

The Lessons of Camp David

By Jehan Sadat *The Wall Street Journal* March 26, 2009

What Anwar Sadat can teach us about peace.

Thirty years ago today, Anwar Sadat, Menachem Begin and Jimmy Carter signed the Camp David Peace Accords. It was a culmination of a journey Anwar Sadat, my husband, began in October 1970 following the sudden death of Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser. Within hours of Nasser's funeral, my husband asked the U.S. ambassador to tell President Richard Nixon that Egypt was ready for peace.

There was no response, since at the time Egypt was a defeated nation having lost the Sinai Desert to Israel in the 1967 war. But Egypt's victory in the October War of 1973 put Sadat in a position to restart his mission for peace.

On Nov. 9, 1977, in an address to the Egyptian Parliament, my husband announced his intention to make peace with Israel. The audience, which included Yasser Arafat, was stunned at first. Then, they began clapping. When Sadat arrived 10 days later in Jerusalem, then Prime Minister Golda Meir said: "Why are you late? We have been waiting for you."

For months after Sadat's historic trip, Egyptian and Israeli leaders attacked the issues: the return to the pre-1967 borders (in particular the return of Sinai); the construction of Israeli settlements on disputed territory; the status of Jerusalem; and the right of return for the Palestinian refugees. Sadat also advocated for the creation of a Palestinian state.

Today, these same contentious issues remain unresolved. In 1979, we hoped the Camp David Treaty was the beginning of a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. But that hope has yet to be realized.

There have been moments when it seemed otherwise. In 1993, when Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat reluctantly shook hands in the White House Rose Garden, it looked like Israeli-Palestinian peace was imminent. And the situation was again promising in 1996, when Jordan and Israel made peace. But on the whole, Sadat's noble dream has waned. Sometimes, it's almost faded entirely as fighting between the Palestinians and Israelis intensified, while Lebanon and Syria sit by, waiting to see what will happen next. In conditions like these, how could anyone hope for peace?

I do. I believe that now, with tensions the highest they have ever been, the urgent need for

renewed efforts is staring us in the face. It's time to re-examine my husband's method of making peace.

First, we must recognize that people in the region want peace. Our leaders must commit to making and keeping the peace that its citizens crave. Second, our leaders need to be realistic while being real. No leader in the Arab world except Sadat believed peace could be made with a Likud leader. I hope Benjamin Netanyahu will follow Begin's example. Furthermore, my husband was sincere in his desire for peace, and his style of face-to-face negotiating proved it. Third, the peace process requires serious work. For many, the so-called peace process in the Middle East has become a myth -- a lot of talk with few results. Sadat believed that as president, he had to be the engine and energy behind the peace process. Fourth, we need to forgive. President Carter once said that my husband was "more inclined to look toward the future than to dwell on the hate-filled and often bloody past." Today's leaders must make peace, not the past, their focus. Finally, have faith. No one can take the political and personal risks required for peace in the Middle East without having a steadfast determination to enact God's will to love our enemy.

For nearly 30 years, Egypt and Israel have lived side-by-side in a state of peace. The Palestinians and Israelis ought to live this way as well. The Palestinians deserve to live as free people in their own state, and the Israelis deserve to live safely and securely among millions of Arabs.

My husband made a difficult choice to make peace his political and personal priority. In response, I made the choice of supporting him entirely -- even though I knew I would lose him. We in the Middle East must make a choice to do all we must do for peace. Only then, future generations might slowly free themselves of the pitfalls of our history.

Peace -- this word, this idea, this goal -- is the defining theme of my life. I am hoping and praying that President Obama, Prime Minister Netanyahu and the Palestinian leadership will finally fulfill Anwar Sadat's dream of a fair, just and comprehensive peace for all of the people of the Middle East.

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Ms. Sadat's Vision Is Noble, But Her History is Weak

By Barry Augenbraun The Wall Street Journal (letters to editor) April 1, 2009

Jehan Sadat's plea for peace in the Middle East is certainly welcome ("The Lessons of Camp David," op-ed, March 26). But her misrepresentation of history could well lead to further conflict in the region, rather than the peace for which she speaks so eloquently.

Egypt did not achieve "victory in the October War of 1973," as she puts it. When Israel -- victim of a surprise attack on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the Jewish calendar -- finally agreed to the ceasefire urged by Egypt's Soviet patrons (and by the American secretary of state), armored units of the Israeli army were well inside the west bank of the Suez Canal, just south of Ismailia, and had cut the Suez-Cairo road while striking towards the town of Suez. The Egyptian Third Army was stranded on the east bank of the Canal, with its forward movement stalled and no place to retreat, since Israeli forces now occupied the west bank of the Canal.

In fact, then, it was not "Egypt's victory in the October War" which impelled Ms. Sadat's husband

to move toward peace. It was his sober recognition that for the fourth time in 25 years, Egyptian military might had been unable to destroy Israel and, for the third time since the 1956 Suez campaign, the heart of Egypt had been mortally threatened by Israel's response to these Egyptian campaigns of destruction.

The "lesson" that Anwar Sadat had the courage to acknowledge was that Israel's military determination meant that only peace was a realistic option for his country's security. That is the same lesson that Jordan acknowledged when it made peace with Israel some 15 years later.

Sadly, neither Syria nor the Palestinian community has been willing to accept that lesson, as recent events in Lebanon and Gaza have demonstrated. While that in itself is tragic, it would be truly dismaying if Ms. Sadat's rewriting of history were to encourage them to continue in their Pyrrhic quest for "victory" over Israel.

Israel's moment of decision

By Meyrav Wurmser The Washington Times March 31, 2009

Israel's formation of a national unity government, a common strategy by parliamentary governments in times of war or national emergencies, is a move to gird the Jewish state for an impending crisis involving Iran's nuclear program.

Though it could have formed a free-standing right-leaning coalition, Likud last week concluded an agreement with Israel's Labor Party for a national unity government, with Benjamin Netanyahu as prime minister. After February's elections, it had seemed the differences between Likud, the leading right-leaning party, and Labor, the leading left-leaning party, were too great to permit unity.

Later it looked as if Labor would split and just half of its members join with Likud. But Israel's dire security situation, particularly over Iran's nuclear program, drove Mr. Netanyahu and Labor's Ehud Barak, who still disagree on the peace process, to overlook their differences. Iran is at the top of the agenda for the incoming Israeli administration, with the peace process lower down.

Reaching an agreement between the parties was not easy. Likud had to tempt Labor with enough political rewards to join the coalition. Likud was willing to pay the price: It needed unity in order to gain international and domestic legitimacy, particularly if and when action is needed against Iran. It had offered Labor a lot - such as five top ministries, including the Defense Ministry, to be headed by Mr. Barak, as in the outgoing government.

It is such a generous offer that Mr. Barak could find himself hard-pressed to find five qualified people in his 13-member faction to staff these positions.

Likud also agreed to adopt Labor's emergency economic plan with its many benefits for the weaker social classes. This was no simple compromise. During his successful tenure as finance minister in Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's government, Mr. Netanyahu led the deepest effort in Israel's history to liberalize and privatize the Israeli economy. Nevertheless, Mr. Netanyahu's need for national unity was so great that he compromised with Labor on its social-democratic agenda.

The economic plan he accepted includes large government expenditures on social benefits such as retraining the unemployed, opening day care centers for working mothers, increasing state allowances to the elderly, and so on.

In turn, Labor, unable to advance its peace agenda meaningfully, compromised on the peace process. The articles of the coalition agreement between Likud and Labor dealing with this issue are crafted carefully but are vague and unspecific on the issue of compromises with either the Palestinian Authority or Syria.

According to the Likud-Labor agreement, Israel will formulate a proposal for a regionwide peace agreement and cooperation with its neighbors in the Middle East.

But this is no more than a general statement without target dates and specifics. The agreement further states that the new government will be committed to all previously signed international agreements. This is somewhat inconsequential because Mr. Netanyahu never said he intends to disregard previous agreements.

The coalition agreement also states that the government will work to dismantle illegal settlements. However, Mr. Barak, who is the serving defense minister, has not dismantled them thus far.

Labor's failure to commit Likud to advancing the peace agenda resulted from coalitional realities. Labor is neither the only nor the largest of Likud's partners. The coalition still rests on the foundation of parties to the right of Likud that object to territorial compromises and would bring the government down in the event they found the compromises too deep.

So Labor joins a coalition over which it has little true power. Why? Mr. Barak, even more than his party, drove Labor's willingness to enter the coalition and yield to Likud on the issue of the peace process. Now Mr. Barak has decided that Iran's nuclear ambitions confront Israel with a historic crisis so grave that even the peace process is of secondary importance.

During the stormy Labor Party Central Committee meeting in which Labor voted to join the

coalition, Mr. Barak argued before his critics: "I am not chasing any seat ... I already served in almost all ministries. I was prime minister and defense minister. ... I am not lacking any seat. Whoever thinks that my concern is personal survival, I propose that ... he understands the price you pay when you don't follow fashionable slogans but go against the current, against fashion [and do] what is really correct for the state. ... We are responsible for the Labor Party, but we are also responsible for the state of Israel. We don't have a spare state."

Even if one looks at Mr. Barak's statements with a healthy dose of skepticism, there still is much in them. While the new unity government will view the peace process as important, its focus is the national emergency posed by Iran's nuclear threat.

Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Barak, two seasoned former prime ministers, are convinced Israel faces decisions of life or death. Twice before, Israel has had national unity governments. Both reflected a national consensus, once because of the grave threat on the eve of the Six-Day War and the second to deal with Israel's economic meltdown in 1984. Israel is now to have its third unity government - anchored to the emerging national consensus on Iran.

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The Palestinian cause is being hijacked

By Michael Young The Daily Star (Beirut) March 26, 2009

I first met Kamal Medhat, whom I always knew as Kamal Naji, in early 2007, when I was looking for background information to review a book on militant Islam in the Ain al-Hilweh Palestinian refugee camp. At the time, Kamal could still claim to have abandoned everything for the attractions of academia, though you knew even then that the finality of the man was not a fastidious thesis and a chalkboard.

Kamal had been an aide to Yasser Arafat in the 1980s and was the official who surrendered the Palestinians' heavy weapons to the Lebanese government in 1991, when the army, backed politically by Syria, attacked Palestinian forces east of Sidon. When Abbas Zaki was named the Palestinian Liberation Organization's representative in Lebanon after the Syrian pullout in 2005, he chose Kamal as his deputy. Zaki needed a man with experience and decisiveness on the ground. He also used him as a counterweight to the secretary of the Fatah movement in Lebanon, Sultan Abu al-Aynayn, whose allegiances, typical of a Palestinian official who had to maneuver through the years of Syrian domination, were complicated when it came to the Ramallah-based Palestinian Authority.

The speculation over who killed Kamal Medhat will continue for some time. Hamas is a prime

suspect, however that theory doesn't seem particularly credible. That's not because the Islamist movement is incapable of such a thing, but because in Lebanon Hamas probably doesn't have the political latitude or wish to take such a drastic measure, which risks a major backlash. The identity of the murderers in such cases does not remain secret for very long. That doesn't mean that Hamas will not benefit from Medhat's elimination, but it seems more likely that others calculated that consequence on the movement's behalf.

Was Syria involved, or Hizbullah, or a cutout acting on behalf of one or the other? That's possible; both have an interest in marginalizing the Palestinian Authority led by Mahmoud Abbas, which means weakening Fatah and undermining the independence of Palestinian decision-making in Lebanon. However, men like Medhat stand at the nexus point of complex relationships, where political, security, and intelligence interests intersect, buried in layers of ambiguity, so that while it may be tempting to jump to obvious conclusions, the truth may be more complex. Soon enough we will have a better sense of what happened, but until then what are the broader consequences of Kamal Medhat's assassination?

It is surely no coincidence that Medhat was killed at a particularly sensitive moment in the

negotiations over a Palestinian-unity government in Cairo. Those talks have gone nowhere in recent weeks, which is hardly a surprise. Neither Syria nor Iran is eager to cede to Egypt a diplomatic victory on the Palestinian front, or to lay the diplomatic groundwork for a revival of the Saudi peace plan adopted by the Arab League in 2002. As the Doha Arab summit looms next week, the struggle over who holds the Palestinian card seems to be intensifying, with Syria and Iran, each for reasons of its own, wanting to ensure that it can veto, through Hamas, any possible consensual Arab policy on Palestinian negotiations with Israel.

Does Medhat's killing signal the final nail in the coffin of the troubled Palestinian unity talks? Not necessarily. In fact it may be an upping of the ante to soften Fatah's stance by sending the movement a warning that the next battlefield between it and Hamas will be the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. Who has the advantage? Since Hizbullah is bound to oppose Fatah, and the Lebanese state will undoubtedly be too timorous to take sides in an inter-Palestinian confrontation, particularly if Syria prevents it, Fatah may find itself under increasing duress, allowing Hamas and pro-Syrian Palestinians to regain the initiative in the camps.

Fatah retains much support among the Palestinians in Lebanon, and it's not the murder of Kamal Medhat that will reverse this. However, if Fatah's leadership comes under more attack and is unable to distribute money and services in the way it has managed to in the past year, and is unable to protect its political independence and Ramallah's sway in the camps, the balance may slowly shift away, perhaps even within the movement. The Syrians, for example, may be more comfortable with the Fatah leadership in place before Zaki arrived, over which it had greater influence.

Doha will determine whether the so-called moderate Arab states have any valid rejoinder to the very plain Syrian and Iranian efforts to hijack the Palestinian cause. It's no secret that Hamas leaders would like to take control of the PLO away from Fatah, just as it's no secret that Syria tried during the Gaza war to persuade other Arab states to distance themselves from the 2002 Arab peace plan. Damascus prefers to talk to Israel alone, so that it is not blindsided by parallel progress on the Palestinian track; and with Hamas these days largely doing Syrian and Iranian bidding, the Syrians are in a position to strengthen their bargaining hand by manipulating Palestinian affairs. The late Yasser Arafat spent three decades trying to avoid that situation. It's no wonder, then, that Medhat, once one of his collaborators, should have paid so high a price.

In that context, doesn't the Saudi-led project to renew Arab amity risk creating an opportunity for Syria, and with it Iran and Hizbullah, to cripple an autonomous Palestinian track led by Mahmoud Abbas? More perniciously, isn't this precisely what a government led by the next Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, would welcome? Netanyahu and Syria's President Bashar Assad share a longing to discredit Abbas. A strengthening of Hamas would allow Netanyahu to say that he has no Palestinian interlocutor, which would allow Assad to respond: "Well, you will always have Syria to talk to."

We don't yet know who killed Kamal Medhat, and who is targeting an independent Fatah in Lebanon. But we can say who stands to gain from this, whether they were involved in the crime or not. Pity the Palestinians for once being a powerful idea now in serious risk of becoming an afterthought.

After Gaza, peace is further out of reach

By Joel Brinkley *The San Francisco Chronicle* March 29, 2009

Palestinian militants in Gaza fired another missile into Israel on Tuesday. In recent weeks, Israel has responded to these attacks by assaulting Hamas fighters in Gaza and the West Bank.

Sound familiar? It should. This has been the status quo since Hamas seized control of Gaza in 2005.

Yes, but what about that war Israel fought in Gaza in December and January, the bloody conflict that took more than 1,200 lives and was intended to end the rocket attacks forever? In hindsight, we can now see that it was a failure, a waste of time, resources and lives. Israel is worse off now than before it fought that war.

I'm not talking about the calls for war-crimes investigations, the new allegations of wanton killing of civilians in Gaza, or the diplomatic crises the

nation faces as numerous nations turn away in anger. No, my point is that the offensive backfired. And one consequence is that Israel is far less able to make peace.

Think about it. After 22 days of attacks and bombardments intended to pacify Hamas and remove its ability to terrorize Israel with missiles, nothing has changed. The missiles continue to this day. The army has shown itself impotent to stop them. But the situation is even darker than that.

Israel is about to inaugurate Benjamin Netanyahu, a right-wing prime minister who has no interest in pursuing peace if it involves an independent Palestinian state. After the Gaza fiasco, should anyone be surprised?

What happens if Israel does remove its West Bank settlements, withdraw its forces and grant the

Palestinians an independent state, as the United States and the rest of the international community demand? What would keep Palestinians in this new state from firing missiles into Israel from the West Bank, just as they are now doing from Gaza?

If they did, wouldn't Israel be just as powerless to stop those attacks as they are now in Gaza?

I am not offering this as a defense of Israel. I have spent more than five years working in that region, and in my view both sides have much to answer for. Neither is blameless. I, for one, would like to see Israel and the Palestinians separate themselves into two independent states. But the logic of this moment says that simply cannot happen.

The minute Washington begins pressuring the new Israeli government to begin peace talks, I can predict what Netanyahu will say. From Gaza, he will note, Hamas has fired missiles able to strike the outskirts of Ashkelon, a small town about 15 miles away. Fired from the West Bank, those very same missiles would be able to strike Israel's international airport.

Years ago, I stood with former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon on a West Bank bluff that overlooks the airport. He was making a similar point. "See how close," he said, pointing to the runways just below us, so close it almost seemed you could reach out and touch them. As Netanyahu appoints his new ambassador to Washington, I imagine he is also hiring a contractor to build a multilevel viewing platform on this same bluff.

Over several weeks, Israel's outgoing centrist government has been unable to make peace with

Hamas. Talks, mediated by Egypt, collapsed last week over the failure to agree on a prisoner exchange to allow the release of Gilad Shalit, an Israeli soldier Hamas has held since 2006. As a result, a cease-fire foundered. Meantime, Hamas has said quite publicly that it does not want Gazans to fire any missiles.

"They are being fired at the wrong time," Hamas averred earlier this month. Yet nearly 200 of them have hit since the offensive ended. So Hamas is either dishonest or impotent - probably a bit of both. But from this, Israeli right-wingers can continue to make the argument that peace agreements with Palestinians are worthless. Palestinians do not keep their word.

Most new presidents do not make grandiose promises to settle the Middle East conflict during the early days of their presidencies. But as Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said this month, "We will vigorously pursue a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict." Just rhetoric, perhaps. But at the same time, she appointed former Sen. George Mitchell as Middle East envoy. Asked about this Tuesday night, President Obama added, "We're going to be serious from Day One."

Mitchell is in Jerusalem, where he is furnishing a permanent office. My suggestion: Set up a satellite office on that bluff overlooking the airport. You're going to spend a lot of time there.

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The Stages of Anti-Semitism

By Bret Stephens The Wall Street Journal

An avant-garde play revives an ancient hatred. Here's a sketch for a racist play about "moral decline" in black America since the civil rights era.

Act I: Heroic protestors gather at the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Ala., in 1965 to march in defiance of a segregationist state. Act II: The scene moves to San Francisco in the early 1970s, where the radical politics of the Black Panthers quickly give way to robbery and murder. Act III: A New York City crack house, circa 1985. Act IV: the trial of O.J. Simpson. Act V: The present, in which a black man on a prison furlough goes on a murder spree.

Appalled? I hope so.

Now substitute the word "Jewish" for "black" and change the scene to Europe and Israel and you have, roughly, the plot of celebrated British playwright Caryl Churchill's "Seven Jewish Children," which debuted last month to some controversy and much acclaim at London's Royal Court Theater. It is now in the U.S., playing in small but respectable venues to sophisticated audiences

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that -- judging from the performance I attended in New York last Thursday -- are overwhelmingly disposed to like it.

Ms. Churchill's short play unfolds over seven scenes, beginning, dimly, sometime during the Holocaust and concluding, sharply, with Israel's war with Hamas. Characters appear as parents or older relatives of an offstage child, and the dialogue revolves around what the girl should or should not know about her political circumstances as they unfold over the decades.

So, for the first scene we have the line, "Don't tell her they'll kill her" -- the "they" presumably referring to Nazis. Yet by the final scene the tables have turned. Now it's the Jews who behave like Nazis: "Tell her," says one of the play's Zionist elders, "I wouldn't care if we wiped them out . . . tell her we're *better haters*, tell her we're *chosen people*, tell her I look at one of their *children covered in blood* and what do I feel? Tell her all I feel is happy it's not her." (My emphases.)

Just what is this supposed to mean? Michael Billington of the Guardian grasped Ms. Churchill's point when he wrote that the play captured "the transition that has overtaken Israel, to the point where security has become the pretext for indiscriminate slaughter." Ms. Churchill herself has written that she "wanted [the play] in some small way to reflect the shock and enormity of what happened in Gaza. I think it does that *relatively mildly*." (My emphasis again.)

All this makes perfect sense -- provided you're willing to reduce the Arab-Israeli conflict to caricature, magnify it to the exclusion of all others, assign blame (and moral agency) wholly to one side, and suppose that Israelis use the memory of the Holocaust cynically or neurotically as an alibi for gratuitous and wanton bloodletting.

In other words, if you're prepared to manipulate history as dishonestly as our vile little "play" about black America does, then it's easy to draw a damning moral. And if you're clever enough to cast the indictment as a story about *some* blacks or *some* Jews, or as one of generational decadence, then you might also acquit yourself of charges of racism or anti-Semitism, since you can point to a few Jews or blacks worthy of your considered respect.

Of course Ms. Churchill does just that, even as she mocks Jewish claims to statehood ("Tell her her great great great great lots of greats grandad lived there"). Of course she cites the authority of Israel's

many internal dissenters and Jewish critics as another method of self-justification, thereby using Israel's own openness as a club with which to bludgeon it. Yet if you say, for instance, that Israel is a fascist state and cite the testimony of Israelis who freely argue as much, then you have done nothing except instantly disprove your own premise.

But logic is not the issue here, nor, really, are the facts: Try arguing either with someone determined to ignore them. The issue is about taboo -- a word easy to mock until you realize it often upholds what is best in society. Racism has become taboo in American society, and that's a very good thing. Anti-Semitism used to be taboo, but that's been eroded by an obsessive criticism of Israel that seems to borrow freely from the classic anti-Semitic repertoire ("tell her they're filth") while adopting the brilliant trick of treating Jewish victimization as a moral ideal from which modern Israel has sadly deviated.

Readers may wonder why Ms. Churchill's trite agitprop, a cultural blip on the vast American stage, deserves a column. Maybe it doesn't; maybe it's best ignored. But I'm reminded of what a better Churchill -- Winston -- wrote about the German decision in 1917 to put V.I. Lenin on a sealed train to Petersburg, "in the same way you might send a phial containing a culture of typhoid or cholera to be poured into the water supply of a great city." Something foul has now gotten into our water, too.

Avigdor Lieberman's Brilliant Debut

By Daniel Pipes FrontPageMagazine.com April 2, 2009

Avigdor Lieberman became foreign minister of Israel yesterday. He celebrated his inauguration with a maiden speech that news reports indicate left his listeners grimacing, squirming, and aghast. The BBC, for example, informs us that his words prompted "his predecessor Tzipi Livni to interrupt and diplomats to shift uncomfortably."

Too bad for them -- the speech leaves me elated. Here are some of the topics Lieberman covered in his 1,100-word stem-winder:

The world order: The Westphalia order of states is dead, replaced by a modern system that includes states, semi-states, and irrational international players (e.g., Al-Qaeda, perhaps Iran).

World priorities: These must change. The free world must focus on defeating the countries, forces, and extremist entities "that are trying to violate it." The real problems are coming from "the direction of Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq" -- and not the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Egypt: Lieberman praises Cairo as "a stabilizing factor in the regional system and perhaps even beyond that" but puts the Mubarak government on notice that he will only go there if his counterpart comes to Jerusalem.

Repeating the word "peace": Lieberman poured scorn on prior Israeli governments: "The fact that we say the word 'peace' twenty times a day will not bring peace any closer."

The burden of peace: "I have seen all the proposals made so generously by Ehud Olmert, but I have not seen any result." Now, things have changed: "the other side also bears responsibility" for peace and must ante up.

The Road Map: The speech's most surprising piece of news is Lieberman's focus on and endorsement of the Road Map, a 2003 diplomatic initiative he voted against at the time but which is, as he puts it, "the only document approved by the cabinet and by the Security Council." He calls it "a binding resolution" that the new government must implement. In contrast, he specifically notes that the government is not bound by the Annapolis accord of 2007 ("Neither the cabinet nor the Knesset ever ratified it").

Implementing the Road Map: Lieberman intends to "act exactly" according to the letter of the Road Map, including its Tenet and Zinni sub-documents. Then comes one of his two central statements of the speech:

I will never agree to our waiving all the clauses - I believe there are 48 of them - and going directly to the last clause, negotiations on a permanent settlement. No. These concessions do not achieve anything. We will adhere to it to the letter, exactly as written. Clauses one, two, three, four - dismantling terrorist organizations, establishing an effective government, making a profound constitutional change in the Palestinian Authority. We will proceed exactly according to the clauses. We are also obligated to implement what is required of us in each clause, but so is the other side. They must implement the document in full.

The mistake of making concessions: He notes the "dramatic steps and made far-reaching proposals" of the Sharon and Olmert governments and then concludes, "But I do not see that [they] brought peace. To the contrary. ... It is precisely when we made all the concessions" that Israel became more isolated, such as at the Durban Conference in 2001. Then follows his other central statement:

We are also losing ground every day in public opinion. Does anyone think that concessions, and constantly saying "I am prepared to concede," and using the word "peace" will lead to anything? No, that will just invite pressure, and more and more wars. "Si vis pacem, para bellum" - if you want peace, prepare for war, be strong.

Bibi and Barack Can Unite on Iran

By Yossi Klein HaLevi The Wall Street Journal March 31, 2009

Israel's new government is an 'obstacle' only to unrealistic goals. Enemies of the American-Israeli alliance could not have conjured a scenario more fraught with potential for misunderstanding. In Washington, a new president is reaching out to the Muslim world, including Iran. In Jerusalem, the government about to take office represents the disillusionment of the Israeli public with 15 years of failed peace talks. For President Barack Obama, power is a means to encourage the rational self-interest of opponents. For Prime Minister-designate Benjamin Netanyahu, power is the means of defending his people from irrational hatred. Mr. Obama's mandate is for change; Mr. Netanyahu's is for survival.

Though the inclusion of the Labor Party in Mr. Netanyahu's otherwise right-wing coalition will shift it toward the center, differences between Washington and Jerusalem will persist. With Iran about to achieve nuclear capability, and its proxies in Lebanon and Gaza gaining strength, this is the worst possible time for tension between the U.S. and Israel. But a crisis can be averted if both countries consider each other's most pressing needs and remain focused on their shared anxieties.

The first prerequisite is genuine realism in Washington regarding negotiations with the

Israeli strength: Lieberman concludes with a rousing call to fortitude: "When was Israel at its strongest in terms of public opinion around the world? After the victory of the Six Day War, not after all the concessions in Oslo Accords I, II, III and IV."

Comments:

(1) I have had reservations about Lieberman and still do, but this speech has him off to a great start. Put as briefly as possible, he announced that "Israel is back."

(2) Given that the formal name of the Road Map is "A Performance-Based Roadmap to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," I confess myself puzzled by the news reports (such as the one headlined in the Los Angeles Times, "Foreign minister says Israel not bound to follow two-state path") declaring that Lieberman has pronounced the end of the two-state solution.

(3) There is much irony in Lieberman now championing the Road Map, an initiative he and many others of his outlook condemned at the time. For an authoritative discussion at the time of its origins, flaws, and implications, see the analysis by Daniel Mandel, "Four-Part Disharmony: The Quartet Maps Peace."

Palestinians. It will be tempting in the coming months to blame Mr. Netanyahu -- who has refused to commit himself to a two-state solution -- for the absence of a peace agreement. But that breakthrough would have eluded any Israeli government. Outgoing Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and his foreign minister, Kadima leader Tzipi Livni, couldn't have tried harder to reach an agreement with the Palestinians.

Instead of continuing to pursue the unattainable, the American-Israeli approach should focus on creating a civil society in the West Bank that is an essential precondition for the eventual creation of a Palestinian state. Mr. Obama will find a ready partner in Jerusalem for improving economic conditions in the West Bank. That process would present the Palestinians with a stark choice between their two territories: the beginnings of prosperity in a peaceful West Bank, or devastation in a jihadist Gaza.

Inevitably, the most sensitive issue in managing the American-Israeli relationship will continue to be settlements. Under President Bill Clinton's December 2000 Middle East peace plan, settlement blocs like Gush Etzion near the 1967 border would be retained by Israel in an eventual agreement.

Indeed, no Israeli government will stop building in those West Bank blocs.

The tacit agreement between Mr. Obama and Mr. Netanyahu, then, needs to be American acquiescence in continued building within the highly populated settlement blocs, in exchange for Israeli restraint in building beyond the blocs. The Netanyahu government has a mandate from the Israeli public to act decisively against any security threat, and to resist international pressure for premature peace agreements. But it doesn't have a mandate to resume massive settlement expansion across the West Bank.

The Israeli Jewish public that voted overwhelmingly for right-wing parties did so primarily for security reasons. The Israeli right of 2009 is a mood, not an ideology. And Mr. Netanyahu understands the expectations of his voters. During the election campaign, he spoke incessantly about stopping a nuclear Iran and the jihadist threat generally -- not about settlement growth. However grudgingly, Mr. Netanyahu's right-wing coalition partners will likely accept some limitation on settlement building. And the presence of the Labor Party in the coalition will ensure moderation on the settlement issue. Indeed, the small National Union party is the only right-wing party that places massive settlement building at the top of its agenda, and it will not be part of this coalition.

For all their differences over the nature of a negotiated settlement with the Palestinians, Mr. Netanyahu and Labor leader Ehud Barak have set

those aside to focus on the most urgent issue facing the Middle East in the coming months: preventing the emergence of a nuclear Iran and the imposition of an irreversible blackmail on the region. Dealing with that threat will define this Likud-Labor coalition.

America and Israel should emulate the new Israeli government's single-minded focus. This is not the time to be distracted by what are, for now, secondary issues, like eventual Palestinian statehood. Nor should disagreements between Israeli and American intelligence agencies over the pace of Iranian nuclear development distract the two governments from their agreement over the danger posed by a nuclear Iran. By focusing on thwarting Tehran's nuclear ambitions, the U.S. and Israel will find Arab allies like Egypt and Saudi Arabia. That dynamic is already creating a shift in regional alliances, and could eventually lead to a real Middle East peace process.

In sparing Israel a narrow right-wing coalition and by persisting in creating a semblance of a national unity government, Mr. Netanyahu has taken the essential first steps in protecting his country's relationship with Washington. Now Washington needs to take the next step and affirm its readiness to work with the Netanyahu-Barak government to save the Middle East from apocalyptic threat.

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The loathsome cartoon (See a copy of the cartoon on Page 10)

By Barry Rubin Israel Insider March 27, 2009

It is silly to say that the Pat Oliphant Cartoon in the New York Times and many newspapers around the world is antisemitic. But it's also a bad mistake because the cartoon deserves serious analysis to show just how dangerous and wrong it is, in ways that not only hurt Israel but all Western democracies.

Let's deconstruct the cartoon to show the basic ideas that underlie it and that make it lie.

1. To begin with, it is not a very good cartoon and bears a striking resemblance to anti-Israel propaganda cartoons in its crudity and one-sidedness. Aesthetic decline has accompanied political crudeness. It doesn't just say: these people are wrong but these people are 100 percent evil and hateful. The next step is, of course, they deserve to die and their state deserves to be wiped off the map. Is that what Oliphant thinks? Who cares? That's what he said.

2. On the left is a huge figure. On the right is a small figure. The implication that need not be spoken here is that the big figure—the powerful side—must be wrong. Oliphant like many or most

Western intellectuals, academics, and policymakers, still doesn't understand the concept of asymmetric warfare. In this, a weaker side wages war on a stronger side using techniques it thinks can make it win. What are these techniques? Terrorism, indifference to the sacrifice of its people, indifference to material losses, refusal to compromise, extending the war for ever. This is precisely the technique of Hamas: let's continue attacking Israel in order to provoke it to hit us, let's target Israeli civilians, let's seek a total victory based on genocide, let's use our own civilians as human shields, and with such methods we will win. One way we will win is to demonize those who defend themselves, to put them in positions where they have a choice between surrender and looking bad. This cartoon is a victory for Hamas. But it is also a victory for all those who would fight the West and other democracies (India, for example) using these methods. Remember September 11?

3. The big figure has no head, and hence is not a human being. Israelis are not human. Moreover the headless figure is irrational. We are to believe that

Israel attacked Gaza for no reason. Forget about thousands of rockets, hundreds of mortar shells, and scores of cross-border attacks. The tiny figure on the right is no threat. So there is no reason to attack it. Attacking is immoral and irrational. The same could—and has—been said about al-Qaida, Hizballah, Pakistani terrorists striking at Mumbai, etc.

4. Dehumanization: The figure on the left is a monster, a robot. Monsters and robots deserve no sympathy; they have no right to self-defense. If tomorrow an Israeli child or civilian is killed in a terrorist attack, how can one have sympathy for these people since they are not people?

5. Goosestep: The leg is raised in a Nazi goosestep; the shoe is a jackboot. Thus, Israel is a Nazi power. But why is it a Nazi power? Because it isn't human and just attacks women and children for no reason at all. And what happens then? Since Israel is said to be Nazi, any sympathy for 2000 years of Jewish suffering—including Arab terrorist attacks—is thus erased. Incidentally, this is all being done when there is still no proof (not even weak proof) for a single Israeli soldier having committed a single atrocity. Where, then, is the rationality here?

6. Sword: Ironically, the sword is the weapon used by Islamists to behead people. Why a sword? Because it is a primitive weapon for a primitive people. The hand which is very hairy—again the ape, dehumanized image—holds the sword at a 45 degree angle reminiscent of a Nazi salute. See point 5 above.

7. The Magen David is Israel's symbol. Therefore, despite the fact that it is also a general Jewish symbol, it is not antisemitic to use it. Of course, the context matters, too. But that is not what is most important in this cartoon. Still, the author could have labeled the monster "Israel." Note, however, that "magen" means shield, and the name of Israel's army is the Israel Defense Forces. In Gaza, they were acting in a defensive manner but that of course escapes much of the media coverage and things said about the war. What strikes me as most bizarre about the usage of this symbol is that it is being wheeled forward, as if Israel seeks to install itself in the Gaza Strip. But Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip, openly stating that it wanted peace. The symbolism is to make the action purely offensive, an aggressive war to annex territory, which of course is untrue.

8. The shark is to me the most offensive part of the cartoon because it shows that the cartoonist has lost any sense of his tradition. Aren't all the other elements enough to show his theme? The "over-kill" puts it into the category of Arab propaganda cartoons. It says: Israel is innately aggressive, that the whole state of Israel is permanently aggressive and exists for no other reason. If the cartoonist had shown Israel doing mean things to helpless

Palestinians, the suggestion is that the Gaza War is a terrible thing. The way this cartoon is done it suggests that Israel's existence is a terrible thing.

9. Palestinians are portrayed as only women and children. There are no fighters. Was there no army in Gaza, no 20,000 Hamas men under arms? Did Israel attack a defenseless area? Again if the cartoonist wanted to portray Israel carelessly attacking into a civilian area, the implication would be that it used excessive force or insufficient care. I would disagree but the extremism of the cartoon's suggestion, and its falseness, exceeds the usual bounds of Western rationality.

10. The evil Israel is heading right toward the Palestinians and they are running in fear. Here is an accurate way to describe the war: After Hamas unilaterally announced it was cancelling the ceasefire, it launched even more rockets and mortars at Israel than it did during the "normal" ceasefire. Their range was increasing and the lives of one million Israelis became impossible. Hamas leaders openly bragged that Israel was afraid to fight back and they would keep escalating. Israel then attacked, the Hamas forces retreated into the middle of highly populated civilian areas. After some fighting, where civilians were used by Hamas as human shields, Israel had no intention of going into the most densely populated neighborhoods. It thus ended the war, and withdrew. Hamas then came out of hiding and bragged that it had won a great victory. The fantasy Israel created by Oliphant and others would have continued the war, wiped out Hamas, and retaken the Gaza Strip. In military terms, Israel could have done this with minimal casualties for its own side. Far from proving anti-Israel claims, the history of the Gaza War proved the opposite.

This is, then, a loathsome cartoon. But to dismiss it by the single word "antisemitism" will foreclose thought as to why it is a loathsome cartoon. It will allow its defenders to avoid facing the real problems with this cartoon and the worldview it represents. And worst of all: that argument implies that the only problem was using the ambiguous Magen David, that it would have been acceptable if he had just written the word "Israel" on the Nazi monster he created to represent the Jewish state.

Finally, this cartoon represents the mentality that will plague every Western and democratic state in the coming years. Imagine the exact same cartoon but with the Magen David replaced by the Stars and Stripes—the evil America attacking the Taliban or al-Qaida, or Iraq, or Muslims in general. Indeed, this is the kind of cartoon which has appeared aimed against America or the West in general. It is part of the merging of much Western fashionable intellectual and cultural thinking with that of extremist Third World, and especially radical Islamist, propaganda.

The cartoonist doesn't hate Jews; he probably doesn't even hate Israelis. What is involved here is a lack of understanding so enormous that it will both incite hatred; cause violence and death; and block policies needed to help people—including Palestinians who, are supposedly the object of its sympathy but thus doomed to suffer under a repressive regime with a permanent war policy.

Antisemitism? Ask not for whom the bell tolls because Israel, the canary in the mine—the one who first they came for—can tell you that you are all next.

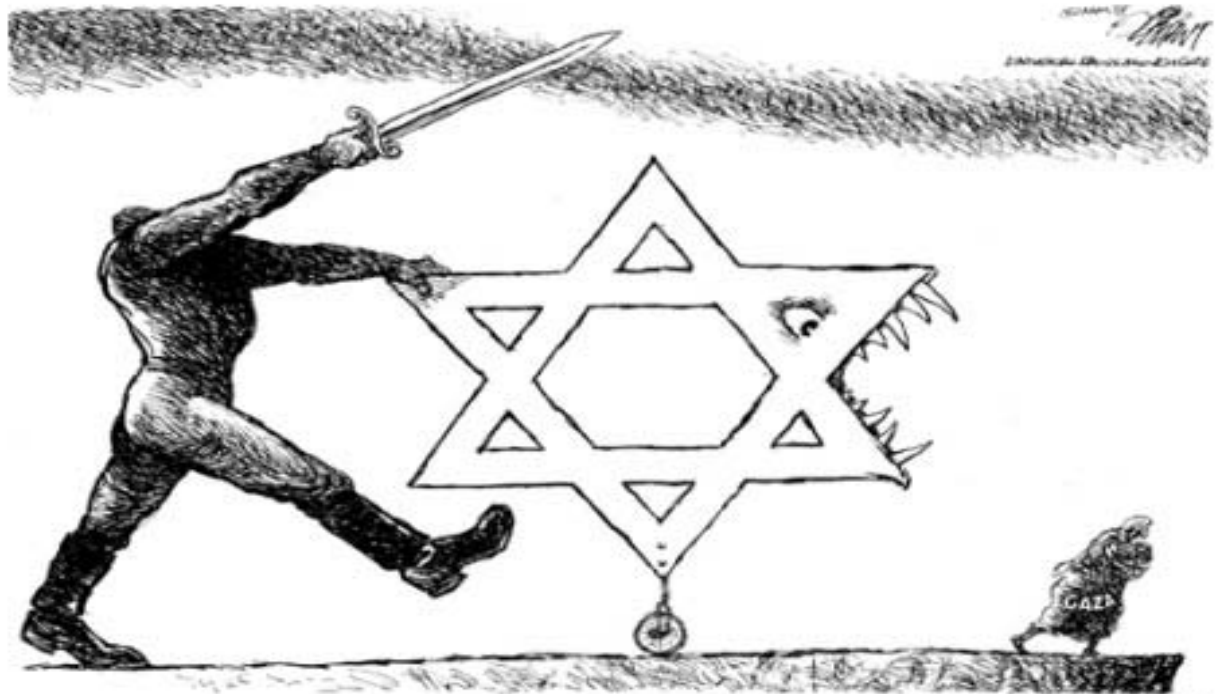
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Oliphant

BY PAT OLIPHANT

March 25, 2009



The editors of the Israel newsletter want to wish their readers a wonderful and meaningful Passover Holiday which starts on Wednesday night, April 8 and will continue through Thursday evening April 16 (or Wednesday April 15 in Israel). The newsletter will not be published next week in honor of Passover, sorry but you will just have to wait for our volume number 400 until after Passover.

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

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