

When Zionism Was About Ideas

By Daniel Gordis DanielGordis.org June 1, 2008

Recently, I found myself thumbing through one of my heavily worn copies of *The Zionist Idea*, longingly reviewing the array of thinkers that Arthur Herzberg, of blessed memory, had thought to assemble in one volume. The truth is, I took it off the shelf looking for something specific, but it took only a minute or two of flipping through the dog-eared pages to completely forget what it was I'd been searching for. Instead, I began to wonder: Is what Zionism has wrought worthy of the grandeur of that volume?

I'd never given much thought to the title that Herzberg chose for his anthology. But, it suddenly struck me, *The Zionist Idea* was actually a stroke of genius as a title, for it claimed then, and reminds us now, that part of the greatness of Zionism lay in the ideas it produced. Yes, statehood itself is an extraordinary accomplishment, as are many other elements of what's been produced here. But first and foremost, as Herzberg essentially continues to remind us, Zionism was about ideas.

One hundred years ago, the Jewish state was nothing more than an idea. Some believed it could be realized, while others did not. Some thought it a terrible and dangerous notion, while others believed it was the only hope for a Jewish future. But as Herzberg's now-classic volume continues to illustrate, the very idea of Jewish statehood engendered scores of other ideas. For decades, the early Zionists debated issues ranging from the political to the cultural. Almost talmudic in the breadth of its conversation and the energy of its disagreements, the first phase of Zionism was one of those periods in which the Jews did well what they've long done best; they engaged in the honing and exchange of ideas.

How the mighty have fallen! Now that the "distractions" of the 60th anniversary celebrations have ended, Israeli society is confronted once again by an array of issues ranging from the diplomatic to the potentially criminal, from preparations for war to - some would say - the possibility of peace, from nuclear proliferation to rumors of agonizing prisoner exchanges, and our reaction is... virtual silence.

To be sure, Israeli television and radio offer a seemingly endless array of pontificating experts. Some are interesting, most are not. But what almost none of them offer us is ideas, anything even remotely verging on the profound, that might prompt us and our society to move from either

deafening silence or deadening argumentation, and instead to a revival of the sorts of debates to which Ze'ev Jabotinsky and Ahad Ha'am once treated us.

Where are the thinkers guiding us as we settle into the tragic realization that we may not live to see peace? Now that many Israelis believe (perhaps correctly) that there is simply no peace to be had, that what is at stake is not borders - or Palestinian statehood - but the very right of the Jewish state to be, how shall we proceed?

In the days after the 1967 Six Day War, most of us would have imagined that if Israel had treaties with Egypt and Jordan and relative quiet with Syria, regional peace would be at hand. But yesterday's formidable enemies are today's sideshow; today, it is Iran and her satellites, Hizbullah and Hamas, that most threaten Israel, and on those fronts, we might as well be back at Khartoum - no negotiation, no recognition, no peace.

What sort of education system do we need to respond to that challenge? How does one raise a generation of children who no longer believe they'll live to see peace without getting them to hate the "other" as deeply as our enemies do? Can we produce young men and women so passionately Zionist that they will risk everything for this country in their youth and live their adult lives here, all the while remaining sufficiently open to the possibility of peace that were it to become possible one day, they would not be so callous that they would squander the opportunity?

Can a young generation robbed of the possibility of peace grow into sophisticated adulthood without serious discussions of the legitimacy of the use of power? Can we produce a generation of leaders without asking them to wonder why Plato's Republic places soldiers immediately below the rulers? What did Plato mean to suggest about the moral imperative of defending one's citizens? How might reading the Republic shape the views of a young Israeli generation that increasingly sees matters military as something to be avoided at virtually all cost? Does the classic Jewish distinction between obligatory and optional wars have anything to say about how we ought to respond to the relentless shelling of civilians in towns situated in sovereign Israeli territory? There is, to be sure, a moral obligation not to use excessive power, but might there also be a moral imperative not to spurn its use?

Yet how many of our high-school students read deeply and think clearly about issues like this? Appallingly few. How is it possible that 60 years after its creation, Israel still does not have its first liberal arts college? We've become pundits instead of philosophers, and respond to moments of moral magnitude with silence or simplicity rather than with sophistication. The people of the book has created a

Jews united for Israel's friends

By Caroline Glick *The Jerusalem Post*

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad suffered a humiliating setback this week in his quest for international legitimacy. Ahmadinejad is expected to arrive in Rome this week to participate in a UN summit on the global food crisis (which has been caused by the rise in oil prices that Ahmadinejad is so pleased to have had a role in fomenting).

Ahmadinejad was hoping that while in the Italian capital he would be able to have a photo-op with Pope Benedict XVI. To secure the meeting, Ahmadinejad - who has called for all nations to convert to Islam or be destroyed (except for the Jews who can do nothing to avoid destruction) - has been sweet talking the Vatican for months. In his latest move, during a meeting in April with Archbishop Jean-Paul Gobel, the Vatican's representative in Iran, Ahmadinejad referred to the Vatican as a "positive force for justice and peace."

But Benedict was unmoved by Ahmadinejad's flattery. His request for an audience with the pontiff was unceremoniously rejected.

Not surprisingly, the Israeli government has nothing to say about Benedict's humiliation of Ahmadinejad. This is unsurprising because the Olmert-Livni-Barack-Yishai government has never bothered to pay attention to anything that the pope does. His bold moves in recent years to challenge Islamic leaders to repudiate murder and coercion in the name of Allah have elicited no support and indeed no reaction of any kind from Jerusalem.

The Olmert-Livni-Barack-Yishai government's neglect of the Vatican is regrettable, but it is par for the course for this government which has limited Israel's foreign policy to appeasing Palestinian terrorists and kowtowing to the State Department. The best that can be said for this state of affairs is that at least Israel's neglect of the Catholic Church - like its neglect of Africa, Asia, Europe, South America and Australia - is benign. In contrast, the treatment that the Vatican has received from some American Jewish leaders has been far from neglectful and far from benign.

Rather than stand with the Catholic church as Benedict moves boldly against radical Islam, American Jewish leaders led by ADL Director Abe Foxman have been attacking the church for its theological decisions. Last year, fresh from his bitter campaign against Mel Gibson's movie about Jesus,

state that robs its young people of the opportunity to learn to think.

One day, someone is going to want to produce the sequel to Herzberg's volume. What does Israel have to do now so that we might produce a generation of young people capable of saying something worthy of being included?

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Foxman began targeting the Vatican for its decision to permit wider use of the traditional Latin Mass which includes a prayer for Jews to convert to Christianity.

While it is unpleasant for Jews to consider millions of Catholics praying for us to abandon our faith, it is unclear why what they say in their churches should interest us so long as they aren't demanding our presence at disputations or forcibly converting us. After all, in our prayers, we explicitly reject their faith as false. And this is to be expected.

Every religion asserts itself as the one true faith and demeans all others as false. As the American Jewish radio host Dennis Prager noted at a lecture for the David Horowitz Freedom Center in Santa Barbara, California this weekend, "There is no Judeo-Christian faith. There are Judeo-Christian values."

Judaism and Christianity are different religions. But they share common moral values and it is on the basis of these values that joint action can be taken and separate actions can be judged. Jews and Christians cannot judge each other on the basis of theology, only on the basis of morality.

Pope Benedict's actions clearly show him to be a friend of Israel and the Jewish people. Unfortunately, due to the grave absence of Jewish leadership in both Israel and the US today, he has little to show for it.

But any grief that Israel's neglect, and men like Foxman's unnecessary criticisms may have caused the pope are nothing compared to the insults Jewish leaders have heaped in recent months on our most prominent Protestant Christian friend. The humiliating treatment that Pastor John Hagee, the founder and national chairman of Christians United for Jews has suffered at the hands of American Jewish leaders is simply a travesty.

This week in Washington, DC, AIPAC is hosting its annual policy conference. It will be an illustrious affair. Heavy-hitters from both American political parties will be in attendance, as will scholars and activists from Israel and the US. But one name is noticeably absent from the three-day program. John Hagee - who in three years has transformed CUFI into a grassroots pro-Israel movement that dwarfs AIPAC in size - is not on the program. And this is a horrible thing.

AIPAC's decision to shun Hagee says something terrible about the state of American Jewish politics today. Quite simply, Hagee has become a victim of liberal American Jewish leaders' decision to place their leftist political preferences above their concern for Israel's survival and for the well-being of American Jewry.

Senator Barack Obama, the presumptive Democratic nominee for President, has a problem with his religious background. Until last weekend, Obama was a 20-year member of the Trinity United Church in Chicago. In recent months, his former pastor Jeremiah Wright, the man who converted him to Christianity, officiated at his wedding and baptized his daughters, has been exposed as an anti-American, anti-white and anti-Semitic political activist who preaches a black supremacist version of Christian teachings to his enthusiastic congregation. Then too, Obama's Catholic friend, and friend of Trinity United, Father Michael Pfleger, has been exposed as an anti-American, anti-white and anti-Semitic political activist who preaches a black supremacist version of Christian teaching to his enthusiastic congregation.

Obama's longstanding and deep connections to these spiritual mentors have placed him in a problematic position vis-à-vis the American electorate. To mitigate the damage, Obama's supporters have sought to counterbalance Wright with a conservative clergyman of equal weight in the Republican camp. And Hagee, with his avowedly anti-homosexual, anti-abortion views and public prominence was the chosen target.

The first Obama supporter to hone in on Hagee was Rabbi Eric Yoffie, president of the Union for Reform Judaism. Yoffie has long sought to discredit Hagee who he sees as a threat to his view that the only way to be pro-Israel is to support the establishment of a Palestinian state.

Hagee endorsed Republican John McCain for President in March. In early April, Yoffie called on McCain to reject Hagee's endorsement and he called on American Jews to reject CUFI, claiming that CUFI's unconditional support for Israel precluded its support for a Palestinian state.

In his words, "No, we cannot cooperate with Christian Zionists. What [Hagee and his allies] mean by 'support of Israel' and what we mean by 'support of Israel' are two very different things. Their vision of Israel rejects a two-state solution, rejects the possibility of a democratic Israel, and supports the permanent occupation of all Arab lands now controlled by Israel."

Following Yoffie's lead, Democratic activists desperate to find a Republican counterpart to Wright, focused their fire on Hagee. They attacked him for anti-homosexual remarks he has made. And they grossly distorted remarks he made on historical Christian anti-Semitism to portray him as an enemy

of the Catholic church. Then too, they attacked him for a sermon he gave where he argued that the Holocaust was God's way of getting the Jews to Israel and so absurdly implied that a man who has devoted his professional life to improving Jewish-Christian relations, ending Evangelical Christian drives to convert Jews and supporting Israel is an anti-Semite.

The Democratic Jewish charge against Hagee compelled McCain to reject Hagee's endorsement, and so drove another wedge between McCain and the Republican voting Christian Right. It also successfully created an illusion of symmetry between Wright and Hagee.

This in and of itself is morally repugnant since there is no moral equivalence between Hagee and Wright. Hagee clearly loves America, doesn't have a problem with whites or blacks and loves Jews. Wright is a man defined by his hatreds.

But even more insidious than Hagee's forced estrangement from McCain is the effort to have him disowned by the American Jewish community and Israel. Yoffie, together with the pro-Palestinian Jewish American lobbying group J Street, have been pressuring Jewish leaders to distance their organizations from Hagee and CUFI and to boycott CUFI's annual conference in Washington next month. Not surprisingly, Foxman answered their call by announcing that he was placing the ADL's relations with CUFI "on hold." And no doubt bowing to their pressure, AIPAC neglected to invite Hagee to its policy conference this week.

As for Israel, just as Yoffie made his initial attack on Hagee, Hagee was setting out to Israel with a thousand CUFI members on a solidarity mission. He held a rally of his supporters at the Jerusalem Conference Center. There he distributed six million dollars in contributions from CUFI members to Israeli charities and educational institutions. No doubt in response to Yoffie's pressure, the only prominent Israeli politicians who attended the event were Likud leader Binyamin Netanyahu and former Likud minister and MK Uzi Landau. No government minister attended and Prime Minister Ehud Olmert sufficed with a private meeting with Hagee.

Happily, not all American Jewish leaders have agreed to toe the line. Senator Joseph Lieberman has rejected demands by Yoffie and J Street to boycott CUFI's conference in Washington. The American Jewish Committee and the Zionist Organization of America have refused to distance themselves from Hagee. Israel and American Jewry should follow their example.

These are terrible times for world Jewry. Islamic Jew-hatred is genocidal. The international Left has betrayed us. Our leaders are weak. Our friends are few and far between.

If we wish to persevere in this environment we must embrace those who support us while eschewing those - even in our own ranks - who tell us that support for Israel is conditional. Now is not

the time to quibble over Christian theology. Now is the time to stand united with our friends against our common enemies.

Syria's genocidal intentions

By Zalman Shoval and Louis Rene Beres

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert is once again raising the issue of Golan surrender. Oddly, Mr. Olmert ought to have already learned the perils of land for nothing from his prior fiasco in the wake of last year's Lebanon war. He claimed success for getting the Lebanese army stationed in southern Lebanon: Yet the largely Shi'ite military force capitulated rapidly and predictably to Hezbollah.

Significantly, any Israeli retreat from the Golan - an area roughly the size of New York City's borough of Queens - could produce very similar losses.

Syria had already taken steps to "go nuclear." These steps, which involved North Korea, were reportedly ended by Israel on September 6, 2007. Yet now, - and even without any pressure from Washington - Mr. Olmert is willing to consider giving up the 452-square-mile Golan Heights to Damascus. The prime minister seems propelled by two distinct motives. He seeks to strengthen his hand in domestic politics. Perhaps, he also wants to put pressure on the Palestinians and signal that the "peace train" could leave without them. But both of his calculations are bound to boomerang.

Syria, like Iran, makes no secret of its genocidal intentions toward Israel. Both actively support a number of major terrorist groups. Syria maintains especially important links to Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the PFLP-GC and Hezbollah - which is an Iranian proxy.

Al Qaeda, which also has close ties to Iran, could exploit new opportunities on a surrendered Golan. On May 16, Osama bin Laden - in a statement intended to coincide with celebrations of Israel's 60th-anniversary - announced that the Palestinian cause was now at the core of his jihad. Although the Golan has no clear connection to this particular cause - and although bin Laden's third statement of 2008 is inconsistent with previously listed al Qaeda priorities - any Golan surrender to Syria could strengthen al Qaeda. It is also true that there is no single "Palestinian cause": There is only a myriad of different and often conflicting objectives.

Syria cannot afford to detach itself from Iran because Tehran provides the minority Allawi regime with protection against the Sunni majority in Syria. Also, Syria's dominant position in Lebanon is contingent on Hezbollah.

Any Israeli Golan withdrawal could leave the northern region of Israel open to wider Syrian or even Iranian invasion through the Jordan Valley. Over time, hundreds of assaults on the Land of Israel, west of the Jordan, have been launched from

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or through the Golan. A Golan withdrawal would also destroy at least 32 Jewish communities and threaten Israel's water supply.

The Golan has long occupied a place of historic importance in the creation and re-creation of Jewish nationhood. But even from a narrow security standpoint, Mr. Olmert's flawed reasoning lies in the gravely obvious limits of international law and diplomacy. Also problematic for Israel are ever-changing missile and satellite technologies - which could expose the Jewish state to unanticipated risks.

For security alone, the Israeli military must retain its positions on the Golan - especially on Mt. Hermon. After the June 1967 war, the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff issued a major report advising permanent Israeli retention of the Golan. Nothing has changed to alter the validity of this recommendation. Indeed, Golan surrender could also enlarge the prospect of war on the Lebanese front and the corollary influence of assorted terrorist factions.

Israel and the United States have coincident regional security interests. Both countries should now stand together against a determined Syrian enemy in the Middle East. It is not in Israel's or America's interest to encourage renewed Syrian aggression, or to enlarge opportunities for radical Islamist sanctuaries. Religion notwithstanding, operational collaboration between Shi'ite and Sunni terrorists would be likely on all fronts. Iranian intelligence first met with Osama bin Laden at the Khartoum jihadist conferences of 1992-1993.

Israel formally annexed the Golan in 1981 - after defeating Syrian aggression in June 1967, and after the Yom Kippur aggressions of October 1973. The Israeli Supreme Court has ruled conclusively on Israel's sovereignty over the Golan: "Wherever in the law it says Israel or the State of Israel," said the Court, "Ramat HaGolan is included."

Neither Israel nor the United States has anything to gain from Golan surrender. Syria might agree, on paper, to some form of "demilitarization." But once the territory is actually back in Syrian hands, the area would be quickly re-militarized by Damascus. These crucial points should not be overlooked in Jerusalem or Washington.

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Perfection demanded only from little Israel

By Chris Powell Connecticut Journal Enquirer May 24, 2008

Much of the world has disparaged Israel's celebration of its 60th year of independence (renewed independence, actually) by claiming, as one Connecticut newspaper columnist did the other day, that the country "was built over the debris of 400 destroyed villages and the sorrows of 750,000 people, both Christians and Muslims, expelled from their land."

Yes, Israel's re-establishment in 1948 had its dislocations, Jews going here, Muslims going there, and Christians caught in the middle. But not all these dislocations were expulsions. And if the whole Middle East is counted, there have been far more expulsions of Jews than of anyone else. In any case complaints about the dislocations in Israel's re-establishment presume that the planet was delivered to humanity straight from the factory with its national borders already marked on it and that the return of Israel was a smudge on the natural order of things. In fact, of course, most of today's national borders were established either by war or colonialism. Some make sense now; many still don't.

Even though its re-establishment in 1948 involved war, Israel can claim far more legitimacy than most countries. For unlike most countries today Israel was re-established by resolution of the international organization, the United Nations. Israel's neighbors refused to accept the U.N. resolution and immediately went to war against the new country, and then twice more, in 1967 and 1973, always to deny Israel's legitimacy. But unlike most nations victorious in war, Israel has either given back or has been looking for safe ways of giving away most of the territory it conquered.

As much as the dislocations arising from Israel's re-establishment obsess certain people today, they are tiny compared to dislocations that are hardly noticed anymore. For example, just a year before Israel's re-establishment, British-ruled India was partitioned, by act of Parliament and consensus among the colony's political classes, into Hindu and Muslim sectors, the former becoming independent India and the latter becoming Pakistan. This partition uprooted about 15 million people and cost about a half million lives, through ethnic violence, expropriation, and exhaustion. The resentments arising from the partition of India endure today and continue to cost as many lives every year as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict does, but no one outside India and Pakistan seems to care.

Of course Europe, where criticism of Israel's anniversary may be strongest, has partitioned itself too many times to count, with peoples and nations pushed north, south, east, and west over the centuries. From Finland down to Yugoslavia -- whoops, Serbia now -- it is impossible to walk more than a few miles without crossing what, within the last 200 years, used to be a national border or without finding a town whose name wasn't different not long ago.

Anyone aggrieved that the areas that are supposed to become the Palestinian homeland -- the West Bank and Gaza -- are separated by 20 miles of Israel might check the map of the Indian subcontinent, where 1,500 miles separate what used to be the two Pakistans (now Pakistan and Bangladesh), or the map of Europe, where Russia's Kaliningrad province is 300 miles from Russia proper, cut off by Lithuania and Latvia.

While Israel, the size of Connecticut, is supposed to return to Syria the Golan Heights, smaller than Rhode Island, China is keeping the vastness of Tibet, which it seized in 1959. And, having made five states out of the territory it seized by war in 1848, the United States won't be returning Alta California to Mexico any time soon.

Traces of vanished, persecuted, dispersed, and murdered aboriginal peoples can be found in practically every country -- that's what Connecticut's Indian casinos are supposed to be about -- but everyone is forgiven except for the Jews, who instead are constantly ducking rocket fire and curses for clinging to their tiny strip along the eastern Mediterranean. Call it tribalism if you want, but that is to be blind to the tribalism that surrounds Israel, a tribalism that, unlike any Israeli tribalism, preaches extinction.

That Connecticut newspaper columnist approvingly quoted a letter written by a hundred anti-Israel British Jews denouncing the country's anniversary: "We will celebrate when Arabs and Jews live as equals in a peaceful Middle East." Of course such equality is to be attempted first not by democratizing Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, or Iran but by erasing the border that protects the smallest tribe so that it falls under the sovereignty of the very nations that drove it out and then three times waged war against it. Any such peace will be only the peace of the grave -- which has been the idea all along.

The blank page option By Yossi Alpher BitterLemons.org May 19, 2008

Abraham Lincoln said, "Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power." The leaders in our neighborhood,

as well as the American president who just came from Washington to visit us, have been given power and their character has been found wanting. Olmert,

Barak, Netanyahu, Abu Mazen, Bush, the Hamas leaders, Mubarak, Assad--the list is long and depressing. Here and there we find possible glimpses of good leadership--Livni, Fayyad and Abdullah of Jordan come to mind. But they are as yet untried or unfulfilled, hence below the cutoff point required for our judgment. Nowhere do we find a Ben-Gurion, a Sadat, a Begin, a Rabin or a Hussein of Jordan.

The temptation, particularly in writing about leadership in the Israeli-Palestinian context, is simply to leave the page blank.

Since first perceiving themselves as a people or a nation, the Palestinians have had only three national leaders. Haj Amin al-Husseini and Yasser Arafat took power and led them to repeated disasters. Mahmoud Abbas inherited power but does not know how to translate it into authority; moreover, his status as a truly national leader must be questioned since Hamas took over Gaza. For nearly 100 years, the Palestinians have failed at nation-building--perhaps the ultimate test of the use of power.

Compared even to our Arab state neighbors, Palestine constitutes without doubt a depressing instance of the failure of leadership. Israel, incidentally, is finally becoming aware just how severely it suffers from the Palestinian leadership's extended failure to create a stable state neighbor. That the Palestinians almost exclusively blame Israel for their failures does not enhance their case. Yet Israel's own leadership failings have undoubtedly contributed heavily to this state of affairs.

Israel itself is not nearly as badly off. Yet all its recent leaders failed at both peace and war and most were the subject of repeated police inquiries. Under present circumstances, it's hard to imagine the emergence of a Begin or a Rabin.

Many outside observers from the democratic countries would at this point remark that we Israelis are being too tough on our leaders. Or, put differently, our leadership problems are shared by much of the western world we aspire to belong to. Look, for example, at the mediocre and at times ludicrous nature of politics in the United States, France, Italy and the United Kingdom. The blame, it is suggested, has to be directed at least partially at the environment: the asphyxiating media, the intrusive

courts, the total lack of privacy that drives all the good men and women away from politics.

Indeed, here in Israel our politicians are subject to problematic fundraising norms, corrupting primary systems and horrific constituent pressures. Wealth and politics are now thoroughly and fatally mixed. Nevertheless, one might argue, our leaders are talented people who work hard day and night for our safety and welfare and who don't deserve the microscopic scrutiny they are constantly subjected to.

If you want to appreciate how tough our leaders have to be, note the instances of good people like Dan Meridor, Uzi Baram and Avraham Burg--all candidates for national leadership--who felt obliged to leave politics at a relatively young age because they refused to continue exposing themselves and their families to the unfair pressures of public life. I myself was once a rising young activist in what purported to be one of Israel's most civilized and well-run parties; I left it at an early stage, thoroughly disgusted with the level of politics. I can appreciate the staying-power and survival skills required of an Olmert, a Netanyahu or a Barak.

Yet they remain mediocre leaders, tainted by charges of corruption and lack of strategic insight and "human" skills. And perhaps our biggest problem is that we cannot allow ourselves the luxury of mediocre leadership that the West enjoys. There, if the civilian or security leadership performs poorly the private sector, where all the talented people seem to have gone, takes up the slack. Here in Israel, on the other hand, while many of the most talented people also seem to have gone into the globalized private sector, the threats against our security and even our existence are such that we simply must have more of them in the public sector, and soon. That means radically changing the system. And that is not about to happen.

A blank page, indeed.

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The Golan Heights and the Syrian-Israeli Negotiations

By Dore Gold The Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs May 22, 2008

Israeli negotiators will quickly discover three core areas in their discussions with the Syrians that they will not resolve easily: delineation of an agreed boundary, security arrangements, and the Syrian-Iranian alliance.

Just prior to the outbreak of the 1973 Yom Kippur War, Syria deployed 1,400 tanks along the border against a total Israeli force of 177 tanks (a force ratio of 8 to 1 in favor of Syria). Should Syria's

considerable missile forces be used to delay Israel's reserve mobilization, then the importance of the Golan terrain will increase as Israel's small standing army will have to fight for longer without reserve reinforcement.

When Israel reached its Treaty of Peace with Egypt in 1979, it agreed to fully withdraw from the Sinai Peninsula to the international border. Syria illegally occupied Israeli territories during the 1950s

that were within Israel's international borders: the southern demilitarized zone at al-Hamma, the Banias area, and the strip of coastal territory along the northeast shoreline of the Sea of Galilee.

If Israel were to agree to the June 4, 1967, line, as Syria demands, it would be rewarding Syrian aggression. Moreover, it could compromise Israel's control of its largest fresh water reservoir. Israel should not have to be arguing with the Syrians over the question of whether a future Israeli-Syrian boundary should correspond to the June 4, 1967, line or to the older international border, for neither of these lines is defensible.

The U.S. has given Israel repeated diplomatic assurances in the past that Israel will not have to come down from the Golan Heights, beginning with a September 1, 1975, letter from President Gerald Ford to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. It was renewed prior to the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference by Secretary of State James Baker. During the Clinton administration, Secretary of State Warren Christopher renewed the Ford commitment in a letter dated September 19, 1996.

Even if, by prior agreement with Tehran, the Syrians took steps that appeared to be downgrading relations, Israel's concession of the Golan Heights would be irreversible, while the political orientation of states in the Middle East is notoriously changeable. It would be a cardinal error for Israel to put into jeopardy its own security by agreeing to come down from the Golan Heights.

Despite advances in military technology, the Golan Heights remains a vital strategic asset for the defense of the State of Israel. True, this week Israel and Syria have re-opened their diplomatic dialogue after a hiatus of eight years. But negotiators will soon find that there are three clusters of issues that they will not resolve easily: delineation of an agreed boundary, security arrangements, and the Syrian-Iranian alliance. And to a large extent, these issues have become even more difficult since negotiations were held back in the 1990s.

Israel's First Line of Defense Israel captured the Golan Heights in the 1967 Six-Day War, after years in which the Syrian armed forces positioned there pounded Israel's farms and towns below with artillery attacks. In the western Golan, there are a series of steep cliffs reaching a height of 500 meters that dominate the Sea of Galilee, which Syria exploited to attack Israel from 1949 to 1967. Eastward, the Golan plateau continues to rise to a maximal height of 1,200 meters above sea-level - at Har Avital - close to the Syrian border. This provides Israel's numerically inferior standing army a clear topographical advantage against the masses of Syrian armor that are deployed in the plain below - stretching back to Damascus, Syria's capital - until Israeli reserve forces arrive.

Just prior to the outbreak of the 1973 Yom Kippur War, Syria deployed 1,400 tanks in this area against a total Israeli force of 177 tanks (a force ratio of 8 to 1 in favor of Syria). In the early 1990s, it was estimated that Syria generally deployed a standing force of five to six divisions in this area against an Israeli force of one division.¹

It is incorrectly assumed that with the proliferation of ballistic missiles, the initial terrain conditions of conventional warfare are less important. In fact, should Syria's considerable rocket and missile forces be used to delay Israel's reserve mobilization, then the importance of the Golan terrain will increase as Israel's small standing army will have to fight for more extended periods of time without reserve reinforcement. Whether the Israeli Air Force can supply close air support during this critical period will depend on how preoccupied it becomes with suppressing Syrian ballistic missile attacks against Israeli cities. In short, the Golan Heights remains an essential strategic asset for Israel's defense.

Israeli negotiators will quickly discover three core areas in their discussions with the Syrians over which there has been considerable Israeli-Syrian disagreement in the past.

1. Delineating an Agreed Boundary: Implications for the Sea of Galilee The basis of Syrian-Israeli negotiations will be the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference invitation that included UN Security Council Resolution 242 from November 22, 1967. Resolution 242 called for the "withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict." By not requiring a withdrawal from "all the territories" Israel captured, the resolution left open the possibility that the future border between Israel and Syria will be negotiated as part of the termination of belligerency and establishment of peace between the two countries.

When Israel reached its Treaty of Peace with Egypt in 1979, it agreed to fully withdraw from the Sinai Peninsula to the international border between the two countries. If Syria argues that it too is entitled to the pre-1967 lines, there is a fundamental problem, for Syria itself illegally occupied Israeli territories during the 1950s that were within Israel's international borders: the southern demilitarized zone at al-Hamma, the Banias area, and the strip of coastal territory along the northeast shoreline of the Sea of Galilee.

If Israel were to agree to the June 4, 1967, line, it would essentially be rewarding Syrian aggression from the 1950s. But if it offers the international border between Israel and Syria, that dates back to 1923 during the Mandatory period, then the Syrians would be obtaining less than the Egyptians. Moreover, after Syria encroached on Israel's coastal strip in the 1950s along the northern shoreline of the Sea of Galilee, it proclaimed at that time a 250-meter

belt of the lake as Syrian territorial waters. Damascus even denied Israel fishing rights in this part of the Sea of Galilee.² Thus, an Israeli agreement to the June 4, 1967, line can compromise Israel's control of its largest fresh water reservoir.

In reality, Israel should not have to be arguing with the Syrians over the question of whether a future Israeli-Syrian boundary should correspond to the June 4, 1967, line or to the older international border, for neither of these lines is defensible. Moreover, the U.S. has given Israel diplomatic assurances in the past that Israel will not have to come down from the Golan Heights. On September 1, 1975, President Gerald Ford wrote to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin: "The U.S. has not developed a final position on the borders. Should it do so, it will give great weight to Israel's position that any peace agreement with Syria be predicated on Israel's remaining on the Golan Heights."

The Ford letter might be thought to be a subject of interest to diplomatic historians alone. However, prior to the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference, Secretary of State James Baker renewed the U.S. commitment on the Golan to Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir on October 18, 1991. During the Clinton administration, Secretary of State Warren Christopher also renewed the Ford commitment in a letter dated September 19, 1996, to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.³ Christopher, moreover, added in his letter that whatever conditional statements Israel might have made during past negotiations about the Golan Heights (the reference was to the "Rabin Deposit") could not be considered as a legally binding commitment.⁴ Israel is thus still in a strong position to insist on a final boundary that reflects its security interests and is not bound to the negotiating record from past diplomatic contacts.

2. The Limits of Demilitarization and Security Arrangements The fundamental security problems between Israel and Syria - the asymmetry of their standing conventional armies - has been a problem Israel once faced with Egypt. But when Israel withdrew from the Sinai Peninsula, it compensated for its loss of control of the Sinai with "security arrangements" that fundamentally restricted Egyptian forces through demilitarized areas and limited forces zones that were a part of their Treaty of Peace.

But while these "security arrangements" were instituted in the area of Sinai, which is roughly 220 kilometers wide, the territory of the Golan Heights is largely only 25 kilometers wide and is just 12 kilometers wide at its narrowest point. In order to create sufficient security for Israel, it is necessary to institute force limitations on the Syrian Army beyond the Golan Heights, well into southern Syria.⁵ Given the proximity of Damascus to the Golan Heights, it is likely that Israel's security needs for

demilitarized zones will require Syria to pull back its armored forces behind its own capital.

This problem is exacerbated by Syria's massive acquisition of ballistic missiles and rockets, especially after the 2006 Second Lebanon War. Israel must seek to place limitations on these missile forces and on their location close to the Israeli border. Syria will have to make hard choices regarding what are its paramount interests and the extent of the concessions it will have to make: will Syria be willing to accept intrusive security restrictions near its capital or will it prefer to leave the territorial status-quo in place?

3. Neutralizing the Syrian-Iranian Alliance

In Israeli diplomatic circles, the main demand that is voiced today concerning the renewed negotiations on the Syrian-Israeli track is the separation of Syria from its alliance with Iran and from what President George W. Bush called "the Axis of Evil." But is it reasonable to assume that Syria, indeed, will be willing to distance itself from its ally in Tehran?

The Syrian-Iranian alliance was in fact born in 1980 and had nothing to do with Israel: at the time, it resulted from the Iran-Iraq War and the antipathy of both countries to the regime of Saddam Hussein. Today, the Syrian-Iranian alliance is based on other Syrian interests, as well, that have little to do with Syrian-Israeli relations.

For example, a clear priority for Syria's foreign policy is its hegemonic position in Lebanon. The main vehicle for the Syrians to dominate Lebanon is their close alliance with Hizbullah, which, as was recently proven, is the strongest faction in Lebanon. Were Syria to cut itself off from Iran, it would lose its special relationship with Hizbullah, which is funded and controlled by Tehran. As a result, Syria's control over Lebanon would diminish and the anti-Syrian coalition of Sunni Muslims, Druze, and Christians would become predominant.

Thus, it is extremely unlikely that Syria would halt its strategic ties with Iran and adopt a pro-Western orientation instead. Moreover, even if, by prior agreement with Tehran, the Syrians would take steps that appeared as though they were downgrading their relations, it is important to realize how temporary such changes might be. While Israel's concession of the Golan Heights would be irreversible, the political orientation of states in the Middle East is notoriously changeable. An Israeli negotiator would be hard-pressed to hammer out an agreement that would provide any permanence to a break between Damascus and Tehran.

There are many other daunting subjects that negotiations will face. Israel, for example, expects "full normalization" of relations with Syria, while Syrian spokesmen carefully used the term "normal relations" for the quality of their future ties to the Jewish state. "Normalization" implies the kind of relations enjoyed today by former adversaries like

France and Germany in the context of the European Union. "Normal relations" is an alternative term that suggests the most minimal of ties; it provides a kind of formalization of the idea of a "cold peace."

Given these fundamental differences, there are serious risks emanating from the current effort of Israel and Syria to re-engage diplomatically. If expectations are raised that a peace agreement is imminent, but no treaty is finally concluded, then the political environment after a failed negotiation can be full of real escalatory potential.

For Israel it is particularly critical to take into account the interests of its American ally. On April 28, 2008, the U.S. ambassador to the UN, Zalmay Khalilzad, slammed the Syrians for their destabilizing role in Iraq. He disclosed that 90 percent of foreign fighters in Iraq came across the Syrian-Iraqi border. Moreover, al-Qaeda's "facilitators" in Iraq "operated inside Syria."⁶

Entering a negotiation when such broad differences of substance exist is highly problematic. Given the continuing strategic importance of the Golan Heights, it would be a cardinal error for Israel to put into jeopardy its own security by agreeing to come down from this dominant terrain. Finally, such an initiative could also jeopardize Israel's ties with its most important ally, the United States.

Notes

1. Aryeh Shalev, *Israel and Syria: Peace and Security on the Golan* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, 1993), p. 124.

2. Meron Medzini (ed.), *Israel's Foreign Relations - Selected Documents, 1947-1974* (Jerusalem: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1976), p. 271.

3. Eli Kamir, "The Secret Negotiations Between Netanyahu and Assad," *Ma'ariv*, December 31, 1999.

4. Itamar Rabinovich, *The Brink of Peace: The Israeli-Syrian Negotiations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 3-13. The "Rabin Deposit" was a theoretical exercise during which the U.S. was told that if Israeli requirements were met for security arrangements, sequence of implementation, and normalization, then Rabin was willing to withdraw from the Golan. The Clinton administration was supposed to put this conditional statement in their pocket and take it out if Syria met Israel's other conditions.

5. In past negotiations these zones of demilitarization were called "the relevant areas," and Israel made it clear they would need sufficient depth for them to provide security. See Uri Sagie, "The United States and the Israeli-Syrian Dialogue," *The Israeli-Syrian Dialogue: A One-Way Ticket to Peace?* (Houston, TX: Baker Institute, October 1999), Chapter 3.

6. "U.S. Envoy Slams Iran's Alleged Destabilizing Role in Iraq," *AFP*, April 28, 2008, <http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5g6gHdkw33tAceBTnP8yQB3lg2Ybw>.

Dr. Dore Gold, Israel's ambassador to the UN in 1997-99, is President of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs and author of *Hatred's Kingdom: How Saudi Arabia Supports the New Global Terrorism* (Washington: Regnery, 2003) and *The Fight for Jerusalem: Radical Islam, the West, and the Future of the Holy City* (Regnery, 2007).

Hatred of Israel cuts deep to heart

By Ben Lando *The Washington Times*

May 29, 2008

A hole in the heart of Diyar Raouf's 6-year-old son threatens his life.

But in Mrs. Raouf's heart lies a hatred of Israel that is so great that at the last minute, the Iraqi woman declined to let Israeli surgeons touch her son.

"These feelings were born with us. They are inbred," said Mrs. Raouf, who jumped at an offer from Algeria to perform the same operation.

The Israeli charity Save A Child's Heart arranged for them to travel to Amman, where her son Ahmad was undergoing tests before the surgery in Israel to correct a pulmonary valve stenosis - a disease that restricts the flow of blood to the lungs.

Instead of departing for Tel Aviv as planned, the two arrived Friday in Algiers, after an Iraqi doctor in Amman intervened and the Algerian government pledged the cost of transport, housing and a medical team to perform surgeries on 14 children so they would not have to go to Israel.

"We hear about this, the way they kill our children in Palestine. All of this we see," Mrs. Raouf said. "We are not afraid of going to any other country."

Hours earlier, she and two other Iraqi mothers who made up the first group to go to Algeria for the surgeries were visited by George Bakoos, an envoy sent by Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki to investigate what has become a burgeoning controversy in Iraqi and Arab media.

An Iraqi television station called it a matter of "sending Iraqi children with their guardians for treatment in the enemy country No. 1 for Iraq and Arabic nations."

The *Jerusalem Post*, quoting *Al Jazeera*, reported that the Iraqi Parliament's Health and Environment Committee is calling for an investigation. The Health Ministry claims it didn't know of the work happening inside the country.

Shatha Fakhri faced a similar situation with her daughter Sara and took the child to the National Iraqi Assistance Center located in the Green Zone.

Mrs. Fakhri was approached by the group Brothers Together, or Shevat Achim in its Hebrew moniker. The group, which was founded in 1994 with the purpose of helping non-Israeli children receive lifesaving medical care in Israel, offered their assistance.

In Baghdad, Mrs. Fakhri was told 2 1/2-year-old Sara may be taken to either Israel or somewhere in Europe for dual surgeries to fix the corrected transposition with valve malfunction in her heart.

Diyar Raouf plays with her 6-year-old son, who has a hole in his heart, in Amman, Jordan. Mrs. Raouf jumped at an offer from Algeria to perform an operation after refusing to allow Israeli surgeons to touch her son.

"It's the only way I see it at the time. I can't refuse it," she said. "Maybe it's the only chance to save my child. If I refuse it, maybe I don't have a second chance. So I say yes at this time."

According to a letter to Jordanian immigration officers and obtained by The Washington Times, Mrs. Fakhri on March 3 flew to Amman. Doctors at the Jordan Red Crescent office told her the next day that the operation would take place in a Tel Aviv hospital.

Over the next two months, Sara would need regular medical attention. An Iraqi doctor suggested that she see Dr. Omar al Kubaisy, an Iraqi cardiologist at the private al Israa Hospital, who had assembled other Iraqi doctors in a two-room office in a special practice for Iraqi refugees in Amman.

Dr. Kubaisy was senior cardiac consultant and former director of the Ibn al Bitar Hospital for Cardiac Surgery in Baghdad before it was burned and looted in 2003. When he was told of the Israel plan, he and other Iraqis living in Amman looked for options. Algeria responded right away.

"We moved them immediately," said one of the Iraqis, who spoke on the condition of anonymity in the quiet three-room apartment where the mothers lived after leaving an apartment provided by Brothers Together.

They're now working on more long-term arrangements for children bound for Israel.

The intervention was unsettling to Jonathan Miles, a former journalist and international coordinator for Brothers Together.

"I'm a little bit troubled about what happened," Mr. Miles said. "We're going to be watching closely to see these kids aren't injured. It's something for advanced medical centers to take on."

Mr. Miles said that since 2003 his group has transported 80 or more children to Israeli hospitals.

"Our work is motivated by faith and obedience to Jesus," he said, invoking the New Testament parable of the Good Samaritan. "Our position is the love of God is freely offered unconditionally to all people and these outstanding world-class medical facilities in Israel should be open to all the people in the region. A Muslim child dying from a heart condition should have same rights to medical care as Jewish or Christian children."

Mr. Miles said the group doesn't work with the Iraqi or U.S. governments and interacted with the Ministry of Health only "a couple times in the early years right after the war."

"We've been very open about what we've been doing. There wasn't much response or cooperation from them," he said.

Brothers Together is funded by donors, though "much of the financial burden" is carried by the Israeli charity Save A Child's Heart as well as what's solicited from its Web site. He said most of the contributions come from Christians.

Mr. Miles said Brothers Together arranges the visa to Amman where Iraqi doctors come to conduct tests. The organization provides accommodations, either furnished apartments or at a local church.

The group is not registered with the Iraqi government to work as a nongovernmental organization in Iraq, nor the World Health Organization, Mr. Miles said. It is registered in Israel, the United States and Britain as a charity organization. Children in need of heart surgeries are referred to them, including by the NIAC.

However, the NIAC in a statement yesterday disassociated itself from the group.

"As of April 1, 2008; the NIAC no longer sends children to Israel for treatment, nor do they associate with organizations whom send children there," a spokeswoman said.

The mothers interviewed said the location of the surgery didn't matter as much as their children's lives.

"I don't blame or reproach the mothers that go [to Israel]," Mrs. Raouf said, "because if there were any other route any other mothers, they would go there."

But they also say resentment toward Israel won't be removed by free surgery, and they expressed relief that they would not have to take their children there.

"I still can't believe that this nightmare of Israel has been removed from my heart and my shoulders," Mrs. Fakhri said.

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