

## Middle East Peace Through Anxiety

By Michael B. Oren *The New York Times*

Last week's multi-national summit meeting here was about many things, the least of which, perhaps, was the pursuit of Israeli-Palestinian peace. Behind the calls for the creation of a Palestinian state that would live serenely and stably alongside the Jewish state, beyond the vision of a Middle East at last absolved of its longest-running conflict, was the paramount question of power — who in the region wields it and who in the region wants it. Indeed, while Annapolis is unlikely to succeed in bridging the gaps between Israeli and Arab positions, it effectively drew lines in the sand between those nations siding with America and the West and those allied with Iran.

As a rule, international conferences have never served as effective frameworks in the search for Middle Eastern peace. The British held the first one, the St. James Conference, back in 1939, and failed to reconcile the warring Jews and Arabs of Palestine. The United Nations tried next at Lausanne in 1949 and met with similar results; Arab delegates refused to sit at the same table with the Israelis. The Geneva Conference, jointly sponsored by the United States and the Soviet Union but without the participation of the Syrians and the Palestinian Liberation Organization, convened in December 1973, and unraveled a few days later without a single sentence exchanged between Arab representatives and Israelis.

Far more pomp and optimism attended the Madrid Conference in 1991 where President George H. W. Bush, flush from his victory over Iraq, heralded a new era of Arab-Israeli understanding. Such empathy was notably absent, however, as Israeli and Arab leaders exploited the forum for trading accusations. Stymied, the comprehensive talks dissolved into separate Syrian-Israeli and Palestinian-Israeli tracks that led ultimately nowhere.

The Annapolis gathering, at least superficially, seemed different. Avoiding the rancorous rhetoric that poisoned previous gatherings, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel and Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian leader, ardently reiterated their commitment to achieving peace, even at great sacrifice. Present at the table were not only the Syrians and the Palestinians but also the Saudis — talking to, if not yet shaking hands with, their Israeli counterparts.

Nevertheless, the chances for any progress emerging from Annapolis seem at best remote. Peace treaties in the past were forged by strong

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statesmen — Menachem Begin of Israel and Anwar Sadat of Egypt, Israel's Yitzhak Rabin and Jordan's King Hussein.

But Mr. Olmert and Mr. Abbas are two of the region's weakest leaders, unpopular among their own people and discredited by corruption charges. And President Bush, who, unlike his father, has not won a war in Iraq, is hardly perceived as muscular in Middle Eastern eyes. Indeed, Mr. Bush's refusal to engage in direct mediation in the manner of Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter, and his insistence that comprehensive talks be broken down into bilateral and multilateral tracks, à la Madrid, further diminishes any hope for breakthrough.

Yet, in spite of its glaring handicaps, Annapolis must be deemed a triumph — not of peacemaking, paradoxically, but of girding the region for conflict. Though no doubt sincere in their desire to neutralize the Arab-Israeli irritant in Middle Eastern affairs, participants in the conference were above all motivated by their fear of a radical and relentlessly aggressive Iran. This fear has deepened with the success of the Iranian proxies Hezbollah and Hamas in Lebanon and Gaza, as well as the expansion of Iranian influence westward into the Iraqi vacuum.

The inability of the international community either to entice or deter the Iranians from producing nuclear weapons adds urgency to the need to unite those countries threatened by those bombs. That, and not American fiat, brought 49 states and organizations to Annapolis; that, and not the yearning for an Israeli-Arab accord, impelled a Saudi prince to sit alongside an Israeli prime minister.

Not unexpectedly, the Iranians reacted ferociously to Annapolis. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad pronounced it a “failure” and the government-controlled press promised to “bring down Islamic wrath” on its participants. But such rage merely betrays the anxiety induced by Annapolis in Tehran. For the first time a coalition of Western and modern Arab leaders has coalesced and declared its commitment to resist “extremism” in the Middle East — a well-known euphemism for Iran.

What's more, new efforts have begun to confront Iran outside of the United Nations and woo Syria from Iran's orbit. An international conference may not be the ideal formula for attaining Israeli-Palestinian peace, but it can provide a powerful forum for expressing solidarity in the face of war.

Situated on the Naval Academy campus, not far from where the meeting's delegates gathered, is America's oldest war monument. Carved out of marble in 1806, the 30-foot-high column commemorates the Navy's victory in America's first war in the Middle East — against the pirates of Tripoli.

Today, 200 years later, the United States is again taking the lead in rallying opposition to another rogue state in the region. The Barbary Wars, as they were called, lasted a long time, flaring off and on

from 1801 to 1815. The struggle against Iran inaugurated at Annapolis is only just beginning.

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**(He spoke at Chizuk Amuno Congregation in Baltimore last week, ed.)**

## Jerusalem's Jewish roots must be acknowledged

**By Nathan J. Diament The Baltimore Sun November 25, 2007**

Past efforts at resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have failed for multiple reasons, chief among them the issue of Jerusalem. And while the leaders gathering in Annapolis have agreed not to agree about the holy city's fate for now, it will likely be the unbridgeable divide in the follow-up negotiations. As Madeleine K. Albright noted, "If Jerusalem were just a real estate issue, we could have dealt with it long ago." Jerusalem is hardly a real estate issue. It is at the heart of the Israel-Arab impasse, for it relates fundamentally to history, theology and national identity.

The last time Israelis and Palestinians met in Maryland, they were at Camp David in July 2000. Then-Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak unexpectedly put the division of Jerusalem on the table for Yasser Arafat's consideration. To the surprise of the Israelis and President Clinton, not only did Mr. Arafat reject the offer, but he and his chief negotiator - now Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas - flatly refused to acknowledge the religious and historic connections of the Jewish people to the holy city.

From the religious perspective, Jerusalem is at the heart of religious identity for Jews - we pray each day toward Jerusalem and for its welfare, we regularly read the Biblical accounts of our forefathers that take place in the city's environs, and we conclude our holiest days with the prayer that next year we will celebrate in Jerusalem.

Historically, King David made Jerusalem his capital 3,000 years ago, and since then Jerusalem has been the national capital of the Jewish people; only

brute force has kept them out. From 1948-1967, when the Old City and eastern parts of Jerusalem fell under Jordanian rule, Jews were barred entry to the Old City, denied worship at the Western Wall at the foot of the Temple Mount and denied access to the ancient cemeteries on the Mount of Olives and Mount Zion. Following the 1967 Six Day War, Israel recaptured and unified the entire city and opened the holy sites of all faiths to all people.

Under Israeli control, Jerusalem has been restored and improved, and its religious diversity is once again allowed to flourish. Pilgrims of all faiths come to Jerusalem for spiritual sustenance; they are not turned away. Muslim mosques, even those constructed on the mount where the Jewish holy temple once stood, operate freely, under Muslim religious oversight.

There is little reason to believe that if Jerusalem is discussed at Annapolis - or months from now at a meeting resulting from Annapolis - the discussion will play out any differently than it did in 2000. Even in recent weeks, senior Palestinians have publicly denied the historic Jewish connection to Jerusalem and stated they will not recognize Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state.

In light of such statements, Annapolis is destined to join the litany of sites of failed Mideast meetings - as it should, if the religion and history of the city of Jerusalem are ignored once again.

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## The Forgotten Exodus

**By Irwin Cotler The National Post (Canada) November 28, 2007**

This week marks the 60th anniversary of the UN Partition Resolution of Nov. 29, 1947. It is sometimes forgotten that this was the first ever blueprint for an Israeli-Palestinian two-state solution. Regrettably, while Jewish leaders accepted the resolution, Arab leaders did not, and by their own acknowledgement, declared war on the nascent Jewish state.

Had the Partition Resolution been accepted, there would have been no Arab-Israeli war, no refugees and none of the pain of these last 60 years. Annapolis could now be the site of the celebration of the 60th anniversary of an Israeli-Palestinian peace.

Yet the revisionist Mid-East narrative continues to hold that there was only one victim population,

Palestinian refugees, and that Israel was responsible for the Palestinian naqba (catastrophe) of 1947.

The result was that the pain and plight of 850,000 Jews uprooted and displaced from Arab countries -- the forgotten exodus -- has been expunged from the historical narrative these past 60 years. Moreover, the revisionist narrative has not only eclipsed the forgotten exodus, but denies that it was also a forced exodus, for the Arab countries not only went to war to extinguish the fledgling Jewish state, but also targeted the Jewish nationals living in their respective countries. The United Nations is preparing, yet again, to commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People on this 60th anniversary of the UN Partition Resolution, but will ignore the plight of Jewish refugees.

Indeed, evidence contained in a recent report, *Jewish Refugees from Arab Countries: The Case for Rights And Redress*, documents for the first time a pattern of state-sanctioned repression and persecution in Arab countries -- including Nuremberg-like laws -- that targeted Jews, and resulted in denationalization, forced expulsions, illegal sequestration of property, arbitrary arrest and detention and the like.

These massive human rights violations were reflective of a collusive blueprint, as embodied in the Draft Law of the Political Committee of the League of Arab States. This is a story that has not been heard. It is a truth that must now be acknowledged.

The UN also bears express responsibility for this distorted narrative. Since 1947, there have been 126 UN resolutions that have specifically dealt with the Palestinian refugee plight. Not one of these resolutions makes any reference to the plight of the 850,000 Jews displaced from Arab countries. Nor have any of the Arab countries involved expressed any acknowledgement, let alone regret. What, then, is to be done?

The time has come to rectify this historical injustice, and to restore the "forgotten exodus" to the Middle East narrative.

Remedies for victim refugee groups -- including rights of remembrance, truth, justice and redress -- must now be invoked for Jews displaced from Arab countries, as mandated under human rights and humanitarian law. In particular, each of the Arab countries and the League of Arab States must acknowledge their role in the perpetration of human rights violations against their respective Jewish nationals.

Further, the peace plan currently being promoted by the Arab League should incorporate the question of Jewish refugees from Arab countries as part of its narrative for an Israeli-Arab peace, just as the Israeli narrative now incorporates the issue of Palestinian refugees in its vision.

On the international level, the UN General Assembly should include references to Jewish refugees as well as Palestinian refugees in its resolutions. The UN Human Rights Council should do likewise.

The annual Nov. 29th commemoration by the United Nations of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People should be transformed into an International Day of Solidarity for a Two-State Solution, including solidarity with all refugees created by the Israeli-Arab conflict.

Furthermore, any bilateral Israeli-Palestinian negotiations -- such as those being promoted this week in Annapolis, which one hopes will presage a just and lasting peace -- should include Jewish refugees as well as Palestinian refugees in a joinder of discussion.

Where there is no remembrance, there is no truth; where there is no truth, there will be no justice; where there is no justice, there will be no reconciliation; and where there is no reconciliation, there will be no peace -- which is what we all seek.

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## Mission accomplished when?

By Cal Thomas [TownHall.com](http://TownHall.com) December 5, 2007

Not since President Bush stood on the USS Abraham Lincoln May 1, 2003, with a "Mission Accomplished" sign behind him has he been as optimistic about progress in the Iraq war as he was during a meeting with conservative journalists last Wednesday at the White House.

Frequently sitting forward and gesturing with both hands for emphasis, an often smiling and optimistic president said of Iraq there is a "bottom-up reconciliation taking place that's beginning to influence the central government in profound ways."

The president indicated he believes recent stories of military successes in defeating al Qaeda and early signs of possible reconciliation between Shia and Sunni factions are allowing Iraq's government to focus on basic things all governments must address.

The president listed some of what he regards as positive signs in Iraq other than military progress: "The government is going to pass a budget [that will] increase spending by \$8 billion. It's a budget that, when analyzed by relatively objective people, will tell you that it's well-done, well-thought out, and it's a

sharing of revenues from the central government to provincial governments."

Fresh from meetings with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, the president said he thinks the Palestinians can "develop a democracy that will exist with Israel in peace." He gave no evidence for this and there is no history of Palestinian-Arab-Muslim nations or people, other than Turkey, ever establishing a government where the people get to choose their leaders and unelected religious leaders and other dictators do not determine their rights.

Still, the president was adamant that no such state would be created until and unless the terror stops. "We wouldn't ask [Israel] to welcome terrorists on her border. On the other hand, we agree with Israel when Israel says that a democracy on her border that recognizes our right to exist would be the best opportunity we have for peace."

Sure it would, but getting there is the problem and every promise by the Palestinian side remains unfulfilled. The president's conditional statement that terror must first cease before a state is established is welcome. The question becomes will Mr. Abbas be portrayed as a helpless victim of the terrorism of Hezbollah and Hamas or a pawn of these organizations that quietly believes along with those groups in the eradication of Israel? Some comfort might be taken from the president's pledge that if terrorists take over the West Bank, as they have done in Gaza, "there won't be a Palestinian state under those conditions."

## Peace process fine print

By Oliver North The Washington Times

As my Fox News team left the United States for our ninth "embed" with U.S. combat troops in Iraq, the headlines were all about the resurrected "Mideast Peace Process." European papers touted the Annapolis Conference as a "long overdue breakthrough" because Syria attended. Buried deep in all these stories is the observation that Iran, Hezbollah and Hamas all condemned the conference and its goals.

It's doubtful that radical Islamists like Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in Tehran, Hezbollah's Sheik Hassan Nasrallah or Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh will ever accept Israel's existence or "Western"-style, secular, consensual government in the Middle East. That, however, doesn't mean their followers can't be persuaded otherwise.

If the Annapolis Conference "peace process" is to work, President Bush and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice must focus on five issues that are far more crucial than drawing lines on a map — and convince the Mideast "moderates" involved of their importance.

(1) The "Arab Street" must be reminded regularly that jihadist masterminds like Mr.

He said firmly he does not believe the current Palestinian leadership wants to eliminate Israel. That will require proof. His word, while welcome, is not enough to quell the concerns of skeptics who have seen these scenarios played out across many administrations and all with the same result.

Speaking of what he called the "ideological" conflict inherent in radical Islam (he scrupulously avoided calling it a religious conflict), the president said the struggle would not end, even if Iraq turns out well. "I think it's a war that's going to last 50 years." Yet, he says old enemies can become friends and cited the Japanese as an example. "Enemies can become allies."

It is a strong analogy. The Japanese under Emperor Hirohito were driven by religious zeal. Many Japanese worshipped Hirohito as a god and were profoundly disturbed when he appeared in public to announce Japan's surrender. Does the analogy hold with radical Islam, which is spread over a far wider area with many more adherents than tiny Japan six decades ago? That is a judgment that also may take 50 years to sort out.

President Bush has made an enormous gamble — in Iraq and with the push for a Palestinian state. If he's right, future historians will regard him as one of this country's greatest presidents. If he's wrong, the United States and the world will be paying the price for his misjudgment for much longer than 50 years. Even his severest critics should hope he's right, regardless of who gets the credit.

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Ahmadinejad, bin Laden, Sheik Nasrallah and Mr. Haniyeh aren't eager to find martyrdom. To the extent possible, they remain on the run and in hiding, relegating the "glory" of exploding bodies to their followers and their followers' children. Those followers need to be constantly reminded that their leaders are cowards.

(2) Muslim moderates must point out to their people that the radical Islamic terrorists in Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere may be able to construct car bombs, use cell phones as detonators, and know how to use AK-47s, RPGs, and videocameras to record their atrocities. But none of them are capable of building a car, a cell phone, a camera or even a relatively simple automatic rifle. They can blow up a generating station, but couldn't make a light bulb. The people of the Mideast need to know that "Jihadists" seeking to "drive out the infidels" are destroyers, not builders.

(3) Those who took part in the conference need to tell the people in their own countries that they are not ashamed to be friends of America — that Americans have brought freedom and opportunity to hundreds of millions around the globe. They need

to remind their countrymen that America sends its young people around the world not to fight for gold or oil or colonial conquest — but to offer others the hope of freedom; that Christianity, Judaism and individual liberty aren't threats to Islam — only to the power of radical Islamists.

(4) Those who were at Annapolis need to know Islamic radicals like bin Laden, the theo-fascist regime in Tehran and terror kingpins like Sheik Nasrallah and Mr. Haniyeh count on an illiterate and impoverished citizenry that can be incited to frenzy or suicidal terror by defaming Jews or Americans. The palliative for this misery-driven fury is education — real education, not the indoctrination of a madrassa. Teaching young Muslims math, science, medicine, accounting and law will give them tools to live better instead of reasons to die the "right way" by killing an "infidel."

(5) Finally, and perhaps most important, conference participants must offer Muslim women real rights — and soon. In far too many places in the Islamic world, half the population is denied even the basics of human liberty. Radical Islamic courts treat girls as young as 9 as adults, have women stoned to death for adultery and permit female genital mutilation.

Countries and regions ruled by radical Islamists don't permit women to travel unless escorted by a male relative, limit the availability of medical care and forbid access to higher education. In far too

many places, women are not allowed to have their own bank accounts, use a cell phone, participate in political debate or to vote.

Just before the December 2005 election in Iraq, Mamun Rashid, governor of Anbar Province, told me: "this election will change everything because women are going to vote."

When I asked him why that would change things in Iraq, he replied, "Because women don't vote to have their sons become suicide bombers." Nearly half the ballots in the 2005 election were cast by women.

The American troops I'm heading off to cover for Fox News understand this. They realize the reduced violence in Iraq today can be attributed to much more than simply a "surge" in U.S. forces.

If a broader "peace process" is to work in the Middle East, those who participated in the Annapolis Conference need to be convinced that granting women the right to vote is essential. The best antidote for radical Islamic terror is a woman's purple finger.

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## **Annapolis: One Cheer, One Yawn, One Cynical Shrug**

**By Barry Rubin The GLORIA Center December 3, 2007**

Before the Annapolis meeting, some said the operation would save the patient; others that it would kill the patient. In fact, the patient is exactly the same but the doctors had a hell of a big party and congratulated themselves on doing a terrific job.

We'll end the conflict by December 2008, says President Bush. We want to make peace and get along, say Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA). The Western media cheers it as a big success since everyone showed up and said the right words; nobody walked out or hurled insults. It's enough to make you believe that peace is at hand.

But there's a huge gap between Western and Middle Eastern reactions to the meeting. While the former celebrates, the latter knows better than to expect anything.

It isn't surprising that Western would-be mediators cannot end a conflict when they don't understand why it exists. Neither the Arab-Israeli nor the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is based on a misunderstanding, a gap that can be closed by well-meaning but ignorant conflict managers, or Israeli intransigence.

The reason the issue persists is twofold. First, the Palestinians and a very large portion of their fellow Arabs still want and expect total victory. They

don't seek compromise because they don't really want a two-state solution, at least not as more than a temporary stage leading to Israel's disappearance from the map. Thus, while there is endless talk about Israeli concessions and commitments but virtually nothing about what is required by the other side. Why? Because they won't give anything and pointing that out too explicitly shows there is no chance of real progress.

Second, Arab politics needs the conflict's continuation. Incumbent regimes require it to provide a scapegoat so they can mobilize support for themselves and as an excuse letting them explain away their own multiple failures. The Islamist oppositions need it as a slogan in their pursuit of power. Fatah is in the first category; Hamas in the second.

Consequently, any analysis that piously blames each side equally is incapable of comprehending Middle East politics. Yet peace brokers believe their effectiveness requires a dishonesty that ensures their own failure. They pretend intransigence, terrorism, and incitement comes from both parties.

The future is easily predictable: endless talks; no agreement. The only progress will be from the

comforting illusions of vague speeches like those made at Annapolis.

This will have little effect on the ground. Attempts to attack Israel will be made daily, including by Fatah members who may get U.S. training but reject an end to the conflict or even resettling Palestine refugees in a West Bank-Gaza Palestinian state. The PA will arrest almost nobody and hold no one in jail very long. Anti-Israel incitement will continue.

Indeed, the day after the conference ended, PA television ran multiple times a film showing Israel being transformed into an Arab Palestine. What is amazing is not that the PA makes inadequate attempts to preach peace and compromise but that it makes no effort at all in that direction. Meanwhile, what Abbas is really hoping for and expecting is not so much any material Israeli concessions but billions of dollars in foreign aid, in exchange for which he won't be asked to do much more than merely to survive.

Consider in this context just one element in President George Bush's new framework which is being touted as a major advance. The United States will judge of whether Palestinians and Israelis are meeting their commitments. This sounds tough and decisive. But it is not at all new.

During two previous periods, U.S. policy put itself in a similar position. The first was in the 1988-1990 period, when the White House-under Congressional pressure-had to certify that the PLO was stopping terrorism in order to continue dialogue with that organization. As a result, the State Department, charged with this mission, repeatedly ignored PLO attacks by the simple expedient of saying they were not carried out by the PLO but by groups which just happened to be members of the PLO. Only when a major foiled terrorist attack was praised by PLO leaders did the United States have to end the dialogue.

The second example was the 1994-2000 peace process. The PA usually made no serious attempt to stop terror attacks from lands it controlled nor did it arrest or punish those responsible. It is hard to find a single PA media program or speech made internally that urged conciliation. On the contrary, incitement took place daily. But the United States had to remain

either silent or, at most, equally blame both sides, in order to keep the process going.

As sole judge this time the United States will never say the PA is not meeting its commitments by publicly denouncing the scandal of continued incitement, pitifully minimal anti-terrorist effort, and massive corruption. After all, to show the PA breaks all its commitments to a tremendous degree would be to demonstrate that the peace process cannot work. It would also anger Arabs, who would charge that the United States is pro-Israel and not an even-handed mediator. Oh, and by the way, this policy will also make U.S. policy incapable of bringing real progress.

The administration's public goal is peace but its real one is to keep talks going until it leaves office. The Israeli public is well aware of this fact. According to polls, while 53 percent supported the Annapolis conference's goals, only 17 percent thought the meeting a "success," while 42% called it a "failure." They don't, however, expect any serious pressure or major concessions from Washington either.

Is this apparent contradiction so terrible? Much less so than it may seem. If the United States has strengthened its position in the region, even on the basis of illusion, that is not a bad thing. If having this framework eases Israeli-PA tensions somewhat, shows those willing to listen that Israel wants peace, and helps avoid Hamas overthrowing Fatah, that is a positive contribution. Israel can talk about all the concessions it would make if it really had a sincere, determined partner ready to reciprocate, knowing that this scenario will not happen.

The important thing is for the Bush administration not to believe its own propaganda. If it makes this mistake, and tries to pressure Israel and appease the Arab side into a negotiated settlement-which will not materialize in the end-that would make things worse. But I don't think that is going to happen to any considerable extent either. What is needed might best be called constructive cynicism.

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## Accept Israel as the Jewish state?

By Daniel Pipes The Jerusalem Post November 28, 2007

Surprisingly, something useful has emerged from the combination of the misconceived Annapolis meeting and a weak Israeli prime minister, Ehud ("Peace is achieved through concessions") Olmert. Breaking with his predecessors, Olmert has boldly demanded that his Palestinian bargaining partners accept Israel's permanent existence as a Jewish state, thereby evoking a revealing response.

Unless the Palestinians recognize Israel as "a Jewish state," Olmert announced on November 11, the Annapolis-related talks would not proceed. "I do not intend to compromise in any way over the issue of the Jewish state. This will be a condition for our recognition of a Palestinian state."

He confirmed these points a day later, describing the "recognition of Israel as a state for the Jewish people" as the "launching point for all

negotiations. We won't have an argument with anyone in the world over the fact that Israel is a state of the Jewish people."

The Palestinian leadership, he noted, must "want to make peace with Israel as a Jewish state."

Raising this topic has the virtue of finally focusing attention on what is the central topic in the Arab-Israeli conflict - Zionism, the Jewish nationalist movement, a topic that typically gets ignored in the hubbub of negotiations. Since nearly the birth of the state, these have focused on the intricacies of such subsidiary issues as borders, troop placements, armaments and arms control, sanctities, natural resources, residential rights, diplomatic representation, and foreign relations.

The Palestinian leadership responded quickly and unequivocally to Olmert's demand:

□ The Higher Arab Monitoring Committee in Nazareth unanimously called on the Palestinian Authority not to recognize Israel as a Jewish state.

□ Salam Fayad, Palestinian Authority prime minister: "Israel can define itself as it likes, but the Palestinians will not recognize it as a Jewish state."

□ Yasser Abed Rabbo, secretary-general of the Palestinian Liberation Organization's executive committee: "This issue is not on the table; it is raised for internal [Israeli] consumption."

□ Ahmed Qurei, chief Palestinian negotiator: "This [demand] is absolutely refused."

□ Saeb Erekat, head of the PLO Negotiations Department: "The Palestinians will never acknowledge Israel's Jewish identity. ... There is no country in the world where religious and national identities are intertwined." Erekat's generalization is both curious and revealing. Not only do 56 states and the PLO belong to the Organization of the Islamic Conference, but most of them, including the PLO, make the sharia (Islamic law) their main or only source of legislation. Saudi Arabia even requires that every subject be a Muslim.

Further, the religious-national nexus extends well beyond Muslim countries. Argentinean law, Jeff Jacoby of the Boston Globe points out, "mandates government support for the Roman Catholic faith.

## How UNRWA creates dependency By Asaf Romirowsky and Jonathan Spyer

For Israelis the United Nations is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, they are fully aware of the anti-Israel sentiment that the United Nations perpetuates, but on the other hand they want to be part of it and to have their voices heard. This stance is understandable. But it produces positions which sometimes directly contradict Israel's clear interest.

Observe: During a recent conference titled, "Hijacking Human Rights: The Demonization of Israel by the United Nations," Daniel Carmon, Israel's deputy permanent representative at the

Queen Elizabeth II is the supreme governor of the Church of England. In the Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan, the constitution proclaims Buddhism the nation's 'spiritual heritage.' ... "The prevailing religion in Greece,' declares Section II of the Greek Constitution, 'is that of the Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ'."

So, why the mock-principled refusal to recognize Israel as a Jewish state? Perhaps because the PLO still intends to eliminate Israel as a Jewish state.

Note my use of the word "eliminate," not destroy. Yes, anti-Zionism has until now mainly taken a military form, from Gamal Abdel Nasser's "throw the Jews into the sea" to Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's "Israel must be wiped off the map."

But the power of the Israel Defense Forces has prodded anti-Zionism toward a more subtle approach of accepting an Israeli state but dismantling its Jewish character. Anti-Zionists consider several ways to achieve this: Demography: Palestinians could overwhelm the Jewish population of Israel, a goal signaled by their demand for a "right of return" and by their so-called war of the womb.

Politics: Arabs citizens of Israel increasingly reject the country's Jewish nature and demand that it become a bi-national state.

Terror: The 100 Palestinian attacks a week during the period, September 2000-September 2005 sought to induce economic decline, emigration, and appeasement.

Isolation: All those United Nations resolutions, editorial condemnations, and campus aggressions are meant to wear down the Zionist spirit.

Arab recognition of Israel's Jewish nature must have top diplomatic priority. Until the Palestinians formally accept Zionism, then follow up by ceasing all their various strategies to eliminate Israel, negotiations should be halted and not restarted. Until then, there is nothing to talk about.

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December 3, 2007

## The Washington Times

United Nations stated that "We [Israel] encounter hypocrisy and cynicism on the one hand, and we are all witness to that when we walk into the building, but we are also trying with relative success to identify how, within the existing mandate, [to find] parallel paths of working with the world body." Reflecting this problematic and paradoxical Israeli stance, Mr. Carmon urged the approximately 200 conference participants to state that UNRWA (the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian refugees in the Near East) was "doing a good job"

providing humanitarian assistance to Palestinians in the Palestinian territories.

The matter of UNRWA perhaps above all others illustrates the difficulty of the Israeli position on the United Nations. Israeli officials will tell you that if UNRWA does not take care of Palestinian needs then these will become Israel's responsibility. And despite UNRWA's well-documented terrorist ties, Israel prefers not to bear this burden.

This position produces a situation in which Israel itself ends up forming one of the factors blocking the way to the dismantling of UNRWA. UNRWA, in turn, is a central factor blocking a solution to the Palestinian refugee issue — which is one of the central factors preventing the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Understanding the way that UNRWA helps perpetuate the Palestinian refugee problem requires taking a closer look at the way that the agency functions. Doing so reveals the workings of a dysfunctional bureaucracy.

While Palestinian refugees benefit materially from UNRWA, the agency benefits in return from the refugees. The refugees are the organization's *raison d'être*. And bureaucracies tend to dislike dissolving themselves. So, like any good bureaucracy, UNRWA has zero incentive to resolve the Palestinian refugee problem if it is to continue to exist. Ending the refugee problem would render UNRWA obsolete.

Instead, UNRWA finds a hundred and one ways to perpetuate Palestinian dependency. The interests of the refugees and UNRWA are fatally intertwined; UNRWA is staffed mainly by local Palestinians — more than 23,000 of them — with only about 100 international United Nations professionals. Tellingly, while the U.N. High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) and UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) avoid employing locals who are also recipients of agency services, UNRWA does not make this distinction. Terrorism does not exclude one from being a part of UNRWA. In fact, quite the opposite is true: UNRWA-overseen hospitals and clinics routinely employ members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Employing Palestinians for decade after decade and providing them with subsistence-level food aid and rudimentary education are a far cry from giving them usable skills and a positive

attitude about creating their own independent economy and viable civic institutions.

In addition, the Palestinian agenda (and sympathy for the Palestinian cause) have infiltrated every aperture at Turtle Bay. UNRWA has spent decades keeping this single issue, key to the organization's survival, at the forefront of the U.N. agenda whether it belongs there or not. It has engendered Arab and Western support for the delegitimation of Israel, and facilitated comparisons between Nazism and Zionism — a false linkage that bolsters Palestinian claims of oppression. When former Secretary-General Kofi Annan appeared at a U.N. "Palestine Day" event which astonishingly featured a map of the Middle East that conspicuously omitted Israel, it was emblematic of the way in which the United Nations has transformed itself into a propaganda machine for such thinking. UNRWA has no parallel in the U.N. system. UNRWA is dedicated solely to providing assistance to Palestinian refugees; no other group of refugees, whatever their circumstances, warrants this much attention.

As we look toward the future of Israeli-Palestinian relations, the United Nations as a member of the Quartet has a special obligation to uphold the commitment outlined in the 2003 "road map" for Israeli-Palestinian peace to dismantle terrorist capabilities and infrastructure. In an effort to insulate good works from terrorist infiltration and exploitation, Washington should stand ready to help the United Nations live up to this obligation by funding an "Office of Competent Standards" for UNRWA and similar agencies.

It's also in the interest of Israel to support such an initiative. As it stands, the self-perpetuating bureaucracy of UNRWA is one of the central factors offering day jobs to members of terror groups, propping up Palestinian dependency and perpetuating the myths and falsehoods about Israel which help prevent a solution to the conflict.

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## The Saudis' New PR Man

By Dan Senor The Wall Street Journal

The news out of the Annapolis Mideast summit last week was bizarre. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert was spinning for the Arab League. Before the end of the first day he was tracking down U.S. presidential candidates and members of Congress,

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mostly strong advocates for Israel. Mr. Olmert wanted them to know that their skepticism about the conference was misplaced: It truly was an historic event, a real breakthrough.

What did Mr. Olmert cite as evidence? "The Saudi foreign minister even applauded after my address. That's never happened before."

But in Saudi Arabia, coverage of Mr. Olmert's speech was scant. This after Prince Faisal announced his "no-handshake" policy. But I suppose this is better than Syria, where state-controlled television chose to broadcast a soccer game instead of the conference proceedings.

And to add further insult, Israeli reporters were kicked out of a press event for the arrival of Arab League foreign ministers (they had to cover it from out in the rain, while the rest of the press corps was given access). This is a shame. Earlier this month, I was in Saudi Arabia where I found, in private conversations, many prominent Saudis expressing a willingness to engage Israel. One even cited Yasser Arafat's rejection of a Palestinian state (offered at Camp David in 2000) as the single greatest source of violence over the past few years.

As for the Saudi foreign minister's "historic" applause, the press found him clapping "politely."

The contrast to the breakthrough of November 1977 could not be more stark. This is how the BBC reported Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's visit to Jerusalem at the time: "[Sadat's] trip to Israel has stunned the international community. Israel and Egypt have fought four wars and Israel still occupies the Sinai Peninsula, part of Egypt that it captured in the 1967 war. "The Egyptian leader's offer, in a speech to his parliament on 9 November, to travel to Israel was widely regarded as no more than a literary flourish. When Prime Minister Menachem Begin responded by issuing an official invitation nobody believed Mr. Sadat would accept. His presence in Israel breaks an Arab policy of not dealing publicly with the Jewish state created in 1948."

And Sadat's speech was historic. He stood before the Israeli Knesset and declared: "We really and truly welcome you to live among us in peace and security."

He criticized the Arab world's rejection of Israel: "We used to reject you... We refused to meet with you, anywhere, yes. We were together in international conferences and organizations and our representatives did not, and still did not, exchange greetings with you. Yes. This has happened and is

still happening." Annapolis shows how right Sadat was, even 30 years later.

And he recognized Israel as the Jewish "home": "I have chosen to present to you, in your own home, the realities, devoid of any scheme or whim."

Following Sadat's speech, Begin addressed the Knesset too. And earlier that day the two leaders together visited Israel's Holocaust Museum. The entire visit was broadcast in Egypt. Sadat had nothing to hide.

In covering the event from Cairo, the United Press International reported: "The normally thronged streets of this ancient city were virtually empty. Millions of people sat quietly by televisions and radios in their homes and cafes, hanging on every word of Sadat's speech to the Israeli Knesset."

UPI interviewed Samy Naggar, 24, an Egyptian medical student, who had "reservations" about Sadat's mission but came around after Sadat's speech: "This man has put his position in danger, maybe even his life, to defend the Arab cause... I don't know whether it will prove to be a mistake in the end, but I do know that my respect for his courage and integrity has grown and I think other Egyptians feel the same way. If nothing else, the whole world should be convinced that Sadat is sincere in his desire for peace."

In 1947, the Arab states rejected the United Nations' partition plan, then invaded to crush Israel in its cradle. In 1977, Sadat told the Knesset that he traveled to Israel even though "we were still in a state of war." In 2007, 30 years later, the choice once again is between rejectionism and courage, between endless war and leadership toward peace.

At Annapolis, President Bush said, "Arab states should also reach out to Israel, work toward the normalization of relations, and demonstrate in both word and deed that they believe that Israel and its people have a permanent home in the Middle East." A breakthrough would be if an Arab leader took such a bold step now, so that in 30 or 60 years the Arab world will not be looking back at yet another missed opportunity.

**Mr. Senor was a foreign policy adviser to the Bush administration. He is a founding partner of Rosemont Capital.**

## Condi's Road to Damascus

By Bret Stephens The Wall Street Journal

Remember Nancy Pelosi's spring break in Damascus? Condoleezza Rice apparently does not. When the House Speaker paid Syrian strongman Bashar Assad a call back in April, President Bush denounced her for sending "mixed signals" that "lead the Assad government to believe they are part of the mainstream of the international community, when in fact they are a state sponsor of terror."

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Today, said sponsor of terror will take its place at the table Ms. Rice has set for the Middle Eastern conference at the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md.

Only at Foggy Bottom would Syria's last-minute decision to go to Annapolis be considered a diplomatic triumph. The meeting is supposed to inaugurate the resumption of high-level negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians, with a view toward

finalizing a deal on Palestinian statehood before the administration leaves office. On a deeper plane of geopolitical subtlety, it is supposed to bring Israel and the Arab world together in tacit alliance against Iran.

This raises three significant questions. First, how does Syria's presence at Annapolis affect those goals? Next, how does Syria's presence affect U.S. policy toward Syria? And what effect, if any, will all this have on Syria's behavior in the region?

Much is being made of the fact that, in accepting the administration's invitation, Syria apparently reversed a previous decision, coordinated with Iran, to boycott the conference. This plays into the view that Syria can be persuaded to abandon its 25-year-old ties to Iran and return to the Arab fold, thereby severing the encircling chain that links Tehran to Damascus to southern Lebanon to the Gaza Strip. High-profile ridicule of the conference by Iran's Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (who called it "useless") and spokesmen for Hezbollah and Hamas add to the impression that Mr. Assad may be prepared to chart an independent course -- all for the modest price of the U.S. agreeing (with Israel's consent) to put the issue of the Golan Heights on the conference's agenda.

It really would be something if the Syrian delegation could find their own road to Damascus on the shores of the Chesapeake Bay. But that would require something approximating good faith. The Syrians' decision to be represented at Annapolis by their deputy foreign minister -- his bosses evidently having more important things to do -- is one indication of the lack of it. So is the Assad regime's declaration (via an editorial in state newspaper Teshreen) that their goal at Annapolis is "to foil [Israeli Prime Minister Ehud] Olmert's plan to force Arab countries to recognize Israel as a Jewish state." And lest the point hadn't been driven home forcefully enough, the Syrian information minister told Al Jazeera that Syria's attendance would have no effect on its relations with Iran or its role as host to the leadership of Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist groups.

At best, then, Syria will attend Annapolis as a kind of non-malignant observer, lending a gloss of pan-Arab seriousness to the proceedings. At worst, it will be there as a spoiler and unofficial spokesman of Hamas, Hezbollah and Iran. If it's clever, it will adopt a policy of studied ambivalence, with just enough positive chemistry to induce the administration into believing it might yet be prepared for a real volte face, provided the U.S. is also prepared to rewrite its Syria policy. Recent attestations by Gen. David Petraeus, that Damascus is finally policing its border with Iraq to slow the infiltration of jihadis, suggest that's just the game they mean to play.

What price will the U.S. be asked to pay? Contrary to popular belief, recovering the Golan is neither Syria's single nor primary goal; if anything, the regime derives much of its domestic legitimacy by keeping this grievance alive. What's urgently important to Damascus is that the U.N. tribunal investigating the 2005 murder of Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri be derailed, before the extensive evidence implicating Mr. Assad and his cronies becomes a binding legal verdict. No less important to Mr. Assad is that his grip on Lebanese politics be maintained by the selection of a pliant president to replace his former puppet, Emile Lahoud. Syria would also like to resume normal diplomatic relations with the U.S. (which withdrew its ambassador from Damascus after Hariri's killing), not least by the lifting of economic sanctions imposed by the 2003 Syria Accountability Act.

No doubt the Syrians believe the U.S. can deliver on these items: Dictators rarely appreciate the constraints under which democratic governments operate. Yet there is no credible way the U.S. can deliver on the first demand, and only discreditable ways in which it could deliver on the second. The administration may be tempted to re-establish normal diplomatic relations and ease sanctions, which is about as much as it can do. Yet Damascus would view these concessions either as signs of niggardliness or desperation, and hold out for more.

Put simply, there is nothing the U.S. can offer Mr. Assad that would seriously tempt him to alter his behavior in ways that could meaningfully advance U.S. interests or the cause of Mideast peace. Yet the fact that Ms. Rice's Syria policy is now a facsimile of Speaker Pelosi's confirms Mr. Assad's long-held view that he has nothing serious to fear from this administration.

So look out for more aggressive Syrian misbehavior in Lebanon, including the continued arming of Hezbollah; the paralysis of its political process; the assassination of anti-Syrian parliamentarians and journalists; the insertion of Sunni terrorist cells in Palestinian refugee camps, and the outright seizure of Lebanon's eastern hinterlands. Look out, too, for continued cooperation with North Korea on WMD projects: Despite Israel's September attack on an apparent nuclear facility, the AP reports that North Korean technicians are back in Syria, teaching their Arab pupils how to load chemical warheads on ballistic missiles. And don't hold your breath expecting Syria's good behavior on its Iraqi frontier to last much longer.

In the meantime, we have the Annapolis conference, and the one-day photo-op it provides Ms. Rice. In the spirit of giving credit where it's due, the least the Secretary can do is invite the Speaker to the party.