

## Time is ripe to end the Arab-Israeli conflict

By Shimon Peres The Times of London (UK) June 4, 2009

**This is a unique opportunity for peace in the Middle East. The ship is waiting. It is time to sail** President Obama's journey to Saudi Arabia and Egypt could be an opportunity. It reflects both the need for an historic change in the Middle East and a unique chance of achieving it.

Various ideas are being discussed. One significant concept is King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia's peace initiative which was adopted by the Arab League in Beirut. Much wisdom lies also in King Abdullah of Jordan's proposal of a "57-state solution" to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The kings are right in seeing both the proper destination and the surest path for its realisation. With the support of the leadership in Egypt, it seems the time is ripe to end the Israeli-Arab conflict once and for all.

Achieving this historic goal calls for a twin-track approach. It requires bilateral negotiations between Israel and each of its neighbours - the Palestinians, Syria and Lebanon. And in tandem with this, a regional process of normalisation of relations between Israel and the Arab states.

Such diplomatic architecture may introduce a win-win strategy for all parties. Support from the entire Arab world will provide legitimacy for the Palestinian Authority as it approaches the difficult task of making and then implementing historic compromises. At the same time it may reassure Israel that the painful concessions it will make will be rewarded by a broader, more enduring comprehensive peace across the region.

This approach is already set down in the internationally accepted "road map". This framework outlines certain steps of normalisation towards Israel that must be taken by the Arab states as the bilateral process advances. In its second phase, it calls for the establishment of a Palestinian state with provisional borders that will serve as a step leading to permanent status. A similar plan was negotiated in the past. The Palestinians rejected provisional borders out of concern that they might become permanent. A regional agreement with American and European guarantees may assuage their doubts.

Looking back, I confess that well-formulated peace plans are not enough on their own. Something else is often required. Unforeseen events occasionally decide the fate of war and peace - like a whirling wind they can uproot long-held, stubborn

mindsets. For instance, if the Israeli-Egyptian negotiations had been guided only by lawyers, I wonder if peace would have been reached so quickly.

What brought about the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, signed in 1979, was a journey of less than an hour - the time it took Anwar Sadat to fly from Cairo to Jerusalem. This hour changed the course of history in the Middle East. Not because it exerted pressure, but because it diminished old fears. It captured people's imaginations and created a turning point far more powerful than outside pressure. Israel and Egypt were surprised by the tremendous effect of this journey. It put an end to the history of suspicion.

King Abdullah of Jordan's father did something similar in 1997 after seven Israeli girls were murdered by a Jordanian soldier. Their families lived in Beit Shemesh, a town close to Jerusalem. King Hussein, disregarding protocol, surprisingly drove to Beit Shemesh, where he visited each and every one of the bereaved families. He sought genuine forgiveness. The impact of this unexpected gesture on the Israeli public was spectacular. To this very day, this visit is regarded as a turning point in the relations between our two countries.

A regional peace may have the same dramatic effect, provided that proper preparations are made. It may have the potential to shatter prejudices and overcome petty bargaining. However erudite and astute the negotiators, they cannot match the impact of such a gesture. A regional peace is more feasible today than ever before. The alternative to regional peace is a regional rift.

Many Arab leaders perceive hegemony-seeking Iran as a threat to their existence and identity. For them, the primary challenge is not Israel but the Iranian ayatollahs who seek domination over the Middle East, using terror and threats of unconventional weapons. Israel is increasingly viewed as a part of the new path for a regional solution. A regional security framework will also help Israel to secure its paramount interest of security.

A regional peace will also address vital challenges such as water shortages, environmental pollution and poverty. These problems seem national but they are regional - and so are their solutions. Resolving them depends on science and technology that recognise no borders. Europe kept

its political borders but opened them up for progress. So can the nations of the Middle East.

To keep the wind of change blowing, we have to renew bilateral negotiations with the Palestinians, supported by clear economic and environmental incentives. The "economic peace" is not a substitute for "political peace", but rather a catalyst for progress.

The regional leaders have to treat these options seriously - not as another photo-opportunity but in a substantive discussion aimed at opening the door towards comprehensive peace and regional economic development.

The positive spirit of the Arab peace initiative, together with the road map, provides a clear opportunity. Israel did not take part in the wording

of the Arab peace initiative and, therefore, should not be expected to accept its every word. But Israel will refrain from imposing its own wording on other parties and is ready to negotiate common ground. Regional negotiations should start without preconditions.

His Majesty, the Jordanian King, is right to emphasise that this is a unique opportunity. It is time to sail the strong wind, which today is blowing in the right direction. There is no greater strength than the power of an idea that has come to fruition. That is the case for peace today.

The passengers are ready. The ship is waiting. It is time for the navigators to decisively take the helm.

**Shimon Peres is the President of Israel**

## Is Obama looking for a fight over 'natural growth'?

By Herb Keinon The Jerusalem Post May 28, 2009

"A 'settlement freeze' would not help Palestinians face today's problems or prepare for tomorrow's challenges," Elliott Abrams, the deputy national security adviser under former US president George Bush, wrote in April in The Washington Post.

"The demand for a freeze would have only one quick effect: to create immediate tension between the United States and Israel's new government," he wrote. "That may be precisely why some propose it, but it is also why the Obama administration should reject it."

Abrams proved prophetic: the issue has indeed created immediate tension with the US, not over illegal outposts - Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu has made it clear he will remove them - but over "natural growth" in the settlements.

The question is why the US is looking for this fight, and why Obama has not heeded Abrams's advice and rejected those pushing him in a confrontation over the matter.

Truth be told, comments by Obama himself on the subject have not pointed to a looming battle. After his meeting with Netanyahu in the White House last week, Obama spoke - much as Bush spoke before him - in rather general terms about a need for Israel to stop settlement construction.

"There is a clear understanding that we have to make progress on settlements, that settlements have to be stopped in order for us to move forward," he said, using language heard often in the past.

The indication that a fight was brewing came when US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said in an Al-Jazeera interview - an interview whose transcript was circulated last Wednesday by the State Department - that a freeze is just that: a complete and total freeze, even for "natural growth."

That position, as was made abundantly clear at Sunday's cabinet meeting in Jerusalem, is not acceptable to the current Netanyahu government.

Even Defense Minister Ehud Barak, representing the left flank of the government, said it was illogical to accept a principle whereby a family could not add on to their 45-meter house to accommodate more children, or whereby veterans of IDF units couldn't return - with their wives - to the settlements of their birth to live near their parents.

So a clash is in the making, though coming to some kind of agreement on this issue was one of the main objectives that Intelligence Services Minister Dan Meridor, National Security Advisor Uzi Arad and Yitzhak Molcho, Netanyahu's envoy on the Palestinian issue, took with them to London this week for their meeting with US Middle East envoy George Mitchell.

Israel's position, or its hope, is that this issue can be finessed, just as it was finessed under the previous government. Or, as Netanyahu told a visiting Congressional delegation on Wednesday, there is a need to find a way with the US administration to enable "normal life" in the settlements to continue. If Obama says no settlements, but doesn't mention natural growth, leaving Clinton to do that, does that mean there is wiggle room? Nobody knows yet.

Not too long ago, Clinton's predecessor Condoleezza Rice caused consternation in Jerusalem when she began referring to Israeli neighborhoods in east Jerusalem as settlements.

But then Jerusalem was able to say, "Hey, that's only Rice. Bush doesn't feel that way." The problem is that no one quite knows the dynamics yet on these issues inside the Obama administration.

Israeli officials are confident - perhaps overly confident - that if they "line up" with the US administration on the "right side of the fence" on most settlement issues, they could find a formula to work regarding natural growth.

This means that if, as the Olmert government declared, the Netanyahu government says it will

uproot illegal outposts, not set up new settlements, not give incentives to move to the settlements, and not expropriate any additional Palestinian lands, then the conventional wisdom in the current government is that the US would permit - as it has in the past - natural growth construction as long as it does not go beyond the existing construction lines.

But what if Obama, as some maintain, is actually looking for a public fight with Israel on this issue in order to win credit with the Arab world, and legitimacy among the Europeans as a leader who is willing to take Israel on when necessary?

That could be a tricky tactic, because if the US president picks a fight with Israel over the natural growth issue at a time when Israel has declared it won't build new settlements, expropriate land or give incentives to move there, then it could be perceived among some Obama supporters in Congress as being unfairly tough on Israel, especially since various verbal understandings were made over the years that Israel interpreted as a green light for natural growth.

Indeed, what is lacking is clarity, not about where Israel stands on the issue at this point, but

where Obama stands, and how far he will push. Clinton's position is clear - but is she also speaking for the president?

As Abrams wrote in April, "for the past five years, Israel's government has largely adhered to guidelines that were discussed with the United States but never formally adopted: that there would be no new settlements, no financial incentives for Israelis to move to settlements and no new construction except in already built-up areas. The clear purpose of the guidelines? To allow for settlement growth in ways that minimized the impact on Palestinians."

The new Netanyahu government has made clear it will abide by those guidelines, and even go further, by taking down illegal outposts. What remains to be seen, what has to be clarified, is whether the Obama administration feels bound by these same guidelines.

If it doesn't, then a clash over the issue is all but inevitable.

**The author was recently a guest speaker of the Suburban Orthodox Israel Action Committee in Baltimore.**

## Pressure on Israel raises war risk

By Frank J. Gaffney, Jr. **The Washington Times June 2, 2009**

From this vantage point, two events this week appear to be ominous straws in the wind, warnings of a "man-caused" maelstrom that inexorably may plunge the Middle East into another, potentially cataclysmic war.

The first is that Israel feels obliged to undertake an unprecedented, countrywide civil defense exercise this week. At one point, every man, woman and child in the Jewish state is supposed to seek shelter from a simulated attack of the kind Iran may shortly be able to execute against it.

The second is President Obama's latest effort to reach out to the Muslim world, on Thursday from one of its most important capitals, Cairo. There, he is expected to make a speech reiterating his previous statements on the subject - which, unfortunately, can only have been interpreted by his intended audience as acts of submission.

If the past is prelude, the president of the United States will: apologize yet again for purported offenses against Muslims by his country; promise to be respectful of Islam, including those who adhere to its authoritative, if virulent, theo-political-legal program known as Shariah; and enunciate diplomatic priorities and initiatives designed to reach out to America's enemies in the region while putting excruciating pressure on its most reliable ally there, Israel.

This pressure has become more palpable by the day. It has taken various forms, including: U.S. stances adopted at the United Nations that will

isolate Israel; blank political and even financial checks for Palestinian thugs such as Mahmoud Abbas; diminishing U.S.-Israeli cooperation on intelligence and military matters; and the withholding from Israel of helicopters (and perhaps other weaponry) being provided to Arab states.

Perhaps the most chilling example of this coercive pressure so far, however, was reported originally in the Israeli paper Yediot Aharonot and given international prominence by my esteemed colleague and Jerusalem Post columnist Caroline Glick. According to these accounts, in a recent lecture in Washington, U.S. Army Lt. Gen. Keith Dayton, the American officer charged with training Palestinian military forces in Jordan, made a shocking declaration.

In Ms. Glick's words, Gen. Dayton "indicated that if Israel does not surrender Judea and Samaria within two years, the Palestinian forces he and his fellow American officers are now training at a cost of more than \$300 million could begin killing Israelis." She noted that neither the general nor the Obama administration seemed to find this prospect grounds for rethinking the wisdom of such a training-and-arming program. In fact, her column observed that Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates "just extended Dayton's tour of duty for an additional two years and gave him the added responsibility of serving as Obama's Middle East mediator George Mitchell's deputy."

Taken together with the U.S. administration's refusal to come to grips with what truly is the most serious threat to peace in the Middle East - Iran's rising power and growing aggressiveness, reflecting in part its incipient nuclear-weapons capabilities - the stage inexorably is being set for the next, and perhaps most devastating, regional conflict.

Whether the signals Mr. Obama is sending are intended to communicate such a message or not, they will be read by Israel's enemies as evidence of a profound rift between the United States and the Jewish state. In this part of the world, that amounts to an invitation to an open season on Israel.

It is hard to believe the Obama Middle East agenda enjoys the support of the American people or their elected representatives in Congress. Historically, the public and strong bipartisan majorities on Capitol Hill have appreciated that an Israel that shares our values, that is governed democratically and that is in the cross hairs of the same people who seek our destruction is an important ally. Quite apart from a sense of moral and religious affinity for the Jewish people's struggle to survive in their ancient homeland, most of us recognize it is in the United States' strategic interest to stand with Israel.

It is worrisome in the extreme that Mr. Obama does not appear to share this appreciation. To those who worried about his affinity for the Saudi king and

Islam more generally and his long-standing ties to virulent critics of Israel such as Columbia University professor Rashid Khalidi and former Harvard professor-turned-National Security Council staffer Samantha Power, the president's attitude is not exactly a surprise.

His administration's posture may have been further reinforced by Arab-American pollster John Zogby's recent Forbes magazine article arguing that friends of Israel made up John McCain's constituency, not Mr. Obama's. (This raises an interesting question about the sentiments toward Israel of the 78 percent of American Jews who voted for the latter in 2008.)

My guess, however, is that, as the implications of Mr. Obama's Middle East policies - for the United States as well as Israel - become clearer, he will find himself facing the sort of popular and congressional revolt that has confronted him in recent weeks on Guantanamo Bay. The question is: Will such a reaffirmation of American solidarity with and support for Israel come in time to prevent the winds of war being whipped up by Mr. Obama's posturing and rhetoric - and driving Israelis into bomb shelters - from wreaking havoc in the Middle East, and perhaps far beyond?

**Frank J. Gaffney Jr. is president of the Center for Security Policy.**

## **Perilous policy** By Ariel Cohen *The Baltimore Sun* May 18, 2009

**Obama's demands on Israel, rather than advancing the cause of Mideast peace, would only threaten a democratic ally's security**  
Monday's meeting between President Barack Obama and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is critical for both nations. U.S.-Israeli relations are in danger of deteriorating to the lowest point since Dwight Eisenhower ordered Israeli troops to evacuate Sinai in 1956 - an event that contributed to the 1967 Six-Day War. The summit may define relations between these two democracies for the duration of the Obama administration and beyond.

The White House seems to be intentionally slighting Israel in advance of the summit, even as it raises the stakes. Obama Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel and National Security Adviser Gen. James Jones appear to have linked U.S. willingness to stop Iran's nuclear program to receiving Israeli concessions regarding the two-state solution.

This is both immoral and counterproductive. Immoral, because it is dangerously close to blackmailing the Jewish state with a nuclear holocaust, planned by the Holocaust denier-in-chief, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Counterproductive, because potential Iranian nukes would threaten American interests and allies in the Middle East, including the oil-producing Gulf states.

The Obama administration is advocating steps that would jeopardize Israeli security. There is concern that it might approve an Arab-backed plan that could compel Israel to withdraw to indefensible 1967 cease-fire lines. The administration supports dividing Jerusalem to make a Palestinian capital. Jerusalem should not be cut in half by barbed wire fences.

It also wants Israel to join the ineffective Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The U.S. had committed in a bilateral agreement not to tamper with the Israeli nuclear shield. At a time when Iran seems on the verge of acquiring nuclear weapons, this is like demanding that a man in a rough neighborhood give up his shotgun when the criminal next door is getting a Kalashnikov.

All this occurs while the terrorist organization Hamas is gaining strength. Polls predict that it would win Palestinian elections.

The bigger picture is even more alarming. The administration is trying for a quick fix to an intractable conflict. Mr. Obama and his top officials are meeting with the kings of Saudi Arabia and Jordan, the Egyptian president, the Europeans and the Russians to effectively develop a plan that Israel had no part in formulating - and which would be imposed on it by extreme pressure.

This grand design is based on the "Arab peace plan" penned by the Saudis. It envisions settling millions of the 1948 Palestinian refugees and their descendants in Israel, a country the size of New Jersey. This would irrevocably change the nature of Israel and create an ever greater terror threat. In pursuing this track, the Obama administration risks repeating the mistakes of its predecessors, who also eagerly embraced instant solutions.

The administration seems to be making three grave errors. The first is disregarding reality. The entrenched hostility of the Arab world and radical Muslims toward Israel is there for all to see. The core issue is that the Arab elites have not accepted Israel's existence in the region.

A second major mistake is arm-twisting a democratic ally to curry favor among a deeply anti-American Arab and Islamic world. Doing so would send a message of weakness. A new wave of anti-American attacks may be the unintended consequence.

## Netanyahu agonistes

By Cal Thomas The Washington Times

**Allowing more time for Iran may prove unrealistic** Things are not always as they appear in the Middle East. Appearances also can deceive whenever an Israeli prime minister and a U.S. president get together in Washington.

During their two-hour meeting at the White House on Monday, it appeared as though President Obama and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu were bosom buddies. Mr. Netanyahu, especially, praised the new president and claimed agreement with Mr. Obama that, as a first priority, Iran must be stopped from possessing nuclear weapons.

A senior official traveling with the prime minister (one of those euphemisms required to disguise who is really speaking) told a small group of reporters and columnists after the White House meeting that for the first time since the creation of Zionism, Jews and Arabs see eye to eye concerning the strategic threat a nuclear Iran would present. "This goal supersedes anything else," the official said. In response to questions, the official acknowledged that Arab leaders say one thing to their friends and something quite different to their enemies.

Mr. Obama invoked an end-of-the-year timeline for diplomacy with Iran to work. This would seem to give Iran a green light to pursue its nuclear bomb for the next seven months. At the end of December, when we in the West learn that Iran has been stringing us along and using diplomacy as a delaying tactic, what then? Will it be Israel that bombs the nuclear sites, or will it be one or more of those Arab nations supposedly of one mind in opposition to a nuclear Iran?

The third mistake is to reward terrorism. A seven-year barrage of rockets from Gaza has not broken the will of the Israelis. Neither have the terror attacks, which killed nearly 1,200 Israelis since 2000. We should not allow the threat of terror to break the will of America to stand up to terror masters and financiers.

Israelis would be delighted to live in peace with their neighbors. But that can't happen until Hamas and Fatah abandon terror and cease teaching hatred to their children, brainwashing them about suicide bombing and driving Jews into the sea. Palestinians have a long way to go to develop civil society, the rule of law and economic prosperity before being ready to run a state. Israel will be in grave danger unless Washington stands with its ally in this fight for survival. The Middle East needs U.S. leadership, but not the kind of leadership that imperils Israel while creating a Hamas-controlled terror state.

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It's a safe bet to put your money on Israel doing the dirty work and suffering the usual condemnation - accompanied by more terrorist attacks from Hamas and Hezbollah - from the United States, the United Nations and the European Union, the latter two seeing nothing worth fighting to preserve.

A more sobering assessment has come from the Rand Corp., a nonprofit research corporation. In a new report titled "Dangerous but Not Omnipotent: Exploring the Reach and Limitations of Iranian Power in the Middle East," prepared for the U.S. Air Force, Rand dismisses hopes that bilateral talks between the United States and Iran will alter Tehran's behavior. It calls such hopes "unrealistic" and advocates a broad international effort that would leverage incentives and punishment based on Iran's response. This has been tried before and has mostly proved ineffective because there are countries that do not abide by economic boycotts.

The senior Israeli official noted that while Israel has lived up to its obligations and commitments - especially on relinquishing land taken from enemies that launched attacks from that land and that would do so again if they get it back - the Palestinian side has not. Does this not beg the question as to why any future promises should be believed when every previous promise has been broken?

Yes, for 60 years, Arab leaders have been captured by their own propaganda, as one member of the Israeli delegation told me. So how do you reverse that, I asked, and when can the world expect to see them stop publishing textbooks, delivering sermons and printing cartoons in state-owned

newspapers that equate Jews with pigs and monkeys and call for their destruction? He couldn't say.

If there is to be a Palestinian state, what kind of state will it be? Would it be allowed to have an army, or a "police force" that would effectively serve as an army? Surely Israel could not stand for another armed force in its neighborhood. Would a Palestinian state be permitted to have an airport and overland access to countries that might supply it with terrorists and weapons?

A recent editorial in *The Washington Times* put it well: "The Obama administration should focus less on creating a Palestinian state and more on helping Palestinians earn the right to statehood." That is exactly the right order.

## Time to Plant Mideast Seeds

By Jim Hoagland *The Washington Post*

Memo to President Obama: Cling to one thought as you work on your greatly anticipated speech to the Muslim world Thursday in Cairo, Mr. President: There is no American solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict that you can heroically deliver from on high. Peace must be built from the bottom up by the warring sides. Cling to that thought but keep it to yourself.

It would be pleasing to your hosts to suggest the opposite -- a made-in-the-USA plan for the Middle East. Some of your aides believe this is a special moment that can end the region's Sixty Years' War if you intervene forcefully enough. But that neglects history and the internal logic of the conflict.

Your own jut-jawed face-off with Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu in the Oval Office two weeks ago suggested that you hoped to bring a West Bank settlement freeze to the Cairo masses and a global Muslim audience this week. Netanyahu pushed back by ruling out unilateral gestures, insisting that Israel, the Palestinians and moderate Arab states move simultaneously.

You will not, of course, take Netanyahu's no as a final answer on the settlements. You are right when you say they are not only a huge obstacle to regional peace but also a stain on the global reputations of Israel and the United States. But the settlements cannot be treated in isolation or used as trophies with which to win Arab favor. They will eventually have to be for the most part evacuated as part of a give-and-take in which Israel's legitimate security concerns are addressed. For Netanyahu, agreeing to freeze settlements is tantamount to declaring them chips to be bargained away. He will require a good bit more than is on offer now from the Palestinians and other Arabs to make that move.

Yes, new administrations feel compelled to offer overarching initiatives to the Arab-Israeli conflict, and some have been useful -- especially when they have been so poorly thought out that they scared the

In 1996, Mr. Netanyahu came to Washington for the first time as prime minister to meet with President Clinton. I recall him warning the Clinton administration that the greatest threat facing Israel was the arming of Iran with nuclear weapons. He was a prophet then, and that prophecy is on the verge of coming true.

In a rebuke to the president's commitment to diplomacy, Iran conducted a missile test within hours after Mr. Netanyahu left Washington for Israel. If Iran gets a nuclear bomb, everything will change in the Middle East. Whatever dim prospects for peace there may be will come unraveled. That's why stopping Iran's nuclear ambitions trumps a Palestinian state and everything else.

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two sides into bypassing the United States and seriously negotiating with each other.

See Carter, Jimmy, and the Oct. 1, 1977, Soviet-U.S. communique that drove Egyptian President Anwar Sadat to Jerusalem and eventually to the Camp David treaty. Other presidents have cynically put forward peace plans, road maps and demands for settlement freezes to placate the Arabs with process rather than substance. See everybody from Nixon, Richard M., to Bush, George W.

But cynicism is not your long suit, and unwittingly scaring others into acting in their own best interest is not your style. You need instead to start a step-by-step process built on squeezing Israel and the Palestinian Authority to fulfill the implicit bargain struck in Oslo in 1993. You should give glimpses of that approach -- but not present an American blueprint for the final outcome.

In the Oslo accords, Yasser Arafat was offered a Palestinian state in return for that state's eliminating Palestinian terrorism. But Arafat never intended to go through with either part of the bargain. He feared a two-state solution's finality as much as he feared dismantling the terrorist machine he had helped create. Instead, he bobbed and weaved his way through U.S. peace efforts while enriching himself and his cronies and destroying the Palestinian Authority's claim to moral and political legitimacy.

But the bargain's logic remains intact and should be incorporated into a revival of a realistic two-state solution, not the rhetorical fig leaf your predecessor offered. Israel must come back to empowering Arafat's successor, Mahmoud Abbas, and his security forces, by dismantling settlements and roadblocks to bring stability to the West Bank and eventually Gaza.

The United States has trained two brigades of Palestinian security forces, which kept order in the West Bank during the January upheaval in Gaza, and wants to train half a dozen more. This is patient, low-visibility U.S. help that builds confidence for

Israelis and Palestinians to reach their own settlement. So does Tony Blair's work on economic development.

Today the Arab side lacks a leader as visionary as Sadat to save a failing U.S. effort or a Palestinian leader as skillfully duplicitous as Arafat to keep a

## Walking the talk back to Arabia

By Wesley Pruden The Washington Times

Barack Obama is off to see the Arab world, taking carefully polished apologies and regrets and an assortment of grovels, but probably all unavailing. The Muslims want deeds, not words.

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is no Arab but he suggests that if Americans convert to Islam further apologies might not be necessary. Mr. Obama has given no hint that he wants to go that far. The president is mixing remembrances of wars old and new on this trip, first apologizing in Cairo to anyone who thinks America is at war with Islam, and then going on to Buchenwald to pay homage to the memory of those who died at the hands of the Nazis and finally to Omaha Beach to honor the boys of the summer of '44.

In homage to the spirit of the moment he shouldn't say anything in Cairo about his later stops, since our Muslim friends were ambivalent at best in that earlier war. The grand mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husseini, spent most of the war years taking the waters in Berlin, trying to persuade der fuehrer to extend the final solution to the Middle East.

Mr. Obama is expected to reprise his earlier regrets and amends, but with new ruffles and flourishes on his famous teleprompter. He gave the first television interview of his presidency to Al Arabiya, sounding properly chastened by regrets for whatever America had done to offend Muslims. He sent a special greeting to Iranians on their new year, and the last time he went abroad he repeated the obvious, telling the Turkish National Assembly that America never had been at war with Islam and never would be. Mr. Obama's remarks echoed the assurance by George W. Bush, given while rescuers were still pulling bodies out of the smoking rubble of the World Trade Center, that Islam is "a religion of peace." It's scary to imagine what else Mr. Obama might say to make Muslims feel good.

"He will face a nation hardened in its negative view of the United States and its role in the region, and unconvinced that this or any other American president can or will change policy," says James J. Zogby, president of the Arab American Institute. He cites a poll by his brother, John Zogby, that 75 percent of the Egyptians think Mr. Obama isn't a very good president. But why would they? The Egyptians have been feeding for years on

homegrown one afloat. It is a moment for what George Shultz, Ronald Reagan's secretary of state, called the "gardening" phase of diplomacy -- pulling weeds and planting seeds -- rather than overly ambitious plans that raise expectations too high.

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propaganda that children here wouldn't swallow. The Egyptians can't get enough of grim fairy tales.

The more the Cairo media peddles the tales, the more voracious the appetite. A decade ago Cairenes rioted over a rumor that Christians were spray-painting crosses in invisible ink on the dresses of young women. Egyptians were told that if you hold a bottle of Coca-Cola to a mirror the iconic Coke script would reveal the threat, printed backwards, "No Muhammad, No Mecca." The grand mufti of Egypt finally issued an official opinion that the Coca-Cola icon was designed in Atlanta "in the state of Georgia" more than a century earlier in English, not Arabic. He could have added that soda pop originated in a sweeter time when few Americans had even heard of either Muhammad or Mecca.

Owners of Cairo taxicabs had to begin refitting their cabs when a rumor erupted that seat belts manufactured in Israel contained an embedded chemical to render Arab men sterile. James F.X. O'Gara, writing in the Weekly Standard, notes that not even the exploding Egyptian birth rate could calm the hysteria. Egypt has so far not counted its first case of swine flu - that's the swine flu we're not supposed to call swine flu - but the government nevertheless ordered the slaughter of 350,000 pigs. (Thus neither barbecue nor burgoo for the visiting president.)

The president's speech at Cairo University will be dissected throughout the Islamic world, carefully measured to see whether he "walks the walk and not just the talk," in the words of Marina Mahathir, a "community organizer" in Malaysia, where her father was once the prime minister. The president could actually do several things to make the Muslims like us. In addition to converting to Islam, the Americans could get out of Iraq and Afghanistan, ease sanctions on Iran, abandon Israel, and prevent the imposition of Western values - e.g., democracy, freedom of speech and worship - and knock off embarrassing Western demands that Muslims quit beating up women. A tall order, but not so tall for a messiah.

Or he could tell the Islamic world that respect, like friendship, is earned, not conferred, and civilizing man's base instincts is hard work. But even cave men can do it.

**Wesley Pruden is editor emeritus of The Washington Times.**

## There's No Room for Partisanship on Iran

By Joseph I. Lieberman *The Wall Street Journal* May 30, 2009

**There's No Room for Partisanship on Iran**  
Secretary of State Hillary Clinton recently told the House Foreign Affairs Committee that it is imperative that the world prevent the Islamic Republic of Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. She pledged that the Obama administration's engagement with Iran to achieve that end would be carried out "with eyes wide open and under no illusions."

Mrs. Clinton is right. Iran's illicit nuclear activities represent a uniquely dangerous and transformational threat to the United States and the rest of the world -- a threat that demands a response of open-eyed realism.

A realistic response requires that we first recognize that the danger posed by the Islamic Republic's nuclear activities cannot be divorced from its broader foreign policy ambitions and patterns of behavior -- in particular, its longstanding use of terrorist proxies to destabilize and weaken its Arab neighbors and Israel, to carve out spheres of Iranian influence in the Mideast, and to tilt the region toward extremism.

The Iranians have supported Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in the Palestinian territories, and Shiite militias in Iraq. They have sponsored terrorist attacks that have killed hundreds of American soldiers and thousands of innocent Muslims throughout the region. They have also exploited the plight of the Palestinians in a cynical attempt to put a wedge between moderate Arab governments and their people.

Consider how the balance of power and the prospects for peace in the Middle East would change if Iran were to acquire nuclear weapons -- and its extremist proxies could attack moderate Arab regimes, Israel and us under the protection of Tehran's nuclear umbrella, which they would use to deter conventional military retaliation in response to their aggression.

Engaging Iran with open-eyed realism also requires that we take seriously the violent words of the Iranian regime, and its acts of domestic repression. I know there are some who dismiss Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's calls for Israel to be wiped off the map as little more than political rhetoric. Others urge us not to hear Iran's rulers when they lead crowds in chanting "Death to America." Still others argue that the Iranian regime's mistreatment of its own citizens should not interfere in our diplomacy. If we ever accept that counsel, it would be at our grave peril.

As the Soviet dissident Andrei Sakharov once said, "A country that does not respect the rights of its own people will not respect the rights of its

neighbors." There is no better proof of this than Iran today.

I am not opposed to pursuing direct engagement with the Iranians. It is certainly the preferred way to end Iran's nuclear program. But engagement is a tactic, not a strategy. What we need is a multipronged strategy that employs all of the elements of our national power. Such a strategy would include a clear and credible set of benchmarks by which we can judge Iran's response to our outreach, a timeline by which to expect results, and a set of carrots and sticks that both sides understand. We must make clear to the Iranians and the region that engagement will not be a process without end, but rather a means to a clearly identified set of ends.

And we must build a consensus domestically and internationally. Just as steps forward by the Iranians will justify continued and rewarding engagement, a lack of progress will be met with what Mrs. Clinton characterized before the House Foreign Affairs Committee as "crippling" sanctions.

With the goal of giving President Barack Obama the authority to impose precisely such sanctions, a bipartisan coalition of senators, organized by Sens. Evan Bayh, Jon Kyl and me, recently introduced legislation that would empower the president to sanction companies that are involved in brokering, shipping or insuring the sale of gasoline and other refined petroleum products to Iran.

During last year's campaign, Mr. Obama expressed interest in using Iran's dependence on imported gasoline as leverage in our nuclear standoff. However, under current law, his authority to do so is uncertain. Our legislation would eliminate this ambiguity and enable the president to tell companies involved in this trade that they must choose between doing business with Iran or doing business with America.

I am especially proud of the breadth of the coalition that introduced this bill. It includes some of the most liberal and most conservative members of the U.S. Senate, and it should send an unambiguous message of unity, strength and resolve from America to Iran and the rest of the world.

We should likewise seek to build greater unity among our friends abroad. In the Middle East today, there is an unprecedented convergence of concerns about Iran among Arabs and Israelis alike. The question is whether we can seize this moment to help usher into place a new strategic architecture for the Middle East -- keeping in mind that some of the strongest alliances in history have been forged among old antagonists when confronted by a new, common threat.

Iran's easiest path to a nuclear weapon is clear: It is by dividing the rest of us, Europeans from Americans, the Russians and Chinese from the West. It is by pitting Arabs against Arabs in Lebanon, Iraq, the Palestinian Authority and the Gulf, and by stirring up hatred between Muslims and Jews. It is by dividing the Iranian people from the American people when we are otherwise natural allies. It is by dividing us here at home -- Democrats and Republicans, conservatives and liberals.

The best way to stop Iran from getting nuclear weapons is equally clear: It is by recognizing that

whatever differences divide us on other matters, our shared interest in stopping the Iranian government from getting nuclear weapons is far greater. This is why we must urgently unite to prevent that dangerous result.

**Mr. Lieberman is an Independent Democratic senator from Connecticut. This article is adapted from a speech he delivered at the American Enterprise Institute.**

## **When Barack met Bibi By The Washington Times editorial May 20, 2009**

Reports of severe disagreements between President Obama and Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu are greatly exaggerated, a senior Israeli official told us Monday afternoon in Washington. He said the atmospherics at the U.S.-Israeli summit meeting were very positive, and policy agreements far outweighed any differences. He said Mr. Netanyahu is sincerely impressed with Mr. Obama and has been since they met in 2007. This augurs well for finding solutions to the critical issues these leaders face, but we fear that on at least one issue, time is running out.

Both leaders agree that the top priority is to prevent the development of an Iranian nuclear-weapons capability. Mr. Obama reiterated on Monday that Iran must not possess nuclear weapons and set what he called a "clear timetable" for Iran to respond to diplomatic overtures by the end of the year. However, we got a sense from our source that the clock is ticking faster and that action may be required in seven months. Tehran's uranium-enrichment efforts are accelerating, and most observers agree that the Islamic Republic either already has enough material for a nuclear weapon or will soon. If Iran tests a nuclear weapon this fall, we would not be surprised.

On the Palestinian issue, a two-state solution is possible depending on what the definition of "state" is. Our high-level source indicated that Israel has no desire to rule the Palestinians and that they should have complete self-governance. Israel, however, opposes the Palestinians being granted certain traditional sovereign rights, including the right to maintain military forces and the ability to import arms, sign defensive treaties and provide bases for foreign troops. In short, Israel opposes anything that would turn the prospective Palestinian state into a launching pad for aggression against Israel. If all parties can agree to a demilitarized Palestinian state that recognizes Israel's right to exist, such a solution is possible.

Our source indicated that Israel is as eager as the United States to start the negotiation process with the Palestinians. Working groups will convene

in a matter of days or weeks to fast-track the process, and bilateral talks could begin right away. A regional dialogue is also possible, and it would be helpful, too, if the holdout Arab states made reciprocal moves, such as beginning the process of normalizing relations with Israel. While this has seemed impossible for decades, the growing Iranian threat is reshaping the map of Middle East diplomacy. Our source emphasized that Israel and the Arab states are aligning against their common adversary and overcoming a century of prejudice in the face of this existential hazard. Ironically, the emerging Arab-Israeli bloc against Iran could wind up pushing the Palestinian peace process forward, which would be an unintended and unwelcome consequence from Tehran's point of view.

Our source rejected the notion that there is any official diplomatic linkage between the Iranian and Palestinian issues despite earlier statements from the Obama administration that suggested that pressure on Iran would be contingent on progress on the Palestinian front. If anything, such linkage would be backward; Iran could act as a spoiler through its Hamas and Hezbollah proxies, preventing resolution of the issue and buying more time for its pursuit of nuclear capability. A more reasonable tandem track seems to be in the offing, with Iran being the more urgent issue, but agreement on the goals does not necessarily mean agreement on the process.

The Obama administration has yet to spell out a comprehensive approach to Iran other than to say all options are on the table. We doubt that sanctions can stop Iran, and we wonder if Iran believes that other options, such as the use of force, represent a credible threat. Our source had nothing to say about any possible moves Israel might make directly to counter the Iranian nuclear program but did indicate that if the Iranians believe there is no credible threat of force, diplomacy will fail. As Frederick the Great said, diplomacy without arms is like music without instruments.

The United States and Israel seem to be in agreement on the nature and importance of the critical issues in the Middle East. The points of

dispute regarding the Palestinians - over Israel's eastern border, the status of Jerusalem and the rights of refugees - will be hashed out eventually. But the

Iranian threat is the immediate issue, and we fear Tehran has its own clear timetable that is rapidly reaching its goal.

## The simple truth can help bring peace

By Max Singer The Jerusalem Post May 26, 2009

An often-overlooked piece of Palestinian behavior is key to the pursuit of peace. The Palestinians teach their people that no Jewish kingdom ever existed in the land they call Palestine, and that there was never a Jewish temple on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

Presumably some Palestinians know these teachings are false, but for most they are "facts" learned in school and taken for granted. These falsehoods are deliberately spread by the Palestinian leadership. To publicly deny them is to be viewed as disloyal, and anyone who tries to assert the truth risks retribution.

This is not just a matter of ancient history - it's not merely an "alternative narrative" which needn't be contested because it's just talk. This false story helps explain the Palestinian refusal to make peace, because so long as Palestinians think the Jews were never here before, they will see Jews as a foreign colonial implant with no moral claim or right to the land. Modern Israel's claim to land in Palestine depends on the Jews' historic connection to the territory. Without this history, the nation of Israel would be merely foreign invaders, not a people who can be seen as returning home.

When a powerful foreigner comes and takes your territory just because he wants it, you have no honorable way to yield your rights. Accepting such a foreign invasion would be a cowardly sacrifice of honor. By insisting that this is what happened, the Palestinians' leaders are in effect burning their bridges behind them, so that their people will be forced by their honor to fight on, and prevented from making an honorable peace.

The Palestinian leadership's willingness to look foolish by denying well-known historic facts - including basic Christian history - demonstrates the importance to them of denying their people the

moral and psychological basis for an honorable peace.

The United States can make an important step toward peace by publicly assuring the Palestinians that there were indeed ancient Jewish kingdoms in the land, and a Jewish temple on the Temple Mount before the birth of Muhammad. There are plenty of Muslim sources that the US can use to teach these facts.

Denial of the Jews' ancient connection to the land is much more important than Holocaust denial. Israel's claim to the land has nothing to do with the Holocaust. The international decision that Palestine should be a Jewish homeland was made by the League of Nations a generation before the Holocaust. Jews claim the land based on their continuous emotional and religious attachment to it since ancient times - not as compensation for six million dead.

Since Palestinians and other Arabs care about honor, we should make it possible for them to recognize that there can be an honorable peace with the Jews. (Although there would still be Muslim objections to Jewish rule in Israel.)

Israeli diplomats should call on the US to end the Palestinians' denial of history, even though the State Department apparently regards the truth as something offensive to Arabs.

What better public disagreement can Israel and the US have than a disagreement about whether to allow the Palestinians to continue denying Jewish history? What better diagnostic tool can there be to determine when Palestinians are truly ready to live with Israel than looking at whether they are willing to acknowledge the Jews' connection to the land?

**The writer, a founder of the Hudson Institute, is a senior fellow there and at the BESA Center of Bar-Ilan University.**

If anyone would like to receive this newsletter by a weekly e-mail, please drop us a line at [sheldonb@rsfchart.com](mailto:sheldonb@rsfchart.com) and we will be glad to add you to our growing list of subscribers.

All of the newsletter archives can be found on the Suburban Orthodox webpage (Israel Action section) at the following:

<http://www.suburbanorthodox.org/israel-action.php>.

Also, please keep us informed of any Israel-based activities or programs and we will be happy to help publicize them. Next week's newsletter will likely center around President Obama's much anticipated speech to the Muslim world and commentary on his words and implications from many angles and sources.