

## It's about ideology, stupid

By Herb Keinon The Jerusalem Post December 25, 2006

The newest buzzword in Middle East diplomacy is "strengthening the moderates." This is an expression that continuously rolls off the tongues of both world and Israeli leaders these days. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert uses this phrase repeatedly and heard it often on his visit two weeks ago to Rome and Berlin, and in his meetings last week with the visiting prime ministers from Britain and Norway.

The question is how to do it. How do you prop up the moderates? On Saturday night, Olmert gave his answer: by providing the moderates with money. And he is not alone in the belief that this is the way to help combat Islamic extremists.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who spoke at his press conference with Olmert in Jerusalem last week about providing funds to Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas, was asked whether this was not tantamount to buying votes - paying the Arab street to vote for the good guy. The British prime minister gave a long-winded reply that could not be interpreted as an unequivocal no.

The West, he said, had the right to support financially those who shared its principles. This argument takes on added weight in light of the fact that with Iran successfully smuggling hundreds of millions of dollars to Hamas - some estimate the sum to be \$250 million - those being hurt by the world's financial siege of the PA are the moderates, who are not seeing this Iranian money.

Now this is about to change. The money that Israel freed up Saturday night is intended to prop up Abbas. It will go to him directly, and there is little real fear - because of the intra-Palestinian fighting - that he will then pass this money on to Hamas. This money is clearly meant to buy him support on the Palestinian street.

The problem with this approach, however, is that it underestimates the strength of religion and ideology in the society, and reduces everything to shekels and agarot. It is a throwback to the Shimon Peres way of thinking of the early 1990s, that if you

just improved the Palestinian economic situation, peace would spring up along with the next branch of McDonalds.

While few dispute that destitution nurtures terrorism, alleviating the poverty will not necessarily dry up the reservoir of terrorists. Remember that those who brought down the World Trade Center were not destitute refugees in rags.

If this summer's war in Lebanon taught Israel anything, it is that our conflict is as much an ideological/religious one as it is territorial. Hizbullah had no legitimate territorial claim on Israel, yet it provoked a war.

The same holds true in Gaza. Israel has left Gaza completely, yet the rockets continue to fall. It's not only territorial, not even mostly territorial, but largely ideological and religious.

And for whatever reason - and they are myriad - an extreme ideology is on the ascent from Afghanistan to the Sudan. And it is an ideology that is more attractive to the masses - or so it now seems - than the stodgy, bland, often corrupt alternatives offered up by the Arab "moderates."

While Egypt's Hosni Mubarak was critical of Hizbullah this summer, his people loved what they achieved. While King Abdullah is concerned about what Hamas represents, what the organization stands for has an appeal for a significant number of Jordanians.

While the war in Lebanon won Hizbullah the admiration of the Arab masses, it divided those masses to a large degree from their "moderate" regimes - at least in Jordan and Egypt.

Which doesn't mean that Saturday night's decision to try and prop up the moderates in the PA was wrong. Just that it should be done with eyes wide-open, fully aware that in this part of the world - where religion and ideology have such a powerful pull - money isn't everything, and throwing money at the problem won't necessarily solve it.

## A Religious Problem Jimmy Carter's book: An Israeli view

By Michael B. Oren The Wall Street Journal December 26, 2006

Several prominent scholars have taken issue with Jimmy Carter's book "Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid," cataloguing its historical inaccuracies and lamenting its lack of balance. The journalist Jeffrey Goldberg also critiqued the book's theological purpose, which, he asserted, was to

"convince American Evangelicals to reconsider their support for Israel."

Mr. Carter indeed seems to have a religious problem with the Jewish state. His book bewails the fact that Israel is not the reincarnation of ancient Judea but a modern, largely temporal democracy. "I

had long taught lessons from the Hebrew Scriptures," he recalls telling Prime Minister Golda Meir during his first tour through the country. "A common historical pattern was that Israel was punished whenever the leaders turned away from devout worship of God. I asked if she was concerned about the secular nature of the Labor government."

He complains about the fact that the kibbutz synagogue he enters is nearly empty on the Sabbath and that the Bibles presented to Israeli soldiers "was one of the few indications of a religious commitment that I observed during our visit." But he also reproves contemporary Israelis for allegedly mistreating the Samaritans--"the same complaint heard by Jesus almost two thousand years earlier"--and for pilfering water from the Jordan River, "where ... Jesus had been baptized by John the Baptist."

Disturbed by secular Laborites, he is further unnerved by religiously minded Israelis who seek to fulfill the biblical injunction to settle the entire Land of Israel. There are "two Israels," Mr. Carter concludes, one which embodies the "the ancient culture of the Jewish people, defined by the Hebrew Scriptures," and the other in "the occupied Palestinian territories," which refuses to "respect the basic human rights of the citizens."

Whether in its secular and/or observant manifestations, Israel clearly discomfited Mr. Carter, a man who, even as president, considered himself in "full-time Christian service." Yet, in revealing his unease with the idea of Jewish statehood, Mr. Carter sets himself apart from many U.S. presidents before and after him, as well as from nearly 400 years of American Christian thought.

Generations of Christians in this country, representing a variety of dominations, laymen and clergy alike, have embraced the concept of renewed Jewish sovereignty in Palestine. The passion was already evident in 1620, when William Bradford alighted on Plymouth Rock and exclaimed, "Come, let us declare the word of God in Zion." Bradford was a leader of the Puritans, dissenting Protestants who, in their search for an unsullied religion and the strength to resist state oppression, turned to the Old Testament. There, they found a God who spoke directly to his people, who promised to deliver them from bondage and return them to their ancestral homeland. Appropriating this narrative, the Puritans fashioned themselves as the New Jews and America as their New Promised Land. They gave their children Hebrew names--David, Benjamin, Sarah, Rebecca--and called over 1,000 of their towns after Biblical places, including Bethlehem, Bethel and, of course, New Canaan.

Identifying with the Jews, a great many colonists endorsed the notion of restoring Palestine to Jewish control. Elias Boudinot, president of the Continental

Congress, predicted that the Jews, "however scattered ... are to be recovered by the mighty power of God, and restored to their beloved ... Palestine." John Adams imagined "a hundred thousand Israelites" marching triumphantly into Palestine. "I really wish the Jews in Judea an independent nation," he wrote. During the Revolution, the association between America's struggle for independence and the Jews' struggle for repatriation was illustrated by the proposed Great Seal designed by Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin, showing Moses leading the Children of Israel toward the Holy Land.

Restorationism became a major theme in antebellum religious thought and a mainstay of the Methodist, Baptist and Presbyterian churches. In his 1844 bestseller, "The Valley of the Vision," New York University Bible scholar George Bush--a forebear of two presidents of the same name--called on the U.S. to devote its economic and military might toward re-creating a Jewish polity in Palestine. But merely envisioning such a state was insufficient for some Americans, who, in the decades before the Civil War, left home to build colonies in Palestine. Each of these settlements had the same goal: to teach the Jews, long disenfranchised from the land, to farm and so enable them to establish a modern agrarian society. In 1863, Abraham Lincoln said that "restoring the Jews to their homeland is a noble dream shared by many Americans," and that the U.S. could work to realize that goal once the Union prevailed.

Nineteenth-century restorationism reached its fullest expression in an 1891 petition submitted by Midwestern magnate William Blackstone to President Benjamin Harrison. The Blackstone Memorial, as it was called, urged the president to convene an international conference to discuss ways of reviving Jewish dominion in Palestine. Among the memorial's 400 signatories were some of America's most preeminent figures, including John D. Rockefeller, J. Pierpont Morgan, Charles Scribner and William McKinley. By the century's turn, those advocating restored Jewish sovereignty in Palestine had begun calling themselves Zionists, though the vast majority of the movement's members remained Christian rather than Jewish. "It seems to me that it is entirely proper to start a Zionist State around Jerusalem," wrote Teddy Roosevelt, "and [that] the Jews be given control of Palestine."

Such sentiments played a crucial role in gaining international recognition for Zionist claims to Palestine during World War I, when the British government sought American approval for designating that area as the Jewish national home. Though his closest counselors warned him against endorsing the move, Woodrow Wilson, the son and grandson of Presbyterian preachers, rejected their advice. "To think that I the son of the manse [parsonage] should be able to help restore the Holy

Land to its people," he explained. With Wilson's imprimatur, Britain issued the declaration that became the basis of its League of Nations mandate in Palestine, and as the precursor to the 1947 U.N. Partition Resolution creating the Jewish state.

The question of whether or not to recognize that state fell to Harry S. Truman. Raised in a Baptist household where he learned much of the Bible by heart, Truman had been a member of the pro-Zionist American Christian Palestine Committee and an advocate of the right of Jews--particularly Holocaust survivors--to immigrate to Palestine. He was naturally inclined to acknowledge the nascent state but encountered fervid opposition from the entire foreign policy establishment. If America sided with the Zionists, officials in the State and Defense departments cautioned, the Arabs would cut off oil supplies to the West, undermine America's economy, and expose Europe to Soviet invasion. Hundreds of thousands of U.S. troops would have to be sent to Palestine to save its Jews from massacre.

Truman listened carefully to these warnings and then, at 6:11 on the evening of May 14, he announced that the U.S. would be the first nation to recognize the newly declared State of Israel. While the decision may have stemmed in part from domestic political considerations, it is difficult to conceive that any politician, much less one of Truman's character, would have risked global catastrophe by recognizing a frail and miniscule country. More likely, the dramatic *démarche* reflected Truman's religious background and his commitment to the restorationist creed. Introduced a few weeks later to an American Jewish delegation as the president who had helped create Israel, Truman took umbrage and snapped, "What you mean 'helped create'? I am Cyrus"--a reference to the

Persian king who returned the Jews from exile--"I am Cyrus!"

Since 1948, some administrations (Eisenhower, Bush Sr.) have been less ardent in their attachment to Israel, and others (Kennedy, Nixon) more so. Throughout the last 60 years, though, the U.S. has never wavered in its concern for Israel's survival and its support for the Jewish people's right to statehood. While U.S.-Israel ties are no doubt strengthened by common bonds of democracy and Western culture, religion remains an integral component in that relationship. We know that Lyndon Johnson's Baptist grandfather told him to "take care of the Jews, God's chosen people," and that Bill Clinton's pastor, on his deathbed, made the future president promise never to abandon the Jewish state. We know how faith has impacted the policies of George W. Bush, who is perhaps the most pro-Israel president in history.

In his apparent attempt to make American Christians rethink their affection for Israel, Jimmy Carter is clearly departing from time-honored practice. This has not been the legacy of evangelicals alone, but of many religious denominations in the U.S., and not solely the conviction of Mr. Bush, but of generations of American leaders. In the controversial title of his book, Mr. Carter implicitly denounces Israel for its separatist policies, but, by doing so, he isolates himself from centuries of American tradition.

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## A comedian's sigh, the 4th Commandment, and a better New Year

By Michael Medved TownHall.com December 28, 2006

A random, wistful comment by one of the nation's most successful movie comedians helps illuminate the least noted of all the Ten Commandments – and should suggest some worthy New Year's resolutions for the rest of us.

A December 10th Parade magazine profile of Ben Stiller, the star of the hugely entertaining new comedy "Night at the Museum," describes the 41-year-old star's quiet life with his family. "Ben now lives in the Hollywood Hills with his wife, actress Christine Taylor (best known as Marcia in The Brady Bunch movies), their two young children and two dogs," writes celebrity reporter Robert Masello. "He's been married for six and a half years and says he can hardly remember the night-owl lifestyle he used to lead. 'One of my friends will say, 'Hey, it's Friday night. What are you doing?' and I'll have to stop and think, 'When was the last time I got excited

over a Friday night?' I asked Christine, and she said that maybe it was in high school."

From a Jewish point of view, Stiller's comment conveys a strange sense of emptiness, a tinge of sadness—since our tradition views Friday night – the Sabbath – as by far the most significant, most "exciting" night of the week. Though he often portrays Jewish characters on screen (even playing a likeable, lovesick rabbi in Leap of Faith), Stiller's mother (the gifted comedienne Anne Meara) is Irish Catholic and he claims no particular affiliation with the religious tradition of either parent. It's not surprising that he'd feel no particular compunction to celebrate Friday night as a special occasion with his family, but his implication that weekends at home count as boring and indistinguishable highlights the deeper need for Sabbath commitments.

When it comes to the Ten Commandments, most Americans make some effort to honor most of them – avoiding murder, theft, adultery and false witness wherever possible and even, if they think about, trying to honor parents and to stay away from covetousness. The Sabbath commandment, on the other hand (most often enumerated as number four in the Big Ten) gets scant attention: aside from Seventh Day Adventists, Orthodox Jews and a few other minor denominations, few of us even pause to consider what God expected of us with the instruction “Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy” (Exodus, 20:8) or, in the later restatement of the Ten Commandments: “Guard the Sabbath Day to keep it holy” (Deuteronomy 5:12).

According to Jewish tradition, the two imperative verbs “remember” (zachor in Hebrew) and “guard” (shamor) represent the two essential and contrasting aspects of Sabbath observance. “Remember” emphasizes the positive elements of the holy day – setting up a big festive meal with your best food and wine, singing songs, enjoying guests, celebrating your blessings. The instruction to “Guard,” on the other hand, tells us that in addition to these special, additional positive observances, there are also numerous negatives, things we don’t do. A Biblical Sabbath involves not only things we add to our weekday routine, but behaviors we subtract and restrict. We’re expected to cut back on our normal, daily activities – no creative work, no handling of money, no media immersion, no indulging our normal human (and God-given) impulse to alter the world that the Almighty has created (in the first six days) and given to us as a blessing.

The key purpose of both “remembering” and “guarding” (of both positive and negative observances) is to make the Sabbath “holy” — to consecrate the day to God, and to set it aside as different from all other days. This goes along with the core meaning of the Hebrew word “kadosh,” as well as the dictionary definitions of its English counterpart, “holy.” The first definition (in the American Heritage Dictionary) says “belonging to, derived from, or associated with a divine power, sacred” and the fourth definition explains “specified or set apart for a religious purpose.”

Leaving aside any religious associations, the idea of one day a week “set apart” for family and friends and home-based festivities makes all the sense in the world. With the frantic schedules we all keep today, time rushes past us in a blur with few guideposts beyond birthdays and anniversaries and the major seasonal holidays. Ben Stiller isn’t the only one who can’t remember the “last time I got excited over a Friday night.” The days melt into one another with

little distinction or direction, especially on those not infrequent occasions when weekday stress and demands infect the atmosphere of the weekends. A Sabbath – a day of difference, set aside – breaks the pattern and the pressure and reminds you where you are, in the calendar and in your spiritual progress. One of the big advantages of traditional Sabbath observance is that it forces us to take note of another week that’s passed, and to emphasize the opportunities in the fresh week that’s about to begin.

I can’t claim that every Sabbath counts as memorably “exciting” in the Medved household but you certainly you know it’s different, radically different -- with white tablecloths, glowing candles, free-flowing wine, leisurely, multi-course meals with abundant guests, and no telephone conversations or e-mail connections or business appointments or trips in cars.

The point is to gain a richer appreciation of the completeness of the glorious universe that God finished before he ceased his work of creation (“For in six days The Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all this is them, and He rested on the seventh day” Exodus 20:11) as well as a sharper sense of focus on the toil that consumes the other days of our lives (“And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt and the Lord your God has taken you out from there with a strong hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to make the Sabbath day.” Deuteronomy 5:15).

The Fourth Commandment, in other words, belongs in the Top Ten not because it requires your attendance in church or synagogue (it doesn’t) but because it forces you to take a look at creation and your place in it. The purpose is perspective – the sort of perspective that’s only achievable when you forget about the urgent and the pressing and concentrate instead on the important and timeless.

Even those who feel no religious impulses whatever can benefit from absorbing the message of the Fourth Commandment, just as they can enrich their lives and souls from paying attention to the Fifth (to “honor your father and mother”). As Jews, we begin a Sabbath on Friday at dusk, the evening of the seventh day – just as we begin every day at sunset the night before, because the Biblical description of creation (“And there was evening and there was morning, one day.” Genesis 1:5) suggests that this is the way God set up time. Whether you begin to count your holy, set-aside day at sunset, sunrise, or midnight, whether you observe it from Friday night till Saturday night, or Sunday morning through Sunday night (as most Christians do), the point is to establish an unbreakable pattern. You honor the Sabbath commandment by behaving

differently even when it's inconvenient. Maybe it doesn't require a full 24-hour cessation of work (at least for now), but what about an iron clad, non-negotiable commitment for one celebratory, uninterrupted family meal – either Friday night, or a set time Sunday afternoon, or whenever your tradition (and preference) may dictate?

Those tens of millions of Christians who revere the authenticity of scripture could vastly enrich their understanding of the sacred patterns by which Jesus arranged his own life if they attempted a more serious experiential exploration of the Fourth Commandment. Why leave first hand knowledge of the impact and meaning of one of the God's major instructions to humanity to a few small religious sects? A society in which Sabbath consciousness plays a greater role will be a healthier society, both for its individual members and for the collective.

The upcoming New Year's celebration offers the perfect opportunity to set off in this positive

direction. Looking ahead to the fresh calendar's months and days provides a distinctive chance to mark off some portion of each week as holy, or set-aside – different and restorative—a Sabbath. Making a 2007 resolution to observe some form of Sabbath might pay off even more substantially than the normal promises we make to eat less and exercise more...

Maybe you're every bit as busy as Ben Stiller (one of the hardest working actors in the business) and, like him, you wonder whether it's even possible to get excited once again over Friday nights after draining weeks of exhaustion and accomplishment. Making an attempt to take the Fourth Commandment seriously may not provide an immediate, automatic answer to that challenge but-- as at least some of Ben's ancestors no doubt understood-- it can't hurt.

## Israel Fades, China Takes Lead on Foreign IPOs Listed in US

### By Lynn Cowan The Wall Street Journal December 18, 2006

Although it's small in land mass, Israel was once mighty in terms of foreign issuance of IPOs in the U.S. -- but it has nearly fallen off the map in the past six years.

At the height of the bull market in the late 1990s, the most active foreign source of initial public offerings was Israel, by a wide margin. Today, Israel's share of the number of foreign-based companies listing in the U.S. has slipped to 11% from the 23% it held in 1999, as China has edged ahead in dominance, according to data from Dealogic. Israel was never a prime source of large-size deals for the U.S. market; the dollar amount that its companies raised was regularly eclipsed by other locales like Canada and Germany. And Israel isn't alone in staying away from the U.S. markets, as more foreign companies choose to list closer to home for a variety of reasons, including improved liquidity and valuations.

What's changed for Israel has been the steepness of the decline in offerings coming to the U.S. In 2000, 13 Israeli companies chose to launch their public offerings in America, says Dealogic. In 2006, just three have: email software firm Incredimail Ltd., broadcast content distributor RRSat Global Communications Network Ltd., and telecom equipment-maker Allot Communications Ltd. Only one Israeli company, semiconductor supplier Mellanox Technologies Ltd., remains in the lineup of IPOs waiting to go public in the coming months. During the period, the number of Israeli companies going public on other world exchanges has been sparse as well; there were only four in 2006,

according to data from Thomson Financial, down from 10 in 2000. Meanwhile, Israel's General Share and TA-100 indexes have been trending higher since 2003.

Experts differ on what might be keeping Israeli companies from coming public, particularly in the U.S. Yorum Tietz, the Israeli director of strategic growth markets for Ernst & Young, believes that the preponderance of mergers and acquisitions in that country is keeping a lid on IPOs. Most of the M&A activity is actually emanating from U.S.-domiciled firms snapping up Israeli firms, he says.

"The first company ever bought by Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway outside the U.S. was an Israeli company," says Mr. Tietz, referring to Berkshire's \$4 billion purchase of tool maker Iscar Metalworking Cos. in July. "U.S. investors are still getting exposure to Israeli companies, but as subsidiaries of larger U.S. multinationals, not as a standalone listed stock." Others say that the change has more to do with regulatory and market shifts since the late 1990s. Sarbanes-Oxley rules created additional expense and risks for foreign issuers, and the financial requirements to list successfully in the U.S. are also steeper now, says Zohar Zisapel, co-founder and chairman of Tel Aviv-based Rad Data Communications Ltd. "In the late 1990s, it was quite easy to come public, and some companies went public too early," says Mr. Zisapel, who has backed eight Israeli companies doing IPOs in the U.S. since 1991. "Nowadays, six years after the bubble burst, it is not as easy. The level of sales and profits that you need to go public are much higher now."

## Armed conflict footnotes

By Bruce Fein *The Washington Times* December 19, 2006

More than five years have elapsed since September 11, 2001.

Vastly more is now known about the international terrorist danger to the United States based on both experience and intelligence. That knowledge demonstrates that, at present, international terrorism is insufficiently menacing to the American people's security to satisfy any sensible constitutional notion of war or armed conflict within the United States.

No additional terrorist plots in the nation have succeeded. Embryonic plans or conspiracies have been detected and prosecuted in civilian courts. Only three American citizens have been detained by President Bush as unlawful enemy combatants: one was deported to Saudi Arabia; and another is undergoing prosecution in a civilian court for allegedly providing material assistance to a foreign terrorist organization.

The number of alien unlawful enemy combatants detained at Guantanamo Bay runs into the hundreds, and virtually all were captured thousands of miles from American shores. Not a single alleged international terrorist has been prosecuted by a military commission for an alleged war crime. And Americans do not shy from domestic travel or shopping for fear of a terrorist attack.

Approximately 3,000 died from the September 11 abominations. But 20,000 are murdered annually in the United States. Their perpetrators are apprehended and prosecuted through customary law enforcement tools. The nation is not placed on a war footing to conduct military operations against suspected would-be murderers within the United States.

Last week, the Israeli Supreme Court in the case of the Public Committee against Torture in Israel v. The Government of Israel (Dec. 11), addressed whether the State of Israel was in a state of "armed conflict" with terrorism. Answering in the affirmative, the court elaborated recurring scenes of horror that have been conspicuously absent in the United States since September 11, 2001: "In February 2000, the second intifada began. A massive assault of terrorism was directed against the State of Israel, and against Israelis, merely because they are Israelis. This assault of terrorism differentiates neither between combatants and civilians, nor between women, men, and children. The terrorist attacks take place both in the territory of Judea, Samaria, and the Gaza Strip, and within the borders of the State of Israel. They are directed against civilian centers, shopping centers and markets, coffeehouses and restaurants. Over the last five years, thousands of acts of terrorism have been committed against Israel. In the attacks, more than

1,000 Israeli citizens have been killed. Thousands of Israeli citizens have been wounded. Thousands of Palestinians have been killed and wounded during this period as well.... In these terrorist attacks, the terrorist organizations use military means par excellence, whereas the common denominator of them all is their lethality and cruelty. Among those means are shooting attacks, suicide bombings, mortar fire, rocket fire, car bombs, et cetera."

The severity of the terrorist danger to Israel is further underscored by its repeated successes despite Shin Bet, Mossad, and the Israeli Defense Force (IDF), the gold standard for thwarting international terrorism.

To conclude that the United States, like Israel, is also engaged in armed conflict with terrorism holds alarming legal implications. President Bush has insisted the entire world is a battlefield in clashing with al Qaeda because Osama bin Laden has pledged to kill Americans -- whether civilian or combatant -- anywhere they can be found.

But if the United States is a battlefield of the armed conflict, then the president would be correspondingly empowered to direct the nation's security forces to kill suspected members of al Qaeda or sister terrorist organizations in the United States suspected of involvement in the planning, launching or execution of terrorist attacks.

Suspicion is neither proof beyond a reasonable doubt nor a preponderance of the evidence. It is not even probable cause. It is simply a nonfrivolous worry that an unlawful enemy combatant may be afoot, which accommodates many mistakes, as with Canadian-Syrian Maher Arar. Innocent civilians in the United States could be legally killed in targeting suspected al Qaeda combatants, for example, Jose Padilla, if an armed conflict with international terrorism here were deemed ongoing. In a parallel situation, Israeli security forces have killed approximately 150 civilians who were in proximity of targeted terrorists during the last five years. Hundreds of others have been wounded.

It is conceivable that international terrorism in the United States has been stifled since September 11 because of President Bush's assertion of powers appropriate for armed conflicts within the nation, for example, the warrantless interceptions of phone conversations or e-mails of American citizens suspected of al Qaeda connections. But the president has not shouldered that burden of proof. No convincing evidence has been forthcoming to either Congress or the public establishing that -- in light of what is known today -- terrorism within U.S. boundaries can be thwarted and punished with reasonable safety to our people only if the entire nation is treated as engulfed in armed conflict.

To be sure, President Bush has not yet used lethal military force against suspected al Qaeda members in the U.S. But he is already enshrining in law a sweeping definition of armed conflict that will lie around like a loaded weapon ready for use by any

incumbent who claims an urgent need, to paraphrase Supreme Court Justice Robert Jackson.

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## The Big Lie About the Middle East don't care about the Palestinians

No sensible person is against peacemaking in the Holy Land. Applause and hopefulness would seem the reasonable reaction to the Iraq Study Group's recommendation that the Bush Administration "act boldly" and "as soon as possible" to resolve the conflict between the Israelis and Palestinians. But as a front-row observer of similar efforts over the past 15 years, I could muster neither response. In lumping the Iraq mess in with the Palestinian problem--and suggesting the first could not be fixed unless the second was too--the Baker-Hamilton commission lent credibility to a corrosive myth: that the fundamental problem in the Arab world is the plight of the Palestinians.

It is a falsehood perpetuated not just by the likes of Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden, who came late to the slogan after their actual beefs--Saddam with his neighbors; bin Laden with the Saudi royals--gained insufficient traction in the Arab world. The mantra is also repeated like an axiom in the U.S.--in parts of the State Department, in various think tanks, by editorial writers and Sunday talk-show hosts.

Yes, it was a great disturbance in the Arab world in the 1940s when a Jewish state was born through a U.N. vote and a war that made refugees of many Palestinians. Then the 1967 war left Israel in control of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and thus the Palestinians who lived there. But the pan-Arabism that once made the Palestinian cause the region's cause is long dead, and the Arab countries have their own worries aplenty. In a decade of reporting in the region, I found it rarely took more than the arching of an eyebrow to get the most candid of Arab thinkers to acknowledge that the tears shed for the Palestinians today outside the West Bank and Gaza are of the crocodile variety. Palestinians know this best of all.

To promote the canard that the troubles of the Arab world are rooted in the Palestinians' misfortune does great harm. It encourages the Arabs to continue to avoid addressing their colossal societal and political ills by hiding behind their Great Excuse: it's all Israel's fault. Certainly, Israel has at times been an obnoxious neighbor, but God help the Arab leaders, propagandists and apologists if a day ever comes when the Arab-Israeli mess is unraveled. One wonders how they would then explain why in Egypt 4 of every 10 people are illiterate; Saudi Arabian

## Tell James Baker: Arab nations

By Lis Beyer Time December 10, 2006

Shi'ites (not to mention women) are second-class citizens; 11% of Syrians live below subsistence level; and Jordan's King can unilaterally dissolve Parliament, as he did in 2001. Or why no Middle Eastern government but Israel's and to some extent Lebanon's tolerates freedom of assembly or speech, or democratic institutions like a robust press or civic organizations with independence and clout--let alone unfettered competitive elections.

One might argue that if the Arab dictators were deprived of the Great Excuse, they might begin to rule with greater concern for their constituents' needs. But why should they be allowed to wait--in the meantime cynically selling their people the Israel Myth--especially since the wait is apt to be long? The Baker commission is quite right in wanting to see sooner rather than later a viable Palestinian state. But the report's airy prescription for frog-marching Israelis and Palestinians into new peace talks perpetuates another persistent fiction: that U.S. involvement is the key to a breakthrough. That contradicts the real-life story of all three of the major peace agreements Israel has signed, with the Egyptians, Palestinians and Jordanians. Each was the result of bold initiative not by Washington but by local leaders, when conditions were ripe. In all three cases, the accords were the product of negotiations begun in secret behind the backs of the Americans. The Oslo accords with the Palestinians ultimately fell apart, but not because of a collapse of U.S. diplomacy; rather, because of a failure of leadership by Yasser Arafat.

The Israelis and Palestinians aren't going to make peace until they have brave, inspiring leaders, which they don't, and when they are sick of fighting, which they aren't. When that time comes, the U.S. can facilitate negotiations, as it has before, but only if it re-establishes its reputation as a reasonably honest broker. In the past, Washington tilted to the Israelis' side but not so much that the Palestinians couldn't live with it. President Bush has turned the tilt into a slap-down. He says he supports Palestinian statehood, but the Palestinians don't hear the words; they grasp the lack of feeling he evinces for them. They take in the unprecedented silences in Washington when Israeli forces overreact; they wince at White House endorsements of what the U.S. used to call illegal Jewish settlements in the West Bank. If James Baker had wanted to improve

U.S. policy toward the Palestinians, he might have whispered these things into Bush's ear instead of

sucking up to the Arab states with his inappropriate and quixotic peace plan.

## The Road to Tehran

By Bret Stephens *The Wall Street Journal* December 16, 2006

"Not acceptable," says Ban Ki Moon, new Secretary-General of the United Nations. "Repulsive," say the editors of Britain's Guardian newspaper. "An insult . . . to the memory of millions of Jews," says Hillary Rodham Clinton. Global polite society is in an uproar over the Holocaust conference organized this week in Tehran under the auspices of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Moral denunciation is what reasonable people do -- what they must do -- when a regime that avows the future extermination of six million Jews in Israel denies the past extermination of six million Jews in Europe. But let's be frank: Global polite society has been blazing its own merry trail toward this occasion for decades.

The Australian Financial Review is not the Journal of Historical Review, the Holocaust-denying "scholarly" vehicle of some of the Tehran conferees. But in 2002 the AFR thought it fit to print the following by Joseph Wakim, at one point the country's multicultural affairs commissioner: "Sharon's war is not a war," he wrote. "Genocide would be a more accurate description." In Ireland Tom McGurk, a columnist in the very mainstream Sunday Business Post, noted that "the scenes at Jenin last week looked uncannily like the attack on the Warsaw Jewish ghetto in 1944." Jose Saramago, Portugal's Nobel Laureate in Literature, observed after a visit to Ramallah that the Israeli incursion into the city "is a crime that may be compared to Auschwitz."

Never mind that the total number of Jews "dealt with" in the Warsaw ghetto, according to Nazi commandant Jürgen Stroop, was 56,065, whereas the number of Palestinians killed in Jenin was no more than 60. Never mind that at the time Mr. Saramago visited Ramallah a total of about 1,500 Palestinians had been killed in the Intifada, whereas Jews were murdered at Auschwitz at a rate of about 2,000 a day. Let's concede that, for the sake of moral truth, strained comparisons may still serve useful rhetorical purposes. (Jews and Israelis also often make inapt Holocaust and Nazi comparisons.) Let's concede, too, that the comments cited above amount to criticisms of Israeli policy, nothing more.

Yet once a country's policies are deemed Nazi-like, it necessarily follows that its leaders are Nazi-like and -- if it's a popularly elected government -- so are at least a plurality of its people. "As the dogma of intolerant, belligerent, self-righteous, God-fearing irridentists ... [Zionism] is well adapted to its locality," wrote Tony Judt, head of New York University's Remarque Institute, in the New York

Review of Books. Ian Buruma of Bard College derided Israel's "right-wing government supported by poor Oriental Jews and hard-nosed Russians." And from British MP Gerald Kaufman, this: "If the United States is keen to invade countries that disrupt international standards of order, should not Israel, for example, be considered as a candidate?"

As it happens, Messrs. Judt, Buruma and Kaufman are all Jewish. So let's also concede that it is not anti-Semitic to oppose Zionism. After all, among the Tehran conferees were rabbis from the ultra-orthodox Neturei Karta movement, who, like Mr. Ahmadinejad, actively call for the elimination of the state of Israel.

Yet simply because opposition to Zionism ideologically or Israel politically isn't necessarily anti-Semitic, it doesn't therefore follow that being anti-Zionist or anti-Israel are morally acceptable positions. There are more than six million Israelis who presumably wish to live in a sovereign country called Israel. Are their wishes irrelevant? Are their national rights conditional on their behavior -- or rather, perceptions of their behavior -- and if so, should such conditionality apply to all countries? It also should be obvious that simply because opposition to Zionism does not automatically make one guilty of anti-Semitism, neither does it automatically acquit one of it.

Such nuances, however, seem to go unnoticed by some of Israel's more elevated critics. Michel Rocard said in 2004 that the creation of the Jewish state was a historic mistake, and that Israel was "an entity that continues to pose a threat to its neighbors until today." Mr. Rocard is the former Prime Minister of France, an "entity" that itself posed a threat to its neighbors for the better part of its history.

Alternatively, Professors Stephen Walt of Harvard and John Mearsheimer of the University of Chicago, whose paper on "The Israel Lobby" is now being turned into a book, have complained that "anyone who criticises Israel's actions or argues that pro-Israel groups have significant influence over US Middle Eastern policy ... stands a good chance of being labeled an anti-semite." Maybe. But earlier this week, former Klansman David Duke took the opportunity to tell CNN that he does not hate Jews but merely opposes Israel and Israel's influence in U.S. politics. He even cited Messrs. Walt and Mearsheimer in his defense. Would they exonerate him of being an anti-Semite?

In fact, anti-Zionism has become for many anti-Semites a cloak of political convenience. But anti-

Zionism has also become an ideological vehicle for an anti-Semitism that increasingly feels no need for disguise. In January 2002, the New Statesman magazine had a cover story on "The Kosher Conspiracy." For art, they had a gold Star of David pointed like a blade at the Union Jack. This wasn't anti-Zionism. It was anti-Zionism matured into unflinching anti-Semitism. And it was featured on the cover of Britain's premiere magazine of "progressive" thought.

The scholar Gregory Stanton has observed that genocides happen in eight stages, beginning with classification, symbolization and dehumanization, and ending in extermination and denial. What has happened in Tehran -- denial -- may seem to have turned that order on its head. It hasn't. The road to Tehran is a well-traveled one, and among those who denounce it now are some who have already walked some part of it.

## Mahmoud Abbas and the 'cease fire'

By The Washington Times editorial December 26, 2006

In its effort to marginalize Palestinian rejectionists, the Bush administration is seeking to prop up Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas, despite a considerable body of evidence that Mr. Abbas is not a serious partner for peace. In October, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, speaking in Washington to the American Task Force on Palestine (an organization devoted to blaming Israel for the Palestinians' woes) said that, for "peace and dignity" to prevail in the Middle East, it is essential for "moderate" Arab leaders like Mr. Abbas to be able to show that "their vision for the future can offer a better alternative than violence and terrorism." At a Nov. 30 meeting with Mr. Abbas in Jericho, Miss Rice effusively praised the PA leader, saying that he enjoys "the deep respect and admiration of the international community." She went on to hail Mr. Abbas for his "leadership" and "compassion," as well as his "extraordinary" efforts to arrange the cease-fire between Israel and Palestinian terrorist organizations that officially began Nov. 26.

Every day that goes by under current conditions -- with Israeli forces no longer patrolling the Gaza/Egypt border and no Palestinian security force in place to stop the terrorist organizations from smuggling heavy weaponry into Gaza (or for that matter conducting large-scale military operations against the terrorists already operating there) -- is another day in which Islamofascist forces grow stronger and Israel's deterrent capability grows weaker. Unfortunately, these realities seem lost on policy-makers in Washington and Jerusalem, who doggedly insist that the solution to the current problem lies in strengthening the "moderate" Mr. Abbas so he can "fight" terrorism. Israeli sources say privately that in recent months, the State Department has leaned on Mr. Olmert (a politician in domestic free-fall) to agree to permit Mr. Abbas to expand Force-17, a Fatah militia. Mr. Olmert, for his part, has responded by embracing Mr. Abbas and becoming his number one Israeli cheerleader, something that is probably not a very good long-term strategy. In May, Mr. Abbas appointed Col. Mahmoud Damra, formerly a top aide to Yasser Arafat, to head Force-17 despite the fact that he was wanted by Mr. Olmert's government for running a West Bank terror cell that had killed and wounded scores of Israelis. He was arrested by Israel three months ago.

The effect of the cease-fire was to forestall an Israeli invasion of Gaza to thwart the terrorists who routinely fire rockets into neighboring Israeli towns. Since that time, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, true to form, has exercised "restraint," while terrorists have fired 40 more rockets at Israel. Most important of all, the "cease-fire" has permitted the terrorist groups to continue smuggling arms from Egypt into Gaza for use against Israel -- smuggling made possible by the lethargic performance of Egyptian security forces on the other side of the border.

The Bush administration is vigorously promoting U.S. Army Lt.-Gen. Keith Dayton's efforts to expand Force-17 despite a disturbing history over the past decade in which Palestinians use their American security training to facilitate terrorist operations against Israel. In 1996, CIA Director George Tenet was authorized by President Clinton to begin training the Palestinians in anti-terror tactics. In 1998, Mr. Clinton browbeat the Israeli government into agreeing to expand the program. When the Palestinians went to war with Israel on September 29, 2000, it turned out that scores of the Palestinian trainees joined al Aqsa and other terror groups involved in suicide bombings and other attacks against the Jewish state. (In the coming weeks, we will provide more detail of how

Meanwhile, in Gaza, the Hamas-dominated Palestinian Authority government actively encourages a who's who of terrorist organizations like the Iranian- and Syrian-backed Palestinian Islamic Jihad and the Popular Resistance Committees to establish their presence, while Mr. Abbas and security services loyal to him do nothing to stop them. Indeed, his own Fatah organization includes the al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, one of the most deadly terrorist organizations operating in the West Bank and Gaza.

U.S. assistance has been used to train more competent Palestinian terrorists.)

Anyone who believes Mr. Abbas will reform this situation is deluding themselves. As Miss Rice was praising Mr. Abbas in Jericho, the Israeli group Palestinian Media Watch issued a report showing how PA television (which is under Mr. Abbas'

control) and the Fatah-controlled newspaper al-Hayat al-Jadida glorify suicide bombings and the use of children in warfare; support terrorist insurgents in Iraq and depict the United States as a menace to the Arab world. Mahmoud Abbas looks increasingly like Yasser Arafat in a business suit.

## Drop this cherished illusion

By Yosef (Tommy) Lapid *The Jerusalem Post* December 27, 2006

Does anyone really think it is possible to reach a settlement with the Palestinians that will guarantee peace between us?

I can understand that there are those who believe it may be possible to reach a settlement. And I can understand that there are those who hope it is possible to reach a settlement. But does anyone really think it is possible to make peace with the Palestinians - I mean, really think so?

How can one not see the rift among them, their inability to administer their own lives, Fatah's helplessness, Hamas's abysmal hatred, the murderousness of the popular resistance organizations, the destructive influence of radical Islam, the interference of Iran and the belief - so deeply rooted in almost every Arab heart - that, sooner or later, Israel will disappear off the map?

How can anyone see all that and still think there is a chance for a peace settlement? Or that all the different Palestinian factions, so hostile not only to us but to each other, will somehow find a way to cooperate in order to reach a settlement with Israel?

Even if Israel agreed to withdraw to the 1967 borders (and it doesn't); even if Israel agreed to allow the refugees to return to Israel within the 1967 borders (and it doesn't); would Hamas ever recognize the right of a Jewish state to exist in the heart of the Muslim Middle East?

After all, Hamas's entire *raison d'être* is founded on its refusal to recognize Israel's right to exist. Its members would sooner convert to Judaism than relinquish that principle.

True, anything is possible. But not in the foreseeable future. Not in this generation. And if not the Palestinians, then radical Islam will make sure there is no peace agreement with Israel.

Iran on one side and al-Qaida on the other are threatening not only Israel, but the regimes in Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Egypt as well. Israel isn't even their first target, it is their last.

What should we conclude from all this? That the time has come to emigrate from Israel? Maybe give in to the Arabs' demands? Perhaps put an end to the Zionist enterprise and close up shop?

Never. Israel will continue to exist and flourish, as it has existed and flourished since the establishment of the state, thanks, among other reasons, to the Arab boycott, which forced it to export computer software to America and Europe instead of making plastic toys for the market in Damascus. (Did any of us ever imagine that the shekel might one day become stronger than the dollar, or that we would export more than we import?)

Yet, while the leaders of the Islamic countries have not accepted Israel's existence in principle, they have accepted it in fact - and only because they know they cannot wipe Israel off the map without themselves being wiped off as well.

And that, rather than any pie-in-the-sky, illusory hope for the brotherhood of nations, is the basis for the relationship between us. In the entire Muslim world, numbering over a billion people, one would be hard-pressed to find even a dozen willing to stand up and justify Israel's existence.

This does not mean we should forget about striving for peace. We must behave as if we believed that it was possible to achieve a peace settlement. Why? Because if we do not strive for peace, the result will be war. And we do not want war.

But even as we strive for peace, even if we follow the road map, we mustn't delude ourselves. We won't arrive at peace, not here.

But it may be possible to reach a *modus vivendi*, a balance of terror and a balance of mutual interests that will enable us to lead our lives more or less normally. And not just for a year or two, but for generations.

If we foster no illusions, we won't be disappointed.

The writer is a former Knesset member.

**The Israel newsletter wishes all of our readers a Happy and Healthy secular New Years Holiday – This closes the sixth year of the newsletter. See you in 2007.**

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