from the middle of the Arab/Muslim world.

There are two things that the Palestinians can do to show that they have given up the goal of destroying Israel. One is to say – in a peace treaty – that they are ready to live in peace with Israel and drop all its claims against it. The other is to give up the weapon they have preserved to destroy Israel: the unsettled “refugees.”³ A Palestinian regime cannot sign a peace agreement giving up demands to bring “refugees” to Israel while intending to continue the struggle, as it would face tremendous internal and external opposition to making such a promise. Such an agreement could occur only after the Palestinian regime is able to win a political battle against opposition to the plan to scuttle the “refugee” issue. This internal victory would signify the end of the Palestinian effort to destroy Israel, as it would demonstrate the Palestinians’ willingness to move forward and relinquish its historic commitment to eliminating the Jewish state from what it understands to be “Muslim land.”

Mahmoud Abbas, the president of the Palestinian Authority, says that it is not his responsibility or business to say that Israel is or can be a Jewish state. But Israel is not looking for his blessing of its Jewish character; it is merely looking for a definitive statement that the Palestinians are permanently dropping their argument that Israel cannot be a Jewish state. If Israel were not a Jewish state, it could not do anything for Jews or the Jewish religion that it would not do for other citizens of the state. In addition, Israel is seeking assurances that the Palestinians accept a Jewish state as a legitimate neighbor with which they can have normal relations and no more than an intellectual objection. This would undermine other countries arguing against Israel’s right to have a Jewish character.

This study will not consider any agreements that fail to end the conflict, because there are too many such possibilities to analyze in a short space. But general considerations suggest that prospects for reaching such an agreement are poor. On the Palestinian side there is widespread distaste for agreements with Israel and great suspicion that what is called a temporary agreement would become permanent. While it is possible to conceive of agreements that would improve conditions for both sides during the next phase of the conflict, the Palestinians are generally willing to suffer in order to prevent smaller reductions in Israeli suffering. This tactic of Palestinian suffering is in fact one of its main weapons against Israel. Therefore, mutual benefit is not likely to be attractive to the Palestinian community. The effect of an agreement on each side's ability to succeed in the next phase of the conflict is essentially zero-sum. In addition, each side is likely to overrate the other's advantages gained from a proposed agreement and underrate its own advantages. It is thus unlikely that there will be an agreement reached that changes relative advantage in the conflict unless Israel is pressured by international forces, i.e. America, to weaken its position.

The big problem for interim agreements, which are short of full peace treaties, is that Israel is left with big security problems. As long as the conflict continues, the concessions Israel would make are smaller than they would be for real peace. This exposes the folly of recent efforts to try to reach agreement about security and borders before discussing "refugees" and the end of the conflict. If the "refugees" are resettled outside Israel and there is agreement to end the conflict, Israel has smaller security needs and can afford to be more forthcoming about borders.

The common view is that the "refugee" issue is the most difficult to settle and therefore should be left to the end of negotiations. But "refugees" are not a normal negotiating issue – the "refugee" issue determines the nature and purpose of the negotiations. If the Palestinians are ready to resettle the "refugees" elsewhere, then the negotiations are about peace; if the Palestinians expect large numbers of them to go to Israel the negotiations are about the destruction of Israel. How can negotiations be conducted if it isn't known whether they are about peace or about the destruction of Israel?

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The basic problem for negotiations for less than peace is that there is nothing substantial that the Palestinians want except for concessions that would reduce Israel's ability to survive and defend itself. The Palestinians talk about settlements, but their lack of positive reaction to the withdrawal from Gaza and four settlements in Samaria is evidence that any partial withdrawal or limitation on settlements would not be particularly attractive to them. The only thing Israel wants is to end the conflict, or at least end the need to continue to be an "occupier," as per the discussion below.

The strategic pursuit of peace – as distinguished from a demonstrative pursuit of peace aimed at the political benefit of appearances – is based on an attempted objective analysis of the political, psychological, and other influences on Palestinian decision-making; on the expected consequences of alternative Israeli policies; and on actions of others. "Strategy" refers to the evaluation of relevant facts to realistically judge the measures that can effectively help achieve goals. Naturally there will always be uncertainty about nearly every element of any strategic analysis, and this analysis is no different. But disagreements about strategy are different than disagreements about values. Only arguments about reality and strategy, and not about desirability, can be used to challenge a strategic analysis. Differences in values are not the cause of Israel's primary disagreements about peace policy.⁴

The analysis here only addresses the question of which actions have the best chance of making peace possible as soon as possible. The question of what Israel can do now and what Israel should say is a very different issue, one that may have to be determined by the diplomatic situation. Much of the discussion within the government and by the public is often dominated by the question of what must be said to meet the needs of the current diplomatic situation. That is, it assumes that the questions and assumptions of the current diplomatic discussion are based on reality, while they instead are often based on an alternative version of reality created out of diplomatic considerations, with little relation to actual facts. This analysis is intended to balance and supplement the work done within the framework of current diplomatic reality.

The judgments here about which Israeli actions can advance the cause of peace do not imply that Israel should not do anything else; undoubtedly there are actions Israel should take to improve policy in relation to the Palestinians and Israeli Arabs, even if such actions are not likely to bring peace closer. Peace is not Israel's only value.

IS PEACE POSSIBLE NOW?

To think about a strategy for peace one must work with an understanding about what goal the Palestinians are pursuing and what they might agree to. Of course there are many Palestinians and not all of them think alike. The most useful way to think about how to negotiate with the Palestinians is to think of them as being in a continual dialogue with each other, which partly reflects a similar dialogue within the mind of each Palestinian. At any one time it is possible to speak of the position of the Palestinian community, which involves the political leadership and the range of public opinions, but that position never implies unanimity or permanence. The implicit underlying debate in the Palestinian community and within the mind of individual Palestinians is essentially between the desire to eliminate the Jewish state on what they regard as their territory and the advantages of peace.

There is not much disagreement among Palestinians that it would be desirable and just to change Israel into another Arab-majority state; the only questions are whether it would be possible to achieve this goal, and how.⁵ Already they have had to give up hope that this goal would be achieved by Arab armies or boycotts, and thus far terrorism and intifadas have failed to achieve encouraging results. Additionally, an important share of leadership believes that violent attacks on Israel are not useful now.

Currently, Palestinians generally view Israel as a very strong country. They see a currency that is as strong as the American dollar. They see the head of the Chinese armed forces coming to Israel to discuss military cooperation between Israel and China, the world's largest nation. They also see Israel gaining economic importance in the world as a "start-up nation." Though Iran's increasing power, the various

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missile threats from Hamas, Hizballah, and Syria, increasing international condemnation, and US movement away from regional leadership offer the Palestinians some hope for victory, most Palestinians are pessimistic about the possibility of defeating Israel in the near future. They have hopes but no expectations.

In addition, most Palestinians do not believe that they would benefit greatly from peace with Israel. Their casualties in the war are not higher than they are prepared to accept; a large share of the casualties are volunteers, and they accept many casualties in their internal conflicts. They also accept their fighters' use of tactics designed to deter Israeli self-defense by increasing the resulting Palestinian civilian casualties. The conflict with Israel nets over \$500 per person each year in foreign subsidies⁶. The leadership profits nicely as well. As previously mentioned, ordinary Palestinians in the West Bank live better than Arabs in other non-oil countries. Their culture and history don't lead them to think of peace with the Jewish state as normal or essential.

While it is likely true that most Palestinians would live better if there was peace with Israel, their potential gain is neither visible nor attractive enough to be compelling or appealing to most Palestinians. While they don't like living under Israeli control – although many recognize the benefits they receive in return – the possibility of Palestinian statehood has only limited attraction.⁷ They are more concerned with how their daily lives would be affected than with the symbolism and identity of a state. While they identify as Palestinians, much of their personal identity is based on local and tribal affiliations and a general allegiance to the Arab nation and Muslim world. They have never had a state and do not have the intensity that comes from trying to get back something that had been lost.

The current result is that the Palestinian community reinforces its leadership's refusal to give up their goal of eliminating Israel in return for peace. Though their expectations of succeeding are weak, their desire to make peace is weak as well. Their traditional thinking does not include the idea of making peace by recognizing or accommodating their enemies' point-of-view, and they accept that it

may take centuries to achieve their goal. They are willing to keep the conflict as it is now while they wait for victory.

The diplomatic expression of the elimination of Israel is the demand for what the Palestinians call the “right of return,” which posits that the descendants of the Arabs who left Israel in 1948 during the war have a right to live in Israel and be compensated for property left behind. An influx of two to three million Palestinian immigrants into Israel will destroy its status as the Jewish homeland.

Sometimes Palestinian leaders tell the world that they will not insist that all of the “refugees” actually move to Israel, but only that Israel accept in principle their rights and take in a symbolic fraction. However, there has never been a serious political discussion within the Palestinian community on accepting only a token return of “refugees” and no such discussion has any substantial political support. If the Palestinians were really ready to settle for a token return of “refugees,” they would not force millions of their brethren to remain unsettled in “refugee camps.”

Jerusalem can also be viewed as a tool used by the Palestinians to attempt to destroy Israel. The Palestinian demand for all of Jerusalem, or at least for all of Jerusalem outside the 1949 ceasefire line, is effectively a demand for Israel to accept defeat. Under such an agreement nearly 300,000 Israelis would have to give up their homes, many of which were built two generations ago. In addition it would require Israel to give up the heart of its traditional connection to the land, the Jewish quarter of the Old City and the site of the ancient Jewish Temples, the Temple Mount.⁸

If there was a genuine peace, Palestinian rule over the areas of the city where most Arabs live would not be fatal for Israel, though it would be against the current will of the Arab residents.⁹ However, if the conflict continues, such a division could lead to enough violence to threaten the continued vitality of Jerusalem as a city, which would be a disaster for Israel – and quite acceptable to the Palestinian leadership.

In summary, until there is a big change in Palestinian opinion or values, the Palestinians will not agree to peace with Israel; doing so would require them to give up the goal they have had since before Israel was created: a Middle East free of a Jewish state.

Evidence of Palestinian Unwillingness to Make Peace Now

How do we know that the Palestinians will not make peace with Israel now? We can start with what the Palestinian leadership consistently says when it is speaking in Arabic to its own people: that it will never accept Israel as a legitimate Middle Eastern state.¹⁰ Polls indicate that a large share of the population agrees. In an October 2011 poll by Nabil Kukali's Palestinian Center for Public Opinion, a staggering 89.8 percent of respondents said they would rather have "no peace deal" and no "independent state" if it meant giving up the right of return.

There has been no argument within the Palestinian political world about whether to give up the goal of eliminating Israel. That goal is constantly reaffirmed in clear language by both Fatah and Hamas and by all major Palestinian voices when they speak in Arabic. It is also affirmed in cryptic language, and never denied, by official Palestinian representatives speaking in English.¹¹ There would have to be a very visible and hard-fought struggle among Palestinians before the Palestinian community could reverse such a basic principle of its community, and it is clear that no such struggle has begun.

The second piece of evidence is that the Palestinian leadership has spurned offers from Prime Ministers Ehud Barak (in 2000) and Ehud Olmert (in 2007) to make peace on terms very close to what they claim they are seeking, apart from the right of return. Political objections by Palestinians to the rejection of these peace offers has not come from people who are supportive of peace proposals, but rather from those who complain that their leadership is too willing to accept Israel.

There is a big political dispute among the Palestinians on the matter. One side says there should be no agreement with Israel. The other side says that Palestine should agree to a two-state solution, which

would improve Palestinian ability to destroy Israel. The main argument among Palestinians against the two-state solution is the risk that it would make Israel better-equipped to protect itself and inhibit future Palestinian actions against it. Within the Arabic discussion, Palestinian advocates of a two-state agreement insist that it would not require giving up the goal of destroying Israel. No substantial voice among the Palestinians, however, is arguing that a two-state agreement is good enough to justify accepting Israel. In fact, the intensity of the Palestinian determination to destroy Israel is shown by their unwillingness to make an agreement along the lines offered by Barak or Olmert. Such an agreement – or even a less generous agreement that they could get from current Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu – would almost certainly improve their ability to destroy Israel. It would be the smart way for them to carry out their fight. But the strength of the animosity towards Israel is so great that there is not sufficient Palestinian political support to make such a clever move.

The third piece of evidence is the Palestinian leadership's denial of history, telling its people that the Jews are not a nation and have no historic roots in the land. Since Palestinians don't have to deny the Jewish connection to the land to assert their claims, and they embarrass themselves by publicly disputing history, such as Arafat's statement to President Clinton that there never was a Jewish temple on the Temple Mount,¹² we need to ask why they go out of their way to tell these lies. The reason may be that if Palestinians recognized the ancient Jewish connection to the land it would be honorable for them to make peace with Israel. On the other hand, if it were true, as they assert, that Israel is merely a colonial invader seeking to take Arab land to which it has no moral claim, it would be dishonorable to make peace. The leaders teach false history as a way to guarantee that their people reject peace.

The Decisive Point

The key questions for anyone who wants to know if the Palestinians are willing to make peace are: If the Palestinians have become willing to give up the goal of destroying Israel, when did they change their minds? And how did they decide to do so?

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The answer to the first question can be found in the absence of a political conflict among Palestinians about whether it is necessary or desirable to give up the goal of eliminating Israel. Anyone who argues that the Palestinians are willing to give up the goal of destroying Israel must point to a great struggle within the Palestinian community for change. Since destroying Israel has been the consensus for so long, only a visible political debate within the Palestinian community would reverse the commitment. However, there is no indication that there is such a struggle taking place, and rival factions Fatah and Hamas are both opposed to a complete peace with Israel.

The Palestinian goal is not just a theoretical objective which can be adjusted to meet changed needs and circumstances. It is the essential point that determines whether the Palestinians will make peace. For them “peace” is acceptable now only if it can be expected to advance their goal of eliminating Israel. Fatah, following its strategy of achieving its goals in stages (to first receive a state according to 1967 lines, and then to recover the rest of Palestine), may be willing to make an agreement with Israel provided that it doesn’t prevent them from continuing their struggle to destroy Israel, an agreement that most certainly doesn’t meet the definition of peace.¹³

Israel has gone through a long visible political struggle to reach its current willingness to have a Palestinian state west of the Jordan and to evacuate most of the territory it gained in 1967. Israelis have always wanted peace, but in the past they haven’t accepted its probable price, though immediately after the Six Day War there was a governmental offer and a good deal of support for giving up most of the territory gained in return for peace. For a long time the Israeli consensus rejected talking with the PLO because it was a terrorist organization committed to Israel’s destruction. For many years the idea of a Palestinian state west of the Jordan was taboo in Israel. But policies that were anathema to the left-wing Labor Party forty years ago are now the official position of the right-wing Likud-led Israeli government of today. The opinions of the minorities that still reject this current consensus are evidence of the visible political struggle that took place. The degree of consensus following that debate is still somewhat clouded by the part of the Israeli population which now

opposes a Palestinian state and Israeli withdrawals from Judea and Samaria, only because they correctly believe that such concessions wouldn't lead to peace. This group of Israelis would be willing to make concessions if according to their judgment these concessions would lead Palestinians to make peace (which they do not expect). Of course another small but important group of Israelis do not accept the consensus that Israel should give up most of Judea and Samaria to a Palestinian state; they object to the officially-stated government policy. While the politics surrounding the debate are complex, the debate itself is visible to anyone.

There is no comparable visible Palestinian political debate about giving up the goal of destroying Israel, neither the explicit goal nor its diplomatic expression in the claimed "right of return." Nor is there any kind of substantial underground debate, although there certainly are Palestinians who believe and say in private that they should accept a full peace with Israel. But the Palestinian debate is moving away from willingness to make peace.

Since factual analysis of the position of the Palestinian community leads to such a discouraging conclusion, it is tempting to respond by saying that, since no analysis can be certain, we should act as if reality were different than the dire diagnosis. But that is what the world has done for forty years. Almost everyone has assumed that Israel could have peace if it made appropriate concessions and followed a peace policy. While Israel has not made quite as many concessions and gestures as many have urged it to make, it has usually been diligent in restraining itself from asserting rights and protecting interests in order to not interfere with negotiations. The long failure of policies based on unrealistic hopes suggests that perhaps it would be more effective to move to a policy based on a realistic diagnosis of the facts.

If it is as clear as claimed here that the Palestinian community will not make peace now on any terms, why does the whole diplomatic world seem to believe that negotiations can lead to peace? While there are various shallow theories used to explain why some Palestinian statements or hints in English show that they are ready to make peace if Israel does the right things, by and large the issue is not addressed.

It is very doubtful that the US State Department, or any other foreign ministry, has made a serious effort to examine the evidence and make a fairly-debated judgment on the question of whether or not the Palestinian community would make peace with Israel today on any terms. Instead, since it is diplomatically convenient to assume that peace is possible now, the question of whether that assumption is correct is largely ignored. Those who raise the question are treated as obstacles to peace.

Why Are the Palestinians Committed to Destroying Israel?

Anyone who wants to pursue peace between Israel and the Palestinians must understand why the Palestinians now reject it, because these reasons show what needs to be changed to make peace achievable. The question is not, *why do they want to destroy Israel?* That desire is natural, with a long history, and related to deep elements of the Palestinians' religion and identity; and it is not necessary to eliminate that desire in order to make peace. The more appropriate question is *why is their desire to destroy Israel and achieve "justice" for the "refugees" stronger than their desire to reap the benefits of peace, such as a Palestinian state?* Although in the long term (at least a generation) it is possible that the problem will solve itself if cultural changes within the Palestinian community are great enough so that the desire to destroy Israel becomes much weaker.

In the short term the diagnosis here recognizes that the antagonism and conflict between Israel and the Palestinians will get worse. There is no conciliatory behavior that can prevent this. (And there is reason to believe that conciliatory behavior will make the antagonism worse, as the Oslo process did.¹⁴)

The key to getting the Palestinians to be willing to make peace is to convince them that it is hopeless to try to destroy Israel. Until this is done peace is impossible. When it happens it will be worthwhile to increase the advantages of peace to the Palestinians. Anything that makes it harder to convince Palestinians that they cannot ever eliminate Israel works against peace.

There is an inherent conflict between efforts to force Israel to offer better terms, so that peace will be more desirable for the Palestinians, and the need to convince Palestinians that Israel will never be forced to make concessions that might lead to its destruction. Pressure on Israel to make concessions, when the Palestinians think Israelis know that the Palestinians are not ready for peace, gives them hope that Israel may eventually be forced to give the Palestinians the victory they seek. Changing the Palestinian opposition to peace must be a two-step process; first, the Palestinians must be convinced that victory is impossible, and then they must be shown that peace can be valuable. Trying to implement the second step before the first step is accomplished makes the necessary first step harder.

Influence of International Arab-Muslim Politics and Opinion

There is a second decisive reason why the Palestinians cannot make peace now: the outside influence from the Arab-Muslim world.¹⁵ Palestine is a small part of this world and the Palestinian people have little basis for building independent self-confidence. It is also risky for Palestinian politicians to go against the mainstream Arab and Muslim opinion which has been a force for continuing the struggle.

While Egypt and Jordan have peace treaties formally recognizing Israel, neither of them is a voice urging the Palestinians to give up the effort to destroy Israel. Both government and civilian elites in Egypt and most elites in Jordan consider Israel illegitimate and temporary. The most powerful voices in those countries tell individual Palestinian leaders that they will be risking their political and financial futures, if not their lives, if they try to make peace with Israel. (They sometimes speak for “peace” but they mean the “peace” of Israel’s defeat. They never describe “peace” as the coexistence of a Palestinian state and Israel without Arab “refugees.”)

The Saudi peace plan does not contradict this description of the outside influence on Palestinians. That plan does not give up the demand that Israel allow millions of descendants of the refugees from Israel to settle in Israel. And the fact that it is presented as a take it or leave it offer, with an explicit refusal to negotiate its terms, does not show much readiness to accept Israel as a normal state. Furthermore,

while the Saudi government puts forward what it calls a “peace plan,” billions of dollars of Saudi money are spent each year to propagate Salafi or Wahhabi forms of Islam which stand at the heart of forces of intransigence in the Arab and Muslim worlds, especially among the Sunni majority.¹⁶ Additionally, there has been no discussion in the Arab world of a possible need to give up the goal of destroying Israel. The Arab League only endorsed the Saudi peace proposal after it was changed to include a reference to United Nations General Assembly Resolution 194, which the Palestinians claim is the source of their right of return, their instrument of Israel’s destruction. The actual Saudi policy concerning peace is as complex as their overall policy, but two things are clear. They do not make it easier for Palestinian politicians to speak in favor of accepting peace with Israel, and their money is the decisive force behind the poisonous growth of Wahhabi influence on the Muslim world.

In addition, the current governments of the two major non-Arab Middle Eastern powers, Turkey and Iran, use their influence and power against any movement to accept Israel as a permanent part of the Middle East.

Israel cannot do much to change the message the Palestinians receive from the Arab and Muslim world, but that does not mean that that message will continue to stay the same. It is quite reasonable to expect that sometime in the future Palestinians will have significantly less outside pressure against making peace with Israel. Countries other than Israel have more ability to induce the Arab and Muslim world to give up the goal of destroying Israel, and Israel can urge others to act in ways that might lead to a change of message.

There are two currents clashing in the Muslim world. One dictates that Muslims be guided by Islamic traditions of rejection of the non-Muslim (infidel) world and of commitment to the eventual global spread of Islam; this current is often referred to as “Islamism” or “radical Islam.” The alternative current calls for Muslims to accept and peacefully live with non-Muslim regimes. As a practical matter most Muslims, and especially Muslim governments, have been acting in accord with the second current. At the same time, the public political-religious discussion in the Muslim world has been

increasingly dominated during the last thirty years by voices committed to the first current, many of which favor the current trend toward replacement of secular Muslim governments with religious ones. The dominance of enmity towards the West, especially the US and Israel, in Muslim public debate is partly the result of its roots in anti-infidel Islamic tradition and partly the result of Islamic radicals using violence and coercion against Muslims who oppose them.

Today, radical Islam dominates the Muslim public debate, especially in the Middle East. Islamic moderates are beleaguered and have a hard time being heard, although probably only a small percent of Muslims currently support violent jihad against the West at this time. But it is politically incorrect in the Middle East to make fundamental criticisms of the pursuit of Islam's goal to dominate the world or to argue that this pursuit should be dropped. The ability of Islamic radicals to get away with using violence and threats to suppress Islamic moderates shows the breadth of popular respect for Islamic radicalism. In this situation it would be difficult or dangerous for a Palestinian leader to argue that they need to give up the fight to eliminate Israel.

Radical Islam has been growing dramatically stronger since 1979, influenced primarily by two forces. First, the Islamic revolutionary regime in Iran has actively promoted the voices and forces of radical Islam, using exhortation, political action, and terrorism. Second, after 1979 the Saudis began making more money due to a rise in oil prices and felt a need to compete with Iran for leadership of Islamic radicalism. They drastically increased the amount of Wahhabi money devoted to the spread of radical Salafist Islam throughout the Muslim world. Since then, the regime has spent over \$4 billion each year promoting Wahhabism, primarily by building mosques and paying imams' salaries.¹⁷

We have become used to the current dominance of Islamic radicalism and have forgotten that it was much weaker only some thirty years ago. In general, people assume that the present role in the Islamic debate of radical voices will continue or follow the recent trend and get worse. This is a reasonable prediction for the short term, but it is a bad bet for the longer term. Many Muslims would like to see Islam

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rule the world, but most of them will support this goal only if they feel it has a chance of working. On the basis of hope and an optimistic reading of events in recent years – including President Obama’s program of reducing American influence in the Middle East¹⁸ – most Muslims in the Middle East do not currently feel an urgent reason to relinquish their goal of global Muslim domination. This is an important reason that the exclusion of moderate voices from the Muslim discussion is tolerated.

But radical Islam is *not* going to conquer the world, and *Sharia* law will *not* be installed throughout the West. Ultimately radical Islam can’t win, neither by force nor by persuasion. Therefore eventually the Muslim world will have to give up its hope of victory over the West. We should be confident that the tide of the discussion among Muslims will eventually turn so that the door will be opened for the voices of moderate Islam. If now is not the peak of radical Islam’s dominance of Muslim discussion, there is reason to believe that the peak and subsequent decline is likely to come within a decade or two. Furthermore, its current two driving forces – the revolutionary Iranian regime and Saudi worldwide funding of Salafist Islam – could disappear even sooner.

Soviet power seemed to almost everyone to be a permanent part of the world order until it suddenly disappeared. Islam will not disappear, but the current dominance of the radical Islam minority can largely disappear almost as quickly as the Soviet Union did. It is not likely that the Palestinian community can be led to make peace with Israel until that change in the Muslim world happens. In fact, it appears that radical Islam may be on the rise. This strategic plan for peace, however, can rely on the expectation that this current trend will eventually be reversed.

The seemingly stable Arab world was broken in 2011 by the protest movements that began in Tunisia and Egypt and spread through the region. One result – although it may be a temporary one – is an increase in the voice of Arabs demanding political liberties. If the movement toward freedom takes a greater hold in the Arab world – which is uncertain in the short term – it could lead to more freedom and democracy among Palestinians. If, on the other hand, the result of

the “Arab Spring” is increased power for Islamists – as the current situation in Tunisia and Egypt reflects – it can be expected that liberals will be suppressed as strongly as the previous regimes did, and then those Palestinians who are ready to make peace with Israel will have even more difficulty doing so than they do today.

A significant result of the “Arab Spring” is the Muslim Brotherhood’s gains in Egypt, where the party represents a majority in the parliament and the presidency. It also successfully wrested power away from the military, giving radical Islam the most power it has ever held in the Arab world. This may bring a major turning point in the long-term clash between radical and moderate Islam and could also produce another war with Israel, though currently the military leadership prefers not having to fight against the Israeli Defense Forces.

While it still remains to be seen what the new reality in an Islamist Arab world will look like, the first to suffer will most likely be minorities. Arab “liberals” are almost certain to be cruelly suppressed by the new regimes. Ordinary Muslims will be forced – as they are for instance in Iran and Gaza – to be more stringent than they prefer about observing conservative understanding of *Sharia* in their dress and social behavior. The position of women and homosexuals will become worse. In addition, Brotherhood control of Arab governments will certainly lead to a verbally more Islamist foreign policy, that is, one that is at least rhetorically more anti-American and anti-Israel. It is unclear, however, how far Islamist governments would go with policies that involve real risk to their countries. Even if they try to be careful it seems quite plausible that they will overplay their hand and produce defeats for themselves.

It is certainly too soon to have any confidence in predictions about the outcome of the “Arab Spring,” but perhaps the best bet is that the Arab world is about to try Islamism – as it has tried socialism, nationalism, and pan-Arabism – and that the experiment will cause great suffering, and probably new authoritarian or even totalitarian regimes before it too comes to be seen as a failure and is eventually rejected by a new generation of Arabs. One reason that it will fail is that the Arab economic situation, apart from oil, is so bad that no system can quickly deliver the economic gains that these societies

desire and expect.¹⁹ Another reason that it will fail is that Islamism faces social and political challenges. The return to *Sharia* and ancient Muslim ways is an illusion and cannot work in today's modern world. The Shiite example has failed in Iran – surviving on the bayonets of the Revolutionary Guards, not the will of the people – and the Sunnis will not be able to do better. One can sympathize with them and respect their dignity, but to be realistic one has to recognize that they are playing a losing game.

The failure of Islamism will have one important difference from the failure of the previous “isms.” Ordinary Arabs had no deep personal stake in socialism or nationalism; they could be dropped with relatively little pain. But most Arabs have a strong attachment to Islam. While Islamism can be and should be sharply distinguished from Islam, the failure of Islamism will touch most Muslims much more deeply and be very difficult for them to absorb and to live with. Perhaps that experience will have an effect on Muslim consciousness like the eventual effect of the religious wars on Europeans, and will be what enables Muslims to find ways to accommodate church and state, however far a separation is from Muslim doctrine and history.

The immediate result of the fluidity that the Arab Spring has temporarily created in the Arab world is to increase uncertainty in the political thinking of all actors. The reality of increased power for the Muslim Brotherhood makes it more dangerous for Palestinian leaders to argue for making peace with Israel.²⁰

Economic Benefits to the Palestinians to Continue the War

The third reason the Palestinians continue to reject peace is that they are rewarded with foreign aid from the US, Europe, and Arab countries. This money is received regardless of whether the Palestinians are pursuing peace. Israel even encourages a strong Palestinian economy, as Netanyahu has made pursuing an “economic peace” between Israel and the Palestinian Authority a major strategy. The Palestinian Authority and the small Palestinian population receive well over a billion dollars of foreign aid each year, either directly or through UN-sponsored programs. While this is not enough to enable ordinary Palestinians to live well, and many are quite poor,

especially in Gaza, the leadership personally does very well for themselves; in fact, foreign support has enabled a substantial elite population to live well above the average Arab standard of living. Despite the poverty there is much prosperity, even in Gaza.²¹ In fact, journalist Ashraf Abu Al-Houl wrote in *Al-Ahram* that a “sense of absolute prosperity prevails [in Gaza], as manifested by the grand resorts along and near Gaza’s coast. Further, the sight of the merchandise and luxuries filling the Gaza shops amazed me. Merchandise is sold more cheaply than in Egypt...The resorts and markets have come to symbolize prosperity, and prove that the siege is formal or political, not economic. The reality [in Gaza] proves that the siege was broken even before Israel’s crime against the ships of the Freedom Flotilla in late May; everything already was coming into the Gaza Strip from Egypt. If this weren’t the case, businessmen would not have been able to build so many resorts in under four months.”²²

Teaching Hate and War

The fourth reason for the rejection of peace is that the Palestinian leadership teaches hatred of Israel, and espouses false facts about the conflict, both in schools and public discourse.²³ A wide array of lies about Israel are taught by Palestinian leaders to their people, ranging from the assertions that Israel spreads AIDS and drugs among Palestinian society²⁴ or harvests the organs of Palestinian prisoners and “martyrs,”²⁵ to the claim that Israel murdered former Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.²⁶ The Palestinian leadership also glorifies violence and encourages the youth to involve themselves in *Shahada*, the aspiration to a Muslim to die in the name of Allah.²⁷

A recent report by Strategic Affairs Ministry director-general Yossi Kuperwasser claimed that “Palestinian incitement is ‘going on all the time,’” a “worrying and disturbing” development. He said that the PA continues to stress three major messages in its educational institutions: that the Palestinians would eventually be the sole sovereign on land between the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea; that Jews, especially Israelis, are “the scum of mankind,” and not humans; and that all methods of struggle against Israel are legitimate. Netanyahu warned that this continued incitement was preventing

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future generations of Palestinians from holding a dialogue of peace, and added that the root of the conflict was the Palestinian refusal to recognize the Jewish homeland.²⁸

The leadership also uses force to prevent pro-Israeli facts and arguments from being heard. There have been Palestinian supporters for peace who have been murdered since the 1930s. In 1937, the British Peel Commission found “intimidation at the point of a revolver has become a not infrequent feature of Arab politics. Attacks by Arabs on Jews, unhappily, are familiar. What may surprise some is the extent of attacks by Arabs on Arabs. For an Arab to be suspected of a lukewarm adherence to the nationalist cause is to invite a visit from a body of “gunmen.”²⁹ And what was true in 1937 is still true today.

Lack of Free Discussion Among Palestinians

The fifth and final major factor which influences Palestinian refusal to make peace is the lack of freedom in Palestinian political life. This effect is uncertain, as we can't know what the result of freedom would be. It is possible that a more free Palestinian society would reach the same conclusions towards Israel. However, perhaps one day a free Palestinian society could lead to a community decision to choose peace. A free society could reach a positive attitude towards peace for several reasons. First, as mentioned above, the mass of people who suffer most from the conflict are the people who are underrepresented in the current debate. Second, facts like the ancient Jewish connection to the land couldn't be kept out of a free debate. Third, it is the arguments for peace that are being suppressed in the current Palestinian discussion, not the arguments for resistance. A free Palestinian society would be able to finally discuss matters of peace in the open, without feeling pressure to stay silent.

ACTIONS THAT COULD IMPROVE THE CHANCES FOR PEACE

The point of the strategic analysis is to look at the reasons currently preventing peace in order to choose actions that can overcome the

obstacles. The following are actions that could counteract the factors that make the Palestinians unwilling to make peace.

Resettle Palestinian “Refugees”

The most important action that can be taken to make peace possible is to move to resettle the Palestinian “refugees.” Everybody who has been trying to make real peace understands that Israel cannot accept the demand that these “refugees” be admitted into Israel, and that this demand undermines any negotiations. Only the Arabs and their supporters give any credence to the legal claim that these people have a “right of return.”³⁰

In the 1940s, when some 650,000 Palestinians became refugees, more than 20 million other people became refugees. All of these other refugees have been resettled generations ago. The Palestinian “refugees” were, and are, a few percent of the population of the Arab countries with whom they share language and religion, and therefore are comparatively easy to resettle.

In contrast, between 1948 and 1951, at least 700,000 Jews became refugees from the Arab countries where Jewish communities had lived more than a thousand years, and were forced to leave behind large amounts of property. All of these Jews were resettled, mostly in Israel, with no compensation or international help, despite the fact that Israel’s population in those years was smaller than the number of refugees it accepted.

The basic policy of the UN organization responsible for refugee matters, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) has always been to resettle refugees. Its definition of “refugee” does *not* include descendants of refugees. (Again, it is because of the international consensus of this definition that I use quotation marks when referring to what the Palestinians call “refugees.”) Since the Palestinian “refugees” don’t fall under the accepted UNHCR definition, they are served by a separate agency, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), which operates entirely separately from UNHCR, with completely different rules and goals that apply only to the Palestinians. One way to

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advance a program to resettle the Palestinians in question is for Western allies of Israel to announce that they are going to stop financially supporting UNRWA and move to close it down. Currently the government of Israel opposes this action because of short-term concerns.

There are three major reasons why a serious attempt to make peace must begin with a program to resettle the Palestinian “refugees.” The first reason is that a demand for resettlement is incompatible with peace. There is no point to negotiations if the central demand of one of the parties implies the elimination of the other side. The most effective way to eliminate this demand is to remove its ostensible object. The second reason is that it is morally wrong to continue to use the “refugees” as a political weapon against Israel. They have not been given a choice. Regardless of their wishes they are deprived of the opportunity to become ordinary citizens of any country (with the exception of a few who can become citizens of Jordan). The US and Europe have been providing essential support to an unconscionable mistreatment of millions of Palestinians, both directly and through the UN. It is long past the time for the world to stop supporting a program that denies these millions of people the opportunity to live normal lives.

The third reason that resettling the “refugees” is critical to achieving peace is that such a development would help the Palestinians to come to understand that they have no hope of eliminating Israel.

The “refugees” will not be permanently resettled – primarily in the Arab countries including Palestine – unless the US and its allies exert heavy pressure on the Arab countries to take them in. One way to speed up the process would be to convince world powers interested in brokering peace to take in some “refugees” themselves and give each family a considerable settlement payment (perhaps \$50,000 to \$100,000). This in turn would make them much more desirable immigrants for the major Arab countries which are still relatively poor. A major movement by the great democracies to call for the settlement of the “refugees” would have a beneficial effect on the prospects for peace long before it succeeded in gaining acceptance by

the Arab countries, because it would show the Palestinians that they do not have support for the destruction of Israel.

Certainly if the US, with or without support from other Western nations, began to call on the Arab countries to accept the Arab descendants of the 1948 refugees it would be met with fierce anger and opposition from the Arab world. But the US cannot pursue peace seriously without making the Arab countries unhappy, as they are against a peace that includes acceptance of Israel. The US has to choose between smaller diplomatic problems with the Arabs and their allies or the genuine pursuit of peace.

This is an example of the difference between the diplomatic realities and strategic realities. Current diplomatic realities say that there is no chance that the West will work to settle the descendants of the Palestinian refugees. But a realistic analysis of paths to peace leads to the conclusion that the most effective first step is settling these people, as there is virtually no hope of a peace agreement until the issue is dealt with. Any policy to produce peace that doesn't give priority to resettling the "refugees" has little chance to succeed.

The Issue of "Occupation"

Palestinians and many others refer to all areas outside the cease-fire lines of June 1967 as "occupied territory" (and some even use the term in reference to all of Israel). Israel understands that Judea and Samaria is disputed territory in which it has a legal status like that of an occupier, although almost all of the Palestinians living there have a great deal of self-rule.³¹

The disputed territory is part of the area that the League of Nations set aside to become a Jewish homeland. Israel has strong claims on the basis of history, law, and morality for the disputed land to become part of Israel.³² Recently the Levy Commission described the legal importance of the League of Nations Mandate for Palestine. The commission's arguments were dismissed by some on the grounds that Israel's government had admitted that its actions in Judea and Samaria were subject to the Geneva Convention. In fact, Israel only said that it would in some ways act as if it was covered by the

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convention although it didn't believe that it was. These are complicated technical arguments which are not relevant to the basic issue of Israel's moral and legal claims to the territory. Which is not to say that others do not also have serious claims on the land; some 1.4 million Palestinians live – and farm or pasture their herds – on a fraction of the disputed territory, most of which is uninhabited.³³ They obviously have a claim, based on the principle of self-determination, to at least the part of the land where they live and are a majority. It isn't clear, however, how much other land, beyond the areas in which they live and farm, is required for self-determination. There are also larger ethnic groups, such as the Kurds in Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria, who do not have their own sovereign state on the basis of self-determination. (The claim some Palestinians make, that the original people of the land were Palestinians, has no objective basis.)

Some 340,000 Israelis live on a much smaller fraction of the disputed territory, and a small minority farms or pastures its herds there. The modern-day Israelis have lived in these areas for a much shorter period than most of the Palestinians have lived where they do. However, during ancient times large numbers of Jews lived in some of these territories for centuries.

Eventually there will have to be a resolution of the conflicting claims to the area. The question of occupation is the question of who should control these disputed territories until the claims are settled – which may well require another generation or two. As long as there is no agreement about who shall be sovereign some country has to “occupy” the land so that it has a government. Until there is an agreement, any government – Jewish or Palestinian – will be an occupier. Although the acceptance by Palestinian representatives (in the Oslo implementing agreements) to the current status quo, as a temporary arrangement, is another way in which the “occupation” is different than normal hostile occupation.

It is generally agreed – including by Israel – that it is normally undesirable or immoral for people to be ruled, that is, occupied, by a foreign government. It is not right for there to be an occupation if there is a better arrangement available, but the absence of an agreement means that occupation, detestable as it is, is the best

temporary solution and the right thing to do. Morality requires making the most moral choice among the available alternatives, however morally distasteful that alternative is.

Many valid points are made, often with great emotion, about the harms and evils produced by occupation to both Israel and the Palestinians. As bad as occupation is, however, it cannot and should not be ended unless there is a better alternative. The question is not whether occupation is bad; the question is what can be done to end it. The Palestinian community has effectively said that it will not accept any end of occupation unless Israel allows millions of Palestinians to move to Israel, gives up most of Jerusalem, relinquishes its claims to land set aside for the Jewish homeland by the League of Nations, and jeopardizes its ability to defend itself. Since that is the choice offered by the Palestinian community, Israel has to continue to be a technical occupier until the Palestinians are prepared to give up their long struggle to destroy Israel, a quest that is the underlying cause of the occupation.

One alternative arrangement would be to let the Palestinians take power – that is, occupy – all the disputed territories until the dispute is settled. (They already control – except for security – the areas where almost all of them live). There are several problems about this alternative. First, it means that Israel would have to give up its claims to all of the disputed territory, as the Palestinians have been very clear that they will not negotiate on any Israeli claims to land under Palestinian control. Second, since the Palestinians would still have the goal of eliminating Israel, this alternative would be a grave threat to Israeli security. Third, this arrangement would take away the homes and communities of some 340,000 Israelis, some of whom have lived there for over a generation. While many people feel that some of these “settlers” do not deserve to be protected, many of them live in communities, that is, “settlement blocs,” that most observers agree should become part of Israel in a future agreement. These communities were established with the approval of Labor-led governments of Israel and did not displace Arab communities.

So long as the Palestinians are unwilling to make peace with Israel, the only alternatives possible for Israel are either to continue the

occupation or to turn all of the disputed territory – plus at least part of Jerusalem – over to the Palestinians. While nearly all Israelis dislike the occupation – in different degrees – the alternatives to occupation are worse for Israel and do not produce peace.

Israel has the moral right to choose the alternative that is better for itself and worse for the Palestinians for two reasons. One is self-protection, and the other is that the reality is that the Palestinians have nobody to blame for the lack of solutions to the problem but themselves. If the Palestinian community was willing to end its war against Israel, the occupation would end. Until then, Israel is forced to continue to be an “occupier.”

Settlements and Peace

Many people argue that settlements³⁴ – or the expansion of settlements – get in the way of achieving peace. Currently, as argued extensively above, the Palestinians are unwilling to make peace with Israel on any terms, even if all Israeli settlements were to be abandoned. The Palestinians demand that Israel evacuate the settlements but never add that they will make peace if Israel did so. It is not the settlements that are preventing peace; the Palestinians’ goal to eliminate Israel existed prior to the construction of a single settlement. Since the settlements have been built there has not been any substantial Palestinian voice calling for the relinquishing of the national goal to destroy Israel in return for the elimination of the settlements.

In addition to the argument that settlements prevent the Palestinians from negotiating, some argue that settlements are inconsistent with the only plausible terms for a peace agreement. However, since a peace agreement is not likely to be reached in the near future, no one can say what terms will be plausible at that time. For example, the Palestinians may no longer insist that Jews be excluded from Palestine and Jordan may become a Palestinian state. Surely the Middle East retains the ability to surprise us over future decades. In the meantime it would be useful if the Palestinians came to recognize that their current unwillingness to make peace may result in less favorable terms being available when they change their minds. This

has been their experience since they rejected the terms proposed by Britain's Peel Commission in 1937.

Israel does not have a coherent long-range policy concerning specific settlements and their role in possible future peace agreements. Much of the pattern of settlements has developed not as a result of policy decisions but through a tug-of-war among various factions and authorities within the Israeli political system and among the settlers themselves. Neither the government nor any of the contending groups speak with a unified voice. Therefore, while a rational long-term settlement policy would be desirable, it is unlikely that the political costs within Israel of trying to achieve such a policy will be paid soon. In the meantime a share of settlement activity is beyond what most Israelis would approve and inconsistent with the most common expectations about eventual peace terms – although most of it is not. But the Palestinian and international condemnation of “expanding settlements” doesn't distinguish between those relatively few actions, which do conflict with widely expected terms of a peace agreement, and the much more numerous actions which have no relation to genuinely disputed territory. Fortunately it is not the Israeli inability to reach an internal agreement about reasonable limits on settlement location that is standing in the way of peace today, though it might in the future. It is not unreasonable to hope that if the possibility of peace became more imminent the Israeli public and political process would find the ability to overcome the current obstacles and reach a consistent settlement policy.

In the meantime, the fact that Palestinian representatives strongly complain about settlements should not be taken as evidence that settlements are preventing peace or movement towards a solution.

Speak the Truth to the Palestinians and Arab Countries

In addition to moving to resettle “refugees,” the US and Europe can promote peace by regularly going out of their way to remind Palestinians of what the League of Nations, in its decision establishing the Palestine Mandate, called the “historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine and to the grounds for reconstituting their national home in that country.” The message can

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help Palestinians come to believe that compromise is not dishonorable because the Jews are not foreign invaders or strangers trying to take their land by force without any historic or moral claim to it.³⁵

Palestinian leaders could not continue to deny Israel's historic connection to the land if the leading Western nations regularly talked about the true historical facts, which Muslims generally recognized until recently, and publicly challenged blatant historic falsehoods by Palestinian authorities.³⁶ This is the one factor that the world's democracies already have the power to determine without the need for agreement from anyone else. (Israel should also participate in this effort, but it has much less influence.)

This policy would have a double advantage. Not only would it let Palestinians know that there is an honorable basis for accepting Israel, it would also demonstrate that Western nations are prepared to reject false charges against Israel. Palestinian leadership is more likely to decide that it must make peace with Israel if it sees that it can no longer fool the West about its true agenda.

The implicit Palestinian debate about whether to make peace with Israel is mostly a debate about whether the Palestinians still have a chance to defeat Israel. Their main hopes now are Iran and the international movement to delegitimize Israel. Therefore, an additional way for the US and the Europeans to work towards peace is to make it clear that those in the West who speak of "Palestinian land" use that term because they believe that the West Bank should *become* Palestinian land, while acknowledging that currently the land is "disputed territory" to which Israel has moral, historical, and legal claims. Sovereignty over this land must be settled by negotiations, and it is important to stress the fact that it has never in the past been "Palestinian land" and thus never stolen from the Palestinians.

Doubts about international acceptance of Israel's legitimacy, and about whether these Western nations will apply the same rules to Israel as they do to other democracies, undermine the possibility of peace. Peace depends on the Palestinians deciding that there is no chance that the West will force Israel to agree to anything that threatens Israel's survival.

Work to Oppose Radical Islam

Another way to promote peace is to work against the growing influence of Iran, the Muslim Brotherhood, and hardline Salafist and jihadi groups in the Middle East. Ending the radicals' domination of Islamic discourse in the region is critical because the Palestinians are not strong enough to ignore outside Muslim opinion. Removing this Islamist domination would have many additional benefits for the rest of the world.

The current regime in Iran, the Muslim Brotherhood, and Salafist groups cannot be appeased or satisfied by any Israeli or Western concessions. Since their proclaimed and fundamental goal concerning Israel is to eliminate the Jewish state from the region, they are against peace between Israel and the Palestinians. So long as they endanger the life and political position of any Palestinian leader who tries to make peace with Israel, Palestinian society will not be able to choose to make peace until these radical forces are viewed as losing power. This will be signaled by more Muslim moderates becoming willing to speak openly.

Encourage Palestinian Freedom

An additional tactic for pursuing peace is using Western money to gradually increase Palestinian freedoms and to make it less personally profitable to the leadership to continue the war against Israel. It is the Palestinian people who have paid the biggest price for over sixty years of continued efforts to destroy Israel. Without more freedoms, Palestinians who want to make peace cannot organize political groups or present their arguments or true facts about Israel and Jewish history. If the people had more influence on decision-making and the freedom to debate the facts and choices, eventually they might be more willing to make peace than their leadership, which profits nicely from the conflict.

Increase the Value of Peace to the Palestinians

Right now the value of peace to the Palestinians cannot be increased enough so that they will choose peace with the Jewish state.

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Resettlement of the “refugees” would, in effect, make peace more attractive, because peace after resettlement would not leave the “refugees” in their camps as a visible reminder of failure and neglect. When they are settled a peace agreement could give the Palestinians a larger share of their negotiating demands.

The classic tactic to encourage someone to buy what you are selling is to make it seem that the price will be going up in the future. The message now being delivered by the diplomatic discussion and recent history is that the longer the Palestinians wait before making peace the better deal they will get. Most of those pushing for removing settlements now assume that the Palestinians are entitled to – or must be given – all the land outside the 1967 lines, with the exception of a few swaps for Israeli territory. So long as this assumption is maintained the Palestinians cannot lose from postponing peace.

The cause of peace would be advanced by international discussion of just how much of Judea and Samaria needs to be incorporated in a Palestinian state in order for it to be viable and to meet other appropriate criteria. Such a discussion would imply that the Palestinian state will not necessarily include all the land occupied by Jordan from 1948-1967.

The only reason why there is so much support for using what are called the “1967 lines” as the basis of a border between Israel and Palestine is that the Palestinians have insisted on this without internal debate. In addition, they have also insisted on flooding Israel with Arab “refugees.” Since they have not been ready to make peace on any terms they have had no reason to consider compromises. When they are finally ready to make peace, having dropped the goal to destroy Israel, it will be time to consider the possibilities of dividing up the land previously occupied by Jordan, as contemplated by UNSC Resolution 242.

The reason some Palestinians and their supporters argue that Israeli settlements discourage peace is that they make Palestinians fear that the settlements will become permanent, excluding them from the eventual Palestinian state. This fear, however, can encourage peace in the long run. By asking to have the settlements removed before they

agree to make peace the Palestinians are asking for a guarantee that they will not lose by delaying peace. One way to encourage them to decide to accept peace is to let them realize that perhaps the longer they delay, the less they will get.

What Israel Can Do to Pursue Peace Strategically

Israel should *not* make great efforts to convince Palestinians that it is ready to make peace with a Palestinian state and that it is willing to give up almost all of the land outside the lines of 1967 that it now controls. The Palestinians know that they are not ready to give up their efforts to eliminate Israel and that when they say “peace” they mean “justice,” which to them means the end of the Jewish state. So long as that is true they see Israel’s proclamation of its readiness for peace as either a lie or an indication that Israel is not determined to survive.

Israel must change the way it presents itself. The main thrust of Israel’s public voice should be the following major points which all of its representatives should constantly reiterate and incorporate into the “company line.” These points all reflect the current reality, that the conflict and occupation are the result of a long-term Palestinian unwillingness to retreat from its determination to eliminate Israel as a Jewish and democratic state in the Middle East.

1. Israel is the homeland of the Jewish people and Jerusalem is its capital. Israel will never cease to defend its freedom and its rights from all attacks.
2. Israel has never taken authority over any Palestinian land because there never has been land where the Palestinians were ever sovereign.
3. In principle the territory between Israel’s 1967 lines and the Jordan River should be part of the Jewish homeland, as decided by the League of Nations, on the basis of the still-valid historical and moral arguments that the League accepted. However this principle must deal with the practical problem of

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the large number of Palestinians living on a small part of this area.

4. Since the beginning of the conflict nearly a century ago the Jews have been willing to accept a compromise solution while the Arabs have refused to accept any partition. Israel continues to be ready to end the conflict through painful compromise, if necessary yielding some of the land to which it is entitled.
5. The Palestinian community prolongs the conflict by teaching its children to hate Israel and by denying the existence of Jewish people and Jewish history.
6. Since 1922, Arab leaders in Palestine have refused to allow Jews to live on any land they control, and Jews were even prevented from visiting their holy sites when they were controlled by Jordan, despite promises to the contrary. Israel allows more than a million Arabs to live in Israel and protects their basic freedom and human rights, while protecting and providing free access to holy places of all religions.
7. The Arab descendants of “refugees” from Israel must be allowed to settle in Arab countries or elsewhere rather than being forced, for political reasons, to remain “refugees.” Israel has already settled all the Jewish refugees from Arab lands without any compensation for property seized from them.
8. Palestinian institutions and actions deny Palestinians basic freedoms and human rights, deny women legal equality, and persecute homosexuals.
9. Palestinian terrorists kill Israeli civilians and use Palestinian civilians as cover for their military forces. Israel works hard, and accepts risks to its forces, to prevent Palestinian civilian casualties.
10. Palestinian “self-determination” does not require that a Palestinian state contain all the land that Jordan occupied from 1948 to 1967. A viable state can be made on different lines.

To put these arguments at the center of Israel's message to the world – to the Palestinians, Arab nations, the US, and Europe – will represent a major change in Israeli policy and can only be achieved with great difficulty. As a practical matter movement in this direction must probably be made gradually. A key factor of implementing this strategic plan is Israel's ability to maintain its military superiority and defeat all security threats.

Israel has the ability to help or hinder Palestinian economic and social development, although the main obstacles to Palestinian economic advancement are Palestinian corruption and lack of free market behavior. Israel has conflicting interests concerning the Palestinian economy. In the long run Palestinian society will likely evolve and choose peace when it has a growing and developing economy. In the near and medium future it is unclear whether the Palestinians will cause more trouble and danger to Israel if their society is more or less economically and socially healthy. Clearly there are some ways in which it is better to have a poor and incompetent enemy.

Israel could also use its ability to help or hurt the Palestinian economy using legitimate measures as carrots and sticks to influence marginal Palestinian actions against Israel. Israel could also use that ability to express its feelings about and its relation to Palestinian society. That is, if the Palestinian community hates Israel and is non-militarily at war with Israel, Israel could argue, "why should we help our enemy if they can do without our help?" This would also raise the cost of war to the Palestinian community and thus tend to encourage peace. While Israel does have moral obligations even towards its enemies, such as continuing to provide special medical services, it is clear that even according to the highest level of morality, there are limits to the obligation to help a society that treats you as its deadly enemy.

There are those who argue that if Israel continually holds out a helping hand to the Palestinians, the Palestinians may ultimately come to appreciate and respect Israel more. On the other hand if Israel responds to Palestinian enmity by generous behavior Palestinians may feel that Israel is showing contempt for their enmity and for them. To influence a society's attitudes it is necessary to understand that society's values and thinking and respond to them where they are, not

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by mirror imaging. If gifts from Israel to those who hate it don't reflect contempt for the hatred they may be interpreted as a sign of fear, which is also undesirable. Disinterested generosity to an enemy is not a well-understood idea in Israel's neighborhood.

Apart from strategy Israelis need to appreciate, and in some cases increase, personal connections with Palestinians who are more open to peace or understanding than the greater Palestinian community. It is important to remember that there are Palestinians who set noble examples of peace-loving human behavior despite the most difficult circumstances.

CONCLUSION

Peace is not possible now because Palestinian society is not yet ready to give up the goal that it has shared with the Arab world since before Israel was created: to prevent the establishment of and eliminate the existence of a Jewish country. This can be known from the statements and actions of Palestinian leaders, and from the fact that the internal political struggle necessary for the community to change its fundamental goal hasn't taken place. It is confirmed by the Palestinian leadership's denial of Jewish history in the land and the systematic teaching of hatred of both Israel and the Jewish people in Palestinian schools and official propaganda.

The current political environment in the Arab-Muslim world is too hostile towards Israel and the West for there to be any hope of a decisive change in Palestinian opinion at this time. It is only when the Arab-Muslim debate about hostility to the non-Muslim world changes enough to allow moderate voices to be heard that the Palestinians will be able to consider giving up their goal of eliminating Israel.

The measures that various parties can use to work toward future peace are:

1. Rejecting a Palestinian denial of Israel's historic connection to the Land of Israel.

2. Demonstrating that the Western nations will not reject Israel's legitimacy under any circumstances.
3. Resettling the Palestinian "refugees" outside of Israel.
4. Modifying aid programs to reduce the Palestinian use of foreign money to support terror infrastructure, teach hate, and pad leaders' pockets for personal gain.
5. Encouraging free discussion and free press within Palestinian society.
6. Fighting radical Islamist forces by providing financial and political support for the Iranian opposition, inducing the Saudis to end their program of promoting Wahhabism around the world, and encouraging moderate voices in the Arab world.
7. Discussing the specific land that Palestinians really need for effective self-determination and statehood.
8. Helping public opinion recognize that peace between the Israelis and Palestinians is still decades away, while still encouraging long-term confidence in peace.

Whether such a "pro-Israel" set of measures is the most effective way to pursue peace depends on the factual question of whether the Palestinians are willing to accept a peace that doesn't involve Israel's elimination. The serious pursuit of peace requires making a decision about this factual question on the basis of evidence, and using that decision to construct a strategy for pursuing peace.

In addition, Israel has much to do concerning the Palestinians in order to be more just and true to its moral character, and perhaps to increase understanding between Jews and Israeli Arabs and Palestinians. Warlike relationships often become gradually worse as conflict continues over time, and it is worthwhile to struggle against this tendency. It is not clear, however, whether this important agenda is likely to have a noticeable effect on the prospects for peace. And there

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is a danger that efforts by Israelis and by others to create support or pressure on Israel concerning this agenda will have a net negative effect on the prospects for peace by reinforcing a Palestinian desire to believe in the weakness and eventual collapse of Israel. Eventually, however, there will be Palestinians who lead their people away from war, and no one can know what efforts at mutual understanding will turn out to have helped such leaders to arise.

The strategic diagnosis presented here is not a happy one. It implies that Israel's situation is quite dangerous and may get substantially worse before peace can be achieved. But it doesn't do any good to deny reality. Peace cannot be achieved by pretending or hoping that reality is different than it is.

If the diagnosis is correct we have to accept it and figure out the best way to respond to the unfortunate reality. After all, although most of the cause of grim diagnosis is the inherent long-term realities of the region, it is clear that the situation has been made worse by the results of the Oslo Accords and by a long history of acting as if the opposite diagnosis were correct.

If we look realistically at both the Arab and Palestinian political situation and view of the world, the most effective way for Israel to pursue peace is to act to convince Palestinians that Israel wholeheartedly believes in its own rights to the land, has an unshakeable determination to protect itself against all challenges, and is growing in power. When more of the Arab world is ready to give up its effort to defeat the West and the goal of removing the Jewish state from "Muslim territory" there will be opportunities to pursue peace in other ways as well. Peace will be achieved. In the meantime maturity, patience, and courage are required.

Notes

¹ See Gershom Gorenberg, *The Unmaking of Israel*. New York: HarperCollins, 2011.

² This paper uses the phrases "eliminate Israel" or "destroy Israel" as shorthand for "destroy Israel as a democratic Jewish state." This objective would be achieved

either by defeating and ending the State of Israel or by forcing Israel to give up its legal definition as a Jewish state or forcing it to accept so many Arab citizens that there would no longer be an effective majority supporting its commitment to be a Jewish state.

³ Throughout this paper the term “refugees” appears in quotations to reflect the reality that these people do not meet the internationally-recognized legal definition of refugees.

⁴ An exception would be the very small minority of Israelis who are post-Zionists or who do not accept the legitimacy of Israel, although some of this group may also base their position on a misunderstanding of facts. There is also a small group which values Israeli control of historical Jewish areas of Judea and Samaria more than peace.

⁵ There would be disagreement between Palestinians who would like most or all Jews to emigrate or be killed, and those who would prefer that many or most Jews remain under an Arab majority.

⁶ This number is higher than most estimates because it includes a share of the resources provided to residents of Palestine by UNWRA and incorporates recent correction of conventional population estimates for the West Bank. See Bennett Zimmerman, et. al, “The Million Person Gap: The Arab Population in the West Bank and Gaza.” BESA Center, Bar Ilan University. *Mideast Security and Policy Studies No. 65*, 2006.

⁷ There was net emigration from the West Bank when it was controlled by Jordan from 1949-1967. After Israel gained control of the area there was substantial Palestinian immigration to the West Bank from 1967-1993. Since the Palestinian Authority was given control over most of the Palestinian areas in the West Bank in 1993 there has again been net emigration of Palestinians from the West Bank.

⁸ This possibility was noted by PA Ambassador to Lebanon, Abbas Zaki, who said: “With the two-state solution, in my opinion, Israel will collapse, because if they get out of Jerusalem, what will become of all the talk about the Promised Land and the Chosen People? What will become of all the sacrifices they made – just to be told to leave? They consider Jerusalem to have a spiritual status. The Jews consider Judea and Samaria to be their historic dream. If the Jews leave those places, the Zionist idea will begin to collapse. It will regress of its own accord. Then we will move forward.” See (<http://www.memritv.org/clip/en/2109.htm>).

⁹ David Pollock, “What Do the Arabs of East Jerusalem Really Want?” Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, Issue Brief 11(14), September 7, 2011.

¹⁰ There are literally hundreds of examples of such statements, though there are virtually no examples of Palestinian leaders telling their people that they are, or should be, prepared to live with an Israel that did not take in millions of Arabs. Sari Nusseiba has said that the demand for the “refugees” to return to Israel should be given up, but he is a lonely voice. He was advocating including the Palestinians in a single state and not giving up the goal of destroying Israel, however.

¹¹ There is one recent equivocal exception, a statement by Mahmoud Abbas that the Arabs made a mistake by not agreeing to the UN partition recommendation in 1947. It will be interesting to see whether this position – which seems to imply that a

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Jewish state should be accepted – is followed up or drops from the Palestinian discussion.

¹² David Barnett, “The Mounting Problem of Temple Denial.” *MERIA Journal* 15 (2), June 2011.

¹³ Some say that Israel does not want peace either, but this is a different argument. There is no serious claim that the Israeli community or its leadership prefers war or the current conflict over peace, or that Israel is trying to eliminate the Palestinians. Those who claim that Israel doesn’t want peace are saying that Israel refuses to make the further concessions that they believe are necessary to achieve peace. But that nasty way to describe their view of the negotiating situation does not take into account the current Palestinian commitment to destroying Israel, which makes any Israeli concessions – however “necessary” they might be – insufficient.

¹⁴ The Oslo Agreements put the PLO in charge in the areas where Palestinians live. PLO rule dramatically reduced the Palestinian standard of living and introduced an educational program aimed at teaching hatred of Israel. The Intifada that Oslo made possible reduced the number of Palestinians working in Israel and required Israeli security measures, leading to Palestinian casualties and hatred of Israel. Many good relations between Israelis and Palestinians were damaged or ended by the results of Oslo.

¹⁵ “Muslim world” is used to refer primarily to the Arab world plus Muslim non-Arab parts of the Middle East, especially Iran and Turkey.

¹⁶ “Salafi” means one who follows, or attempts to follow, the ways of the “pious ancestors” (in Arabic: *al-Salaf al-Salih*). This is the term by which various radical Islamic groups call themselves. It more or less corresponds to what we would call “Islamists” or “Islamic radicals,” most of whom are not active jihadists. Wahhabis are those who follow the teachings of the 18th century religious scholar Muhammad ibn Abd Al-Wahhab, who is the author of the official Islamic doctrine in Saudi Arabia. Ibn Al-Wahhab was a follower of Ibn Tamiya, a leading 14th century Hanbali scholar (i.e., adhering to the Hanbali legal school, one of the four known legal schools within Sunni Islam). All Wahhabis are Salafists, but not vice versa. Among the key ideas of Salafists is that Muslims should return to the ideas and ways of early Muslims, and that they should avoid any respect for historic places or graves (except the *Kaaba* in Mecca). It emphasizes the Islamic belief that any part of the world that doesn’t accept *Sharia* and Muslim control is illegitimate and must be opposed by Muslims.

¹⁷ See Brian Bennet, “Wahhabism: The Money Trail.” *Time*, March 10, 2003 (<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,428175,00.html#ixzz1Z4aPubNc>); Jeff Gerth and Judith Miller, “Threats and Responses: The Money Trail; Saudi Arabia Is Called Slow in Helping Stem the Flow of Cash to Militants.” *The New York Times*, December 1, 2002 (<http://www.nytimes.com/2002/12/01/world/threats-responses-money-trail-saudi-arabia-called-slow-helping-stem-flow-cash.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm>); and David E. Kaplan, “The Saudi Connection: How billions in oil money spawned a global terror network.” *US News & World Report*, September 2003 (<http://www.usnews.com/usnews/news/articles/031215/15terror.htm>).

¹⁸ President Obama is not against US moral or intellectual influence, what he calls “leading from behind,” but is opposed to the idea of American influence based on the traditional ways of gaining and using power in international relations.

¹⁹ They can achieve economic gains and eventual prosperity by establishing market economies based on the rule of law, but big improvements cannot be achieved instantaneously by any system.

²⁰ Many Arab liberals are also very anti-Israel.

²¹ Crispian Balmer, “Hints of High Life Sprout in Poverty-Stricken Gaza.” *Reuters*, September 7, 2011 (<http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/09/07/us-palestinians-gaza-luxury-idUSTRE7863HX20110907>).

²² MEMRI, Special Dispatch No. 3126, July 28, 2010 (http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/4482.htm%20target=_blank%3E).

²³ A report by Israel’s Defense Ministry finds that Palestinian schoolbooks reject Israel’s right to exist (http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/as_nm_e.pdf).

²⁴ “Libel: Israel Spreads AIDS and Drugs.” *Palestine Media Watch* (<http://palwatch.org/main.aspx?fi=766>).

²⁵ “Libel: Israel Steals Organs from Palestinians.” *Palestine Media Watch* (<http://palwatch.org/main.aspx?fi=776>).

²⁶ “Libel: Israel Murdered Arafat.” *Palestine Media Watch* (<http://palwatch.org/main.aspx?fi=769>).

²⁷ “Shahada (Death for Allah) Promotion.” *Palestine Media Watch* (<http://palwatch.org/main.aspx?fi=110>).

²⁸ Herb Keinon, “Kuperwasser Warns Palestinian Incitement Continuing Unabated.” *The Jerusalem Post*, August 13, 2012 (<http://www.jpost.com/DiplomacyAndPolitics/Article.aspx?id=281005>).

²⁹ http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1937_1938_5_YRAppendices.pdf

³⁰ The Arabs base this claim on United Nations General Assembly Resolution 194, which was a non-binding recommendation made at the end of 1948 as part of the UN effort to resolve the war against Israel by the Arab states. It says that the General Assembly “resolves that the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date.” Resolution 194 does not attempt to declare a right for refugees, much less for their descendants, and even if it did the General Assembly does not have authority to create rights.

³¹ Some argue that Israel does not have the technical status of “occupier” because there can only be “occupation” of land for which there is a sovereign state other than the “occupier.”

³² It is often said that Israel’s claims to the land are “Biblical claims,” presumably of no significance to non-believers. But Israel does not rely on Biblical claims; it has a powerful basis in law, history, and morality for its position that it is the most rightful claimant to the West Bank. Of course many Jews and Christians believe that Israel has rights to the disputed territories because of the Biblical report of a promise by God. But the fact that such Biblical claims are made by believers does not contradict or weaken the other sources of Israel’s claim to the land set aside for a Jewish homeland by the League of Nations.

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³³ Bennett Zimmerman, et. al, “The Million Person Gap: The Arab Population in the West Bank and Gaza.” BESA Center, Bar Ilan University. *Mideast Security and Policy Studies No. 65*, 2006.

³⁴ I use the word “settlements” to refer only to Israeli communities in Judea and Samaria, not to neighborhoods in Jerusalem, nor to land within the lines of June 1967. As hinted elsewhere, the question of Jerusalem is largely avoided in this discussion. When the settlements had many fewer residents than they do today, Elias Freij, Mayor of a Christian-majority Bethlehem from 1972-1997, sometimes argued that the Palestinians should make an agreement with Israel before there was further expansion of the settlements. This illustrates how settlements might encourage *peace*.

³⁵ An important stream of Islamic thought recognizes early Jewish connections to the land but makes it part of Islamic history, even though it is recognized as being centuries before Mohammed and the Koran. This view regards Abraham, Moses, and David as Muslim prophets. On this basis there can be no Jewish history because it is all part of Islamic history.

³⁶ The international community was clear in 1922 that the Jewish people were entitled to have a homeland in Palestine. Winston Churchill, while serving as British Secretary of State for the Colonies, said in June 1922: “When it is asked what is meant by the development of the Jewish National Home in Palestine, it may be answered that it is not the imposition of a Jewish nationality upon the inhabitants of Palestine as a whole, but the further development of the existing Jewish community, with the assistance of Jews in other parts of the world, in order that it may become a centre [*sic*] in which the Jewish people as a whole may take, on grounds of religion and race, an interest and a pride. But in order that this community should have the best prospect of free development and provide a full opportunity for the Jewish people to display its capacities, it is essential that it should know that it is in Palestine as of right and not on sufferance.”