

A triumph of life and hope

By Jeff Jacoby The Boston Globe May 11, 2008

The birth of the state of Israel 60 years ago this week was an astonishment. It is not unheard of for a nation to vanish from the map and later reappear. Poland, for example, was partitioned out of existence in 1795 and regained its independence in 1918. But the restoration of Israel was unlike anything the world had ever seen.

Jews had been deprived of their homeland for nearly 2,000 years, ever since the Roman devastation of Judea in the first and second centuries A.D. That upheaval had been cataclysmic. By the time the fighting ended in 135, half of Judea's population was dead. Of those who survived, hundreds of thousands were sold into slavery or expelled. Not until the Holocaust 18 centuries later would the Jewish people experience a more shattering catastrophe.

Yet through all the generations of dispersion that followed, the Jews never lost their self-awareness as a nation or their connection to the land of Israel. They expressed their longing for it in daily prayer and turned toward it when they worshiped. They collected charity to support the minority of Jews who had never left the land; and over the years others made their way back as well, often in response to Christian or Muslim persecution. By the 1860s, a majority of Jerusalem's population was Jewish once more. Zionism - an organized movement to renew Jewish independence in the Jewish homeland - was formally launched in 1897. Five decades later, against steep odds and every historical precedent, Israel was reborn.

It was an incredible achievement, made even more incredible by the fact that it occurred in the wake of a genocide that had wiped out one-third of the Jewish people.

Within hours of declaring its independence, the newborn state of Israel, with a population of just 600,000, was invaded by five Arab armies. They were intent, in the words of Azzam Pasha, secretary-general of the Arab League, on waging a "a war of extermination and a momentous massacre." The ovens of Treblinka and Auschwitz had barely cooled, and Jews were again being threatened with annihilation. Yet the fledgling state survived and

thrived, a triumph of life and hope over the forces of hatred and death.

It was more than an astonishment; it was a miracle. For many, the rebirth of Jewish sovereignty after the blackness of the Holocaust thrillingly evoked Ezekiel's vision in the valley of dry bones. "These bones are the whole house of Israel," God had told the prophet. "They say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off.' " But before Ezekiel's eyes, the bones reassembled and the skeletons came back to life - and so, God said, will the vanquished and exiled Jews: "Behold, I will . . . raise you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel." To millions of Christians and Jews, the creation of modern Israel was nothing less than the fulfillment of Biblical prophecy. That is part of the reason that a country so tiny - Israel is smaller than Lake Michigan - seems to loom so large.

Under siege since the day it was born, Israel has never known a day of true peace. It is the only nation in the world whose legitimacy is routinely called into question. It still has enemies who want it wiped off the map. Uniquely, the Jewish state came into being with the imprimatur of both the League of Nations and the United Nations. Yet time and again it is told it has no right to exist. Of course that is fatuous; few nations can present a birth certificate as storied as Israel's. Nonetheless, Israel's fundamental right to exist doesn't derive from UN votes, or promises in the Bible, or its own Declaration of Independence.

For the right of statehood ultimately accrues only to those who can fashion and sustain a nation. "The land of Israel belongs to Israelis," Yale's David Gelernter wrote in 2002, "for the same reason America belongs to Americans: Because Israelis conceived and built it - and what you create is yours. If you want a homeland, you must create one. You drain swamps, lay out farms, build houses, schools, roads, hospitals..."

"That's how America got its homeland. And that is why Israel belongs to the Israelis."

The Jewish State at 60

By William Kristol The New York Times May 12, 2008

This week marks the 60th anniversary of the founding of the state of Israel. There have already

been many birthday greetings, some heartfelt, some perfunctory, along with numerous reflections on the

meaning of the occasion, some profound, some commonplace. For me, however, a discordant voice broke through.

Israel is a “stinking corpse” on its way to “annihilation,” Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said last Thursday as Israel celebrated Independence Day. “Those who think they can revive the stinking corpse of the usurping and fake Israeli regime by throwing a birthday party are seriously mistaken,” proclaimed the president of Iran, a nation that is a member in good standing of the United Nations and an active trading partner of countries like Germany and Russia. “Today the reason for the Zionist regime’s existence is questioned, and this regime is on its way to annihilation.”

I didn’t intend, in writing this column, to quote Ahmadinejad. I hate to dignify him by even taking note of his comments. I meant to pay tribute to the Zionists — men like Weizmann and Jabotinsky, Ben-Gurion and Begin — who made possible the almost miraculous redemption of the Jewish people in 1948. And I also intended to recognize the defenders of Israel at moments of crisis — men like Harry Truman and Richard Nixon and George W. Bush.

I thought I might even dwell on the amazing essay by the novelist George Eliot who made a case for Zionism in 1879 — 17 years before the publication of Theodor Herzl’s “The Jewish State.”

“The hinge of possibility,” Eliot wrote, is that among the Jews “there may arise some men of instruction and ardent public spirit, some new Ezras, some modern Maccabees, who will know how to use all favouring outward conditions, how to triumph by heroic example, over the indifference of their fellows and the scorn of their foes, and will steadfastly set their faces towards making their people once more one among the nations.”

The new Ezras and the modern Maccabees arose. But Jew hatred didn’t go away. And so, today, in light of Ahmadinejad’s remarks, in the face of the weakness of the West before the Iranian regime — I can’t avoid being reminded of the fact that this year is not only the 60th anniversary of Israel, but also the 75th anniversary of Hitler’s coming to power.

In 1933, in Germany, at the geographical and intellectual center of 20th-century Europe, the Weimar Republic was replaced, as the philosopher Leo Strauss put it, “by the only German regime —

by the only regime that ever was anywhere — which had no other clear principle except murderous hatred of the Jews, for ‘Aryan’ had no clear meaning other than ‘non-Jewish.’”

The civilized world was helpless. Churchill’s pleas to act were ignored. The world was plunged into war. Two-fifths of world Jewry were murdered.

The founding of Israel promised a more hopeful future, not just for the Jews but for mankind. And, in fact, the last 60 years have perhaps been less horror filled and more humane than the preceding 60. But what of the future?

On Dec. 10, 1948, Winston Churchill, then leader of the opposition, took to the floor of the House of Commons to chastise the Labour government for its continuing refusal to recognize the state of Israel. In his remarks, Churchill commented:

“Whether the Right Honourable Gentleman likes it or not, and whether we like it or not, the coming into being of a Jewish state in Palestine is an event in world history to be viewed in the perspective, not of a generation or a century, but in the perspective of a thousand, two thousand or even three thousand years. This is a standard of temporal values or time values which seems very much out of accord with the perpetual click-clack of our rapidly-changing moods and of the age in which we live.”

In 2008, the defense of the state of Israel, and everything it stands for, requires a kind of courage and determination very much out of accord with the perpetual click-clack of our politics, and with the combination of irresponsibility and wishfulness that characterizes the age in which we live.

Still, even though the security of Israel is very much at risk, the good news is that, unlike in the 1930s, the Jews are able to defend themselves, and the United States is willing to fight for freedom. Americans grasp that Israel’s very existence to some degree embodies the defeat and repudiation of the genocidal totalitarianism of the 20th century. They understand that its defense today is the front line of resistance to the jihadist terror, and the suicidal nihilism, that threaten to deform the 21st.

What Eric Hoffer wrote in 1968 seems even truer today: “I have a premonition that will not leave me; as it goes with Israel, so will it go with all of us. Should Israel perish, the holocaust will be upon us.”

The Myth Of Occupied Gaza

By David B. Rivkin Jr. and Lee A. Casey

Hamas claims that former president Jimmy Carter’s recent meeting with its leader, Khaled Meshal, marks its recognition as a “national liberation movement” -- even though Hamas rockets fired from the Gaza Strip, which Hamas rules as an elected “government,” continue to rain down on Israel’s civilian population. While Hamas is clearly trying to

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bolster its legitimacy, the conflict along Israel’s southern border has a broader legal dimension -- the question of whether, as a matter of international law, Israel “occupies” Gaza. The answer is pivotal: It governs the legal rights of Israel and Gaza’s population and may well set a legal precedent for

wars between sovereign states and non-state entities, including terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda.

Israel's critics argue that Gaza remains "occupied" territory, even though Israeli forces were unilaterally withdrawn from the area in August 2005. (Hamas won a majority in the Gazan assembly in 2006 and seized control militarily in 2007.) If this is so, Jerusalem is responsible for the health and welfare of Gazans and is arguably limited in any type of military force it uses in response to continuing Hamas attacks. Moreover, even Israel's nonmilitary responses to Hamas-led terrorist activities -- severely limiting the flow of food, fuel and other commodities into Gaza -- would violate its obligations as an occupying power.

Israel, however, is not an occupying power, judging by traditional international legal tests. Although such tests have been articulated in various ways over time, they all boil down to this question: Does a state exercise effective governmental authority -- if only on a de facto basis -- over the territory? As early as 1899, the Hague Convention on the Laws and Customs of War on Land stated that "[t]erritory is considered occupied when it is actually placed under the authority of the hostile army. The occupation applies only to the territory where such authority is established, and in a position to assert itself."

The Hague Convention is a founding document of the modern law of armed conflict, and its definition of occupied territory was woven into the 1949 Geneva Conventions. There, the relevant provision provides that "[i]n the case of occupied territory, the application of the present Convention shall cease one year after the general close of military operations," although certain protections for the populations continue "to the extent that such Power exercises the functions of government in such territory." That is the key -- exercising the functions of government. This proposition was recognized in a seminal Nuremberg prosecution, the Trial of William List and Others.

It is because an occupying power exercises effective control over a territory that international law substantially restricts the measures, military or economic, it can bring to bear upon this territory, well beyond the limits that would be applicable before occupation, whether in wartime or peacetime.

The Israeli military does not control Gaza; nor does Israel exercise any government functions there. Claims that Israel continues to occupy Gaza suggest that a power having once occupied a territory must continue to behave toward the local population as an occupying power until all outstanding issues are resolved. This "principle" can be described only as an ingenious invention; it has no basis in traditional international law.

The adoption of any such rule (designed to limit Israel's freedom of action and give Hamas a legal leg up in its continuing conflict) should be actively opposed by the United States. Its adoption would suggest that no occupying power can withdraw of its own volition without incurring continuing, and perhaps permanent, legal obligations to a territory. This issue is particularly acute regarding territory not otherwise controlled by a functioning state -- failed states or failed areas of states where the "legitimate" government cannot or will not exercise effective control. Such places -- call them badlands -- were once rare. Over the past 15 years, though, there has been an explosion in the number of such areas, notably parts of Afghanistan, Somalia and portions of Pakistan.

Gaza is exceptional only in that its international legal status is indeterminate. Its last true sovereign was the Ottoman Porte. It was part of the British Palestine Mandate and has since been administered by both Egypt and Israel. Today, no state claims sovereign authority, though it is expected that Gaza will become part of a future Palestinian state. For its part, Hamas acknowledges no higher authority and functions as a de facto government in Gaza. It is a classic example of a terrorist-controlled badland.

Unduly handicapping states that intervene in such badlands -- whether to protect their own interests, those of the local population or both -- is unrealistic and irresponsible. Requiring agreement by the "international community" (whatever that may be) as a precondition for extinguishing such a designation is equally unproductive if the goal is saving lives. Consider the example of Darfur.

Even worse is pretending that groups such as Hamas are merely criminal gangs that must be dealt with as a local policing problem -- just one of the potential side effects of imposing an "occupied" status on a territory. This implicates U.S. interests directly, since America's ability to use robust armed force against al-Qaeda and similar non-state actors remains critical to defending our civilian population from attack. Efforts to limit states' rights to use military force against such groups simply benefit the globe's worst rogue elements and endanger the civilian populations among which they operate. Here, as in so many other areas, the traditional international law that imposes the obligations of an occupier only on states that physically occupy a territory makes perfect sense.

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The Obstacles to Israeli-Palestinian Peace

By **Abdurrahman Wahid and Abdul A'la** **The Wall Street Journal** **May 10, 2008**

The prolonged Israeli-Palestinian conflict has a far-reaching impact not only upon the lives of those who dwell in the Holy Land, but upon virtually every nation and community on earth. On a daily basis, self-interested parties are callously manipulating the most basic values of humanity and religion in order to advance their personal or political interests. Sectarianism, violence, arrogance and deception are constantly subverting the fundamental values of life, and turning religious principles upon their heads.

This horrific process demands that every moral human being, religious community and nation throughout the world contemplate this tragedy and offer assistance, however small, to help resolve the profound human crisis in the Holy Land. Peace is both a process and a goal that the world can neither morally nor practically afford to push off into the future yet again.

We must develop and implement concrete strategies to resolve the conflict, while inspiring hope that peace can actually be achieved. The problem is that the various obstacles to peace seem nearly impossible to eliminate. These obstacles are rendered even more severe by the fact that both major parties in the conflict harbor groups absolutely convinced of the correctness of their mutually exclusive views and agendas. Such groups reject not only the rights, but the very existence, of the other side.

The corrosive effect of this phenomenon is the evocation and rationalization of the use of violence, either through terrorism or militarism. Prejudiced views on both sides, not only by those directly engaged in the conflict, but by their allies as well, further stoke the flames of hatred and violence.

These prejudices contaminate public discourse throughout the world, and are constantly exploited by Middle Eastern regimes that fuel anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic emotions for political purposes, while displaying little or no actual concern for the well-being of the Palestinians themselves.

Under such conditions, it is nearly impossible for sincere dialogue even to occur, much less to develop or flourish. Instead, the cycle of violence breeds a hardening of mutual hatred.

The Palestinian side routinely condemns its enemy as a colonial power whose entire population is demonized as "imperialists," while the Israeli side brands its political opponents as terrorists, or terrorist sympathizers.

For six decades, the peace process has been conducted primarily by self-interested political players who cannot penetrate to the heart of the underlying problems, much less resolve them. This gives rise to deeply cynical views on the part of certain groups on both sides, who view the peace

process as absurd, its goals unobtainable, and continued violence better than compromise.

Yet the difficulties that have swamped every Israeli-Palestinian peace process to date do not mean that achieving peace is impossible. Rather, they point to the need for a new and more holistic path to peace in the Middle East. This path would mobilize the populations of Israel and Palestine toward this goal, with the active encouragement and support of the rest of the world.

The December 2007 visit to Israel and Palestine by a group of Indonesian ulama from the world's two largest Muslim organizations – LibForAll Foundation and the Indonesian Peace Delegation – represents one such effort, and the first step in a larger, systematic process. Conducted under the joint aegis of LibForAll Foundation and the Simon Wiesenthal Center, members of the group consistently observed that the silent majorities on both sides of the conflict sincerely desire an end to the cycle of violence, and peace for themselves and their children. This is remarkable, given the decades of incitement to hatred and violence in Palestinian mosques, schools and mass media, and a political culture that eschews compromise.

It is tragic that the voice of the people – full of an honest and sincere longing for peace – should be drowned out by violence and the narrow interests of politicians and extremists on both sides. We have a responsibility to amplify the voices of the innocent who pay with their blood and sorrow the price of others' ambitions and hatred.

We must also strengthen and facilitate the people's efforts to pressure their political elites – in a manner that is focused, intense and vocal, yet simultaneously civilized – to create a just and lasting peace.

Palestinians and Israelis need the world's support to create a new reality, in which the highest values of religion and humanity are restored to their proper dignity. We must also help Muslim populations – not only in Palestine, but throughout the Arab world – to rise to embrace a profoundly spiritual and tolerant understanding of Islam, and a humanistic attitude toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that acknowledges the legacy of suffering on all sides. Such an attitude is a necessary precondition for recognizing Israel's unique history and right to exist, while truly advancing the interests of Palestinians as well.

Last year's LibForAll/Indonesian Peace mission to Israel and Palestine was designed to initiate such a process. After the religious leaders who participated returned to Indonesia, they faced intense condemnation from Muslim extremists, who accused them of having betrayed their Palestinian brethren

and embarrassed Indonesia's Muslim community. Yet there is nothing shameful about working to realize the highest values of religion – which God intended to serve as a blessing, and not a curse, to all of humanity.

Although the obstacles to peace in the Holy Land may appear insurmountable, it is the responsibility of religious leaders on all sides to

A Celebration of Israel's Progress

By Jack Kemp TownHall.com May 12, 2008

As I prepare to travel to Israel this June - my second mission for the American-Israeli Friendship League and the Israel Finance Ministry - I also will be participating in the celebration of the 60th anniversary of Israel's historic independence. Meanwhile, thousands of Palestinians are protesting what they call the "nakba," or the catastrophe, of Israel's birth.

Historically and politically, I agree with Winston Churchill, who said on March 29, 1929, in a tree-planting ceremony on Mount Scopus, the future site of Hebrew University, "The hope of your race for so many centuries will be gradually realized here, not only for your own good but for the good of all the world. But the non-Jewish inhabitants must not suffer. Every step you take should therefore be also for moral and material benefit of all Palestinians, Jew and Arab alike."

Obviously, that's the ideal. In reality, Israel has come a long way, and our hope is that the Palestinian authority can eventually overcome Arab hostility in order to reach a true *modus vivendi* in these ongoing talks.

While there are some positive steps being acknowledged and pursued by both sides of the dialogue regarding a two-state solution to Palestinian statehood, we must also pause to recognize what a miracle it is that 60 years ago this tiny democratic nation and Zionist dream ever survived its birth struggles.

On May 20, 1948, just six days after independence was declared on May 14, five Arab armies - Syria, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon - unilaterally invaded Israel with advanced armies and weaponry against a ragtag army of Israelis.

From May 1948 throughout 1949, the fighting raged on relentlessly until an armistice was signed just a few months after the Israeli Defense Forces finally conquered and controlled Judaism's holiest city, Jerusalem.

There is far too much silence on this incredible accomplishment outside of the Jewish community, notwithstanding the president's trip to Israel on May 13 and 14 at the invitation of Shimon Peres for a gathering of world leaders.

To be historically accurate, instead of celebrating 60 years, we should be calling this the

attempt the impossible, and to accept whatever threats, slander and stigma may follow.

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"3,000 plus 60" celebration, as the Jews were the original inhabitants of that ancient land and displaced by the Romans who were among the first colonial powers in decimating the Jewish population, thus leading to the Jewish Diaspora of these 3,000 years plus.

Worldwide Jewry never lost their identity with Israel, however, and prayed daily "next year in Jerusalem," even when incarcerated in Nazi death camps or the Soviet Gulag.

Having been to Israel often since my first trip in 1972 as a rookie member of Congress, I'm always amazed at the incredible progress, juxtaposed against the virulence of its enemies, many of whom would annihilate not only the state of Israel but Jews writ large.

It's equally hard to believe how much opposition there was 60 years ago this month to a Jewish homeland as the remnant of European Jewry, 6 million of whom were burned and gassed by the Nazis and incarcerated by the brutal despot Joseph Stalin.

One of my foreign policy heroes, Gen. George Marshall, tried to dissuade President Truman from recognizing the new state of Israel in 1948. He and his Arabist allies in the State Department thought it would erode our credibility throughout the whole world. On the contrary, Truman's support gave moral standing to our nation in keeping with our founding democratic ideals and shared values. Today, Israel is unambiguously our most loyal and steadfast strategic ally in that part of the world, notwithstanding our increasing trade, diplomatic, and strategic friends and allies in the Arabian Gulf.

I appreciate the perspective of former Israeli Ambassador to the United States Zalman Shoval, who recently wrote, "Israel's triumph should not be seen primarily in terms of victories over its enemies. Instead, it should be considered in light of its achievements. Without natural resources, without any substantial foreign aid during the first 20 years of its existence and in spite of its ongoing security concerns it has created a thriving economy. Israel is a leader in high technology, medicine and related fields, and is a major cultural center."

What about a Palestinian state, people ask. As I wrote several years ago, I believe the United States

and Europe can help restore hope and pave the way for a new Palestinian leadership by making it unambiguously clear that we stand ready to provide a 21st century Marshall Plan of trade and aid for the

Middle East the instant a peace agreement is signed and both sides are living in democratically elected homelands.

German War Guilt and the Jewish State

By Daniel Schwammenthal The Wall Street Journal May 14, 2008

As Israel celebrates its 60th anniversary there is no denying that the Jewish state has an image problem in Europe.

Opinion polls in the U.S. consistently show that a majority of Americans are sympathetic to Israel. But the situation is the reverse on the other side of the Atlantic. It's particularly bad in Germany. In a British Broadcasting Corp. (BBC) survey last month, for example, Germans were among the Europeans with the least favorable views of Israel, second only to Spain. Even the respondents in the United Arab Emirates had a more positive perception of the Jewish state than Germans did.

This may be surprising, given that Berlin is considered one of Israel's more reliable allies in Europe. Successive German governments have justified the "special" relationship with Israel by pointing to the countries' "special" history. In light of the Holocaust, Germany seems to have no choice but to support the Jewish state. Former Green Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer advocated this policy of "historical responsibility" as effortlessly as Christian-Democratic Chancellor Angela Merkel does.

But guilt is an unhealthy basis for a relationship; it easily turns into resentment. This may help explain why so many Germans – 30% according to last year's survey by Bertelsmann Foundation – are eager to compare Israel to fascist Germany. If it were true that Israelis are modern-day Nazis, there would be less reason to feel guilty about the real Nazis.

Historical obligations also tend to have a statute of limitations. Postwar Germans may reasonably reject any special obligations to Israel as a result of crimes committed before they were born.

This brings us to the fundamental problem with Berlin's Israel policy. It implies that had there been no Holocaust, Israel would have no right to exist or, at least would have no reason to expect Germany's support. Israel's detractors take this argument one step further, claiming it was immoral to establish a Jewish state in the Middle East to atone for European crimes.

In 1922, long before the Holocaust, Winston Churchill debunked the idea that Israel could be justified only as reparation for past atrocities when he said, "The Jews are in Palestine by right and not by sufferance." Europe and Germany should thus be able to support Israel not just because of past wrongs committed against Jews, but because of Jews' inalienable right to a state in their ancestral homeland.

Israel's right to exist doesn't mean Germans must automatically back it. There has to be a special bond between nations to prompt support. Such alliances are usually forged around common interests and values. As the Mideast's most vibrant democracy, Israel should qualify for a truly "special relationship."

But unlike Americans, Germans rarely argue that Israel deserves solidarity as a Western ally. Americans generally see Israel as a fellow democracy under attack. But in Germany and much of Europe, Israel is often seen as a human-rights violator.

What explains this difference in perceptions? The U.S. media are not that much better in presenting a balanced view of the Middle East than their European counterparts. More likely, Americans are simply less disposed to believe the worst of Israel.

A key factor is Americans' appreciation of their Judeo-Christian heritage. While this is a common term in the U.S., it is a novel concept in Europe. Only recently has it found its way into the vocabulary of a few conservative Germans. Ms. Merkel and colleagues from Poland and Italy wanted to add a reference to the Continent's Judeo-Christian heritage to Europe's proposed constitution. The idea was rejected as too divisive.

But the term does not just cover the moral standards shared by Judaism and Christianity. Its meaning goes beyond matters of faith. It describes the fact that next to the Greco-Roman heritage, the Judeo-Christian tradition is the other main pillar of Western civilization. Acknowledging this fact helps Americans view Jews as part of that civilization and the Jewish state as part of the broader Western alliance.

In post-Christian Europe and Germany, this realization is largely missing. Moses's law, the foundation for Western legal codes and moral values, is hardly acknowledged on the Continent. Jews are more often seen as having contributed to Western civilization, rather than being an integral part of it, thanks to the role they played as a nation. Jews – often viewed as some kind of guest contributors – thus remain strangers in Europe, as does the Jewish state. And one can be inclined to believe bad things about strangers.

Given the similar threats Europe and Israel face from Islamic terror and a nuclear Iran, an alliance between them would seem natural. But as long as Europe's public considers Israel more as part of the problem than as part of the solution, any alliance will

suffer. It's time for German and European officials to make the real case for Israel — that of solidarity with an embattled ally.

And many more to come

By Mark Steyn *The Washington Times*

Almost everywhere I went last week — TV, radio, speeches — I was asked about the 60th anniversary of the Israeli state.

I don't recall being asked about Israel quite so much on its 50th anniversary, which as a general rule is a much bigger deal than the 60th. But these days friends and enemies alike smell weakness at the heart of the Zionist Entity. Assuming President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's apocalyptic fancies don't come to pass, Israel will surely make it to its 70th birthday. But a lot of folks don't fancy its prospects for its 80th and beyond. See the *Atlantic Monthly* cover story: "Is Israel finished?" Also the cover story in Canada's leading news magazine, *Maclean's*, which dispenses with the question mark: "Why Israel can't survive."

Why? By most measures, the Jewish state is a great success story. The modern Middle East is the misbegotten progeny of the British and French colonial map-makers of 1922. All the nation-states in that neck of the woods date back a mere 60 or 70 years — Iraq to the '30s, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Israel to the '40s. The only difference is that Israel has made a go of it.

Would I rather there were more countries like Israel, or more like Syria? I don't find that a hard question to answer. Israel is the only liberal democracy in the Middle East (Iraq may yet prove a second) and its Arab citizens enjoy more rights than they would living under any of the kleptocrat kings and psychotic dictators who otherwise infest the region. On a tiny strip of land narrower at its narrowest point than many American townships, Israel has built a modern economy with a per capita gross domestic product just shy of \$30,000 — and within striking distance of the European Union average. If you object that its economic blessings exist because it's uniquely blessed by Uncle Sam, well, for the last 30 years the second largest recipient of U.S. aid has been Egypt: Its GDP per capita is \$5,000, and America has nothing to show for its investment other than one-time pilot Mohamed Atta coming at you through the office window.

Jewish success against the odds is nothing new. "Aaron Lazarus the Jew," wrote Anthony Hope in his little known prequel to "The Prisoner Of Zenda," "had made a great business of it, and had spent his savings in buying up the better part of the street; but" — and for Jews there's always a "but" — "since Jews then might hold no property."

Ah, right. Like the Jewish merchants in old Europe who were tolerated as leaseholders but could never be full property owners, the Israelis are

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regarded as operating a uniquely conditional sovereignty.

Jimmy Carter, just returned from his squalid suck-up junket to Hamas, is merely the latest Western sophisticate to pronounce triumphantly that he has secured the usual (off-the-record, highly qualified, never to be translated into Arabic, and instantly denied) commitment from the Jews' enemies acknowledging Israel's "right to exist." Well, whoop-de-doo. Would you enter negotiations on such a basis?

Since Israel marked its half-century, the "right to exist" is now routinely denied not just in Gaza and Ramallah and the region's presidential palaces but on every European and Canadian college campus. During the Lebanese incursion of 2006, Matthew Parris wrote in the *Times of London*: "The past 40 years have been a catastrophe, gradual and incremental, for world Jewry. Seldom in history have the name and reputation of a human grouping lost so vast a store of support and sympathy so fast. My opinion — held not passionately but with little personal doubt — is that there is no point in arguing about whether the state of Israel should have been established where and when it was," which lets you know how he would argue it if minded to.

Richard Cohen in *The Washington Post* was more straightforward: "Israel itself is a mistake. It is an honest mistake, a well-intentioned mistake, a mistake for which no one is culpable, but the idea of creating a nation of European Jews in an area of Arab Muslims [and some Christians] has produced a century of warfare and terrorism of the sort we are seeing now. Israel fights Hezbollah in the north and Hamas in the south, but its most formidable enemy is history itself."

Messrs. Cohen and Parris, two famously moderate voices in the leading newspapers of two of the least anti-Israeli capital cities in the west, have nevertheless internalized the same logic as Mr. Ahmadinejad: Israel should not be where it is. Whether it's a "stain of shame" or just a "mistake" is the merest detail.

Aaron Lazarus and every other "European Jew" of his time would have had a mirthless chuckle over Mr. Cohen's designation. The Jews lived in Europe for centuries, but without ever being accepted as "European": To enjoy their belated acceptance as Europeans, they had to move to the Middle East. Reviled on the Continent as sinister rootless cosmopolitans with no conventional national allegiance, they built a conventional nation-state, and

now they're reviled for that, too. The "oldest hatred" didn't get that way without an ability to adapt.

The Western intellectuals who promote "Israeli Apartheid Week" at this time each year are laying the groundwork for the next stage of Zionist delegitimization. The talk of a "two-state solution" will fade.

In the land between the Jordan and the Mediterranean, Jews are barely a majority. Gaza has one of the highest birthrates on the planet: The median age is 15.8 years. Its population is not just literally exploding, at Israeli checkpoints, but also doing so in the less incendiary but demographically decisive sense.

Arabs will soon demand one democratic state — Jews and Muslims — from Jordan to the sea. And even those Western leaders who understand this will mean the death of Israel will find themselves so confounded by the multicultural pieties of their own lands they'll be unable to argue against it. Contemporary Europeans are not exactly known for their moral courage: The reports one hears of

schools quietly dropping the Holocaust from their classrooms because it offends their growing numbers of Muslim students suggest that even the pretense of "evenhandedness" in the Israeli-Palestinian "peace process" will be long gone a decade hence.

The joke, of course, is that Israel, despite its demographic challenge, still enjoys a birthrate twice the European average. All the reasons for Israel's doom apply to Europe with bells on. And, unlike much of the rest of the West, Israel has the advantage of living on the front line of the existential challenge. "I have a premonition that will not leave me," wrote Eric Hoffer, America's great longshoreman philosopher, after the '67 war. "As it goes with Israel so will it go with all of us."

Indeed. So happy 60th birthday. And here's to many more.

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Ahmadinejad's smile

By Caroline Glick The Jerusalem Post

The regime-affiliated Iranian Fars news agency published a sensational story this week. According to the Fars report, Saudi Arabia and Israel collaborated in killing Iranian terror-master Imad Mughniyeh in Damascus in February. The story is important regardless of whether it is true. It is important because it says something important about the nature of Iran's relationship with Syria. Specifically, it says that Iran views Syria as a vassal state.

If Teheran were not convinced of its control of the Syrian regime, it would never have dared to publish a story that places the Assad regime in an open confrontation with Saudi Arabia. An even partially independent Syria would never go along with such an open challenge to Saudi Arabia.

Syria, of course, is not Iran's only proxy in the Arab world. There is the Hamas regime in Gaza as well. On Thursday the Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center released an in-depth report on Hamas's military buildup since Israel's withdrawal from Gaza in September 2005. The report notes that Hamas receives arms and funding from Iran and Syria and sends its fighters for extending training at camps in Iran and Syria.

By directly supporting Hamas and by supporting Hamas indirectly through Syria and Hizbullah, Teheran has transformed Gaza into a wholly-owned subsidiary of Iran. While Hamas may have independent interests, the fact is that any independent will Hamas may have had at one time has become entirely subservient to Teheran. This is so because Teheran has rendered itself Hamas's

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indispensable ally and protector. Without Iran, Hamas would have no staying power.

Then there is Lebanon. The weak Saniora government, which was brought to power by the anti-Syrian and anti-Iranian March 14 Democracy Movement three years ago, is clearly no match for Iran and its proxies. Presidential elections have been held up for five months due to Hizbullah's Syrian- and Iranian-ordered refusal to agree on a compromise candidate. The Saniora government needs Hizbullah's agreement because Iran's proxies have murdered a sufficient number of cabinet ministers and members of parliament to take away Saniora's parliamentary capacity to elect a successor to the Syrian-puppet, former president Emile Lahoud. The assassination of political opponents in Lebanon, of course, began in earnest with the March 2005 assassination of pro-Western and pro-Saudi former prime minister Rafik Hariri. This week in Washington, Sen. Arlen Specter asked Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to comment on an interesting Syrian offer. According to Specter, during Jordanian King Abdullah's visit to Washington last month, he suggested that Syria might be willing to rein in Hizbullah and Hamas in exchange for an offer of immunity for President Bashar Assad in the UN's probe of Hariri's murder. Rice rejected the offer, but that is not what is interesting.

What is interesting is that Syria would feel comfortable making what amounts to a confession of control over Hizbullah and Hamas. While at first glance the Syrian offer seems to contradict the assertion that Syria is an Iranian proxy, it actually

does no such thing. It shows that Iran is willing to shuffle some proxies around to protect other ones. To protect Assad, for instance, Iran may be willing to have Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal temporarily decamp to Teheran or Qatar or Bahrain. While such a move would have absolutely no impact on Iran's continued control over its proxies, it could neutralize the UN tribunal's threat to the Syrian regime.

To sum up, through its proxy strategy, Iran has taken control of Syria, has paralyzed and is increasingly calling the shots in Lebanon, and has effective control over Gaza, from which it can attack Israel and Egypt at will. And of course, it is the primary sponsor of the insurgency in Iraq.

Led by Saudi Arabia and Egypt, the Sunni Arab states are well aware of Iran's proxy strategy for attaining regional dominance, and they are not pleased. The partial boycott of the Arab League summit in Damascus last month was the Sunni Arab states' way of showing their displeasure with Iran's domination of Syria and Lebanon. On a more operational level, this week the Syrian media reported that the Syrian oppositionist National Salvation Front run by the Muslim Brotherhood and former Syrian vice president Abd al Halim Khaddam will launch an anti-regime satellite television channel in a few months. Presumably wealthy Gulf kingdoms are bankrolling the project.

Strategically, the Sunni Arab states have voiced varying degrees of interest in building their own nuclear programs to compete with the Iranian nuclear program. But diplomatic snubs, jihadist television stations with anti-regime bents, and loud plans to build nuclear reactors will not suffice to defeat Iran or even to slow down its bid for regional domination. And the fact is that the Sunni states are aligned with most of Iran's policies. They keep Iraq at arm's length and loudly criticize US operations in the country. They continue to back Hamas and ostracize Israel. And they have taken no substantive stands against Hizbullah's subversion of the Saniora government since the end of the Second Lebanon War. The main reason that the Sunni Arab countries cannot contend with Iran is that their publics share Iran's jihadist ideology. And their publics share Iran's general jihadist ideology because the Sunni states have indoctrinated their publics to believe in jihad through their state-controlled media.

Egypt, Saudi Arabia and their Sunni Arab brothers are in no position to argue with Iran publicly or to confront Iran's Arab proxies because they can't explain to their own people why Iran's bid to destroy Israel and to dominate the world in the name of Islam is a bad thing.

The attraction of Iran's jihadist ideology for so many Muslims has also helped Teheran expand its army of proxies. Acting as the avant guard of global jihad, Iran has collected otherwise adversarial terror groups in their hours of need and has transformed

them into Iranian proxies over time. After the al-Qaida leadership fled Afghanistan in late 2001, for instance, many of its leaders received sanctuary in Iran from which they continued to operate.

The late al-Qaida in Iraq commander Abu Musab Zarkawi received medical care in Iran and entered Iraq from Iran. He received his operational orders from the al Qaida leadership in Iran.

In a recent interview with the Qatari Al-Arab newspaper translated by MEMRI, Ahmad Salah al-Din, who serves as the spokesman for the Iraqi Sunni jihadist group Hamas-Iraq, alleged that al-Qaida in Iraq today is wholly subservient to Iran. Salah al-Din claimed, "We found Iranian toman [currency] at an al-Qaida headquarters that we uncovered. We have also captured Iranian weapons, not to mention audio and video recordings containing announcements by al-Qaida fighters that they had received training in Iranian military camps and that al-Qaida wounded were being transported to Iran for medical treatment."

So too, Iran has a long history of collaboration with Fatah dating back to the early 1970s, when Ayatollah Khomeini's future revolutionary leaders received training in PLO camps in Lebanon. In 1999, as Yasser Arafat geared up his terror armies ahead of the launch of his terror war against Israel in 2000, Iran began funding Fatah terror cells. Today, after sponsoring Hamas's rout of Fatah in Gaza last June, Iran no longer needs to deal with the Fatah leadership. Through Syria, Hamas and Hizbullah it controls Fatah terror cells directly.

Iran's policy of combining a proxy war strategy with a popular revolutionary ideology is almost an exact reenactment of the Soviet Union's Cold War strategy for fighting the US. Two things, however, distinguish Iran's war against the West today from the Soviets' war against the West in the 20th century. First, Iran is much less powerful than the Soviet Union was. Second, the Iranian regime is far less open to deterrence than the Soviets were.

As David Wurmser, US Vice President Richard Cheney's former Middle East adviser noted recently at an address before the Philadelphia-based Middle East Forum, the Iranian regime is motivated by a messianic ideology with a strong apocalyptic component. This renders useless the threat of mutually assured destruction.

The other main distinction between the Soviet war against the West and the Iranian war against the West is that the US-led West embraced a dual strategy of confrontation and containment against the Soviets. Today, the same US-led West follows no coherent strategy for contending with Iran.

The only battleground where Iranian proxies are directly confronted today is in Iraq. After the 2006 Iranian proxy war against Israel, the US largely abandoned its support for the Saniora government. Hizbullah has been permitted to rebuild its forces

and its arsenal and to reassert control over much of south Lebanon and to extend its control north of the Litani River. Rather than confront Hamas, at the US's insistence, Israel has done nothing to prevent Hamas's military buildup in Gaza or even to prevent it from continuing its rocket campaign against the western Negev. Then too, by supporting the defeated Fatah leadership, the US and Israel are indirectly strengthening Hamas. During the Arab League summit, Fatah leader Mahmoud Abbas announced that he spends some 58 percent of his US, Israeli and European supplied budget on paying the salaries of 77,000 officials who serve under the Hamas regime in Gaza. So by funding Fatah, which supports Hamas, Israel and the US are strengthening Iran's control of Gaza through its Hamas proxy. They are also facilitating the weaker Fatah's incremental absorption into the Iranian axis.

As for Syria, both Israel and the US consistently ignore the fact that Syria is no longer an independent actor. By effectively adopting the Baker-Hamilton Iraq Study Group's recommendations from 2006, the Bush administration and Israel give credence to the notion that Syria will moderate its behavior if Israel surrenders the Golan Heights, and so encourage Iran to continue its aggression by seeming to reward it.

Condi, George Marshall and Israel By The Washington Times Editorial May 8, 2008

Sixty years ago this month, the state of Israel was founded, a nation born with a knife at its throat. Within hours of the United Nations General Assembly's decision to partition British-ruled Palestine into two independent states — one majority Jewish, the other Arab — Israel declared its independence on May 14, 1948, whereupon seven Arab armies invaded in an unsuccessful attempt to wipe it off the map. It's unpleasant to talk about, but one parallel between May 1948 and May 2008 needs a more open public discussion as President Bush prepares to visit Israel next week to commemorate Israel's birthday: When it comes to legitimate Israeli security concerns, the State Department still seems clueless 60 years later.

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert is in a very weak position domestically; Israel is rife with rumors of his impending political demise as a result of myriad corruption investigations. Yet rather than let the Israeli electorate deal with a potential government crisis, it appears that Mr. Bush and Miss Rice have decided to ramp up the pressure on Israel to make life-and-death concessions to Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, a man whose serial incompetence got him run out of Gaza by Hamas, and whose own security record is shaky at best. Miss Rice and other U.S. diplomats pronounce themselves dissatisfied over the pace at which Israel has been taking down anti-terror security roadblocks in the

Then too, while allowing Sunni states to support the Muslim Brotherhood as a presumed counterweight to Iran, Israel and the US ignore the repeated pleas of Syrian Kurds for assistance in their campaign to overthrow the Syrian regime in favor of a federal, anti-Iranian democratic state. The Syrian Kurds receive no assistance from either the US or Israel in their own bid to set up a pro-democracy satellite television station to broadcast into Syria, even as they are violently repressed by the regime.

In the absence of a strategy of confronting Iran either directly or through its proxies, the only coherent course that remains is one of containment. But this option is rife with danger. With Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's announcement this week that Iran is introducing 3,000 upgraded centrifuges to its Natanz nuclear installation, it is clear that international sanctions have had no impact on Iran's quest for nuclear weapons. It is also clear that if Iran acquires nuclear weapons, it will be impossible to confront its proxies, who will operate under Iran's nuclear umbrella.

So as Iran progresses forward with its grand strategy for regional hegemony, the West dithers and so assists it. No wonder Ahmadinejad is always smiling.

West Bank, and the secretary is dispatching observers to various West Bank locations in order to satisfy herself that Israel is jettisoning them quickly enough. While reducing limitations on Palestinian freedom of movement is a commendable goal, it needs to be balanced against the real danger that doing this could make it easier for terrorists to come and go without detection. These checkpoints are part of a layered system of security that has enabled Israel to dramatically reduce the number of suicide attacks directed at its civilian population, Arab and Jewish, in places like Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Haifa during the past five years. But from conversations we've had with State Department officials, the real-world security implications seem to be overlooked in the Bush administration's bid to obtain a "peacemaking" legacy for itself.

Sixty years ago this month, Secretary of State George Marshall was mucking up Middle East policy in his own way. On May 12, 13 and 14, 1948, for example, Gen. Marshall and aides waged a last-gasp bureaucratic battle behind the scenes in an unsuccessful effort to dissuade President Truman from recognizing the coming state of Israel. Fast forward to today, and Miss Rice (this time with presidential approval) seems determined to pound a weak Israeli government into a series of untenable security concessions. It's a Foggy Bottom tradition that no one should be proud of.