

The longest battle By Michael Freund The Jerusalem Post May 19, 2009

The emperor Vespasian must be rolling over in his grave. Some 19 centuries after the nefarious Roman ruler sent his legions to pillage Jerusalem under the command of his son Titus, the city once again serves as the united capital of a sovereign Jewish state.

It just goes to show what a difference two millennia can make. Back then, at the height of the struggle, the Romans were convinced of their own superiority. They looked down on the Jews with contempt, making light of their religious beliefs and military prowess, and confident that they would crush them once and for all.

In his book *The Jewish War*, the historian Josephus records the speech given by Titus to his men as he urged them to press forward in the battle for Jerusalem. "It is unbecoming you, who are Romans and my soldiers," Titus told them, "to be inferior to Jews, either in action of the hand, or in courage of the soul." He did not hesitate to assure them of "a certain and sudden victory," stressing the "immortality of those men who are slain in the midst of their martial bravery."

Interestingly, if you replace the word "Romans" with "jihadists," Titus starts to sound a lot like an ancient version of a Hamas or al-Qaida operative.

The Romans, of course, did eventually prevail, murdering some 1.1 million Jews during the siege and destruction of Jerusalem and taking another 97,000 into captivity, many of whom were either sold into slavery or fed to the lions.

The Jewish commonwealth was snuffed out, the long and dark exile began and the Temple and its sacred daily rituals were abruptly taken from us. Nonetheless, despite the devastating blow which the Jewish people were dealt, here we are in 2009, preparing once again to celebrate Yom Yerushalayim. This Friday marks 42 years on the Hebrew calendar since that wonderful day back in 1967 when Israel liberated the Old City and proudly raised the blue-and-white over the Temple Mount.

What the Romans sought to quash forever has miraculously come back to life, and we must be grateful to God for the mercy He has shown in bringing about our wondrous return.

And yet, even as commemorate this very special day, it is hard not to escape the gnawing feeling that with each passing year, the reunified city of Jerusalem is increasingly coming under siege yet again. Never, it seems, has the pressure been so great, with most of the world demanding that we "share" or "internationalize" the city, and criticizing

even the most mundane of governmental actions regarding Jerusalem.

Earlier this month, for example, the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs released a special report slamming Israel for demolishing Palestinian homes built without permits in the eastern part of the city. This was followed by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon blasting the Jewish state publicly for its policies in this regard. And back in March, during her visit to the region, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton also highlighted the issue of house demolitions, saying that they were "not in keeping with the obligations entered into under the road map."

Where else in the world does the enforcement of local building codes generate such condemnation? It is a sign of how obsessed the international community has become with twisting our collective arm to redivide the city in order to make way for a Palestinian state.

Indeed, they want nothing less than to see a Palestinian flag flying over Jerusalem. How will we ever be able to withstand such pressure? In this respect, it is worth recalling an episode that took place more than a century ago here in Jerusalem, one that contains within it the key to ensuring our continued control over the Holy City.

On Lag Ba'Omer in 1869, the cornerstone was laid for Nahalat Shiva, the first Jewish neighborhood of Jerusalem built outside the walls of the Old City. Two of the main people behind its establishment were Rabbi Yosef Rivlin and Rabbi Yoel Moshe Salomon, and they were aided in their efforts by Rabbi Meir Auerbach and Rabbi Binyamin Beinisch Salant (who was the son of Jerusalem's chief rabbi at the time, Rabbi Shmuel Salant, a relative of mine).

By 1875, some 50 Jewish families were living in the area. As author Dovid Rossof recounts in his wonderful book, *Where Heaven Touches Earth: Jewish Life in Jerusalem From Medieval Times to the Present*, the community quickly came under intense pressure from its Arab neighbors. One night, Rivlin was awakened to the sounds of a commotion. When he looked through the window, he saw a group of Arab men mulling about. Their leader exhorted them, "Remember! Slaughter them all and then take their lumber!" Dozens of Arabs armed with clubs, daggers and guns rapidly approached the entrance to the neighborhood, preparing to attack.

Rivlin reached for his gun and his shofar. He stood by the window and concentrated deeply for

several seconds, before bringing the shofar to his lips and blowing the notes that are sounded on Rosh Hashana. He took a breath and then fired a shot out the window, before proceeding to blow the shofar yet again. Suddenly, the Arabs were struck with terror. "Run for your lives!" one shouted hysterically. "The Jews are killing us!" yelled another, and the group fled in panic and disarray. Later, the residents learned that the Arabs had planned to kill them all and take their possessions.

"This time," Rivlin told his neighbors, "The Lord was with us. Let us pray that the fear which God put into them will keep them away from us forever."

Just as it was over a century ago, Jerusalem is again under siege. And just as our adversaries then sought to remove the Jewish presence from parts of the city, they now seek to do so once more. But like the residents of Nahalat Shiva, we must not be

deterred. They continued to build, expanding Jewish Jerusalem whether their foes liked it or not. And that too must be our guide.

Whether it is the E1 project connecting Jerusalem and Ma'aleh Adumim, or the nascent Jewish neighborhoods near the Beit Orot yeshiva and the Tomb of Shimon Hatzaddik, it is essential that Israel continue to develop these areas. They will strengthen our capital and reinforce its Jewish majority, safeguarding the city and preventing it from ever being divided. Even in the face of American and Arab opposition, we must press forward with these important plans.

By doing so, we can ensure that Jerusalem will remain ours, never again to be taken away. The last laugh will belong neither to Vespasian or to Titus, nor even their modern-day surrogates, but rather to the descendants of Judah whom they sought to destroy - which is, after all, as it should be.

Peace isn't Arab goal By Jeff Jacoby The Boston Globe May 20, 2009

Who favors a two-state solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict? President Obama does, of course, as he made clear in welcoming Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to the White House on Monday. So does former president George W. Bush, who began advocating Palestinian statehood in 2002 and continued until his final days in office. The Democratic Party's national platform endorses a two-state solution; the Republican platform does, too. The UN Security Council unanimously reaffirmed its support a few days ago, and the European Union is strongly in favor as well.

Pope Benedict XVI called for a Palestinian state during his recent visit to the Holy Land, thereby aligning himself - on this issue, at least - with the editorial boards of The Boston Globe, The New York Times, The Washington Post, and The Los Angeles Times. And, for that matter, with most Israelis. A new poll shows 58 percent of the Israeli public backing a two-state solution; prominent supporters include Netanyahu's three predecessors - former prime ministers Ehud Olmert, Ariel Sharon, and Ehud Barak - as well as president Shimon Peres.

The consensus, it would seem, is overwhelming. As Henri Guaino, a senior adviser to French President Nicolas Sarkozy, put it on Sunday: "Everyone wants peace. The whole world wants a Palestinian state."

It isn't going to happen. International consensus or no, the two-state solution is a chimera. Peace will not be achieved by granting sovereignty to the Palestinians, because Palestinian sovereignty has never been the Arabs' goal. Time and time again, a two-state solution has been proposed. Time and time again, the Arabs have turned it down.

In 1936, when Palestine was still under British rule, a royal commission headed by Lord Peel was sent to investigate the steadily worsening Arab

violence. After a detailed inquiry, the Peel Commission concluded that "an irrepressible conflict has arisen between two national communities within the narrow bounds of one small country." It recommended a two-state solution - a partition of the land into separate Arab and Jewish states. "Partition offers a chance of ultimate peace," the commission reported. "No other plan does."

But the Arab leaders, more intent on preventing Jewish sovereignty in Palestine than in achieving a state for themselves, rejected the Peel plan out of hand. The foremost Palestinian leader, Haj Amin al-Husseini, actively supported the Nazi regime in Germany. In return, Husseini wrote in his memoirs, Hitler promised him "a free hand to eradicate every last Jew from Palestine and the Arab world."

In 1947, the Palestinians were again presented with a two-state proposal. Again they spurned it. Like the Peel Commission, the United Nations concluded that only a division of the land into adjacent states, one Arab and one Jewish, could put an end to the conflict. On Nov. 29, 1947, by a vote of 33-13, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 181, partitioning Palestine on the basis of population. Had the Arabs accepted the UN decision, the Palestinian state that "the whole world wants" would today be 61 years old. Instead, the Arab League vowed to block Jewish sovereignty by waging "a war of extermination and a momentous massacre." Over and over, the pattern has been repeated. Following its stunning victory in the 1967 Six Day War, Israel offered to exchange the land it had won for permanent peace with its neighbors. From their summit in Khartoum came the Arabs' notorious response: "No peace with Israel, no negotiations with Israel, no recognition of Israel."

At Camp David in 2000, Ehud Barak offered the Palestinians virtually everything they claimed to

be seeking - a sovereign state with its capital in East Jerusalem, 97 percent of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, tens of billions of dollars in "compensation" for the plight of Palestinian refugees. Yasser Arafat refused the offer, and launched the bloodiest wave of terrorism in Israel's history.

Islam Today By Khaled Abu Toameh

Thank you very much and good afternoon. Today I would like to focus more on current political affairs, rather than on the threats of radical Islam. I will talk specifically about the Israeli-Arab conflict and the status of Israel's Arab citizens.

Before that I would like to tell you a bit about my background. I have been working as a journalist for the past 27 years in the Palestinian areas. My career as a journalist started by working for a PLO newspaper in Jerusalem. For the past 20 years or so I have been serving as a consultant, advisor and facilitator for most of the foreign journalists who come over there and want to go to Ramallah and Gaza and talk to Fatah and Hamas. And for the past eight years I have been also writing for the Israeli media and specifically The Jerusalem Post, reporting on Palestinian issues.

I am an Arab Muslim living in Jerusalem. I am also an Israeli citizen, not because I am a collaborator with Israel, but because my father belongs to the Israeli-Arab community inside Israel. We are talking about nearly 1.4 million people living inside Israel. And I also happen to be a Palestinian because my mother is a Palestinian from the West Bank. So if you're confused you can call me an Israeli-Arab-Muslim-Palestinian. We have a crisis of identity over there.

Now as I said, for the past eight years I have been working for The Jerusalem Post and one of the questions that people often ask me is, "why are you working for a Jewish paper? Aren't you seen as a traitor because you work for a Jewish paper?" I tell people "absolutely not."

There has never been a decision by the Palestinians to boycott the Israeli media. The only talk about boycott comes from American and British university campuses.

For a period of 15 years I was also writing for a Hebrew paper and among the people that I used to interview were most of the Hamas and Fatah leaders, including Yasser Arafat and Ahmed Yassin. Even most of the wanted Palestinian gunmen who were on Israel's list gave interviews to the Israeli media.

The Arabs living over there are not stupid. Although they have lived under occupation and despite the tensions, they have also learned some good things from Israel.

We Arabs have been exposed to many good things inside Israel. I'm not ashamed to say that we learned from Israel. We learned about democracy.

To this day, the charters of Hamas and Fatah, the two main Palestinian factions, call for Israel's liquidation. "The whole world" may want peace and a Palestinian state, but the Palestinians want something very different. Until that changes, there is no two-state solution.

The Hudson Institute May 18, 2009

We learned about the freedom of debate. We learned about the freedom of the media.

That is why the Arabs had high hopes on the eve of the Oslo Accords. They were hoping that when they finally have their own Arab government over there, it would be a democracy like the one in Israel; that we would have our own Knesset where someone can criticize the Prime Minister and government. And we would have a free media where someone could write about corruption.

When I used to work in the PLO newspaper, we used to say that we hope one day we will have a free media like the one these Jews have, where a writer can bring down a minister through an investigative report. But things have been going in the wrong direction ever since the peace process began. Why? Not because of the peace process itself or the principles of the Oslo Accord. The concept of the Oslo Accord and the two-state solution is wonderful, although it is not practical and will never work. The idea of Oslo is good, but the way it was implemented brought disaster to both Jews and Arabs. And the way Oslo was implemented is responsible for the fact that Hamas is now in power.

Why? Because the assumption back then in Israel, in America and in Europe was that if we bring Yasser Arafat into the West Bank and Gaza, give him billions of dollars and guns, he will do the job for us and there would be nothing to worry about. Arafat will even fight Hamas, prevent terrorism and foil suicide bombings.

So they brought Yasser Arafat over there. He established this thing called the Palestinian National Authority and the show began. It was actually a one-man show run by Arafat and his corrupt cronies. The international community poured \$6.5 billion on this Palestinian Authority between 1993 and 2001. Most of this money literally went down the drain or to support the shopping sprees of a lady who was sitting in Paris.

Instead of building a hospital, Arafat built a casino, as if the Palestinian revolution has been aspiring for 40 years to build a casino.

Now by depriving his people of the international aid, Arafat drove many Palestinians into the open arms of Hamas and Islamic Jihad. The people lost faith in him and the peace process. By establishing a corrupt regime, by cracking down on human rights activists, newspaper editors and political opponents, Arafat actually boosted Hamas's popularity among the Palestinians.

Palestinian academics who signed a petition calling for an end to financial corruption in the Palestinian Authority in 1997 were targeted and silenced by Arafat. Some were shot, beaten and arrested. Others had to flee the country. They were targeted by the same Palestinian security forces that were being trained and financed by the United States of America and Europe.

So all these things boosted Hamas's popularity to the point where when Hamas finally challenged Arafat's Fatah Party in a free democratic election in January 2006, Hamas won. Why? Hamas was very clever—it ran under the banner of Change and Reform. Hamas came to the Palestinians with a message that said, "Listen folks, the PLO and Arafat have stolen your money, why don't you try us now?"

I know Christians who voted for Hamas in the January 2006 elections. I know secular Palestinians who voted for Hamas. I even know PLO people who voted for Hamas because the name of the game was, "Let's punish the corrupt PLO guys."

One of the reasons why Hamas became so popular was the incitement. The international community gave Yasser Arafat money to open a TV and radio station and in this media Arafat said jihad, jihad, jihad. Arafat used the media to tell his people how bad and evil the Jews are. So the Palestinians said to themselves, "Well, that means Hamas is right about the Jews. If these Jews are so evil and so bad, why are we making peace with them?" So that's one of the reasons why the Oslo process brought Hamas to power.

Hamas owes its victory to the corruption of Fatah. Now the mistake that the international community made was that they poured money on Fatah unconditionally, without holding them accountable. Fatah was squandering the money while Hamas was building schools and hospitals. One of the reasons why Hamas won the hearts and minds of the Palestinians was that ever since the movement was established, it managed to establish a vast network of social, economic, health and education services. Hamas was establishing orphanages and charities while Arafat was giving his wife \$100,000 a month so that she could do her shopping in Paris.

Now if you ask many Palestinians over there, they will tell you "look, the international community corrupted the Palestinians and created this elitist group that actually distanced itself from the Palestinians." Hamas came into this vacuum that was created. So the international community is responsible for the fact that Hamas eventually came to power.

The international community, sadly, has not learned from its mistakes and is continuing to support the same Fatah guys who lost the election and they are even encouraging them to go and bring down the democratically elected government of Hamas.

And this is playing into Hamas's hands because it is boosting its popularity even more. When a Palestinian sees the U.S. Administration and the Europeans trying to bring down their Hamas government, their sympathies go to the Hamas government.

And on the other hand, when the Palestinians see that Fatah has not drawn the conclusions from its defeat in the January 2006 elections and is continuing to block reforms, the Palestinians do not see any reason why they should support Fatah. I am convinced that if there were a free election tomorrow morning in the West Bank and Gaza, Hamas would win. They would win for two reasons. One, the US-led campaign against Hamas has turned the movement into a victim in the eyes of the majority of the Palestinians. Many Palestinians do not hold Hamas responsible for failure because they say, "Oh these poor Hamas people, they won a free election but no one is giving them a chance."

So that is reason number one why most people would vote for Hamas.

Reason number two: Why should any Palestinian vote again for the same Fatah people he/she voted out three years ago if they have not changed? It is the same faces. You go to Ramallah and it is the same "Abus": Abu Mazen, Abu Ala, etc. It is the same guys who failed their people under Arafat. They are continuing to run the show with the help of the Americans and the Europeans as if nothing happened. So the international community has to wake up and go to these "Abus" in Ramallah and say, "Hamas is in power because of your corruption and incompetence. Why don't you guys reform yourselves?"

When the United States demanded that the Palestinians go and have a free and democratic election, the Fatah people went to Condoleezza Rice and said, "Listen. We can't have free and democratic elections in Palestine" and she asked them why. So they said, "Well, we are corrupt, we are thieves, we are thugs, we stole the money. And Hamas is running under the banner of change and reform and it is very risky." She said "Don't worry. Go and have a free and democratic election and I assure you that Hamas will not win." And when they asked her "how do you know?" She said because I just warned the Palestinians if they vote for Hamas, we the United States of America will punish them. That warning on the eve of the election, by the way, was one of the main reasons why Hamas won the election.

The only way to undermine Hamas is by offering the Palestinians a better alternative to Hamas and not by giving Fatah guns so that they can bring down Hamas. We tried it and it did not work.

But what has been happening since Hamas came to power is also very interesting. The same international community that pushed the Palestinians

to go have a free democratic election, after Hamas came to power, went to the guys who lost the elections, the PLO people, and said, "Folks, Here are guns and here is money. Go bring down this democratically elected government of Hamas."

And Hamas is sitting there saying, "Hey, what do you guys want from us? We were voted in, in a free, democratic election. If you don't believe us, ask Jimmy Carter. He supervised the election."

Fatah's refusal to accept their defeat and Hamas' insistence on clinging to power has created a power struggle that has been raging for the past three years and has claimed the lives of over 1,500 Palestinians, some of them killed in the most brutal, ruthless ways. Thousands of people have been injured in the power struggle between Fatah and Hamas. Contrary to the U.S. administration and the United Nations, I do not think that this is a power struggle between good guys and bad guys; this is a power struggle between bad guys and bad guys.

I wish they were fighting over reforms and democracy and a better economy. All they are fighting over is money and power.

So this is the situation in the Palestinian areas today. I said before that I support a two-state solution. If you think of it, in the end we did get a two-state solution over there. The Palestinians got two states: one in Gaza and one in the West Bank. And it is not good news, by the way, because it means we do not have a clear address on the Palestinian side today.

The funny part is that the Obama Administration is now putting pressure on Binyamin Netanyahu to accept the two-state solution. Let's assume that tomorrow morning Binyamin Netanyahu declares that he is going to give the Palestinians a state. Where are the Palestinians going to set up their state? Fatah cannot go to Gaza and Hamas cannot go to the West Bank. We are talking about two separate entities. So it is a stalemate.

Now with regards to the Israeli-Arabs. On my way to Geneva I read in one of the newspapers that an Arab Knesset member who came here said: "I'm a Palestinian living in Israel and suffering from apartheid and racism."

Now some Israeli-Arab leaders, like this Knesset member, they run in the elections on a platform that promises their constituents equality and better services. They come to us, the Israeli-Arabs and say, "Vote for us. We'll bring you equality. We will make sure that the government starts investing more in the Arab sector."

As I said, there are very serious problems facing the Arab sector inside Israel. Ehud Olmert, the Former Prime Minister of Israel, recently said that the Israeli-Arabs are suffering from a policy of systematic discrimination, especially when it comes to the allocation of public funds.

But when these Israeli-Arabs Knesset members come to the Knesset, instead of dealing with the real problems of the Israeli-Arab community, what do they do? They go to meet with Hamas and Hizbullah leaders. And they will use any available platform to attack Israel and provoke the Jewish public. Why do they do that?

I think they do it in order to grab headlines in the newspaper. Because if they are dealing with sewage and classrooms and paving roads, no one in Israel is going to write about them. But if an Israeli-Arab Knesset member comes out in favor of suicide bombing, for example, he will get a lot of coverage in the Israeli media. As far as he is concerned, "I don't care what you write about me as long as you spell my name right."

In the course of doing this, these radical Knesset members are causing the Israeli-Arabs huge damage. These are not the issues that they should be dealing with. We should not be in favor of Hamas or Hezbollah. We want to see these leaders deal with equality inside Israel. I want to see the leaders of the Israeli-Arab community inside Israel fighting for our rights from the Knesset in Jerusalem and not from Damascus or Beirut or Gaza. And why do they forget that when they were elected they made an oath to the State of Israel. And then they come here to tell us that Israel is a state of apartheid?

Excuse me. What kind of hypocrisy is this? What then are you doing in the Knesset? If you are living in an apartheid system, why were you allowed, as an Arab, to run in the election? What are you talking about?

We do have problems as Arabs with the establishment here. But to come and say that Israel is an apartheid state is a big exaggeration. I am not here to defend Israel, but I think that Knesset members like this gentleman are doing huge damage to the cause of Israeli Arabs. I want to see the Knesset member sitting in the Knesset, in Jerusalem, and fighting for the rights of Arabs over there.

These Knesset members are responsible for the fact that many Jews today see us the Israeli Arabs as a fifth column, an enemy from within.

I am very worried about the deterioration of relations between Jews and Arabs inside Israel, more than I'm worried about the deterioration of relations between Jews and Palestinians.

It is easy to solve the problem with the Palestinians because, at the end of the day, there is going to be separation between Jews and Palestinians in one form or another. But what do we do with the 1.4 million Arabs living inside Israel? That is something that we should focus on.

I really believe that we, the Israeli-Arabs, can serve as a bridge between the Jews and our Palestinian brothers. And it is a huge mistake for us to side with one side against the other. We are playing into the hands of those radical Israeli right-

wingers who are trying to depict us as a fifth column and a cancer and we are actually giving them the ammunition to attack us.

So we should be very careful about how we present our case as Israeli Arabs.

Our dilemma is that our state, Israel, is at war with our people in the West Bank and Gaza. And by the way, we have no problem being Israeli citizens. I mean many of us are even proud to be Israeli citizens. If you go to Ramallah and Gaza once, and you come back into Jerusalem or Tel Aviv, you will see what I mean. Sometimes I say "thank God we have Israel."

Leaders Jockey for Diplomatic Edge

By Gerald F. Seib The Wall Street Journal

This is a tale of two leaders. Both are smart and articulate, and carry themselves with a palpable self-confidence. Both studied at elite American schools, achieved ultimate political power at a precocious age, and now see themselves as wrestling with problems of historic scope.

Yet they also are poles apart ideologically and destined to butt heads as they try to deal with one of the world's most explosive issues, Iran's nuclear program, which is moving steadily ahead at the same time North Korea's nuclear-weapons program is resurgent. All told, their relationship is one of the most important in the world.

They are American President Barack Obama and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who spent almost two hours eyeball-to-eyeball in the Oval Office last week. Talks afterward with officials on both sides suggest the two men find each other interesting, maybe even intriguing. Indeed, one Israeli official says that after he first met Mr. Obama in 2007, Mr. Netanyahu told aides and his wife he had just met the next leader of the U.S., who at the time was a lowly senator.

But these two men also are busy trying to outmaneuver each other, and already they have succeeded in doing a bit of that. The best way to think of their relationship is that they resemble a couple of those guys in a park playing multiple chess games simultaneously -- and the most important chess game is the one they are playing against each other.

The two most important issues on the table for Israel and the U.S. are Iran's nuclear program and the foundering Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Messrs. Obama and Netanyahu have some tactical disagreements on both.

To Mr. Obama, the two are intimately related. One underappreciated effect of the Iranian nuclear program is that many Arab leaders are nearly as horrified about the idea of a nuclear-armed Iran in their midst as are Israel and the U.S. But those same Arab leaders have spent years convincing their people that the region's paramount issue isn't Iran,

Israel is a wonderful place to live and we are happy to be there. Israel is a free and open country. If I were given the choice, I would rather live in Israel as a second class citizen than as a first class citizen in Cairo, Gaza, Amman or Ramallah.

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May 26, 2009

but rather getting the Palestinian people a state of their own.

So if the U.S. and Israel are moving on the Palestinian front, the president believes, it will be a lot easier politically for those Arab leaders to do what they would secretly like, which is to cooperate with the U.S., Israel and others in a concerted effort to stop Iran's nuclear efforts.

Thus, Mr. Obama's goal in his meeting with Mr. Netanyahu, who has been in office for less than two months, was to get him to commit to negotiations with the Palestinians. The president was relentless. At one point in their private session, one U.S. official says, Mr. Obama was pressing again for negotiations when Mr. Netanyahu replied: "Nobody can say you're not focused and determined to get what you want. I hear you, Mr. President."

Later, when the two talked to reporters publicly, Mr. Obama immediately boxed in his Israeli counterpart by saying he didn't want Mr. Netanyahu to miss a "historic opportunity" for diplomacy with the Palestinians. At that point, the Israeli leader had little choice. He replied that he would be starting talks with the Palestinians "immediately."

Mr. Obama had another, unstated reason to push his Israeli counterpart so hard on talks with the Palestinians. The president is going to Egypt on June 4 to deliver a much-anticipated speech to the Muslim world, and he knows his words will go down better, and his credibility will be greater, if he's seen as having pushed a new, hard-line Israeli leader into negotiations with the Palestinians.

He appears to be succeeding in doing that. Israeli leaders say to look for movement toward diplomacy after Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas visits Washington this week. In a symbolic gesture to the U.S. and the Palestinians, the day after Mr. Netanyahu returned home, Israeli police cleared out an unauthorized outpost of Israeli settlers on the West Bank. Mr. Netanyahu also said at an Israeli cabinet meeting Sunday that he wouldn't allow new Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Advantage, Mr. Obama.

Yet Mr. Netanyahu doesn't want to get pushed too fast toward a peace process that could disrupt his fragile governing coalition. So he has refused to do two things Mr. Obama would have liked. He won't say he favors a "two-state solution" to the Palestinian problem, which would imply accepting a Palestinian state with full powers, including power to raise an army. And he won't agree to an outright settlement freeze; he said Sunday that he would allow existing settlements to expand. A standoff there.

And he really doesn't like the idea of linking the Palestinian question to Iran's nuclear program. The

latter is vastly more pressing to Mr. Netanyahu, and he thinks moderate Arab leaders see a nuclear Iran as such a strategic threat that their cooperation won't depend on diplomacy with the Palestinians.

Mr. Netanyahu is more afraid that Mr. Obama's commitment to talking with Iran's leaders will simply provide them time and cover to complete their nuclear program. So he doesn't want diplomacy to drag on. And on that, Mr. Obama gave ground last week, saying he wants progress in talks with Iran by year's end. Advantage, Mr. Netanyahu.

The chess match continues.

Say No To A Palestinian State By Daniel Doron FORBES May 16, 2009

Irving Kristol said that whomever the Gods want to teach humility they first tempt to resolve the Middle East conflict.

Solving this conflict has been so difficult because it has always been misconstrued. As a result of confusion about the conflict's nature, the solutions that were nevertheless tried, such as the Oslo agreement establishing the Palestinian Authority, or Israel's unilateral withdrawal from Gaza, resulted in costly failures. The suffering of Israelis and Palestinian Arabs increased.

The most common approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict, held by the well-connected Peace Now camp, holds that the conflict is about nationhood and territory. It blames Israel for the conflict, claiming Israel's reluctance to fully withdraw its settlements from the West Bank (it did from Gaza) denies the Palestinian Arabs a contiguous territory and enough living space to assert their sovereignty.

This must be why the Obama administration seems to believe that pressuring Israel to immediately accept a Palestinian Arab state and to withdraw to the 1967 boundaries will bring about peace. Obama seems determined to take serious risks to pursue what he believes is a strategic imperative and a moral duty. Indeed, the two-state solution seems like the decent and rational solution to the conflict. But there are many serious doubts about its feasibility.

Advocates of the two-state solution consider themselves political realists. But they always stress the historical and judicial justification for establishing a Palestinian state. They see it as not only politically necessary but an absolute moral imperative, doing justice to a dispossessed people.

But should not the establishment of such a state--which the Europeans so strongly promote--adhere to the European Union's 1993 Copenhagen Political Criteria for new members, which states, "Membership criteria require that the candidate country must have achieved stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, rule of law, human rights, and respect for and protection of minorities"?

Clearly a Palestinian Authority state will not even remotely meet such criteria. What moral justification is there, then, for forcing a vulnerable Israel, threatened by an irredentist Palestinian state, to help establish it when a powerful European Union refuses to take much smaller risks in the case of Turkey?

The chances that the U.S. will be able to assure that the Palestinian Arab state will live in peace with Israel are very small indeed. For powerful historic, political, social and economic reasons, all Arab states have evolved dictatorial regimes and rapacious elites. They rationalize their oppression by fomenting hatred against other nations, especially against non-Muslims. A Palestinian Arab state will not be an exception. (Pakistan and Turkey, which were supposed to be the exceptions, are regressing to the state of the others.)

While Israel has impeded the evolution of Palestinian Arab society toward statehood, it is not the major culprit. Until Oslo, relatively free economic interaction between Israel and the Palestinian Arabs resulted in spectacular economic growth in the West Bank and Gaza. This created an informal peace process that greatly improved Arab life and promoted a Palestinian civil society committed to peace.

But external economic setbacks compounded by increasing Israeli bureaucratic oppression reversed this prosperity. Increasing Arab frustration finally exploded in 1987 in a popular uprising that led to the 1993 Oslo accords. The Palestinian Liberation Organization, a terrorist organization, was invited to set up a Palestinian Authority as a preparation for an independent Palestinian state living in peace beside Israel.

But Arafat's Authority was not interested in living in peace with Israel; it wanted to destroy it. Arafat gladly sacrificed Palestinian welfare, even lives, for this purpose. Ruining the Arab economy and using a totalitarian propaganda campaign to blame Israel for Palestinian misery, Arafat exploited Arab anger to escalate the conflict.

He succeeded because the conflict between the Palestinian Arabs and Israel is only superficially about nationhood and territory. Since the 1948 partition of Palestine, British Mandate Arabs had several opportunities to create an independent state. Jordan and Egypt ruled the area until 1967; recently, they could have done so after Oslo, after the Gaza withdrawal. But they did not, because they were intent on first destroying Israel.

As long as this is so, granting the Palestinian Arabs a state will not result in peace, but in continued war.

As for the historic and legal claims for a Palestinian Arab state, the argument that the Arabs seek the restoration of "stolen Palestinian lands" is sheer fabrication. The area of the former British mandate of Palestine (which included Jordan) was for centuries under the Ottomans an empty, deserted land.

It was so desolate and malaria-infested that a national Palestinian Arab state never existed there, nor were there significant private property holdings in Palestine. Private rights never amounted to more than 4% of the land; 96% remains to this day mostly arid and government-owned. Palestine, as Mark Twain found it in 1860, was an empty "prince of desolation." There was not even a Palestinian people--the few inhabitants considered themselves Syrian.

Palestine became a "promised land" again only after Jewish pioneers, in the second half of the nineteenth century, miraculously revived it, making it the most developed land in the region. It was then also that, as a result of their clash with Zionism, the Arabs started identifying themselves as Palestinians. So much for their "stolen" rights.

The claim that "illegal settlements" are an obstacle to peace is absurd too. Jewish settlements occupy less than 4% of the West Bank territory, mostly constructed on deserted government land. The reason the Arabs want them removed (but not Arab settlements in Israel) is that their radical leadership cannot tolerate any Jews living among them. All Arab lands were ethnically cleansed after 1948, forcing more than 1 million Jews to flee countries in which they had lived long before the Muslim occupation.

The Arabs' struggle to retrieve "stolen Palestinian lands" is really an attempt to get rid of all Jews in the Middle East. The Palestinian Authority maps of Palestine never mark an area as the state of Israel, and their leaders refuse to recognize the Jewish right for a national state.

International law too does not support Arab claims to a state in former Palestine. The last international adjudication of the rights to this territory took place in the post-World War I peace conference in San Remo, Italy. The victors generously granted the vast former Ottoman

territories to newly formed Arab states (like Arabia, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq). Less than 1% of these vast territories were to be given in trust to the British to establish "a Jewish national home."

The League of Nations decided that the Jews had a stronger legal claim to Palestine, their historic and national homeland. The Arabs, represented by Emir Faisal, agreed. They were happy to receive huge areas of land for such a small price. Faisal welcomed the Jews back to their homeland. Only later British colonial machinations incited the Arabs to renege on this fantastic (for them) deal.

The conflict persists because the Arabs, and the Palestinians in particular, cannot forget their 1948 defeat by the Jews. It is a blot on their honor that only the destruction of Israel can wipe out.

But the greatest difficulty in the immediate establishment of a Palestinian Arab state is the unlikelihood that it can be established and maintained right now. It is not by accident that the Arabs missed several opportunities to establish such a state.

"There is a substantial lag between Arab countries and other regions in terms of participatory government," a 2002 U.N. Arab Development Report stated. "This freedom deficit undermines human development and is one of the most painful manifestations of lagging political development ... de facto implementation (of democratic rule) is often neglected and ... deliberately disregarded," in all Arab lands, the report concluded.

The Arab experts who prepared this report cast doubt on the viability of Arab states, sharply criticizing Arab education, economic retardation, deep poverty, social rifts and the inferior status of women, all making Arab states dysfunctional.

The creation of yet another dysfunctional Palestinian Arab state will not only mortally threaten Israel, its irredentist nature will inflame the region. As importantly, it will continue making the personal and communal life of Palestinian Arabs unbearable. Remember what happened in Gaza after Israel vacated it: the wanton destruction of the hot houses Israel left behind to enable the Gazans to make a better living from agriculture; the rule of oppression and mayhem Hamas has instituted in Gaza; the continued impoverishment and immiseration of their hapless citizens. Is this the kind of government America wants extended to the West Bank?

But this will inevitably happen as a result of the premature formation of a Palestinian state. Within a very short time, it will disintegrate and be taken over by the extremist Hamas movement.

As in Gaza, a Hamas West Bank government, an Iranian proxy, will quickly launch missile attacks against Israel. From the West Bank, however, the missiles will not hit a sparsely inhabited Negev but the densely populated heartland of Israel, the greater Tel Aviv metropolitan area. They will hit Israel's only

links to the world, Ben Gurion International Airport and the ports of Haifa and Ashdod.

Worse, Israel's military staging areas, its airfields and its most strategic assets will come within the range of such missiles, making Israel indefensible. For eight years, Israel, the U.S. and others failed to stop Hamas from shelling Israel from Gaza; why should they be more successful when Hamas governs the West Bank?

Eventually Israel will be forced to go to war and re-occupy the West Bank. Such a campaign, as the recent Israeli Gaza operation demonstrated, will involve bloody fighting in densely populated areas, many casualties and great destruction. It won't spare the civilian population. As in the past, masses of Palestinian Arabs will flee the battle areas to Jordan. The human and political costs of such a new wave of refugees are too horrible to contemplate. They may threaten Jordan's survival. This is surely not what the

Promises in the promised land

By Oliver North The Washington Times

On May 14, Israelis celebrated their 61st Independence Day. Less than 96 hours later, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu arrived at the White House in an effort to ensure that the Jewish state will survive to commemorate another anniversary.

In 1948, when Israel was founded by survivors of the Holocaust, they pledged "Never again!" Then the tiny Jewish state, about the size of New Jersey, had a population of less than 850,000 and was surrounded by hostile neighbors intent on its destruction. Today, 7.2 million people call Israel their home, and the country has the only functioning democratic government in the neighborhood.

As it was in the beginning - and is now - powerful opponents in the region remain committed to annihilating what they describe as "the Zionist entity." Unfortunately, the theocracy in Iran is bent on acquiring the means of achieving that goal - a threat the Obama administration appears unwilling or unable to do anything about but talk.

This week's Obama-Netanyahu summit at the White House had but two items on the agenda: The O-Team quest for an Israeli-Palestinian "two-state solution" for peace in the Middle East and the Israelis' plea for U.S. help in stopping Tehran's race to acquire nuclear weapons.

After a 90-minute one-on-one meeting, the two leaders sat for an Oval Office "press availability" during which they tried their best to make it appear that the United States and Israel are of one mind on these issues. It was a good try, complete with jocular exchanges and smiles - but it just isn't so.

Washington remains wedded to the naive hope that if Israel simply withdraws from all territory it captured during the 1967 Six-Day War, tranquility in

"realists" want, but can they honestly dismiss the probability that this may happen?

Chances that advocates of a Palestinian state will be convinced by such arguments are small. It is hard to dispel faith with facts. President Obama and his advisers seem convinced that they will succeed where others failed.

The vision of instant peace is very enticing, but it will take more than faith to make peace. Faith may move mountains, but it cannot remove all the obstacles that prevented peace until now.

Israel may have to accede to Obama's demands. But since there are great risks involved in the two-state solution, it would be fair for Obama to assure Israel that the U.S. will protect it from its serious consequences, should they unexpectedly materialize, as they have in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iraq.

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May 24, 2009

the volatile Middle East will be assured. According to the O-Team, "a two-state solution in which Israelis and Palestinians are living side by side in peace and security" will somehow motivate the Iranian government to abandon its quest for a nuclear arsenal and oft-stated aim of wiping Israel off the map.

Mr. Netanyahu apparently understood the role he was handed in this piece of political theater - the warm-up act for next week's White House seances with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas. All this is but preamble to the much-anticipated June 4 address from Cairo in which Mr. Obama is pledged to describe his "new approach to the Muslim world." Thankfully, for our own good and that of Israel, Mr. Netanyahu didn't stick entirely to the White House script.

The Israeli prime minister did agree to "start peace negotiations with the Palestinians immediately" and called for broadening "the circle of peace to include others in the Arab world." But he never deviated from his most serious concern: the paramount threat to the survival of Israel - and peace of any kind - presented by a nuclear-armed Iran.

He carefully avoided endorsing a two-state solution, did not agree to withdraw from the Golan Heights or accede to shuttering Israeli settlements on the West Bank and Jerusalem. Nor did Mr. Netanyahu embrace the idea that the ayatollahs in Tehran will be dissuaded from acquiring nuclear arms - and the means of delivering them - just because Palestinians and Israelis are somehow living in comity.

Unfortunately, the O-Team offers little evidence that it shares Israeli anxieties about Iranian weapons

of mass destruction or the imminent deployment of Russian S-300 surface-to-air missiles to protect nuclear sites in Persia.

Mr. Obama did say, "Iran obtaining a nuclear weapon" would "be a threat to Israel and the United States" and that it would be "destabilizing" and "extraordinarily dangerous." But he then insisted, "We are engaged in a process to reach out to Iran and persuade them that it is not in their interest to pursue a nuclear weapon and that they should change course." In short - nothing will be done to stop the Iranian nuclear program until after the June 12 Iranian elections and Mr. Obama and Mr. Ahmadinejad have a chance to stroke palms, sip tea and chat.

In subsequent discussions at the Departments of State and Defense, Mr. Netanyahu was reminded that Washington can shut off the flow of financial

aid and military hardware to Israel in an instant. It turns out that this same message also was being delivered in Tel Aviv by CIA Director Leon Panetta. None of this is good news for Israel or the United States.

Asked by a reporter in the Oval Office if he was concerned that his "outstretched hand has been interpreted by extremists, especially Ahmadinejad as a sign of weakness," Mr. Obama replied, "Well it's not clear to me why my outstretched hand would be interpreted as weakness."

Just hours later, the Iranian regime successfully launched a 1,200-mile-range Sajjil-2 ballistic missile. So much for clarity, weakness and the wisdom of offering an outstretched hand to genocidal despots.

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The Pope's Israel Trip Was a Success

By Yehiel Eckstein The Wall Street Journal May 18, 2009

Most Israelis seem to agree that the pope's just concluded trip to Israel wasn't a raving success. Far from healing wounds, his address at the Yad Vashem Holocaust museum garnered harsh criticism for failing to adequately address the horrors memorialized there.

I see the visit in a much more positive light. Jewish-Christian relations have always been of a wary sort, laced with mutual suspicions that have deep theological roots, and with painful memories of persecution and anti-Semitism. But in the past half-century, the church's attitude toward Jews has undergone a fundamental shift.

The *Nostra Aetate* -- the Declaration on the Relations of the Church with Non-Christian Religions, issued by the Second Vatican Council and published in 1965 -- was the harbinger of the change in Catholic attitude toward the Jews and their faith. Later, Pope John Paul II further advanced the process of reconciliation.

Karol Wojtyła had been a fighter in the Underground against the Nazi regime and had many close Jewish childhood friends. Deeply aware of the horrors that befell the Jews during World War II, Pope John Paul's personal sympathy for and close acquaintance with the Jewish people led to an era of fruitful dialogue and rapprochement between Jews and Catholics.

This healing was made possible mainly because the pope, together with Jewish leaders, focused on shared values, biblical traditions and moral principles common to both faith communities.

Pope Benedict XVI does not yet enjoy the goodwill his predecessor generated. Aspects of his past and statements he has made are arguably controversial and have generated criticism -- some valid -- from Jews.

But this week, he arrived in Israel for the first papal visit in nine years. I was part of a delegation that greeted him in a special ceremony at the airport. Sadly, a number of Israeli political and religious leaders refused to participate.

Had they attended, they would have heard the head of the church speak of the terrible suffering of the Jewish people during the Holocaust, their biblical rights to the land of Israel, and the deep bonds between the Christian and Jewish faiths. Had they joined him on his journey, they would have heard him lash out against Holocaust denial, condemn anti-Semitism -- past and present -- and seen him pray at the Western Wall.

They would have witnessed him meeting with rabbis, political leaders and even the parents of kidnapped Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, who is still being held hostage in Gaza. These are just a few of the acts of solidarity and gestures of reconciliation the critics would have witnessed during the pope's pilgrimage. Of course, the pope is not above reproach. But there is no question that this pope deeply respects Judaism and stands solidly for the security of the state of Israel.

As someone who has dedicated the past 35 years to fostering respect between Jews and Christians, I was deeply encouraged by the pope's visit and believe that it has contributed significantly toward supplanting the dark and violent history between Jews and the church.

The world desperately needs this model of reconciliation. I pray that it extends to our Muslim cousins too, so that all the children of Abraham might find peace with one another.

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