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# Jordan Journal of International Affairs

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## From the Editor

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This issue of the *Jordan Journal of International Affairs* comes out at a very critical time in the course of Jordanian and Arab attempts to reach a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The election of President Barack Obama, with his welcome outreach to the Arabs and Islam, has raised to a high level hopes and expectations that a peace settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict can finally be achieved. The election of the extreme right wing Likud leader Benyamin Netanyahu, however, throws a very dark shadow over the hopes of reaching a reasonable settlement and a pall over the entire region, and the world at large.

Does President Obama have the desire, more importantly the ability, to pursue the path of peace and confront the Zionist forces in his country is a question that looms large now.

The articles in this issue revolve around the various perspectives of the Palestine Problem: King Abdullah I's article in *The American Magazine* in 1947 analyzes with great foresight the variety of aspects to this problem, focusing on the undue Zionist influence on American political life. Paul Sullivan's article focuses on the perspective of the newly elected American President as he faces the Middle East as a whole, while Pierre Razoux's article considers Russia's relation to Israel, which, he emphasizes, is based on mutual interests: immigration from Russia to Israel, security, trade and energy. Kareem Elbayar looks at how the narrative of the October War has affected Egypt, noting potential implications for the Palestine Problem. King Abdullah II's address to the American Congress is that of an honest statesman and moderate leader extending the hand of peace on behalf of all the Arabs.

The hope, however should always be tempered with reality: the reality of a traumatized people, the Israelis, that have elected a prime minister whose response to modernity is a citadel mentality of extreme irredentist ideology. Will it be possible to bring about a peace settlement in these circumstances?

Kamel Abu Jaber

## As the Arabs see the Jews\*

Abdullah I\*\*

*This fascinating essay, written by King Hussein's grandfather King Abdullah, appeared in the United States six months before the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. In the article, King Abdullah disputes the mistaken view that Arab opposition to Zionism (and later the state of Israel) is because of longstanding religious or ethnic hatred. He notes that Jews and Muslims enjoyed a long history of peaceful coexistence in the Middle East, and that Jews have historically suffered far more at the hands of Christian Europe. Pointing to the tragedy of the holocaust that Jews suffered during World War II, the monarch asks why America and Europe are refusing to accept more than a token handful of Jewish immigrants and refugees. It is unfair, he argues, to make Palestine, which is innocent of anti-Semitism, pay for the crimes of Europe. King Abdullah also asks how Jews can claim a historic right to Palestine, when Arabs have been the overwhelming majority there for nearly 1300 uninterrupted years? The essay ends on an ominous note, warning of dire consequences if a peaceful solution cannot be found to protect the rights of the indigenous Arabs of Palestine.*

I am especially delighted to address an American audience, for the tragic problem of Palestine will never be solved without American understanding, American sympathy, American support.

So many billions of words have been written about Palestine—perhaps more than on any other subject in history—that I hesitate to add to them. Yet I am compelled to do so, for I am reluctantly convinced that the world in general, and America in particular, knows almost nothing of the true case for the Arabs.

We Arabs follow, perhaps far more than you think, the press of America. We are frankly disturbed to find that for every word printed on the Arab side, a thousand are printed on the Zionist side.

There are many reasons for this. You have many millions of Jewish citizens interested in this question. They are highly vocal and wise in the ways of publicity. There are few Arab citizens in America, and we are as yet unskilled in the technique of modern propaganda.

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\* This essay appeared in *The American Magazine* in November 1947. Miriam Leslie founded *The American Magazine* in June 1906. Leading progressive journalists of the time such as Lincoln Steffens and Ida Tarbell focused the magazine on social issues. It ceased publication in August 1956.

\*\* King Abdullah I (1882-1951): the King of Jordan from 1946-1951.

## As the Arabs see the Jews

The results have been alarming for us. In your press we see a horrible caricature and are told it is our true portrait. In all justice, we cannot let this pass by default.

Our case is quite simple: For nearly 2,000 years Palestine has been almost 100 per cent Arab. It is still preponderantly Arab today, in spite of enormous Jewish immigration. But if this immigration continues we shall soon be outnumbered—a minority in our home.

Palestine is a small and very poor country, about the size of your state of Vermont. Its Arab population is only about 1,200,000. Already we have had forced on us, against our will, some 600,000 Zionist Jews. We are threatened with many hundreds of thousands more.

Our position is so simple and natural that we are amazed it should even be questioned. It is exactly the same position you in America take in regard to the unhappy European Jews. You are sorry for them, but you do not want them in your country.

We do not want them in ours, either. Not because they are Jews, but because they are foreigners. We would not want hundreds of thousands of foreigners in our country, be they Englishmen or Norwegians or Brazilians or whatever.

Think for a moment: In the last 25 years we have had one third of our entire population forced upon us. In America that would be the equivalent of 45,000,000 complete strangers admitted to your country, over your violent protest, since 1921. How would you have reacted to that?

Because of our perfectly natural dislike of being overwhelmed in our own homeland, we are called blind nationalists and heartless anti-Semites. This charge would be ludicrous were it not so dangerous.

No people on earth have been less “anti-Semitic” than the Arabs. The persecution of the Jews has been confined almost entirely to the Christian nations of the West. Jews, themselves, will admit that never since the Great Dispersion did Jews develop so freely and reach such importance as in Spain when it was an Arab possession. With very minor exceptions, Jews have lived for many centuries in the Middle East, in complete peace and friendliness with their Arab neighbours.

Damascus, Baghdad, Beirut and other Arab centres have always contained large and prosperous Jewish colonies. Until the Zionist invasion of Palestine began, these Jews received the most generous treatment—far, far better than in Christian Europe. Now, unhappily, for the first time in history, these Jews are beginning to feel the effects of Arab resistance to the Zionist assault. Most of them are as anxious as Arabs to stop it. Most of these Jews who have found happy homes among us resent, as we do, the coming of these strangers.

I was puzzled for a long time about the odd belief which apparently persists in America that Palestine has somehow “always been a Jewish land.” Recently an American I talked to cleared up this mystery. He pointed out that the only things most Americans know about Palestine are what they read in the Bible. It was a Jewish land in those days, they reason, and they assume it has always remained so.

Nothing could be farther from the truth. It is absurd to reach so far back into the mists of history to argue about who should have Palestine today, and I apologise for it. Yet the Jews do this, and I must reply to their “historic claim.” I wonder if the world has ever seen a stranger sight than a group of people seriously pretending to claim a land because their ancestors lived there some 2,000 years ago!

If you suggest that I am biased, I invite you to read any sound history of the period and verify the facts.

Such fragmentary records as we have indicate that the Jews were wandering nomads from Iraq who moved to southern Turkey, came south to Palestine, stayed there a short time, and then passed to Egypt, where they remained about 400 years. About 1300 BC (according to your calendar) they left Egypt and gradually conquered most—but not all—of the inhabitants of Palestine.

It is significant that the Philistines—not the Jews—gave their name to the country: “Palestine” is merely the Greek form of “Philistia.”

Only once, during the empire of David and Solomon, did the Jews ever control nearly—but not all—the land which is today Palestine. This empire lasted only 70 years, ending in 926 BC. Only 250 years later the Kingdom of Judah had shrunk to a small province around Jerusalem, barely a quarter of modern Palestine.

In 63 BC the Jews were conquered by Roman Pompey, and never again had even the vestige of independence. The Roman Emperor Hadrian finally wiped them out about 135 AD. He utterly destroyed Jerusalem, rebuilt under another name, and for hundreds of years no Jew was permitted to enter it. A handful of Jews remained in Palestine but the vast majority were killed or scattered to other countries, in the Diaspora, or the Great Dispersion. From that time Palestine ceased to be a Jewish country, in any conceivable sense.

This was 1,815 years ago, and yet the Jews solemnly pretend they still own Palestine! If such fantasy were allowed, how the map of the world would dance about!

Italians might claim England, which the Romans held so long. England might claim France, “homeland” of the conquering Normans. And the French Normans might claim Norway, where their ancestors originated. And incidentally, we Arabs might claim Spain, which we held for 700 years.

Many Mexicans might claim Spain, “homeland” of their forefathers. They

## As the Arabs see the Jews

might even claim Texas, which was Mexican until 100 years ago. And suppose the American Indians claimed the “homeland” of which they were the sole, native, and ancient occupants until only some 450 years ago!

I am not being facetious. All these claims are just as valid—or just as fantastic—as the Jewish “historic connection” with Palestine. Most are more valid.

In any event, the great Moslem expansion about 650 AD finally settled things. It dominated Palestine completely. From that day on, Palestine was solidly Arabic in population, language, and religion. When British armies entered the country during the last war, they found 500,000 Arabs and only 65,000 Jews.

If solid, uninterrupted Arab occupation for nearly 1,300 years does not make a country “Arab,” what does?

The Jews say, and rightly, that Palestine is the home of their religion. It is likewise the birthplace of Christianity, but would any Christian nation claim it on that account? In passing, let me say that the Christian Arabs—and there are many hundreds of thousands of them in the Arab World—are in absolute agreement with all other Arabs in opposing the Zionist invasion of Palestine.

May I also point out that Jerusalem is, after Mecca and Medina, the holiest place in Islam. In fact, in the early days of our religion, Moslems prayed toward Jerusalem instead of Mecca.

The Jewish “religious claim” to Palestine is as absurd as the “historic claim.” The Holy Places, sacred to three great religions, must be open to all, the monopoly of none. Let us not confuse religion and politics.

We are told that we are inhumane and heartless because we do not accept with open arms the perhaps 200,000 Jews in Europe who suffered so frightfully under Nazi cruelty, and who even now—almost three years after war’s end—still languish in cold, depressing camps.

Let me underline several facts. The unimaginable persecution of the Jews was not done by the Arabs: it was done by a Christian nation in the West. The war which ruined Europe and made it almost impossible for these Jews to rehabilitate themselves was fought by the Christian nations of the West. The rich and empty portions of the earth belong, not to the Arabs, but to the Christian nations of the West.

And yet, to ease their consciences, these Christian nations of the West are asking Palestine—a poor and tiny Moslem country of the East—to accept the entire burden. “We have hurt these people terribly,” cries the West to the East. “Won’t you please take care of them for us?”

We find neither logic nor justice in this. Are we therefore “cruel and heartless nationalists”?

We are a generous people: we are proud that “Arab hospitality” is a phrase famous throughout the world. We are a humane people: no one was shocked more than we by the Hitlerite terror. No one pities the present plight of the desperate European Jews more than we.

But we say that Palestine has already sheltered 600,000 refugees. We believe that is enough to expect of us—even too much. We believe it is now the turn of the rest of the world to accept some of them.

I will be entirely frank with you. There is one thing the Arab world simply cannot understand. Of all the nations of the earth, America is most insistent that something be done for these suffering Jews of Europe. This feeling does credit to the humanity for which America is famous, and to that glorious inscription on your Statue of Liberty.

And yet this same America—the richest, greatest, most powerful nation the world has ever known—refuses to accept more than a token handful of these same Jews herself!

I hope you will not think I am being bitter about this. I have tried hard to understand that mysterious paradox, and I confess I cannot. Nor can any other Arab.

Perhaps you have been informed that “the Jews in Europe want to go to no other place except Palestine.”

This myth is one of the greatest propaganda triumphs of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, the organisation which promotes with fanatic zeal the emigration to Palestine. It is a subtle half-truth, thus doubly dangerous.

The astounding truth is that nobody on earth really knows where these unfortunate Jews really want to go!

You would think that in so grave a problem, the American, British, and other authorities responsible for the European Jews would have made a very careful survey, probably by vote, to find out where each Jew actually wants to go. Amazingly enough this has never been done! The Jewish Agency has prevented it.

Some time ago the American Military Governor in Germany was asked at a press conference how he was so certain that all Jews there wanted to go to Palestine. His answer was simple: “My Jewish advisors tell me so.” He admitted no poll had ever been made. Preparations were indeed begun for one, but the Jewish Agency stepped in to stop it.

The truth is that the Jews in German camps are now subjected to a Zionist pressure campaign which learned much from the Nazi terror. It is dangerous for a Jew to say that he would rather go to some other country, not Palestine. Such dissenters have been severely beaten, and worse.

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Not long ago, in Palestine, nearly 1,000 Austrian Jews informed the international refugee organisation that they would like to go back to Austria, and plans were made to repatriate them.

The Jewish Agency heard of this, and exerted enough political pressure to stop it. It would be bad propaganda for Zionism if Jews began leaving Palestine. The nearly 1,000 Austrian are still there, against their will.

The fact is that most of the European Jews are Western in culture and outlook, entirely urban in experience and habits. They cannot really have their hearts set on becoming pioneers in the barren, arid, cramped land which is Palestine.

One thing, however, is undoubtedly true. As matters stand now, most refugee Jews in Europe would, indeed, vote for Palestine, simply because they know no other country will have them.

If you or I were given a choice between a near-prison camp for the rest of our lives—or Palestine—we would both choose Palestine, too.

But open up any other alternative to them—give them any other choice, and see what happens!

No poll, however, will be worth anything unless the nations of the earth are willing to open their doors—just a little—to the Jews. In other words, if in such a poll a Jew says he wants to go to Sweden, Sweden must be willing to accept him. If he votes for America, you must let him come in.

Any other kind of poll would be a farce. For the desperate Jew, this is no idle testing of opinion: this is a grave matter of life or death. Unless he is absolutely sure that his vote means something, he will always vote for Palestine, so as not to risk his bird in the hand for one in the bush.

In any event, Palestine can accept no more. The 65,000 Jews in Palestine in 1918 have jumped to 600,000 today. We Arabs have increased, too, but not by immigration. The Jews were then a mere 11 per cent of our population. Today they are one third of it.

The rate of increase has been terrifying. In a few more years—unless stopped now—it will overwhelm us, and we shall be an important minority in our own home.

Surely the rest of the wide world is rich enough and generous enough to find a place for 200,000 Jews—about one third the number that tiny, poor Palestine has already sheltered. For the rest of the world, it is hardly a drop in the bucket. For us it means national suicide.

We are sometimes told that since the Jews came to Palestine, the Arab standard of living has improved. This is a most complicated question. But let us even assume, for the argument, that it is true. We would rather be a bit poorer, and masters of our own home. Is this unnatural?

The sorry story of the so-called “Balfour Declaration,” which started Zionist immigration into Palestine, is too complicated to repeat here in detail. It is grounded in broken promises to the Arabs—promises made in cold print which admit no denying.

We utterly deny its validity. We utterly deny the right of Great Britain to give away Arab land for a “national home” for an entirely foreign people.

Even the League of Nations sanction does not alter this. At the time, not a single Arab state was a member of the League. We were not allowed to say a word in our own defense.

I must point out, again in friendly frankness, that America was nearly as responsible as Britain for this Balfour Declaration. President Wilson approved it before it was issued, and the American Congress adopted it word for word in a joint resolution on 30th June, 1922.

In the 1920s, Arabs were annoyed and insulted by Zionist immigration, but not alarmed by it. It was steady, but fairly small, as even the Zionist founders thought it would remain. Indeed for some years, more Jews left Palestine than entered it—in 1927 almost twice as many.

But two new factors, entirely unforeseen by Britain or the League or America or the most fervent Zionist, arose in the early thirties to raise the immigration to undreamed heights. One was the World Depression; the second the rise of Hitler.

In 1932, the year before Hitler came to power, only 9,500 Jews came to Palestine. We did not welcome them, but we were not afraid that, at that rate, our solid Arab majority would ever be in danger.

But the next year—the year of Hitler—it jumped to 30,000! In 1934 it was 42,000! In 1935 it reached 61,000!

It was no longer the orderly arrival of idealist Zionists. Rather, all Europe was pouring its frightened Jews upon us. Then, at last, we, too, became frightened. We knew that unless this enormous influx stopped, we were, as Arabs, doomed in our Palestine homeland. And we have not changed our minds.

I have the impression that many Americans believe the trouble in Palestine is very remote from them, that America had little to do with it, and that your only interest now is that of a humane bystander.

I believe that you do not realise how directly you are, as a nation, responsible in general for the whole Zionist move and specifically for the present terrorism. I call this to your attention because I am certain that if you realise your responsibility you will act fairly to admit it and assume it.

Quite aside from official American support for the “National Home” of the Balfour Declaration, the Zionist settlements in Palestine would have been almost

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impossible, on anything like the current scale, without American money. This was contributed by American Jewry in an idealistic effort to help their fellows.

The motive was worthy: the result were disastrous. The contributions were by private individuals, but they were almost entirely Americans, and, as a nation, only America can answer for it.

The present catastrophe may be laid almost entirely at your door. Your government, almost alone in the world, is insisting on the immediate admission of 100,000 more Jews into Palestine—to be followed by countless additional ones. This will have the most frightful consequences in bloody chaos beyond anything ever hinted at in Palestine before.

It is your press and political leadership, almost alone in the world, who press this demand. It is almost entirely American money which hires or buys the “refugee ships” that steam illegally toward Palestine: American money which pays their crews. The illegal immigration from Europe is arranged by the Jewish Agency, supported almost entirely by American funds. It is American dollars which support the terrorists, which buy the bullets and pistols that kill British soldiers—your allies—and Arab citizens—your friends.

We in the Arab world were stunned to hear that you permit open advertisements in newspapers asking for money to finance these terrorists, to arm them openly and deliberately for murder. We could not believe this could really happen in the modern world. Now we must believe it: we have seen the advertisements with our own eyes.

I point out these things because nothing less than complete frankness will be of use. The crisis is too stark for mere polite vagueness which means nothing.

I have the most complete confidence in the fair-mindedness and generosity of the American public. We Arabs ask no favours. We ask only that you know the full truth, not half of it. We ask only that when you judge the Palestine question, you put yourselves in our place.

What would your answer be if some outside agency told you that you must accept in America many millions of utter strangers in your midst—enough to dominate your country—merely because they insisted on going to America, and because their forefathers had once lived there some 2,000 years ago?

Our answer is the same.

And what would be your action if, in spite of your refusal, this outside agency began forcing them on you?

Ours will be the same. ■

## President Barack Hussein Obama and the Middle East: The Peace Process, Iran, Iraq and Reasonable Expectations\*

Paul Sullivan\*\*

*The Obama Administration faces a web of interconnected issues in the Middle East that should be faced with realistic expectations by all involved. There are many complex constraints to many of the potential solutions to the many seemingly intractable problems of the region. These constraints can be found in the region, as well as within the US and globally. However, wherever there are constraints there can also be opportunities. As a result of severe limitations in the Peace Process, President Obama might focus on small, but building, successes, such as in Palestinian economic development first, to build a positive track record. One of the major sticking points may be the settlements on The West Bank. A long-term and wise solution to this could lead to many other important breakthroughs. He may be able to engage Syria in fruitful discussions. This could have important implications toward the solutions of many of the issues facing the President and the region. The US-Iran relationship is complicated by historical grievances and the nuclear issue, but Iran plays a critical role in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Central Asia, and the Peace Process, so Obama might pursue more effective and productive relations by presenting some potential introductory carrots, along with some of the potential sticks that could be out there to use, and the sticks that already exist. Of course, the Iranian leadership also needs to show its willingness and ability to improve relations, and to become less problematic in the region. Finally, Obama will likely continue strong efforts to get Iraq on its feet and then get out. There may also be considerable economic and security development follow up for many years after the troops leave. President Obama has brought with him high expectations for many in the region. These expectations should be tempered with the realities on the ground. However, all involved should not be entirely surprised if President Obama shows more creativity, boldness and diplomatic acumen than we have seen from a US President in a very long time.*

### *Terms of Reference and Caveats<sup>(1)</sup>:*

This article will focus on potential developments in US Middle Eastern relations under the Obama Administration with a special focus on the Peace Process,

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\* All opinions are expressed are those of the author alone.

\*\* Paul Sullivan: National Defense University and Georgetown University.

1. I will offer expected priorities to regional problems and opportunities. To begin there will be expectations management. What are our hopes and options, and what realities may limit progress to less than people hope for? It is best to lower rather than heighten expectations for situations where they do not match reality. This is a big picture, strategic-level paper painting broadly many issues, it also points out that the devils and angels are in the details even at the jet-stream level view.

## President Barack Hussein Obama and the Middle East

Iran, and Iraq. Even so, the region cannot be cleanly and logically separated into sub-regions that afford comprehensive analyses *sui generis*. If there ever were a region where the crisis, problems, issues and options of one country were intertwined with those of others, this one is clearly it.

The Middle East is wrought with uncertainties and political landmines. The problems, issues and options people face are intertwined like a massive spider's web. There are no easy and simple solutions to many of the problems of the area. This region has historical baggage going back hundreds of years.

History informs the solutions to the regional issues, therefore only addressing and moving beyond historical baggage will help solve regional problems. One can see the constraints of historical burdens in all resolutions to the tensions, misunderstandings, and animosities related to the Arab-Israeli conundrum, US-Iranian relations, US-Arab relations, and US-Muslim, Jewish-Muslim, Christian-Muslim relations, inter-Arab relations and more. When diplomats and leaders discuss these issues there are more people and players at the table than are physically present in the room.

The President of the United States is not only constrained by the regional realities on the ground, but also by the political and economic realities within the US. Currently the financial crisis has hit home and unemployment is up. The American people have lost trillions of dollars in asset values. There is economic fear amongst many in the country. Millions have lost or may lose their homes through foreclosure. The stock market has dropped massively in the last year. Pensions, college savings funds and "rainy day" funds have diminished.

The trillions put toward bailing out banks, mortgage holders and others, and the trillions being put toward economic stimuli for the country could limit the actions of the US in the region and in the world. The economic realities are harsh. Also, the American people will need to pay for the massive bailouts built on government debt. When those bills come due there may be even less flexibility for the US to help manage the myriad problems of the Middle East, and perhaps less interest in those problems by then. The American people also seem thoroughly focused on economic and other problems at home.

Given the economic, political and other constraints at home, the US is limited in what it can do. Indeed such tight limitations on US actions on this issue led one senior official to recently tell me: "The Arabs cannot expect us to give them a solution to the problems on a silver platter. It is more up to them than to us to get this done, given the constraints that we face."<sup>(2)</sup>

The Arabs and others might expect, however, that people within the Obama administration will work very hard for long-lasting and wise solutions. However, all parties involved might do better to tone down their expectations. There is just so much the best and brightest on all sides can do facing mitigating constraints.

There are also political constraints within the Arab world that the Obama administration seems to understand well. There is less unity amongst the Arab

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2. Non-attribution discussion with a senior American official during the month of April 2009.

nations than ever before. Significant splits on relations with Iraq, especially given the Saudi reluctance to be more engaged in the situation. There also are splits with regard to how to deal with Iran. Some Arab countries have little tolerance for groups like the Muslim Brotherhood. Other Arab states welcome them for one reason or another. The recent Doha Summit was a lesson in disunity.<sup>(3)</sup> Arab views of Hezbollah have started to harden and split further, particularly after the arrests of persons allegedly part of Hezbollah cells planning to attack Egypt.<sup>(4)</sup>

Within each Arab state there are political limitations to what a leader can do, even for kings and persons who one might think of as having unlimited power. Each has internal and external pressures from political, economic, religious, ethnic and other angles that limit their policy movements.

The Arab League is an organization searching for meaning and a meeting place. The most recent Doha Summit had as its major victory a statement of support for the leader of Sudan, Omar Al-Bashir. This is a telling sign that the Arab League has gone from being essentially worthless to dangerously dysfunctional. Amr Mousa and his staff are trying their best, but the rifts amongst Arab states, and the ineffective parts of the charter of the Arab League that require unanimity in decisions, have hamstrung the organization into something that produces noise, some heat, but little motion. The Arab Peace Plan of 2002 has so far failed, in part because the Arabs do not play as a team.

#### *The Israeli-Palestinian conundrum.*<sup>(5)</sup>

Whatever President Obama may want to do on the Arab-Israeli “peace pro-

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3. *BBC News*, “Regional Rifts Stymie Arab Summit,” March 30, 2009, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/7971255.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7971255.stm).

4. For examples see: *Al Jazeera*, “Egypt Arrests Hezbollah Agents,” <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2009/04/2009498338693164.html>; *Haaretz Service*, “Iran behind bid to strike Egypt targets,” *Ha'aretz*, April 10, 2009, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1077422.html>.

5. United States Institute of Peace, *Passing the Baton*, “Reinvigorating Prospects for Arab-Israeli Peacemaking,” <http://www.usip.org/baton2009/extras/6.pdf>; United States Institute of Peace, “Mapping Peace Between Syria and Israel,” <http://www.usip.org/pubs/specialreports/sr219.html>; White House, “Remarks of President Obama to the Turkish Parliament,” [http://www.whitehouse.gov/the\\_press\\_office/Remarks-By-President-Obama-To-The-Turkish-Parliament/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-By-President-Obama-To-The-Turkish-Parliament/); United States Department of State, “US Contributes More than \$150 Million to Help Displaced Iraqis,” Press Release, March 20, 2009, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2009/03/120712.htm>; The United States Department of State, “US Welcomes Agreement on Weapons Smuggling into Gaza,” Press Release, March 16, 2009, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2009/03/120436.htm>; United States Embassy, Damascus, Syria, *Statement of Jeffrey Feltman, Acting Assistant Secretary for the Near East, Department of State, At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Damascus, March 7, 2009*, [http://damascus.usembassy.gov/media/pdf/press-releases-pdf/statement\\_by\\_jeffrey\\_feltman.pdf](http://damascus.usembassy.gov/media/pdf/press-releases-pdf/statement_by_jeffrey_feltman.pdf); International Crisis Group, “Engaging Syria: US Constraints and Opportunities,” <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5903&l=1&m=1>; *BBC News*, “Israeli FM Rejects Annapolis,” April 1, 2009, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/7977002.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7977002.stm); Congressional Research Service, “Egypt: Background and US Policies,” August 2008, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33003.pdf>; Congressional Research Service, “Israel: Background and US Policies,” September 2008, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33476.pdf>; Congressional Research Service, “Israeli-Arab Negotiations: Background, Conflicts and US Policy,” March 2009, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33530.pdf>; The agenda, “Foreign Affairs: What’s Next for the Middle East Peace Process?” March 2, 2009, found at [www.theagendaonline.com](http://www.theagendaonline.com);

cess”<sup>(6)</sup> and co-existence process (which is more important than the peace process), it will be limited by regional and US politics. New moves will be a tough sell for all sides. Any discussions may break the logjam because of built up societal and political pressures or further frustrate the situation.

Where this goes will be determined by the leadership and negotiation skills of President Obama, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Senator Mitchell, and various persons known and unknown, in the State Department, the National Security Council, Pentagon and more. However, the answers cannot lie just in the American corner, because US politicians are cornered on this issue. The President has to answer to the House of Representatives and the Senate. Additionally, powerful political pressures within the country will limit positive movement, even if that movement is in the best interests of the US, Israel and the Arabs.

On the Israeli side the “peace process” is seen as a combination of land-for-peace agreements and a battle against terrorists. The ultra-extremists in Israel see no option but to keep the land they have taken, and take more, meaning the expulsion of the Palestinians. The moderates and liberals in Israel will negotiate a two-state solution, and try to develop a long-term set of mechanisms to allow the Palestinians and the Israelis to live peacefully side-by-side. Between these extremes are gradations on the themes of co-existence and expulsion. Israeli politics are complex, and lately less agreeable to moderates. Some Israelis see their biggest threat as the growing extremism and conservatism amongst Israelis, not the Palestinians.<sup>(7)</sup>

On the Palestinian side the “peace process” is seen as an effort for justice related to past and continuing wrongs. However, there are many Palestinian viewpoints on how to resolve this situation. The more extreme Hamas members want Israel “thrown into the ocean”, and will not accept the existence of what they call “the Zionist entity”. On the other end of the spectrum of Palestinian perspectives are the moderates and liberals who want to negotiate a two-state solution with the Israelis.

The moderates in Israel, within the Palestinian Territories and throughout the

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6. I put this in quotes because it has not brought peace after so many years of process. Strategies need to change. Perceptions need to change. There needs to be a meeting of the minds before a real peace process can occur. So far such a meeting of the minds has not occurred.

7. See PBS, “Israel’s Next War?” <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/israel/view/>; AFP, “Gaza war is gift to Arab and Israeli extremists,” [http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5gOG1-Pi0c9sL\\_INwG9JRpbwxU7jEw](http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5gOG1-Pi0c9sL_INwG9JRpbwxU7jEw); Washington Institute for Near East Policy, “Violence by extremists in the Jewish Settler movement: The rising challenge,” <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=2967>; Washington Institute for Near East Policy, “Prevent Breakdown, Prepare Breakthrough,” December 2008, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/pubPDFs/PolicyFocus90.pdf>; Associated Press and Haaretz Service, “At Rabin memorial Barak calls right-wing extremists ‘cancerous growths’,” *Ha’aretz*, November 9, 2008, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1035405.html>; Washington Institute for Near East Policy, “Rethinking the Two-State Solution,” <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC04.php?CID=299>; Anti-Defamation League, “ADL condemns use of violence by Israeli extremists to oppose peace process,” Press Release, September 13, 1995, [http://www.adl.org/PresRele/1sIME\\_62/2531\\_62.asp](http://www.adl.org/PresRele/1sIME_62/2531_62.asp).

region have recently lost political ground. The Arab street sees them as weak and ineffective, and extremists, especially the violent extremists, such as Hassan Nasrallah, the leaders of Hamas, and others as doing something to solve the problems.

Even as the moderates work harder they are losing ground in the street. The recent invasion of Gaza by the Israelis strengthened Hamas, Hezbollah, the more extreme wings of the Muslim Brotherhood and others. It weakened the moderates even further. Iran is gaining ground in some parts of the Arab world's public opinion for "at least standing up the West" as one person in Cairo, Egypt put it.<sup>(8)</sup> One sign of hope is that the moderates are gaining ground in the United States, and the US seems more willing to work with moderates in the EU and elsewhere to move things forward. A moderate perspective is developing in the highest reaches of the international policy-making community. Realism and moderation are back. However, the extremists in the US still get airtime and the neoconservatives, although weakened, are still in the game.

The Peace Process does not hold out much hope for any substantive solution soon. We need to focus on the easier bearing fruit to begin a positive track record to build credibility with all of the parties concerned. Building a positive track record is crucial to success in the short, medium and long terms. We need to move past the status quo using new and different partners; otherwise, we may find ourselves in even deeper trouble in the region.

Israeli security is about as bad as it has ever been. Our best know this and many Israelis know this. We need to move toward long-term and better-focused strategies and agreements. What happens on this issue influences everything in the Middle East to some degree.

A significant issue is the status of the West Bank settlements. For lasting peace to occur these settlements have to be handled properly. According to experts, the settlements in the West Bank must be dismantled for a sustainable two-state solution to be feasible. This could cause significant localized violence during their dismantlement and beyond. Yet, one must weigh the disruption and violence from the dismantlement against the disruption and violence resulting from their presence. The settlement problem is emotionally laden for both Israelis and Palestinians. It is one of the toughest issues in the region and will take a long time to work out.

Will the Obama Administration support the full or partial dismantlement of the settlements in the West Bank? It is hard to tell. It could be very difficult politically to make this palatable for the US Congress. This may be a sticking point,

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8. This is from a private, non-attribution interview with a senior Arab Diplomat in Cairo on June 20, 2009. I heard similar statements from high-ranking officials in the governments of Jordan and Egypt, as well as from other senior diplomats I met during my research trip to Egypt and Jordan in the summer of 2008.

and an issue that could block the path to peace and coexistence. There are also numerous checkpoints and other controls in the West Bank. It is a very difficult situation for both Israelis and Palestinians. One of the most contentious and dangerous issues to be dealt with will be the settlements. For both the Arabs and the Israelis this is one of the most important problems to be solved.

President Obama has said repeatedly that he supports a two-state solution, but the devil is in the details on how to achieve it. Many things must happen first for that result.

President Obama has called for Jerusalem to be the undivided capital of Israel, which upset many Arabs. Regardless, after hearing him say this during his campaign they still retained hope for change. He has called AIPAC “good friends”. He has publicly stated that the “bond between Israel and the US is unbreakable” and that he “understands the Zionist vision”. He will “not compromise when it comes to Israel’s security”. He wants to ensure Israel’s qualitative military advantage. He will likely deepen defense cooperation and funding going to Israel.<sup>(9)</sup>

However, all of this does not rule out surprising moves on the peace process from this administration. One should not dismiss the possibility of some significant breakthroughs. However, there are many obstacles to those breakthroughs.

Could there even be a time that the Obama Administration will have open and public discussions with Hamas? At the moment this seems doubtful. Hamas is considered a terrorist group in the US. Many in the Obama Administration see Hamas as a major blocking point to forward action. The Obama Administration will continue to focus on supporting President Abbas. President Obama publicly stated that he was against the election of Hamas in 2006, and that Hamas has caused many of the problems in the peace process. Even with a unity government amongst the Palestinians the US will not like to deal with anyone from Hamas. Robert Malley, a respected Middle East expert, was taken off the Obama campaign for meeting with a low-level Hamas official as part of his work at the International Crisis Group.<sup>(10)</sup> Hamas is a hot issue in the US. It is also seen as a problematic extremist group by moderate Sunni leaders in the region, such as those in Jordan and Egypt.

One of the main foci of the Obama Administration will likely be the economic and political development of the Palestinian Authority and the West Bank. Most of the funds pledged by the US during the recent donors meetings in Sharm El Shiekh are to go to the West Bank and the Palestinian Authority. Funds going to Gaza, which are about \$300 million, will be for humanitarian and reconstruction

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9. AIPAC, “Senator Barack Obama, AIPAC Policy Conference 2008,” June 4, 2008, [http://www.aipac.org/Publications/SpeechesByPolicymakers/PC\\_08\\_Obama.pdf](http://www.aipac.org/Publications/SpeechesByPolicymakers/PC_08_Obama.pdf); Sandy Berger, *et al.*, “In defense of Robert Malley,” *The New York Review of Books*, March 2008, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/21170>.

10. *Times Online*, “Barack Obama sacks advisor over talks with Hamas,” [http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/us\\_and\\_americas/us\\_elections/article3897414.ece#cid=OTC-RSS&attr=2015164](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/us_and_americas/us_elections/article3897414.ece#cid=OTC-RSS&attr=2015164).

aid.<sup>(11)</sup> The US will be wary about any use of these funds by Hamas, and will keep an eye on where these funds go.

However, one must remember that the US is UNRWA's<sup>(12)</sup> biggest donor. Additionally the US has helped the people of Gaza in direct and indirect manners in the past. However, after Hamas' rise to power in Gaza, the US has focused on sending aid to the West Bank in support of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, and most aid to Gaza has had significant legislative oversight and restrictions.<sup>(13)</sup> It is very doubtful that President Obama will change his negative views on Hamas.

The solutions to water, food, schooling, employment and other problems of Gaza and West Bank, could find some support from the US. These problems make life for the average Palestinian rough, especially in Gaza. The President understands this, and the importance of alleviating the suffering of the people of Gaza on humanitarian grounds, not only to advance the peace process. He understands that life in the West Bank is difficult for most Palestinians, and basic needs, such as health, education and jobs, must be met.

Clearly things are more difficult to move forward under a Netanyahu Administration in Israel. The fact that Mr. Lieberman is the Foreign Minister is inflammatory to the Arabs and Palestinians, and will reduce hopes for a solution any time soon. Some within and outside of Israel believe that including the Israeli Labor Party in the Netanyahu coalition will improve the image of Israel after the choice of Lieberman. It is doubtful that the Arab world sees this.

The choice of Lieberman, whom many Arabs call a racist, outweighs any other Labor Party choices in the eyes of the Arabs, and especially the Palestinians. Lieberman's "Populated-Area Exchange Program" was condemned by Ariel Sharon. This plan would require all Israeli Arabs to sign a loyalty oath. Those who refuse would then come under the authority of the Palestinian Authority. (Haredi

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11. Amira Hass, "International donors pledge \$5.2 billion for Gaza reconstruction," *Ha'aretz*, March 2, 2009, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1068031.html>; United States Virtual Presence Post, Gaza, "Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas," March 4, 2009, <http://gaza.usvpp.gov/nw040309.html>; Liam Stack, "At Gaza Donor Conference, Clinton Vows to Pursue Peace," *Christian Science Monitor*, March 3, 2009, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2009/0303/p25s06-wome.html>; Edward Yeranian, "Donor's Pledge \$4.8 Billion in New Gaza Aid," *Voice of America*, March 2, 2009, <http://www.voanews.com/english/archive/2009-03/2009-03-02-voa24.cfm?CFID=164345352&CFTOKEN=96760280&jsessionid=84306ac9c83ce3998fd0231f27a7049a4d5f>; America.gov, "US Pledges \$900 million for Palestinians," March 2, 2009, <http://www.america.gov/st/peacesec-english/2009/March/20090302133115dmslahrellek0.8415338.html&distid=ucs>.

12. United Nations Relief Works Association, "Finances," <http://www.un.org/unrwa/finances/index.html>.

13. United States Department of State, "United States Assistance to the Palestinians," Press Release, March 2, 2009, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2009/03/119925.htm>; Congressional Research Service, "United States Aid to the Palestinians," February 2009, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS22967.pdf>.

Jews would also be required to sign such an oath.)<sup>(14)</sup> Mr. Lieberman also supports a greater role for Russia, his original home, in the peace process and in Israel. The Obama Administration may have problems with this if Russian engagement is less than productive.

However, Lieberman has stated that he supports a two-state solution, but with redrawn borders and an inclusion of many settlements in Israel. He also believes “there are no illegal outposts”. (He and his family live in a settlement in the West Bank.)<sup>(15)</sup> Many of the ultra-right wings of Israeli politics are against the two-state solution. Mr. Lieberman has significant support in conservative right-wing Israeli communities, but not much in the ultra-right. It is clear that Israel has shifted to the right on many issues. Even the Former Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni has stated that the Palestinians have no partner in peace in the new Likud-led coalition.<sup>(16)</sup>

It is also clear, with the election of Hamas and its growing support that many in the Palestinian community have hardened their opinions about Israel, and about what the peace process will resemble. The recent attack on Gaza has made Hamas more popular within many Palestinian communities. The hard route has failed. The lack of real effort to find a common ground has failed. It is time for a new beginning. Maybe the Obama Administration can find that common ground and that new beginning, but it will be far from easy or smooth.

President Obama has said that even though getting to peace may not be easier now, it is just as necessary. President Obama sees it as critical that the two-state solution be pushed forward. He has also said on many occasions that “the status quo is unsustainable”. This is true, of course, but the real question is how to go from here to a better future.<sup>(17)</sup>

Mr. Mitchell is a smart, hard working and sophisticated person who has worked on difficult issues in the past, including this one. Now he faces greater obstacles to peace than before. Opinions have hardened on many issues. Hamas is a relatively new player, and one that is unmovable on the more important issues. This may be his toughest challenge yet. Its difficulties may dwarf those of the Irish peace deal by orders of magnitude. By choosing Mr. Mitchell President Obama has shown his seriousness of purpose. That is a big step forward. Now the really hard work begins.

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14. *Time.com*, “2-minute bio: Avigdor Lieberman,” <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1878741,00.html>; Knesset, “Knesset Members: Avigdor Lieberman,” [http://www.knesset.gov.il/mk/eng/mk\\_eng.asp?mk\\_individual\\_id\\_t=214](http://www.knesset.gov.il/mk/eng/mk_eng.asp?mk_individual_id_t=214); Zionism-Israel.com, “Avigdor Lieberman,” [http://www.zionism-israel.com/bio/Avigdor\\_Lieberman.htm](http://www.zionism-israel.com/bio/Avigdor_Lieberman.htm); “Yisrael Beytenu,” <http://www.yisraelbeytenu.com/>.

15. Zionism-Israel.com, “Avigdor Lieberman,” [http://www.zionism-israel.com/bio/Avigdor\\_Lieberman.htm](http://www.zionism-israel.com/bio/Avigdor_Lieberman.htm); “Yisrael Beytenu,” <http://www.yisraelbeytenu.com/>.

16. *BBC News*, “Livni Condemns New Israeli Leaders,” April 2, 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle-east/7978605.stm>.

17. AIPAC Policy Conference of 2008 at [http://www.aipac.org/Publications/SpeechesBy Policymakers/PC\\_08\\_Obama.pdf](http://www.aipac.org/Publications/SpeechesBy%20Policymakers/PC_08_Obama.pdf).

*The Syrian track, but with the Turks, Saudis and others in the game.*<sup>(18)</sup>

This approach may contain low hanging, but not the sweetest of fruit and it has political and diplomatic landmines around it. One of the most important of landmines might center on the commission looking into the assassination of Rafik Hariri.<sup>(19)</sup> If the highest reaches of the Syrian leadership are found guilty by the commission, this will be a game-changer in the Syrian front. It is very hard to tell where this might lead. Another political-diplomatic landmine is the Iranian-Hezbollah-Hamas connection to Syria, as well as other problematic relations that need to be better “developed” for the positive benefit of the US, and all concerned, according to officials in the Obama administration.<sup>(20)</sup> The recent arrest of Hezbollah members in Egypt has complicated Egyptian-Syrian relations, making US relations with Syria even more complex.

However, advancing the Syrian track may advance other things. Recently a couple of high-level State Department officials visited officials in Syria.<sup>(21)</sup> The

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18. Please see: Congressional Research Service, “Syria: Background and US Relations,” August 2008, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33487.pdf>; International Crisis Group, “Engaging Syria? US Constraints and Opportunities,” February 11, 2009, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5903&l=1&m=1>; Congressional Research Service, “Lebanon: Background and US Policies,” January 2009, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R40054.pdf>; Oxford Research Group, “The Arab Peace Plan: Why Now?” November 2008, [http://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/publications/briefing\\_papers/pdf/api.pdf](http://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/publications/briefing_papers/pdf/api.pdf); The agenda, “Foreign Affairs: What’s Next for the Middle East Peace Process?” March 2, 2009, found at [www.theagendaonline.com](http://www.theagendaonline.com); Carnegie Endowment for Peace, “President Obama and Middle East Expectations,” January 2009, [http://carnegieendowment.org/files/obama\\_middle\\_east.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/obama_middle_east.pdf); Carnegie Endowment for Peace, “President-Elect Obama and the Middle East,” January 12, 2009, <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/0112carnegie-obamamiddleeast.pdf>; United States Consulate General, Jerusalem, “Peace Process,” [http://jerusalem.usconsulate.gov/peace\\_process\\_-\\_relevant\\_links.html](http://jerusalem.usconsulate.gov/peace_process_-_relevant_links.html); United States Department of State, “Briefing on Meetings with Syrian Officials,” Press Release, March 7, 2009, <http://www.state.gov/t/pa/prs/ps/2009/03/120122.htm>; The United States Embassy, Damascus, Syria, *Statement of Jeffrey Feltman, Acting Assistant Secretary for the Near East, Department of State, At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Damascus, March 7, 2009*, [http://damascus.usembassy.gov/media/pdf/press-releases-pdf/statement\\_by\\_jeffrey\\_feltman.pdf](http://damascus.usembassy.gov/media/pdf/press-releases-pdf/statement_by_jeffrey_feltman.pdf); United States Institute of Peace, “Mapping Peace Between Syria and Israel,” <http://www.usip.org/pubs/specialreports/sr219.html>; United States Institute of Peace, *Passing the Baton, “Reinvigorating Prospects for Arab-Israeli Peacemaking,”* <http://www.usip.org/baton2009/extras/6.pdf>.

19. See The United Nations, *Report of the International Independent Investigation Commission Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1595 (2005)*, <http://www.un.org/News/dh/docs/mehlisreport/>; Issam Michael Saliba, “International Tribunals, National Crimes, and the Hariri Assassination: A New Development in International Law,” <http://www.loc.gov/law/help/hariri/hariri.pdf>; United Nations Security Council, *Security Council Resolution 1595 (2005)*, <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N05/299/98/PDF/N0529998.pdf?OpenElement>; Mona Yacoubian, “Syria’s Role in Lebanon,” United States Institute of Peace, 2007, [http://www.usip.org/pubs/usipeace\\_briefings/2006/1109\\_syria\\_lebanon.html](http://www.usip.org/pubs/usipeace_briefings/2006/1109_syria_lebanon.html).

20. Haaretz Service, “Hezbollah Chief: ‘We actively support Hamas,’” *Ha’aretz*, May 13, 2009, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1085209.html>.

21. United States Embassy, Damascus, Syria, “Statement of Jeffrey Feltman, Acting Assistant Secretary for the Near East, Department of State, At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Damascus, March 7, 2009,” [http://damascus.usembassy.gov/media/pdf/press-releases-pdf/statement\\_by\\_jeffrey\\_feltman.pdf](http://damascus.usembassy.gov/media/pdf/press-releases-pdf/statement_by_jeffrey_feltman.pdf); United States Department of State, “Briefing on Meetings with Syrian Officials,” Press Release, March 7, 2009, <http://www.state.gov/t/pa/prs/ps/2009/03/120122.htm>.

Syrian Ambassador to the US has also had much better access to US officials since the inauguration. There is a lot of diplomatic traffic between the two countries. Those who would know in Washington think one of the foci of the development of the peace process under the earlier days of the Obama Administration will be a focus on Syria.<sup>(22)</sup>

This will take a lot of work given that Syria has been on the list of state sponsors of terrorism in the US since the list started in 1979. There are remaining sticking points to the relations that need to be resolved, including Syria's support of Hezbollah in Lebanon, both directly and as a conduit for Iranian support of Hezbollah. Syria also harbors some of the leadership of Hamas, such as Khaled Mashal, and many other Palestinian militants. Many in Washington consider Syria to be a country that is a weapons proliferator. Some think that Syria has had a nuclear program in place, and that the attack on a Syrian facility by the Israelis was an attack on a nuclear plant.<sup>(23)</sup> Others believe that North Korea and Syria have been working together on a nuclear program. In any event, the Israelis attacked the facility, and this unleashed further complications for the peace process.<sup>(24)</sup>

Syria is also considered by many in Washington to be a spoiler in the peace process. There are indications that many in Washington and Lebanon believe that Syria was behind the murder of Rafik Hariri and 22 others in 2005. Some also believe that Syria is still meddling in the politics of Lebanon well beyond its support for Hezbollah. The fact that the "Syrian Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Act" remains active shows the importance of this perspective.<sup>(25)</sup>

On many occasions during his campaign for the presidency, then Senator Obama mentioned that he distrusts the Syrian regime, and that it is engaged in "dangerous and irresponsible behavior". The facts that there have been numerous political assassinations in Lebanon that many think were Syrian inspired and planned, and that Syria has attempted to destabilize Lebanon on many occasions,

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22. Off the record conversations with US officials during the months of February, March and April 2009.

23. Nuclear Threat Initiative, "Syria Profile," [http://www.nti.org/e\\_research/profiles/Syria/Nuclear/index.html](http://www.nti.org/e_research/profiles/Syria/Nuclear/index.html); William J. Broad and Mark Mazzetti, "Photos Show Cleansing of Suspect Syrian Site," *New York Times*, October 26, 2007, [http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/26/world/middleeast/26syria.html?\\_r=1&hp](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/26/world/middleeast/26syria.html?_r=1&hp); *Guardian*, "US Claims North Korea Helped Build Syrian Reactor Plant," April 25, 2008, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/apr/25/usa.nuclear?gusrc=rss&feed=networkfront>;

24. United States Department of State, "Background Note: Syria," <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3580.htm#relations>, David Albright and Paul Brannan, "Suspect Reactor Site in Eastern Syria: The Site of the September 6 Israeli Raid?" [http://www.isis-online.org/publications/SuspectSite\\_24October2007.pdf](http://www.isis-online.org/publications/SuspectSite_24October2007.pdf); Yossi Melman, "IAEA Slams Israel for Bombing Alleged Reactor in Israel," *Ha'aretz*, April 25, 2008, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/978043.html>.

25. See [http://www.fas.org/asmp/resources/govern/108th/pl\\_108\\_175.pdf](http://www.fas.org/asmp/resources/govern/108th/pl_108_175.pdf) for text of the Act. For a different perspective on this see Stephen Zunes, "The Syrian Accountability Act and the Triumph of Hegemony," *Foreign Policy in Focus*, October 2003, <http://www.fpif.org/papers/syriaact2003.html>; See also Washington Institute for Near East Policy, "The Syrian Accountability Act: Two Years On," <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/print.php?template=C07&CID=296>; See also Congressional Research Service, "Syria: Background and U.S. Relations," <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/122975.pdf>.

have not helped alleviate that perspective.

Many in Washington have concerns about Syria's close relations with Iran. There has been quiet cooperation between the US and Syria on some issues, including attempts at controlling the movement of extremists into Iraq via Syria, and some other anti-terrorism activities, but overall the cooperation has been minimal. There was a time during the Bush Administration when Syria and the US were working together fairly well on counter-terrorism information sharing, but that stopped after some awkward misunderstandings.<sup>(26)</sup> Syria has a very large number of Iraqi refugees who are mostly living a harsh existence. In many ways Syria holds some of the cards for a more smooth transition to stability in Iraq. It also has a considerable border with Iraq.

Syria could be a helpful information source on certain terror groups. It could also be a key to getting the Palestinians and the Israelis to the table for productive discussions.

Getting the Syrians on board may entail some Turkish help. The recent visit of the President to Istanbul surely included discussions about Syria. How discussions with Syria go depends on events on the ground in Syria and the region, and some political and economic trends in the US. They also may depend on how Syrian-Turkish relations develop. The President's visit to Turkey did much to move Turkish-US relations forward on many tracks.

Another part of the Syria track is to try to separate Syria from some of the influence of Iran, and to bring Syria in line with the more moderate states in the region. This may be one of the most difficult parts of this track. Syria has had close relations with Iran for many years. The Alawite leadership in Syria relies on Qom for certain religious definitional validities. Then there is the Iran-Syria-Hezbollah connection, which has developed into a very deep relationship over many years.<sup>(27)</sup> But it seems that the Syrians may find a better future in changing some strategies. The willingness to talk is a step forward, but it is a small one. The Syrians have to see some business, trade or other benefits coming their way before

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26. Non-attribution conversations with Syrian and US diplomats and others. See also Ziad K. AbdelNour, "The US-Syrian Crisis: Why Diplomacy Failed," [http://www.meib.org/articles/0310\\_s1.htm](http://www.meib.org/articles/0310_s1.htm); *Arabic-news.com*, "Syria cuts military and intelligence cooperation with the U.S." May 25, 2005, <http://www.arabicnews.com/ansub/Daily/Day/050525/2005052504.html>; Seymour Hersh, "The Syrian Bet," *New Yorker*, [http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2003/07/28/030728fa\\_fact](http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2003/07/28/030728fa_fact).

27. Robert Grace and Andrew Mandelbaum, "Understanding the Iran-Hezbollah Connection," [http://www.usip.org/pubs/usipeace\\_briefings/2006/0922\\_iran\\_hezbollah.html](http://www.usip.org/pubs/usipeace_briefings/2006/0922_iran_hezbollah.html); STRATFOR, "Iran's Hezbollah Connection," January 17, 2006, [http://www.stratfor.com/memberships/51521/irans\\_hezbollah\\_connection](http://www.stratfor.com/memberships/51521/irans_hezbollah_connection); Yaacov Amriddor, "The Hizbollah-Syria-Iran Triangle," <http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2007/issue1/jv11no1a1.html>; Congressional Research Service, "Lebanon: The Israel-Hamas-Hezbollah Conflict," September 2006, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33566.pdf>; Congressional Research Service, "Iran: U.S. Concerns and Policy Responses," March 2009, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL32048.pdf>; Congressional Research Service, "Syria: Background and U.S. Relations," August 2008, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33487.pdf>.

they move further.

It is hard to tell how hard the Syrians will push the Golan issue, and whether the present Israeli government would ever consider turning over the Golan for a peace deal with the Syrians. Netanyahu has been against handing over the Golan for a very long time, but sometimes even the extreme hardliners can change as circumstances change – and as incentives change. However, in the present circumstances, this seems unlikely.

One of the most important changes one might expect from the US President is that discussions will begin, some meetings will be more public (although often the best way to resolve some issues is quietly and out of the limelight), and there will be attempts to help resolve many issues that vex US-Syrian relations. President Assad of Syria seems open to discussions. President Obama seems open to discussions. There is even talk of President Obama going to Syria, or at least meeting with President Assad. None of this will be easy. Recent meetings between fairly high-level representatives of the US and Syria seem to be a good sign. But these relations are wrought with political and other landmines, and there are many people in the region and in the US who would like to scuttle any rapprochement between the US and Syria.

*The Iranian issues, inclusive of the Hezbollah, Hamas, and other interconnections in the region, and the nuclear issues, as well as the offshoots into our relations with East and South Asia, Russia, China and the EU.*<sup>(28)</sup>

The leadership of Iran is under some rather extreme constraints based on historical precedence and the incendiary politics of the continuing, but waning, revolution. Anyone who wants to be in a leadership position in Iran is limited in their ideological and other positions by the vetting of the Guardianship Council and the

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28. Please see: White House Blog, "A New Year, A New Beginning," <http://www.whitehouse.gov/Nowruz/>; White House Blog, "Crossroads in Turkey," <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/pg3/>; White House Blog, "President to Muslim World: 'Americans are not your enemies,'" [http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog\\_post/PresidenttoMuslimWorldAmericansarenotyourenemy/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog_post/PresidenttoMuslimWorldAmericansarenotyourenemy/); White House Blog, "Presidential Notice on Iranian Sanctions," [http://www.whitehouse.gov/the\\_press\\_office/Presidential-Notice-on-Iranian-Sanctions/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Presidential-Notice-on-Iranian-Sanctions/); David E. Sanger, "The US May Drop Key Condition for Talks with Iran," *New York Times*, April 14, 2009, [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/14/world/middleeast/14diplo.html?\\_r=1&hp](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/14/world/middleeast/14diplo.html?_r=1&hp); AIPAC, "Senator Barack Obama, AIPAC Policy Conference 2008," June 4, 2008, [http://www.aipac.org/Publications/SpeechesByPolicymakers/PC\\_08\\_Obama.pdf](http://www.aipac.org/Publications/SpeechesByPolicymakers/PC_08_Obama.pdf); Congressional Research Service, "Iran: US Concerns and Policy Responses," March 2009, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL32048.pdf>; Congressional Research Service, "Iran's Activities and Influence in Iraq," February 2009, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS22323.pdf>; Congressional Research Service, "The Iran Sanctions Act," August 2008, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RS20871.pdf>; White House, "Joint Statement by President Dmitry Medvedev of the Russian Republic and Barack Obama of the United States," [http://www.whitehouse.gov/the\\_press\\_office/Joint-Statement-by-President-Dmitriy-Medvedev-of-the-Russian-Federation-and-President-Barack-Obama-of-the-United-States-of-America/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Joint-Statement-by-President-Dmitriy-Medvedev-of-the-Russian-Federation-and-President-Barack-Obama-of-the-United-States-of-America/); White House Blog, "Presidential Statement on the Iranian Sanctions," [http://www.whitehouse.gov/the\\_press\\_office/Presidential-Message-on-Iranian-Sanctions/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Presidential-Message-on-Iranian-Sanctions/).

Expediency Council. They are also limited by the overall clout of the Ayatollah Khamenie, who pulls most of the most important strings in the country. There is also the political inertia that seems to dominate the political situation in Iran that makes all decisions with regard to negotiations and agreements with the US predicated on the perceptions of past wrongs, such as the 1953 coup, the support of Iraq in the Iran-Iraq War, the shooting down of the Iranian aircraft by the Vincennes, and more such grievances.

On the American side there are grievances related to the 444 days that the hostages from the US embassy were held, the Iranian-backed Hezbollah kidnappings and murders of US officials and citizens, the 1983 bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut, the bombing of the US Embassy in Beirut, the backing of Hamas and other such groups by some in Iran, and Iran's intransigence with regard to any peace moves between the Arabs and the Israelis. Additionally there are anxieties and animosities developed over the years around Iran's nuclear ambitions, their actions in Iraq and throughout the Arab world, their activities in Central Asia, and much more. It will take a lot of healing of old wounds to make any real negotiations toward better US-Iranian relations to work.

President Obama's Nowruz greeting is a step in the right direction.<sup>(29)</sup> It showed a nuanced understanding of Iranian culture and history that has not been seen in the upper reaches of the US government for many years. It also showed respect for Iranian culture and history, and for the importance of Iranian art, history, and science. This may be the beginning of an opening that could have many surprises in it. However, the Obama Administration is holding its cards close to the vest on its thinking.

The Obama Administration recently said that they would meet with the Iranians to discuss nuclear and other issues. This is a potential game-changer. However, the Iranians must show some movement on their side to make this game-changer effective in helping to solve the many problems between the US and Iran.

It is difficult to judge right now who will be the point person on the US discussions with Iran. One could guess that there will be many meetings between mid-level negotiators and staffers in very quiet settings without the press and the public eye before there will be high-profile meetings with higher level officials.

The discussions amongst the American "thought leaders" about who will be in charge of Iran policy for the US seem to be rather moot given what seems to be the President's personality. He will ultimately be in charge, with Secretary Clinton, Dennis Ross and others taking on subordinate rolls in the process. Neverthe-

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29. White House Blog, "A New Year, A New Beginning," <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nowruz/>. Nowruz means "New Day." This is considered by Iranians and many others to be the first day of Spring and the beginning of a new year. Surely some hope that we may have some new beginnings with Iran in order to help develop better relations with this important country in the region, but there are many difficult barriers, problems and issues to overcome for both sides for this to happen.

less, expect that there will be many people involved in trying to sway this process through informal and formal advising of the President, his advisors, diplomats and others.

Iran's occasionally intrusive relations with Afghanistan and Central Asia need to be considered. Also there are parts of US relations with Iran that must be improved before true dialogue on the really big issues, like the nuclear one, can begin.

The biggest issue is clearly the nuclear one. President Obama has stated on many occasions that a nuclear Iran would be a threat to the region and to the world. He does not mean an Iran with nuclear electricity, which Iran has the right to, given its membership in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT),<sup>(30)</sup> but an Iran with a nuclear explosive device. The sense amongst many is that this administration will use its power to stop this from happening, as candidate Obama stated during his 2008 AIPAC policy conference speech.<sup>(31)</sup>

The military option has not been taken off the table for leverage purposes, and also for political reasons. Sanctions on Iran have continued as they were under the Bush administration because the Obama administration has not seen much change in the behavior of the Iranian regime. On the other hand Iran has been invited by the US to attend an upcoming conference on Afghanistan.<sup>(32)</sup> Such a thawing should not be considered a huge change just yet. There is a lot to be ironed out.

The US could, in return for Iran's turning away from any nuclear ambitions beyond producing electricity, medical devices and the like, reduce sanctions against Iran in a step-by-step manner, such as what occurred with Libya in recent years. Needed investments into Iran then could begin to pick up pace gradually.

One of the most important investments that Iran needs to develop is in natural gas, especially at its South Pars field.<sup>(33)</sup> Iran is the second largest source of natural gas in the world, yet it is a net importer of natural gas. Part of this is due to bad energy and economic policies in Iran, but also due to pressures put on some international investors. Iran also needs investment in its oil sector, which has a prob-

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30. IAEA, *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons*, <http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Infcircs/Others/infcirc140.pdf>. See also Nuclear Threat Initiative, "Iran Profile," [http://www.nti.org/e\\_research/profiles/Iran/index.html](http://www.nti.org/e_research/profiles/Iran/index.html).

31. See AIPAC, "Senator Barack Obama, AIPAC Policy Conference 2008," June 4, 2008, [http://www.aipac.org/Publications/SpeechesByPolicymakers/PC\\_08\\_Obama.pdf](http://www.aipac.org/Publications/SpeechesByPolicymakers/PC_08_Obama.pdf).

32. Dusan Stojanovic, "Iran Weighing US invitation to Afghan Conference," *FoxNews.com*, March 6, 2009, <http://www.foxnews.com/wires/2009Mar06/0,4670,EUIranUSAfghanistan,00.html>; Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Afghanistan Conference 2009*, <http://www.minbuza.nl/en/themes/international-cooperation/afghanistan/afghanistan-conference-2009>; Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Afghanistan Conference 2009: Representatives*, [http://afghanistanconference2009.minbuza.nl/res/00266/img\\_user/PDF/delegation\\_leaders\\_2.pdf](http://afghanistanconference2009.minbuza.nl/res/00266/img_user/PDF/delegation_leaders_2.pdf).

33. United States Department of Energy, Energy Information Administration, "Iran Country Profile: Natural Gas," <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Iran/NaturalGas.html>.

lem with the maintenance of fields and infrastructure. Its refinery sector is badly in need of massive investments. Iran imports from 40-50% of its gasoline.<sup>(34)</sup> This is yet another example of the bankruptcy of some Iranian economic policies, but also an indication of some openings for give-and-take in US-Iranian relations.

Iran could also benefit from investments in other industries. Yet even more important than improving the investment climate in Iran is rationalizing the energy and economic policy environment in Iran, but that can only be done by the Iranians. Iran's banks have been under great strictures because of the sanctions imposed by the US and others. Opening up Iranian banks, slowly, to the world banking and payments system, might be a good way to help develop the Iranian banking system. This could be yet another carrot to the Iranians. But there will be lots of sticks held in place as US-Iranian relations develop under the Obama Administration.

Iran could be helpful in supporting President Obama's new focus on the US war front: Pakistan and Afghanistan. This emphasis is becoming clearer by the day as Pakistan heads into more dangerous and uncertain times. The US will likely switch its efforts eastward, and Iran is right nearby to either help or hinder. President Obama seems to realize how important it is to work with the Iranians on certain issues, like in handling the Taliban. The Iranian regime saw many of its diplomats slaughtered by the Taliban and Al-Qaeda.<sup>(35)</sup> The Taliban and Al-Qaeda see Shia as heretics. Hence these violent Sunni extremists are enemies of Iran in many ways. Iran was pleased when the Taliban fell after the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. They have not been happy with the resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan and in Pakistan. Iran could be very helpful in mitigating the Taliban and Al-Qaeda threats in, and coming from, Pakistan and Afghanistan. It could be greatly to their advantage to work with the US on this, just as it could be greatly to the US' advantage to work with the Iranians. The US and Iran have common

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34. Pierre Tristam, "Iran Paradox: Why the Second Biggest Oil Reserves Imports Gasoline," *Middleeast.About.Com*, June 11, 2008, <http://middleeast.about.com/b/2008/06/11/iran-paradox-why-2nd-biggest-oil-producer-imports-gasoline.htm>; Nazila Fathi and Jad Mouawad, "Unrest Grows Amid Gasoline Rationing in Iran," *New York Times*, June 29, 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/06/29/world/middleeast/29iran.html>; See the refining section in EIA.DOE.GOV, <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Iran/Oil.html>; STRATFOR, "Iran: Gasoline Imports Expected to Increase 37 Percent," [http://www.stratfor.com/sitrep/20090430\\_iran\\_gasoline\\_imports\\_expected\\_increase\\_37\\_percent](http://www.stratfor.com/sitrep/20090430_iran_gasoline_imports_expected_increase_37_percent); AIPAC, "Iran Refined Petroleum Sanctions Act of 2009," [http://www.aipac.org/Publications/AIPACAnalysesBillsSummaries/Bill\\_Summary\\_-\\_IRPSA\(1\).pdf](http://www.aipac.org/Publications/AIPACAnalysesBillsSummaries/Bill_Summary_-_IRPSA(1).pdf); *Wall Street Journal*, "How to Put the Squeeze on Iran," [http://online.wsj.com/article/SB122654026060023113.html?mod=todays\\_us\\_opinion](http://online.wsj.com/article/SB122654026060023113.html?mod=todays_us_opinion); UPI.COM, "Iran to Import Gasoline Through June," [http://www.upi.com/Energy\\_Resources/2009/03/16/Iran-to-import-gas-through-June/UPI-73121237212291/](http://www.upi.com/Energy_Resources/2009/03/16/Iran-to-import-gas-through-June/UPI-73121237212291/).

35. Douglas Jehl, "Iran Holds Taliban Responsible for 9 Diplomats' Deaths," *New York Times*, September 11, 1998, <http://www.nytimes.com/1998/09/11/world/iran-holds-taliban-responsible-for-9-diplomats-deaths.html>.

enemies in the Taliban and Al-Qaeda.<sup>(36)</sup>

Iran could also be helpful in stemming the drugs trade coming out of Afghanistan. The Taliban and other criminal groups find a good part of their funding in the drugs trade. The US wants this stopped. The Iranians want this stopped. So the two countries have yet another common enemy.

Iran still openly supports Hezbollah and has cooperated with Syria in attempting to destabilize and stoke sectarian strife in Lebanon. Iran, along with Syria, aided Hezbollah in its recent military ventures against Israel. Iran also openly supports Hamas.

Iran over the years has tried to interfere with the peace process whenever and wherever it has had the opportunity. Its support for Hamas has had the effect of dragging out and disturbing whatever gains could have been made, even in the face of some Israeli intransigence. The extremists in Israel are the main groups stopping the peace process from going forward from the Israeli side. The extremists in Hamas, with their backing from Iran, Syria and others are the main groups stopping the peace process from the Palestinian side. Iran could be a real wild card in any upcoming efforts to help build peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians. The same is true for Israeli home-grown and imported extremists.

Iran made some incendiary comments about Egypt, a US ally, and its President Hosni Mubarak. Some believe that Iran is trying to stir up trouble in Egypt. Others believe that Iran is trying to stir up trouble in the Shia communities of the Gulf Cooperation Council, especially in Bahrain. Its recent comment about Bahrain being a part of Iraq was not helpful in the development of its relations with the GCC and the Sunni Muslim world. Morocco severed diplomatic ties with Iran recently due to what it saw as improper Iranian activities in Morocco.

In a much wider scope one could see Iran as either part of the solution, or worsening Shia-Sunni relations. The Obama administration sees the deepening divide between the Shia and the Sunni in some areas as a potential source of greater conflict. However, it is also wary of the joining of Shia extremism with Sunni extremism in the Iran-Hamas connections.

These Shia-Sunni complexities span the globe, not just in the Middle East. Any movements forward on this front need to be done multilaterally, inclusive of the US, the Sunni Arabs, the Kurdish Arabs, and the Shia and Sunni in Pakistan, Central Asia, Russia, and Africa and beyond. Such moves will have to proceed with great caution and nuance, and it seems that President Obama understands this. One could hope that President Obama will engage more with some of the moderate religious leaders in the Sunni and Shia worlds to help alleviate some of the tensions that straddle the borders of these two groups.

There are many options for getting Central Asian and Caspian oil and gas to Europe. Iran's policies and the reactions of the US and others to them have blocked

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36. Shona Bhattacharyya, "US, Iran Find Common Cause in Afghanistan," *France24*, March 31, 2009, <http://www.france24.com/en/20090331-iran-us-find-common-cause-afghanistan-conference-the-hague-clinton>.

the development of pipeline systems like the TransCaspian and Nabucco. Iran has massive natural gas reserves, mostly in the southeast, and these reserves could be connected with future pipelines from Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan, then, directed toward Europe. This is so far a non-starter given the relations between many European countries and Iran, and the US and Iran. The recent natural gas deal between Azerbaijan and Russia may have postponed these deals even further.<sup>(37)</sup>

If the Obama Administration and others succeed in solving the Iranian nuclear issue, and in assuaging mutual animosities between the US and Iran, then these pipeline systems might move forward, thereby improving European energy security. So far this energy security enhancement is seen as not worth giving in to Iranian demands and Iranian activities.

There are also options for Iranian natural gas going to India and Pakistan via pipeline, Qatari and Iranian gas being combined and then sent via pipeline to India and Pakistan, or even Iranian and Qatari gas being liquefied and sent all over the world, including to possible gasification plants in Ghwadar in Pakistan, and then on to China and more.<sup>(38)</sup> There are a lot of energy and pipeline politics involved in US-Iranian relations.

The complexities of US-Iranian relations will be dealt with as well as possible by the intellectual Obama and his staff. However, this does not mean that problems will be solved, or even managed better, given the chances for real problems cropping up independent of the best efforts.

The question about whether moves by the US should occur before or after the June elections in Iran seems to be a question to elicit delays. There are many ticking clocks involved in US-Iranian relations. The Obama administration realizes this; therefore, it may move faster than expected.

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37. Bruce Pannier, "Nabucco Chief Eyes Iranian Oil Despite US Objections," *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, June 23, 2008, [http://www.rferl.org/content/Nabucco\\_Chief\\_Eyes\\_Iranian\\_Russian\\_Gas/1144787.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/Nabucco_Chief_Eyes_Iranian_Russian_Gas/1144787.html); Nicholas Norling, "Gazprom's Monopoly, Nabucco's Potentials: Strategic Decisions for Europe," [http://www.rferl.org/content/Nabucco\\_Chief\\_Eyes\\_Iranian\\_Russian\\_Gas/1144787.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/Nabucco_Chief_Eyes_Iranian_Russian_Gas/1144787.html); *PressTV*, "US Sees Iran as a Potential Nabucco Supplier," <http://www.presstv.com/detail.aspx?id=92584&sectionid=351020103>; STRATFOR, "Central Asian Energy: Circumventing Russia," [http://www.stratfor.com/theme/central\\_asian\\_energy\\_circumventing\\_russia](http://www.stratfor.com/theme/central_asian_energy_circumventing_russia); United States Department of Energy, Energy Information Administration, "Azerbaijan Energy Profile," <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Azerbaijan/Background.html>; DW-WORLD.DE, "EU Seals Watered-Down Gas Pipeline Deal with Eastern Energy States," May 8, 2009, <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,4235916,00.html>; EURACIV, "Putin and Berlusconi Seal South Stream Pipeline Deal," May 18, 2009, <http://www.euractiv.com/en/energy/putin-berlusconi-seal-south-stream-pipeline-deal/article-182435>.

38. *Tehran Times*, "Iran's Aggressive Gas Export Plans," September 23, 2007, [http://www.tehrantimes.com/index\\_View.asp?code=153498](http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=153498); PetroPars.com, "Natural Gas," <http://www.petropars.com/AboutIran/OilGasInIran/NaturalGas/tabid/302/Default.aspx>; *Iran Daily*, "LNG Agreement with Oman," October 5, 2008, <http://www.iran-daily.com/1387/3236/pdf/i4.pdf>; United States Department of Energy, Energy Information Administration, "Energy Profile: Iran: Natural Gas," <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Iran/NaturalGas.html>; Borzou Daragahi, "Iran Signs \$3.2 Billion Gas Deal With China," *LA Times*, March 15, 2009, <http://articles.latimes.com/2009/mar/15/world/fg-iran-china15>; Anne Korin and Gal Luft, "Ahmedinijad's Gas Revolution: A Plan to Defeat Sanctions," Institute for the Analysis of Global Security, December 2006, <http://www.iags.org/iran121206.pdf>; World Gas Intelligence, "Iran's Gas Ambitions Undaunted," [http://www.energyintel.com/print\\_me.asp?document\\_id=240169](http://www.energyintel.com/print_me.asp?document_id=240169); Florence C. Fee, "The Russian-Iranian Energy Relationship," *Middle East Economic Survey* vol. XLIX no. 11 (March 12, 2007), <http://www.mees.com/postedarticles/oped/v50n11-50D01.htm>.

A quote from candidate Obama's 2008 talk at AIPAC is telling:

"If you abandon your dangerous nuclear program, your support for terror, and your threats to Israel there will be meaningful incentives, including the lifting of sanctions and political and economic integration with the international community. If you refuse, we will ratchet up the pressure. My Presidency will strengthen our hand as we restore our standing. Our willingness to pursue diplomacy will make it easier to mobilize others to join our cause. If Iran fails to change course when presented with this choice by the United States it will be clear to the people of Iran and to the world that the Iranian regime is the author of its own isolation and that will strengthen our hand with Russia and China as we insist on stronger sanctions in the Security Council. And we should work with Europe, Japan, and the Gulf States to find every avenue outside the United Nations to isolate the Iranian regime from cutting off loan guarantees and expanding financial sanctions to banning the export of refined petroleum to Iran to boycotting firms associated with the Iranian Revolutionary Guard whose Quds forces have rightly been labeled a terrorist organization."<sup>(39)</sup>

President Obama has stated that he has always seen Iran as a greater threat to Israel than Iraq, or any other threat. How he sees it as a threat to the US has not been clarified.

Iran has been heavily involved in Iraq, sometimes in a counterproductive and destructive way from the American perspective. One thing that could help bring Iran and the US closer is developing better relations to address the situation in Iraq, and creating cooperative rather than competitive relations overall. That would require both sides to make some significant moves. Some of those moves started under the Bush Administration.

*Iraq is clearly way up on the agenda.*<sup>(40)</sup>

We need to give the Iraqis and the leaders and people of the region some sense that the economy and society of Iraq are heading forward. Paul Collier at Oxford writes that in countries that have experienced conflict, if the economic and politi-

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39. AIPAC, "Senator Barack Obama, AIPAC Policy Conference, June 2008," June 4, 2008, [http://www.aipac.org/Publications/SpeechesByPolicymakers/PC\\_08\\_Obama.pdf](http://www.aipac.org/Publications/SpeechesByPolicymakers/PC_08_Obama.pdf).

40. White House Blog, "Secretary Clinton on the Middle East," <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/09/03/03/Secretary-Clinton-in-the-Middle-East/>; White House Blog, "The President Speaks to the Troops," <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/09/04/07/The-President-Speaks-to-the-Troops/>; White House Blog, "The Student Roundtable in Turkey," <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/pg2/>; United States Institute of Peace, "Iraq and the Obama Administration," [http://www.usip.org/pubs/usipeace\\_briefings/2008/1218\\_iraq\\_obama.html](http://www.usip.org/pubs/usipeace_briefings/2008/1218_iraq_obama.html); United States Institute of Peace and the Stimson Center, "Iraq, Its Neighbors and the Obama Administration," [http://www.usip.org/pubs/working\\_papers/wp8\\_syria\\_saudiArabia.pdf](http://www.usip.org/pubs/working_papers/wp8_syria_saudiArabia.pdf); White House, "Remarks of President Obama to the Turkish Parliament," [http://www.whitehouse.gov/the\\_press\\_office/Remarks-By-President-Obama-To-The-Turkish-Parliament/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-By-President-Obama-To-The-Turkish-Parliament/); White House, "Remarks of President Obama and Prime Minister Maliki to the Press," [http://www.whitehouse.gov/the\\_press\\_office/Remarks-by-President-Obama-and-PM-Maliki-to-the-press-4-7-09/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-President-Obama-and-PM-Maliki-to-the-press-4-7-09/); White House, "Remarks of President Obama: Responsibly Ending the War in Iraq," February 27, 2009, [http://www.whitehouse.gov/the\\_press\\_office/Remarks-of-President-Barack-Obama-Responsibly-Ending-the-War-in-Iraq/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-of-President-Barack-Obama-Responsibly-Ending-the-War-in-Iraq/); United States Government and The Government of the Republic of Iraq, "Agreement between the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq on the Withdrawal of United States Forces from Iraq and the Organization of Their Activities During Their Temporary Presence in Iraq," [http://www.mnf-iraq.com/images/CGs\\_Messages/security\\_agreement.pdf](http://www.mnf-iraq.com/images/CGs_Messages/security_agreement.pdf).

cal systems do not develop properly and quickly, most particularly in multi-ethnic societies like Iraq, then those countries will likely experience trouble.<sup>(41)</sup>

We have lost ground in the Arab street due to what has happened in Iraq. The situation in Iraq is a recruiting tool for extremists in many countries of the region. We need to focus on basic needs and getting the Iraqis back on their feet. We need Iraq to be Iraq, and let the organic nature of its development advance.

Iran is, other than the US, the most powerful player there, and in certain situations is even more powerful than the US. We need to tread carefully on the Iraq-Iran nexus. We also need to focus a nuanced eye on the Kurdish situation.

President Obama has moved fast on Iraq. He is working off the “Agreement between the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq on the Withdrawal of United States Forces from Iraq and the Organization of Their Activities During Their Temporary Presence in Iraq”<sup>(42)</sup> and “Strategic Framework Agreement for a Relationship of Friendship and Cooperation between the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq,”<sup>(43)</sup> which were signed in November of 2008. President Obama may move forward with these documents in a fairly brisk manner. Frankly, he does not have much choice because these documents have time limits attached to them. Some of what we will see in the coming months and years in US-Iraqi relations will have the past stamped on them, but the Obama Administration will also give a strong stamp on these activities and policies. A powerful indication of that is the speech he gave in February 2009 to the Marines at Camp Lejeune.<sup>(44)</sup>

The President is not walking into these changes with naïveté. He gets it:

But let there be no doubt: Iraq is not yet secure, and there will be difficult days ahead. Violence will continue to be a part of life in Iraq. Too many fundamental political questions about Iraq’s future remain unresolved. Too many Iraqis are still displaced or destitute. Declining oil revenues will put an added strain on a government that has had difficulty delivering basic services. Not all of Iraq’s neighbors are contributing to its security. Some are working at times to undermine it. And even as Iraq’s government is on a surer footing, it is not yet a full partner – politically and economically – in the region, or with the international community.

In short, today there is a renewed cause for hope in Iraq, but that hope rests upon an emerging foundation.<sup>(45)</sup>

Part of the plan is to carefully draw down the US military at given intervals and in given amounts over the next many months until, “Let me say this as plainly

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41. “Home Page: Paul Collier,” <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~econpco/> (Last Updated August 2008).

42. [http://www.mnf-iraq.com/images/CGs\\_Messages/security\\_agreement.pdf](http://www.mnf-iraq.com/images/CGs_Messages/security_agreement.pdf).

43. [http://www.mnf-iraq.com/images/CGs\\_Messages/strategic\\_framework\\_agreement.pdf](http://www.mnf-iraq.com/images/CGs_Messages/strategic_framework_agreement.pdf).

44. <http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/February/20090227131653eafas0.5627405.html&distid=ucs>

45. <http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/February/20090227131653eafas0.5627405.html&distid=ucs>

as I can: by August 31, 2010, our combat mission in Iraq will end.”<sup>(46)</sup>

This drawdown and what the President calls the responsible ending of the war in Iraq will have some good and some tough days, but he is committed to ending this. There may be troops left after August 31, 2010, but they will not have a direct military mission and will likely be involved in helping the Iraqi military and police develop greater capacity to deal with security problems.

Every so often they may be asked by the Iraqi government to help on a directed mission to take care of a threat, but these will likely be infrequent. Aspects of troop withdrawal and the transfer of control and responsibility to the Iraqis is outlined in the “Agreement between the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq on the Withdrawal of United States Forces from Iraq and the Organization of Their Activities During Their Temporary Presence in Iraq”.<sup>(47)</sup>

US forces, American and other contractors will be subject to Iraqi law. The US forces will still have US officers in charge, but the Iraqi government will have an increasing role in some strategic inputs as time approaches the ultimate date of December 31, 2011, when, if all goes well, Iraq will return to “the legal and international standing it enjoyed prior to the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 661 (1990)”.<sup>(48)</sup> This document cannot be fully analyzed here, but it could be a good thing for many involved in these issues to take a hard look at these documents to see where things may be heading.

President Obama’s people are also quite aware of the suspicions that still exist about why the US went into Iraq. In response to this the President has stated:

So to the Iraqi people, let me be clear about America’s intentions. The United States pursues no claim on your territory or your resources. We respect your sovereignty and the tremendous sacrifices you have made for your country. We seek a full transition to Iraqi responsibility for the security of your country. And going forward, we can build a lasting relationship founded upon mutual interests and mutual respect as Iraq takes its rightful place in the community of nations.<sup>(49)</sup>

It seems unlikely that Iraq will be left as Afghanistan was left in the 1980s. The US has learned its lesson. We have agreements in place to work for the development of Iraq, cooperation with Iraq, and more. One could hope that such agreements and actions will bring things toward a better future in Iraq and toward a better future in US-Iraq relations, especially US relations with the people of Iraq.

Iraq is not out of the woods yet. There are simmering sectarian splits. There are outstanding problems associated with the Iraqi refugees in Jordan, Syria, Egypt and elsewhere. There are also problems with the declining oil revenues, and hence declining economic development funds in Iraq. Then there are the problems of water security and even energy security for the Iraqi people.

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46. <http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/February/20090227131653eafas0.5627405.html&distid=ucs>

47. [http://www.mnf-iraq.com/images/CGs\\_Messages/security\\_agreement.pdf](http://www.mnf-iraq.com/images/CGs_Messages/security_agreement.pdf).

48. [http://www.mnf-iraq.com/images/CGs\\_Messages/security\\_agreement.pdf](http://www.mnf-iraq.com/images/CGs_Messages/security_agreement.pdf).

49. <http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/February/20090227131653eafas0.5627405.html&distid=ucs>.

The fact that Iraq has a pile of oil underground does not guarantee energy security for its people if electricity plants are not running, the petrol is not refined, and the natural gas does not get from point A to point B. There is a huge amount of work still left to do on energy and water security in Iraq.<sup>(50)</sup>

Then there are prickly problems, such as Iraq's relations with Iran, drugs and guns trafficking, extremism, the Kurdish desire for independence, what to do with the oil revenues, how to repatriate Iraqi refugees, Iraq's relations with its other neighbors, most particularly Saudi Arabia, and how the Arab world and the rest of the world will treat and work with or against the future of Iraq. One should expect in any event that the US will withdraw its troops, yet continue to work with Iraq on its development, and that this will not be easy.

*Conclusions:*

One of the key words of President Obama's campaign was hope. What the people and leaders of the Middle East and the US need more than hope is mutual and long-term trust to make whatever changes that may develop over the next few months and years of the Obama Presidency work, and work well.

There will be unexpected surprises, lots of losses and wins on many issues, many hopes dashed and others built up and competing interests looking for their pieces of the pie of the Middle East, and US-Middle East relations.

One can also be sure that the Obama Administration will bring some hope, but these hopes should be tempered by clear understanding of the realities on the ground. The President is a realist and seems to be person who can handle many ideas at once. He is also a very good communicator. His ability to lead, communicate, and to understand this complex part of the world will likely take up a very large part of his efforts in the next four or more years.

*Inshallah*, the region and the world will be better places after this. But all involved must maintain reasonable expectations given the existing constraints. ■

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50. Please see Paul Sullivan, "Energy and Water Security in Iraq," *International Journal of Iraqi Studies*, forthcoming.

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## Israel and Russia: A pragmatic relationship

Pierre Razoux\*

*Israel and Russia, despite assumptions to the contrary, have fostered a relationship based on mutual interests. Their relationship is based in a history of emigration from Russia to Israel and is sustained by overlapping security, trade and energy interests. Both strive to gain the favor of the Russian-speaking Israeli population, which is large and influential in Israeli politics. Because of their potential to affect each other, the two countries seek to attain consensus on foreign policy issues where possible, but they retain the prerogative to differ where necessary. This relationship may result in a greater role for Russia in the Middle East.*

The recent elections in Israel in which Avigdor Lieberman and his “Russian party” appear to be kingmaker illuminate the complex relations between Israel and Russia. The contradictions of this perplexing odd couple are a constant source of serious concern to the Western and Arab world. Why is it that only six weeks after the verbal clash over the Georgian crisis in August 2008 (when Russia accused Israel of having armed and trained the Georgian army), Russia and Israel abolished their visa regulations,<sup>(1)</sup> thus facilitating reciprocal trade? How do we explain the acceleration of capital flows between the two countries, at a time when world trade is clearly slowing down? And why is it that Moscow, after Washington, is still a destination of choice for Israeli prime ministers, while the Israeli authorities continue to insist that Israel has a special relationship with the United States? Lastly, why is Israel, after the Cold War, one of the very few states in the Middle East to maintain regular relations with Russia? Whereas many Arab states have cold-shouldered their former arms supplier, Moscow, just as it was preparing to deliver sophisticated missile systems to Syria and a nuclear power station to Iran.

For many observers, trapped in Cold War thinking, it is impossible to imagine Israel and Russia, the USSR’s successor, as anything other than irreconcilable adversaries. This perception of Israel as the West’s champion against Soviet-supported Arab countries overlooked the fact that the Arab-Israeli conflict arose from a regional conflict that went beyond the confines of East-West confrontation. It also failed to take into account the deep and longstanding bonds between Israel and Russia, particularly in the area of immigration.

The answers to these questions are to be found in the multiple converging interests that have led Israeli and Russian leaders to establish a realistic, pragmatic

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1. Israel and Russia abolished their bilateral visa regulations in September 2008.

relationship, regardless of different views on certain international issues.

### *Immigration, security, trade and energy: driving forces in the bilateral relationship*

From 1990 to 1995 more than 800,000 Jews from the former USSR emigrated to Israel, in addition to those who settled in other Western countries. The wave of immigration has stabilized since then, although 7,500 Jews continue to arrive every year from Russia and the CIS member states, representing one third of annual emigration to Israel. Today, fifteen per cent of Israeli citizens and thirteen per cent of Knesset members were born in the former USSR and speak fluent Russian; indeed, certain areas of Israeli cities have become fully-fledged Russian-speaking enclaves where the Cyrillic alphabet has replaced Hebrew and many shops have had to adapt the range of food products on their shelves.

According to a number of Israeli experts, the integration of the Jewish communities from the former USSR (just under a million people) is perceived as “an overall success” and a “bridge between the two countries”, despite its ups and downs, the serious mafia problems it has created, and even though the rabbinate suspect that a significant proportion of Israelis of Soviet origin are not Jewish and have immigrated to Israel only in search of better economic prospects. Whatever the truth is, this massive flow of immigrants seems to have given Israel a new injection of vitality. The Russian-born soldiers have integrated by paying “the price of blood” in Lebanon or in the Occupied Territories during the second Intifada. By all accounts, they displayed tremendous fighting spirit during the war in summer 2006 between Israel and Hezbollah, particularly in the special units. They are the ones, it is said, who have suffered the greatest proportional losses and received the highest number of decorations for valour.<sup>(2)</sup> Today they are estimated to represent almost 25% of combat personnel (appreciably more than the percentage of the population that they comprise). Some of them, Chechnya veterans, have been regrouped in special units of crack marksmen, said to be highly regarded by the Israeli military staff.

In addition to immigration issues, the other factors that have reinforced bilateral cooperation are security concerns and the common fear of radical Islamism. As underlined by Yevgeny Satanovsky, President of the Russian Institute of Middle East Studies: “Israel and Russia have a common enemy in Islamic terrorism.” Nearly 20% of the population of the Russia Federation in fact are Muslims, and the Kremlin wants to make sure, no matter what the cost, that this fraction of the population does not come under the influence of radical Islamism, which it believes would seriously destabilize the country. Since the late 1990s, and especially since 11 September 2001, the two capitals have strengthened their ties in the fight against terrorism. This new form of cooperation, which grew from

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2. Interview with Avi Issacharoff, military specialist for the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz*, 26 May 2008.

exchanges of information between special services and intelligence agencies, has expanded to include actions of a more operational nature. Russian Special Forces have applied the Israeli experience of street fighting during an uprising to their operations in the North Caucasus, while Israeli commandos have benefited from Russian feedback about their experience in Chechnya. Joint exercises take place regularly.<sup>(3)</sup> Russia is believed to have even sent experts to Israel to assess the feasibility of constructing a concrete wall around Chechnya, inspired by the Israeli Wall around the West Bank.

Israelis and Russians also share important commercial interests. Their relations in this area have developed rapidly since the signing of three important agreements during the period 1993-1995.<sup>(4)</sup> Today the average volume of trade between the two countries exceeds 1.5 billion dollars and is supervised by an Israel-Russia Economic Council chaired by a Russian-speaking Israeli minister. The number of Russian tourists visiting Israel has doubled every year for the past three years and reached 250,000 in 2008. Ambitious projects supervised by the Israeli Ministry of Science and the Russian Foundation for Basic Research are in the pipeline, in the areas of nanotechnology, new generation computers and renewable energy sources. Cooperation in space technology is also intense. The Israelis have entrusted the Russians with the launching of several of their satellites<sup>(5)</sup> and are planning to set up a joint space committee.

To enhance their security and commercial exchanges, Israel and Russia have been engaged in military cooperation under the terms of a special agreement signed in 1995, which led to the establishment of bilateral links between their defence industries. In addition to high tech, Israeli industrialists have become specialized in the upgrading of earlier Soviet weapon systems. Israelis and Russians undoubtedly clinched one of their best deals in October 2003, when they signed an agreement for delivery to India of airborne early warning and radar control systems combining Israeli technology with a Russian aircraft platform.<sup>(6)</sup> Since then, the Israelis have sold the Russians surveillance drones to help them monitor Chechnya.

Since early 2000, the bilateral trade relationship between Israel and Russia has included energy; before then Israel had diversified its supply sources very carefully. Subsequently, however, Ariel Sharon's government and then Ehud Olmert's government increased their energy dependence on Moscow. Hydrocarbon fuel deliveries from Russia are believed to represent more than half of Israeli

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3. *USA Today*, "Israel sends experts to help Russia", 15 September 2004.

4. A civilian air transport agreement (23 September 1993), a trading and economic cooperation agreement (27 April 1994) and a telecommunications agreement (21 November 1995).

5. The Israeli AMOS-3 communications satellite was launched into orbit on 30 April 2008 by a Russian Zenit launcher from the Baikonur site launch site.

6. Israel and Russia have excellent commercial and military relations with India and China, whom they regard as special partners.

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gas and oil purchases. This choice is dictated, it would appear, by proximity and advantageous prices, as well as by pressure from Russian-speaking Israeli ministers. In 2003, as further enticement for their Israeli partners, the Russians reactivated the Ashkelon-Eilat oil pipeline, which transits through Israel, bypassing the Suez Canal and allowing Russian oil to be exported more rapidly to Asia.<sup>(7)</sup> The Israelis receive royalties on the oil transported via this route. Since then, realizing the risks of energy dependence on Russia, in an attempt to diversify their oil supplies the Israeli authorities have taken an interest in the famous Bakou-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline. Privately, a number of Israeli officials admit that from now on they want to procure their oil and gas supplies from Azerbaijan.

In order not to offend Russia and to give substance to its alliance with Turkey, Israel also participated in the “Blue Stream” project, a gigantic undersea gas pipeline that will transport 16 billion cubic metres per year of Russian-produced natural gas to Turkey (by 2010). The Israeli government is currently engaged in negotiations with Turkey and Russia for an undersea extension of this gas pipeline to Israel. The Israelis are also holding parallel talks with Ankara on a proposal to construct an undersea oil pipeline which would connect the Turkish oil terminal at Ceyhan to the port of Haifa and would allow direct transport to Israel of oil transiting through the BTC.

### *Capacity to inflict mutual harm*

Israel and Russia’s converging interests do not prevent friction between them in both foreign and domestic policy. The Israeli authorities still suspect the Kremlin of maintaining trading relations that run counter to Israeli security interests. For a long time, in fact, the USSR supplied arms to regimes that were the most hostile to Israel. Today Russia continues to arm Syria and other Arab countries that have not recognized Israel and is participating in the construction of the nuclear reactor at Bushehr in Iran. The Kremlin, which is a member of the Quartet (with the US, the UN & the EU) and co-sponsor of the peace process, firmly supports the Palestinian Authority and does not shrink from holding talks with Hamas, therefore arousing the ire of the Israeli government.

Moscow, in turn, is irritated by the Israeli government’s systematic alignment with US policy in the Middle East, which prevents Russia from becoming more involved in the region. Above all, the Kremlin cannot bear the fact that Israel has close relations with countries trying to break free of Russian influence, such as Ukraine and Georgia, both candidates for NATO membership.

On the domestic front, Israel and Moscow court the Russian-speaking Jewish communities, because of their electoral weight (in Israel) and their political and economic influence (in Russia). In Russia, the Jewish community is well

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7. This oil pipeline, the result of Israeli-Iranian cooperation (the Eilat-Ashkelon Pipeline Company), was no longer in operation after the fall of the Shah of Iran in 1979.

assimilated, with a third estimated to be living in the Moscow area. In Israel, successive Prime Ministers have recognized the clout wielded by the Russian-speaking community and its impact on the precarious equilibrium of a complex and traditionally fragmented political situation. Experience has clearly shown how volatile this predominantly right-wing electorate can be. The way it votes is conditioned by the Russian-speaking community's interests and can swing the elections either one way or another. That is why they are so careful not to offend Avigdor Lieberman, the new Minister of Foreign Affairs and leader of the Israel Beitenou "Russian" party, which has 16 key votes in the Knesset. A constant in the Israeli Russian-speaking electorate is its support for the policies of Vladimir Putin, as repeatedly stressed by Arkady Gaydamak, the oligarch who founded the "Social Justice" party and ran for mayor of Jerusalem. The Israeli government knows, therefore, that it would be risky to openly criticize Putin's policies. On the other hand, it knows that the numerous oligarchs who have sought refuge in Israel or have an Israeli passport can be a powerful lever to influence Russian financial and political life. The Israeli authorities are aware of the dangers of this double-edged weapon, since clearly most oligarchs have at the very least suspicious links with the increasingly powerful organized crime networks in Israel. They have no compunction about arms trafficking, and brazenly supply terrorist organizations of every colour.

The Israeli government has one more type of leverage to use over Russian authorities: media coverage of the anti-Semitism that is never far from the surface in Russia. According to a survey by the Moscow Expertisa agency published on 16 March 2005, two thirds of the Russian population hold nationalist and xenophobic opinions. Forty per cent of the persons questioned, annoyed by the power many oligarchs have, think that Jewish influence on public life should be curbed.<sup>(8)</sup> In Moscow there have been several attacks over the last few years on synagogues and Israeli diplomats. Every time a serious incident occurs, the Israeli authorities put pressure on the Kremlin and threaten to alert international public opinion. On each occasion Vladimir Putin condemns the anti-Semitic attacks and takes steps to resolve the issue. As a token of goodwill to the Jewish community, in 2007 he lost no time in appointing Mikhail Fradkov, former Prime Minister (2004-2007), who makes no secret of his Jewish origins, to the greatly coveted position as leader of the Russian Federation's Foreign Intelligence Service. It is a *modus vivendi* that seems to work, since the foreign media only rarely report these anti-Semitic incidents, preferring instead to highlight incidents that are far less frequent but affect certain Western countries that have complex relations with Israel.

On the whole, the balance of power today seems to be tilted in favour of Russia, as it has more ways to exert pressure on Israel. Israel has fewer means at its disposal to pressure Moscow, especially now that the general elections are in sight.

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8. Poll published by *Expertisa agency* on 16 March 2005.

### *A necessarily pragmatic relationship*

Israel and Russia face the same dilemma: how to promote their trading interests, be they arms sales or energy contracts, without harming each other's political and security interests. There is an easy answer to this: by constantly seeking consensus and by avoiding dogmatic discussions. As Sergei Lavrov, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, constantly reiterates: "Russian policy is neither pro-Arab nor pro-Israeli. It is aimed at securing Russian national interests. Maintaining close and friendly ties with Arab states and Israel is among them."<sup>(9)</sup>

This pragmatism does not prevent either of the capitals from occasionally adopting a tougher attitude, as we saw during the recent Georgian crisis, which highlighted Israel's "flexibility" with regard to Russia and its ability to decide where its priorities lie. By late 2007, foreseeing an imminent conflict between Moscow and Tbilisi, Israel reduced its military cooperation with Georgia, just as Israeli industrialists were putting pressure on the government to step up its arms sales to Tbilisi.<sup>(10)</sup> Tension worsened on 20 April 2008 when a Georgian reconnaissance drone delivered by Israel was shot down over Abkhazia. On 5 August 2008 the Israeli government, afraid of finding itself in an awkward position with Russia, openly announced its decision to end its military cooperation with Georgia, thus sending a very clear signal to Moscow. Russia is equally capable of taking a pragmatic approach in order to save its relationship with Israel. To please the Israeli government, the Kremlin decided to forego delivery to Syria and Iran of new generation missiles, particularly the famous S-300 (SA-20), regarded as excellent anti-aircraft missiles able to threaten Israeli air superiority.<sup>(11)</sup> It also slowed down its nuclear cooperation with Iran. As Sergei Lavrov continues to emphasize to his Western and Israeli interlocutors, Moscow "is committed to preventing Iran from acquiring a military nuclear capability."<sup>(12)</sup> In a similar vein, he recently proposed that Russia should contribute to the indirect peace negotiations between Israel and Syria, because of its close relations with both players. Both sides seek to nurture areas of mutually over-lapping self-interest and to ignore areas of disagreement wherever possible, for as long as possible.

### *The Iranian crisis: the next test for the bilateral relationship*

Despite the apparent complicity between Israel and Moscow on a number of issues, the Iranian nuclear crisis is still a real cause of friction between Israel and

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9. Interviewed by Sergey Borisov, "Russia and Israel to join forces in anti-terrorist cooperation," *Pravda*, 7 September 2004.

10. Amos Harel, "Israel predicted Georgia and Russia headed for war in 2007," *Ha'aretz*, 14 August 2008.

11. Guysen Israel News, 10 October 2008.

12. Itay Smadja, "Nucléaire iranien: la Russie souffle le chaud et le froid," *Guysen Israel News*, 19 October 2008.

Russia. There is no doubt that the outcome of this crisis, which calls into question the nuclear balance of power that prevailed until recently in the Middle East, will be a test for the future of relations between the two countries.

Up to now, Russia has adapted to Israel's status as an unofficial nuclear power. The Kremlin has pursued a policy of preventing nuclear proliferation, both civil and military, at all costs, particularly in a region as unstable as the Middle East. Like their US counterparts, the Russian leaders thought it was important to minimize the risks of nuclear proliferation spinning out of control and escalating into a crisis. This approach went down well with successive Israeli governments, as one of their priorities had always been to prevent the installation of competing nuclear arsenals in the Middle East, thus safeguarding Israeli monopoly in the area and increasing the effectiveness of their deterrence strategy.

The Kremlin signed a nuclear cooperation agreement with Egypt, at the time of President Mubarak's visit to Moscow on 24 March 2008, and it is currently engaged in an advanced stage of talks with Qatar. What is more serious, from Israel's perspective, is that the Kremlin is pursuing its cooperation with Iran and reaffirming Tehran's right to nuclear energy. This attitude has aroused much criticism in Israel, where some academics have been quick to denounce Moscow's double game and to conclude that the relationship with Russia is just a fool's game.

They are, however, in the minority. On the whole, Israelis continue to see a large number of advantages in a close relationship with Russia, even if they doubt the Kremlin's ability to stop Iran from developing a military nuclear programme. They are afraid that Iran could have an atomic bomb and that if it happens, this will encourage other Arab states like Egypt and Saudi Arabia to acquire their own nuclear capabilities. This is why the Israeli authorities are seriously envisaging military strikes against Iranian nuclear facilities. This assumption seems to have consensus in Israel. Benjamin Netanyahu has never concealed the fact that he would consider recourse to the military option. If this were to occur, how would the Russian authorities react to the probable bombing of the Bushehr nuclear station, where a large number of Russian technicians are permanently employed, when Moscow is allegedly discussing the possibility of constructing another nuclear power station in Iran? What would Russia do to avoid losing face, given that prestige is so important to them? And how would Moscow react to pressure from their Arab customers to punish the Israelis for their attack?

### *The implications for the West and the Arab World*

On balance, the rapprochement between Israel and Russia is real, but it needs to be seen in perspective and must not be overestimated. Each side is convinced of the usefulness of an uninhibited and ambitious partnership that leads to excellent results, but at the same time is aware of its limitations: the context is that of a pragmatic relationship between good neighbours, rather than a sincere friendship based on shared values and proven trustworthiness. It is most certainly an exag-

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generation to talk of enhanced strategic ties between Israel and Russia.

Western and Arab countries must not, however, be alarmed by Israel's relations with the Kremlin. These relations have no "hidden agenda" other than the pragmatic desire to cultivate good relations with Moscow, like the majority of Western and Arab states, and to avoid an exacerbation of tensions that would be of little benefit to anyone and of great detriment to everyone.

One thing is certain: thanks to its newly regained stature, energy resources, and good relations with Israel and a number of Arab countries, Russia seems determined to play an important role once again, in the Mediterranean and also in the Persian Gulf, as demonstrated by its recent political initiatives in the Middle East. This has three consequences. First, NATO countries must not ignore the "Russian" factor when defining its future cooperation with Maghreb, Mashrek, Gulf and EU countries in the framework of the Mediterranean Dialogue or the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, especially when its southern Mediterranean partners, annoyed at seeing the Alliance focus primarily on Gulf security, are questioning the future and relevance of the Mediterranean Dialogue. And, since nature abhors a vacuum, these countries could be tempted to turn once again, albeit momentarily, to a Russia perceived as triumphant and self-assured. As numerous Arab intellectuals stress, there are two aspects of post-communist Russia that attract and reassure Muslim societies: lack of any ideology and lack of a colonial past in the Middle East.

Additionally, Americans and Europeans can hardly afford not to have an energy security debate in a NATO or European Union framework, or in the context of NATO-EU relations. Third, since Moscow is now able to exert real pressure on Jerusalem, it is quite conceivable that the US and Russia might exert joint pressure on Israel to persuade it to be more flexible on certain crucial issues, such as the settlement of the Palestinian issue or the recognition of the two-state solution. It is thus possible to imagine that American and Russian leaderships, each for different reasons, might exert joint pressure on Israel to prevent it from conducting military strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities. A development of this kind could be the precursor of revolutionary change in the Middle East. ■

*In Egypt, the government has undertaken massive efforts to ensure that the sole narrative of the October 1973 war against Israel remains that of a great victory, by stifling counter-narratives and encouraging the perpetuation of the success story even today. President Sadat, faced with a population discouraged by past defeats, especially the loss of the Sinai to Israel in 1967, used this war to his advantage to foster positive public opinion of himself and of Egypt's standing in the region. The kernel of truth in the narrative has allowed Egypt to undergo major changes and reforms that would have been impossible without a sense of success.*

“When we crossed into the Sinai, we ‘crossed’ the defeat [of 1967]. Whatever the outcome of the fighting, the important thing is that we have cleansed ourselves... The world thought [Egypt] had sunk into torpor, but its spirit had not become inert. If it dozed for a while, it woke up quickly, roared, and stood on its feet.”<sup>(1)</sup>

On October 6, 1973, Egypt and Syria launched a surprise attack against Israel in a battle that would become known as the Ramadan War in the Arab world and the Yom Kippur War in Israel and much of the West. Although both the Egyptian and Syrian armies made significant early gains, by the time a cease-fire was implemented on October 25th it was clear that the tide had turned decisively in Israel's favor. Israel ended the war in possession, for the first time, of Egyptian land west of the Suez Canal – putting the Israeli army within 75 miles of Cairo. The Egyptian Third Army, trapped by an Israeli unit led by Ariel Sharon, was totally encircled and saved from destruction only by the efforts of Henry Kissinger.<sup>(2)</sup> The result for the Syrians was even worse, as Israel was able to capture the entire Golan Heights, inflict damage on major population centers in Syria, and come within only 35 miles of Damascus.<sup>(3)</sup>

Despite the final military outcomes of the war, the dominant Egyptian narrative holds that October 1973 was a stunning and historic victory over Israel. The war itself has become a powerful symbol of national revival and redemption.

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1. Tawfiq al-Hakim, al-Ahram, October 10, 1973. Cited in Yoram Meital, *Egypt's Struggle for Peace: Continuity and Change, 1967 – 1977*, University Press of Florida (Gainesville: 1997), p. 126.
2. Abraham Rabinovich, *The Yom Kippur War: The Epic Encounter That Transformed the Middle East*, Schocken Books (New York: 2004), p. 486 – 487.
3. For an excellent and even-handed discussion of the military maneuvers of the Egyptian, Israeli, and Syrian armies, see Major Michael C. Jordan, *The 1973 Arab-Israeli War: Arab Policies, Strategies, and Campaigns* (United States Marine Corps University Command and Staff College: 1997), available online at <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/1997/Jordan.htm>.

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How is it that a war which ended in territorial losses for Egypt and Syria and the catastrophic near-destruction of the Egyptian Third Army became transformed into a battle almost universally recognized by Egyptians as a great Arab success? How was this narrative shaped (and opposed), and to what ends? This paper seeks to answer these questions by examining the formation, and contestation, of the narrative of the October 1973 War in the Egyptian national consciousness.

Of course, the October War had far-reaching consequences – not just for Egypt and Israel but for the Syrians, Palestinians, other Arab regimes, and indeed the two Cold War superpowers, the US and the USSR – and it is for this reason that the war has been a subject of endless fascination for academics and military historians alike.<sup>(4)</sup> Nonetheless, my purpose here is to focus solely on Egypt and the effect that the October War had upon the modern development of that ancient country. It is for this reason that I have consciously excluded examination of the October War's many other effects.

### *Precursors to the October War: Arab-Israeli Conflict from 1948 to the Six-Day War*

The narrative of the October War would be difficult if not impossible to understand if considered in isolation from the prior history of Arab-Israeli conflict. It is only when October 1973 is situated within its proper context, as the fifth major Arab-Israeli war<sup>(5)</sup>, that the dominant narrative (as well as the counter-narrative) of the war begins to make sense. Space does not permit a detailed discussion of the long and complex history of the Arab-Israeli conflict, but a few essential points must be made.

First and foremost, Egypt has long been considered the “largest and most powerful Arab state,” and it “has always been expected to play a leading role in supporting the Palestinians” – both by Egyptians themselves as well as by other Arabs.<sup>(6)</sup> Because of its unique role in the Arab world, Egypt has been a primary player in the Arab-Israeli conflict from its inception – even though the formation of Israel and the resulting dispersion of the Palestinians should arguably have had little practical effect upon the Egyptian state.

As such, when the first Arab-Israeli war broke out in May 1948, Egypt sent by far the largest group of men into battle – more than 10,000 of the estimated 23,000 Arab troops. By way of comparison, Jordan, the next highest contributor,

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4. Jon B. Alterman, “Dynamics Without Drama: New Options and Old Compromises in Egypt's Foreign Policy,” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* (Routledge: October 2005), p. 357.

5. Egyptian and Israeli forces met in the Israeli War of Independence / Palestinian Naqba in 1948, the Suez War in 1956, the Six Day War in 1967, and the War of Attrition from 1968 – 1970. In the Yom Kippur war, at least 10,000 Israelis and Arabs were killed and 25,000 were injured in a mere twenty-five days.

6. Hassan A. Barari, “The Al-Aqsa Intifada as Seen in Egypt,” *Civil Wars* (Taylor & Francis Ltd: Autumn 2003), p. 86.

sent only about 4,500 troops.<sup>(7)</sup> Despite the large contribution of soldiers, however, Egypt was only peripherally interested in the core issues of the conflict; indeed, subsequent evidence demonstrates rather conclusively that King Farouk had no desire to fight a war on behalf of the Palestinians, having his hands full attempting to negotiate between the independence-minded Egyptian Parliament and a British High Commissioner determined to preserve his influence, and being in any case aware that the Egyptian army was too weak and poorly equipped to mount a serious war effort.<sup>(8)</sup> Nonetheless, afraid of the domestic and regional reaction if perceived as failing to respond to the annexation of mandatory Palestine, and worried about potential territorial gains to be made by his chief rivals to leadership of the Arab world, the Hashemite kings of Iraq and Transjordan, King Farouk was ultimately persuaded to enter into the war.<sup>(9)</sup>

The notion that tiny Israel miraculously defeated a numerically and qualitatively superior coalition of Arab regimes has long gripped the Western popular imagination, but the equally-entrenched view in the Arab world is that the disorganized Arab armies that entered into Palestine in 1948 were never any match for the nascent Israeli army. The “Arab forces had no unified command, nor did they have agreed-upon goals,” and at all times they “remained divided along traditional rivalries.”<sup>(10)</sup> Their equipment was shoddy at best and most of the men had never before been tested in battle.<sup>(11)</sup> Contrasted with the experienced, motivated, highly-disciplined, and well-equipped Jewish armies, the Arabs never had a serious chance of defeating the new Jewish state. After months of battle, the Arabs recognized their defeat, and an armistice agreement was signed that put Israel in control of 20% more land than the Arab-rejected UN partition plan would have provided for.

The Arab view of 1948 as presented above was not popularized until the mid-1950s, long after the first Arab-Israeli war took place. At the time, however, Arabs had cause to believe (based on the propaganda that came from their governments) that the war would be an easy win. As such, when the full extent of the enormous and humiliating defeat of the Arabs at the hands of the small new country of Israel became clear,

a state of turmoil, bitterness, and recrimination [overtook] the Arab world. The Egyptian prime minister, Mahmoud Fahmi Al-Noqrashi, was assassinated in Cairo before the war ended; a year later the prime minister of Lebanon, Riad Al-Solh, was assassinated, and in 1951 King Abdullah [of Jordan] was assassinated while entering Al-Aqsa Mosque in the Old City [of Jerusalem].<sup>(12)</sup>

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7. Dan Kurzman, *Genesis 1948: The Arab-Israeli War*, New American Library (New York: 1970), p. 182.

8. “The Arabs Divided,” *Al-Ahram Weekly Online*, May 4 – 20, 1998. Available online at <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/1998/1948/index.htm>.

9. Ian J. Bickerton and Carla L. Klausner, *A Concise History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, Prentice Hall (Upper Saddle River, NJ: 2002), p. 102.

10. *Id.* at 103.

11. *Id.*

12. “The Arabs Divided,” *op. cit.* at note 8.

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In Egypt, the Arab defeat of 1948 contributed directly to the eventual overthrow of the monarchy by the Egyptian army in July of 1952. Gamal Abdel Nasser, who emerged as leader of the revolution and took office as president of Egypt in October 1954, stated on more than one occasion that the experience of being sent into battle in 1948 unprepared and underequipped was a major reason why the Egyptian Army officers ultimately overthrew the old regime, and a recurring theme of his rule was that post-Revolutionary Egypt would avenge this disaster.<sup>(13)</sup>

Nasser quickly gained prominence around the world as the leading exponent of Arab nationalism and the determination of the Arabs to remove Israel from their midst. He became a pan-Arab hero because of his determination to rid the Middle East of “colonialism, imperialism, and Zionism.”<sup>(14)</sup> Under Nasser Egypt’s rhetoric and behavior toward Israel became increasingly belligerent until, on May 22, 1967, Nasser took the fateful step of closing the Gulf of Aqaba to Israeli vessels and any ships carrying goods to Israel, thus cutting off a crucial supply point for the new state. Israeli Prime Minister Levi Eshkol warned that his country would consider this an act of war, but Nasser replied by delivering a speech to the Egyptian National Assembly on May 29th full of his typically bombastic threats:

Preparations have already been made. We are now ready to confront Israel... We are now ready to deal with the Palestine question. The issue now at hand is not the Gulf of Aqaba, the Straits of Tiran, or the withdrawal of the [United Nations peacekeepers], but the rights of the Palestinian people... We are not afraid of the United States and its threats, of Britain and her threats, or the entire Western world and its partiality to Israel... we Arabs must teach them to respect us and take us seriously.<sup>(15)</sup>

The world, and especially the Egyptian people, did take Nasser’s threats seriously. Arabs everywhere expected that, in contrast to the situation in 1948, a united Arab army under the leadership of Nasser would take on the Israelis and restore Palestinian and Arab dignity once and for all. Instead, as is now well-known, Israel achieved a stunning victory in a pre-emptive attack that smashed the Arab armies and left the Jewish state in control of the Egyptian Sinai, the West Bank, Jerusalem, and the Syrian Golan Heights. Nasser, and Arab nationalism, were discredited; Nasser himself passed away only three years later.

### *Anwar Sadat and the Long Shadow of 1967*

When Gamal Abdel Nasser passed away in September 1970, he left behind a country that was defeated and psychologically demoralized. The Egyptian Sinai, an area of over 23,000 square miles, had been conquered by Israel. As a result, the Suez Canal, a crucial source of Egyptian foreign reserves, was no longer in opera-

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13. Gamal Abdul Nasser and Walid Khalidi, “Nasser’s Memoirs of the First Palestine War,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* (University of California Press: Winter 1973), p. 4.

14. Bickerton and Klausner, *op. cit.* at note 9, p. 126.

15. Walter Laquer and Barry Rubin, *The Israel-Arab Reader: A Documentary History of the Middle East Conflict*, Penguin Books (New York: 1984), p. 150.

tion. The socialist Arab nationalism which had been pursued by Nasser for over a decade was seen at home and abroad as a total failure, and the economy was in a state of complete freefall:

The large state sector was inefficient and lacking in dynamism; agriculture was lagging in spite of the Aswan High Dam; efforts to enlarge the domestic market by promoting the “Arab nation” had come to naught; the state bureaucracy was an economic burden and a source of corruption and tyranny; and nothing was working very well.<sup>(16)</sup>

Unsure of how to proceed, the ruling committee of the revolution decided to select Anwar al-Sadat, a man seen by friend and foe alike as weak and unassertive, as a “temporary compromise candidate” to lead the country until the real centers of power in Egypt could resolve their internal power struggle.<sup>(17)</sup> Sadat, however, had other plans. He acted quickly to consolidate his authority, arresting much of the collective leadership that had appointed him to power and instituting a “Corrective Revolution” that would see all Soviet advisers expelled from the country and would purge the ruling party of pro-Soviet and left-wing members (as well as right-wing Islamists, liberals, and almost all other potential sources of opposition to his regime).<sup>(18)</sup>

With his regime temporarily secured, Sadat turned to the task of actually governing Egypt. Here, however, he found that he could not take decisive action against the serious problems that plagued the country. As he later wrote in his autobiography, the period in which he assumed power “was one of intense suffering, unprecedented, I believe, in the entire stretch of Egyptian history. The suffering was engendered by a sense of frustration on the national, political, and military levels – so much so that a struggle for survival was the period’s most distinctive feature.”<sup>(19)</sup> Nearly every institution of Egyptian political and economic life had crumbled in the wake of Nasser’s death and the bombshell of the Six Day War.

Sadat resolved to radically reorient Egyptian domestic and international affairs by bringing Egypt out of the Socialist world and into the American sphere of influence. His view, as set out in his personal diary just a few weeks after taking office, was that “the key to Egypt’s political, military, and economic well-being was to redress the situation ensuing from the 1967 debacle... the basic task was to wipe out the disgrace and humiliation of 1967 in order to regain self-confidence at home and the respect of the world community.”<sup>(20)</sup> The 1973 War, and the narrative which the Egyptian regime would construct around it, would be the way in which this goal could be achieved.

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16. Marie-Christine Aulas, “Sadat’s Egypt: A Balance Sheet,” *MERIP Reports* (1982), p. 6.

17. Yoram Meital, *op. cit.* at note 1, p. 79.

18. Joe Stork, “Sadat’s Desperate Mission,” *MERIP Reports* (1978), p. 4.

19. Anwar Sadat, *In Search of Identity*, Harper & Row (New York: 1978), p. 181.

20. Bickerton and Klausner, *op. cit.* at note 9, p. 170.

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### “The Year of Decision”

Sadat began 1971, his first full year in office, by proclaiming that it was to be the “Year of Decision.” In a speech to the Egyptian Parliament in February of that year, Sadat declared that “liberating the territories occupied during the 1967 aggression... is my major commitment, and all our political, military, economic, and diplomatic actions should be geared towards this end.”<sup>(21)</sup> The US diplomatic representative serving in Cairo at that time later wrote that Sadat spent all of 1971 trying “to persuade the United States, and through the United States, the Israelis, that... Egypt would sign a peace agreement with its adversary.”<sup>(22)</sup> But at the same time, Sadat warned that if his overtures were not reciprocated and the Sinai were not returned, Egypt would prepare for another war – a threat that neither the United States nor Israel found particularly credible.<sup>(23)</sup> Debates exist about the seriousness of Sadat’s early offers of peace, but what is certain is that indirect negotiations between Egypt and Israel through the United States did take place and ultimately deadlocked. As 1971 came to a close,

Sadat realized that the year of decision he had proclaimed had failed to change the status quo. His declarations, early that year, that he would go to war unless the status quo was overthrown turned out to be unrealistic, and his failure to follow through now gained him scathing criticism both in Egypt and abroad.<sup>(24)</sup>

Events now came to a head. As early as January 15, 1972, student protests against Sadat broke out all across Cairo, motivated, as one of the participants wrote, by a popular mood of “bitterness, frustration, and despair... we are not capable of reaching a solution, or of changing the situation, by military means. The continuing political attempts have not produced any results... All we want is a solution, a move of any kind, a thaw of the freeze, a change in the situation.”<sup>(25)</sup> The student protests were followed by an extraordinary public debate between major figures in Egyptian intelligentsia on the question of whether Egypt should (or even had the ability to) go back to war with Israel; the intellectuals split into two camps over the question, but were united in the feeling “that the status quo was intolerable.”<sup>(26)</sup> Mohammed Hassanien Heikal, at the time Editor-in-Chief of Egypt’s paper of record, *Al Ahram*, described the early months of 1972 as “an explosion” which was barely contained; the entire country “had become the laughing stock of the Arab world. We claimed to be the leader and protector of the Arabs, but... showed ourselves unable to protect our own territory... Each day

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21. Yoram Meital, *op. cit.* at note 1, p. 86.

22. *Id.*, p. 84 (quoting Donald Bergus, Head of US Interests Section at the Spanish Embassy in Cairo; at the time the US did not have formal diplomatic representation in Egypt).

23. “A Year of Debacle?” *Time Magazine*, Jan. 3, 1972, available online at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,879024,00.html>.

24. Yoram Meital, *op. cit.* at note 1, p. 99.

25. *Id.*, p. 103.

26. *Id.*

that passed was a day of humiliation.”<sup>(27)</sup> Under enormous pressure to act, Sadat “came to the conclusion that, as a matter of principle, the status quo needed to be broken by a military operation.”<sup>(28)</sup>

### *October 1973 as Legitimizing Myth*

From the beginning, the October 1973 War was carefully orchestrated by Sadat as a mechanism for securing his legitimacy, and through that his overall goal of reorienting Egyptian politics. This, of course, was a closely guarded secret; immediately after the war, famed Israeli diplomat Abba Eban spoke of October 1973 as “a total assault on Israel,”<sup>(29)</sup> and even Egypt’s partner in the war, Syria, was given a war plan that called for a full-scale invasion of Israel proper.<sup>(30)</sup>

But invasion of Israel was never the goal, and the war plan given to Syria was a fake one, sent over the objections of Egyptian Army Chief of Staff Sa’ed al-Din El-Shazly by personal order of the President himself.<sup>(31)</sup> The Egyptian plan was simply to cross the Sinai Canal, an important symbolic movement that Sadat believed would be enough to “mark the rehabilitation of the army and the restoration of its prestige and morale” and allow him to pursue his policy agenda.<sup>(32)</sup> Sadat himself wrote in his memoirs that occupation “of even 10 centimeters on the other side of the canal would change the situation in the Western, Eastern, and Arab realms equally.”<sup>(33)</sup> Fully aware that his goal could not be accomplished without Syrian support, and equally aware that the Syrians would never agree to such limited (and Egypt-specific) war aims, Sadat authorized the creation of a fake war plan that would induce the Syrians to join his war effort.<sup>(34)</sup>

As can be seen clearly in Figure 1, when the cease-fire lines were drawn on October 25, 1973, the Egyptian Army had not succeeded in recovering even a tiny portion of the territory that was lost in 1967 (that is, the entire Sinai Peninsula).<sup>(35)</sup> Worse still, the Israeli army was now positioned on the west side of the Suez Canal, putting the Israelis within easy striking distance of major Egyptian population centers.<sup>(36)</sup> But Egypt was in control of the two separate enclaves on the east side of the Suez Canal totaling about 1,000 square kilometers, and this was enough

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27. Mohamed Heikal, *The Road to Ramadan*, Quadrangle (New York: 1975), p. 205.

28. Yoram Meital, *op. cit.* at note 1, p. 111.

29. “Another Round in the War of Words,” *Time Magazine*, Oct. 29, 1973, available online at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,8816,910848,00.html>.

30. Yoram Meital, *op. cit.* at note 1, p. 115.

31. *Id.*

32. *Id.*, p. 114.

33. *Id.*

34. *Id.*, p. 115.

35. *Id.*, p. 126.

36. P.R. Kumaraswamy, “Revisiting the Yom Kippur War: Introduction,” in P.R. Kumaraswamy, ed., *Revisiting the Yom Kippur War*, Frank Cass Publishers (London: 2000), p. 1.

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to allow Sadat to claim victory.<sup>(37)</sup> Considering the final outcomes of the war, Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir said that Israel “won the Yom Kippur War, and I am convinced that in their heart of hearts the political and military leaders of both Egypt and Syria know they were defeated again, despite their initial gains.”<sup>(38)</sup>

But contrary to Meir’s belief, the immediate and dominant narrative of the October War in Egypt was that it was a stunning strategic and military victory by the Egyptian army. Sadat’s prediction of the psychological power of recovering “even 10 centimeters” of Israeli-occupied land proved to be correct.

The dominant Egyptian narrative was created according to Sadat’s plan, but it was also perpetuated by prominent Egyptian writers and social critics. The novelist Yusuf al-Qa’id jubilantly wrote on the day of the cease-fire: “You people in the land of Egypt are living in times of victory, of happy laughter and boundless joy. You are a happy people, happier than our forefathers ever were, and happier than our grandchildren will be.”<sup>(39)</sup> Naguib Mahfouz, who would go on to win the first (and only) Nobel Prize in Literature awarded for work in the Arabic language, said that “there is then no doubt that the outcome is a

victory for Arab armies. It is certainly not a defeat, even if it is not the final victory, which will only be attained by another, crushing victory, or else by just and honorable peace.”<sup>(40)</sup> An American reporter in Egypt one year after the war was shocked to find that “the mood of Egyptian university students has totally flip-flopped since the October War. In the seven grim years following the bitter defeat of the Six Day War, students had exploded several times... [but] the 6



Figure 1: Israeli, Egyptian, and Syrian army positions on October 25, 1973.

Source: Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <http://www.mfa.gov.il>.

37. *Id.*

38. Yoram Meital, *op. cit.* at note 1, p. 125.

39. Yusuf al-Qa’id, *War in the Land of Egypt*, Saqi (London: 1986), p. 93 – 94.

40. Naguib Mahfouz, *al-Ahram*, December 14, 1973. Cited in Yoram Meital, *Egypt’s Struggle for Peace: Continuity and Change, 1967 – 1977*, University Press of Florida (Gainesville: 1997), p. 126.

October War and subsequent ceasefire seem to have drained the discontent from the campuses.”<sup>(41)</sup>

Sadat’s government, of course, wasted no time in capturing and institutionalizing this view of the war. In Sadat’s first post-war speech to the Egyptian Parliament, he argued that by crossing the Suez Canal, “the Egyptian armed forces have realized a miracle. The wounded nation has restored its honor and the political map of the Middle East has changed.”<sup>(42)</sup> The government-controlled press focused on the “miracle of the crossing” and the “smash[ing] through” of “the allegedly invincible Bar-Lev line,” a network of fortifications along the Suez built by Israel in the wake of the Six Day War, while little if any mention was made of the encirclement of the Egyptian Third Army and Israel’s occupation of territory on the West bank of the Suez.<sup>(43)</sup> Similar media accounts quoted Israeli government officials in their statements from the earliest days of the war (when Israel was caught off-guard and suffered major casualties) rather than more belligerent statements made at the war’s end.<sup>(44)</sup> Military parades and celebrations were held throughout Egypt, and the “October Generation” was celebrated in a manner recalling the lionization of the “Greatest Generation” of World War II fighters in the United States.<sup>(45)</sup>

Again, all of this was in accordance to the plan set out by Sadat as early as 1971; the October War narrative was conceptualized and promoted as a mechanism for reform of Egypt’s politics and economy. An April 1974 manifesto issued by the Egyptian government, titled the “October Working Paper,” outlined in clear terms Sadat’s plan to use the war narrative to pursue his policy objectives:

... the world, after October 1973, is different from what it was before... The whole world was then astounded to see our Armed Forces crossing the Canal, storming the Bar-Lev line, and launching the greatest tank battle in history...

*The picture has changed radically and it has become incumbent upon all parties to reconsider their policy in the light of the new circumstances...*

With our achievements we can affirm that the Egypt of October is the Egypt of the future... All views are unanimous that *the Great Ramadan War should be a springboard for a new phase of national action along the same lines and with the same rates we achieved in the magnificent battle* (emphasis added).<sup>(46)</sup>

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41. Trudy Rubin, “Students in Egypt after the October War,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, September 16, 1974, available online at <http://www.aliciapatterson.org/APF001974/Rubin/Rubin03/Rubin03.html>.

42. “Another Round in the War of Words,” *op. cit.* at note 43.

43. “Visions of War and Peace,” *Al-Ahram Weekly Online*, 5 – 11 October 2000, available online at <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2000/502/eg6.htm>.

44. Egypt State Information Service, “They Said About the War,” available online at <http://www.sis.gov.eg/VR/october/english/4.htm>.

45. Ibrahim Nafie, “The October Generation,” *Al-Ahram Weekly Online*, 15 – 21 October 1998, available online at <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/1998/399/op1.htm>.

46. Anwar Sadat, *The October Working Paper*, April 1974, available online at [http://www.bsos.umd.edu/SADAT/archives/Written\\_Works/AAFB%20Glorious%20Days%20of%20Oct5.71.pdf](http://www.bsos.umd.edu/SADAT/archives/Written_Works/AAFB%20Glorious%20Days%20of%20Oct5.71.pdf).PDF

## Victory in Defeat

The most well-known post-October shift in Egyptian policy was, of course, the permanent exit of Egypt as a combatant in the Arab-Israeli conflict; Sadat's historic speech before the Israeli Knesset is remembered even today. But Sadat's famous trip to Israel was only made possible by a narrative which held that October 1973 was enough to "expunge the stain of ignominious defeat" and "achieve a sufficiently honorable result" that would permit Egypt to sit at the negotiating table with Israel as an equal rather than as the weaker party.<sup>(47)</sup> The Israelis themselves recognized this; former Israeli president Ezer Weizmann later recalled that Sadat "had no intention of conquering the state of Israel, but he certainly had the intention of inflicting a painful blow on us, and this he did... I imagine that, following these achievements, he said to himself, 'Now I am ready to talk with the Israelis.'"<sup>(48)</sup>

Similar changes to Egyptian domestic and foreign affairs were enabled by the narrative of 1973. Sadat moved the political system from a dictatorship to a semblance of multiparty democracy by arguing that the war allowed Egypt "to move forward into an era of greater democracy as a state of institutions."<sup>(49)</sup> He initiated a rapprochement with the United States that saw the return of the US Ambassador to Egypt in February of 1974 and a gradual reduction in the Soviet relationship (culminating in the severing of relations with the USSR in 1976).<sup>(50)</sup> At the economic level, Sadat imposed the *infitah*, or "opening," moving the country permanently from socialism to capitalism.<sup>(51)</sup> A 1975 economic reform plan issued by the Egyptian Minister of Planning was titled "The Plan of the Economic Crossing," again an explicit reference to the October War and a clear sign that these reforms were inextricably tied to the war narrative.<sup>(52)</sup>

It should thus come as no surprise that the narrative of October 1973 as a victory became firmly established in the Egyptian national consciousness. This narrative enabled and legitimized Sadat's reforms. Furthermore, to the extent that these reforms became permanent features of Egyptian policy (and continue to be implemented to this day), the government went out of its way to reinforce the narrative with every opportunity. October 6, the first day of the war, was immediately enshrined as Armed Forces Day, a public holiday commemorated

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47. Lloyd Cohen, "The Israeli Lust for Peace: Illusion, Tragedy, and Prospect," *Israel Affairs* (2005), p. 737.

48. Ezer Weizman, "Address by the President of the State of Israel Ezer Weizman on the Inauguration of the Sadat Chair for Peace," *Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs* (1997), available online at [http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFAArchive/1990\\_1999/1999/8/President%20Weizman%20on%20Inauguration%20of%20Sadat%20Chair%20f](http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFAArchive/1990_1999/1999/8/President%20Weizman%20on%20Inauguration%20of%20Sadat%20Chair%20f).

49. Yoram Meital, *op. cit.* at note 1, p. 131.

50. *Id.*

51. Joe Stork, *op. cit.* at note 18, p. 4.

52. Marie-Christine Aulas, *op. cit.* at note 16, p. 7.

with annual military parades.<sup>(53)</sup> Sixth of October City and Tenth of Ramadan City (corresponding to the opening of the war on the Gregorian and Islamic calendars) were both founded in the late 1970s and have since grown to be major population centers just outside of the Egyptian capital in Cairo, as has the city of El-Oboor (“the crossing”).<sup>(54)</sup> The October War Panorama Museum, situated on a site of over 31,000 square meters, was opened in October 1989 and has since become a major site of socialization and perpetuation of narrative memory for succeeding generations of Egyptian youth and tourists to Egypt alike.<sup>(55)</sup> Major celebrations have marked each anniversary of the war, the largest of which, held on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the war in 1998, attracted tens of thousands of spectators and substantial media attention.<sup>(56)</sup> The Egyptian government has thus sought to use almost every tool available to ensure that the sole narrative of October 1973 was one of victory.

### *October 1973 as Counter-Narrative*

The Egyptian government has had enormous success in promoting its narrative of the October War, but the victorious narrative has not been uncontested. A counter-narrative of the October War has been promoted in a variety of ways by a diverse coalition of individuals and organizations who in all cases have focused on painting the war as a military defeat and the ‘selling out’ of the Palestinians, thus calling into question Sadat’s legitimacy and the domestic and international relations reforms that he enacted. Contestation of the narrative began during the war itself, as when the Chief of Staff of the Army, General Sa’ad al-Din El Shazly, was dismissed from the military for questioning Sadat’s insistence that the Egyptian Army halt its advance immediately after the crossing of the Suez<sup>(57)</sup>:

The President had thrown away the greatest army Egypt had ever assembled. He had thrown away the biggest airlift the Soviet Union had ever mounted. He had thrown away the greatest collaborative effort the Arabs had achieved in a generation... the heroic details of the crossing itself were ignored in a chorus of sycophancy proclaiming that all effort resulted from the leadership of one man [that is, Sadat]... our plans were vetoed day after day by the President or his Minister of War.<sup>(58)</sup>

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53. Galal Nassar, “A Big Day Out in October,” *Al-Ahram Weekly Online*, 1 – 7 October 1998, available online at <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/1998/397/eg1.htm>. The annual military parades were stopped after Sadat’s assassination in 1981 and did not resume again until 1998, seventeen years later.

54. Janet L. Abu-Lughod, “Cairo,” *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, 2008, available online at <http://concise.britannica.com/dday/print?articleId=106112&fullArticle=true&tocId=9797>.

55. Egypt State Information Service, “Egypt’s Military Museums,” available online at <http://www.sis.gov.eg/VR/october/english/5.htm>.

56. Nassar, op. cit. at note 53.

57. Kenneth W. Stein, *Heroic Diplomacy: Sadat, Kissinger, Carter, Begin and the Quest for Arab-Israeli Peace*, Routledge (New York: 1999), p. 76. The dismissal was not made public until after the war, “in order to preserve military morale and the public’s confidence in the army.”

58. Sa’ad El Shazly, *The Crossing*, American Mideast Research (San Francisco: 1980), p. 184.

## Victory in Defeat

Shazly's critiques were threatening to the victorious narrative because he argued that Sadat prevented the Egyptian army from driving all the way to Israel, an explicit argument that the war was no victory at all (and, more threateningly to the regime, an implicit argument that Sadat's subsequent reforms and moves to make peace with Israel were illegitimate). The regime prevented Shazly's critique from gaining traction by ordering him, immediately after the war, to serve as Egyptian Ambassador to London and then Portugal – a form of de facto exile.<sup>(59)</sup> In 1978, while living in Portugal, Shazly published a book making similar arguments and explicitly criticizing the Camp David Accords as an Egyptian abandonment of the Palestinians; for this act Shazly was stripped of his position as Ambassador, court marshaled, and sentenced in absentia to a prison term of three years.<sup>(60)</sup> In 1992, fourteen years after publication of his book, General Shazly returned to Egypt– and was immediately arrested at the airport and forced to serve the full prison term handed down in 1978 by Sadat's successor, President Husni Mubarak.<sup>(61)</sup> Although Shazly is today a prominent commentator on domestic politics and frequently appears on Al Jazeera, both of his books remain banned in Egypt.<sup>(62)</sup>

The story of General Shazly is emblematic of the manner in which the Egyptian government has handled challenges to the October narrative. Shazly was a member of the regime and the Egyptian elite, but this did not protect him from the full brunt of the government's power when he began to promote a counter-narrative of 1973. The results were much worse for the Egyptian Islamist groups that did the same. A wide variety of Islamist groups in Egypt contested the October narrative, primarily on grounds similar to Shazly's critique: the war was lost, not won; and it was lost because Sadat had halted the Egyptian army's advance at the Suez rather than allowing it to proceed to Jerusalem. These criticisms became especially vehement after Sadat signed a peace agreement with Israel in 1979, an action which would lead ultimately to his assassination at the hands of a radical Islamic terrorist group. In the months prior to his assassination, Sadat had over 1,600 citizens arrested and summarily sentenced to long prison terms on "national security" grounds, but as has been subsequently demonstrated by both Egyptian and foreign researchers, these arrests were nothing more than transparent attempts to silence individuals who challenged the reforms that were the fruits of the victorious October narrative.<sup>(63)</sup>

On the international level, of course, such repressive measures have not been available to silence competing narratives. Nonetheless, Egypt has not hesitated

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59. Sa'ad El Shazly, "Book Reviews," <http://www.el-shazly.com/Reviews.htm>.

60. Sa'ad El Shazly, "Biography," <http://www.el-shazly.com/about.htm>.

61. *Id.*

62. *Id.*

63. Joe Stork, "Massive Arrests Precede Sadat's Assassination," *MERIP Reports* (1981), p. 43.

to forcefully pursue its narrative, even at the cost of alienating other Arab states. When Sadat entered into peace negotiations with Israel, the governments of practically the entire Arab world protested vigorously, arguing again that Sadat was no victor but instead a traitor to the Palestinian cause. At least initially,

Sadat simply charged [Arab] leaders with ill-considered and irresponsible conduct. He argued against his critics that only his realistic war planning had ensured military success... The proposals made to Egypt by his Arab rivals, on the other hand, he considered altogether unrealistic. As he put it in an address to the People's Council, "We have heard leaders who spoke about destroying Israel within three hours, but we have not heard why they did not do so."<sup>(64)</sup>

Later on, however, Egypt went even further, allowing its membership in the League of Arab States – an inter-Arab institution which Egypt had founded and which was based in Cairo since 1945 – to be suspended. The administrative institutions of the Arab League were moved from Cairo to Tunis in 1979, where they remained until Egypt was re-admitted in 1989.<sup>(65)</sup> Egypt also cut off all diplomatic relations with Iran when the leaders of the Islamic Revolution dedicated a Tehran mural to Khaled al-Islambouli, Sadat's assassin, saying that he would "forever be enshrined in the annals of the struggle against treason to the Palestinian cause." To this day diplomatic relations between Egypt and Iran have not been restored, a strong indicator of just how seriously the regime guards the narrative of October 1973 and the memory and legacy of President Sadat.<sup>(66)</sup>

### *Pride, Victory, and Defeat*

The October 1973 War may be unique in the annals of modern history in that it was conceptualized and fought not to defeat the enemy but to create a victorious narrative that could be harnessed by the state in order to achieve political and economic reforms. Many states have promoted subsequent narratives of their wars to suit contemporary policy goals, but it is perhaps unique in the annals of history that a war has been deliberately started *solely* for domestic consumption, as appears to have been the case in October 1973. As the above discussion has made clear, the narrative has been successfully promoted in Egypt through a combination of coercive tools available to any regime (government newspapers and celebrations, military marches, museums, holidays, even the naming of entire cities) and repressive tools usually available only in non-democracies (jailing or exiling proponents of the counter-narrative). By promoting a victorious narrative and combating with all tools at their disposal the counter-narratives that have

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64. Yoram Meital, *op. cit.* at note 1, p. 133.

65. *BBC News*, "Timeline: Arab League," 21 November 2007, available online at [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/low/middle\\_east/country\\_profiles/1550977.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/low/middle_east/country_profiles/1550977.stm).

66. *Islamic Republic News Agency*, "'Kayhan International' Slams Tehran City Council's Decision to Change Street Name; Egyptian MPs Hail the Decision," May 28, 2001, available online at <http://www.payvand.com/news/01/may/1125.html>.

## Victory in Defeat

been embraced by their opponents, Egyptian governments under Presidents Sadat and Mubarak have been able to achieve and sustain truly revolutionary changes in Egypt's domestic and international affairs.

Despite the regime's embrace of undemocratic means of protecting its narrative, it seems in hindsight that Sadat's prescription for achieving political and economic reforms at home was fundamentally sound. As early as 1970, he recognized that no change with regard to Egyptian domestic politics or the wider Arab-Israeli conflict could be implemented unless and until he could "wipe out the disgrace and humiliation of 1967."<sup>(67)</sup> It is because of this core realization that Sadat is remembered even by his opponents as a master strategist.

It is dangerous to generalize, but one cannot help but draw parallels with the current state of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Egyptian narrative was successful because it was built upon a kernel of truth: Egypt may have lost the war in a military sense, but they succeeded in dealing a blow, however fleeting, to the Israelis, and this was enough to enable the regime to create a new narrative and a new Egypt. The Palestinians, of course, have achieved little if anything at all in the last sixty years, and as a result they do not have any kind of kernel around which a new Palestinian narrative can be constructed. They are thus mired in an endless cycle of loss and defeat, as demonstrated most recently by the Israeli invasion of Gaza that resulted in more than 1,400 deaths and 5,300 casualties for the Palestinians versus 13 deaths and 500 casualties on the Israeli side.<sup>(68)</sup> Indeed, one might sum up the entire history of the Palestinian people since 1947 as a single continuous humiliation – in their own phrase, *a naqba* or national catastrophe. Worse still, the United States, Israel, and the international community at large have reacted to the rise of Hamas as a player in Palestinian politics by further 'tightening the screw,' isolating and marginalizing the Palestinians even further.

Might not Sadat's prescription for Egypt apply equally to Palestine? Is it not probable, or at least possible, that the key to a lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians lies not in fighting armed Palestinian movements but instead in finding some way for the Palestinians to exorcise old demons and create a narrative that gives them something to be proud of? Is it too much to hope that an Arab, Israeli, or American policymaker will emerge with enough foresight to give the Palestinians their own 'crossing' of the humiliating past? ■

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67. Bickerton and Klausner, *op. cit.* at note 9, p. 170.

68. Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, "Confirmed Figures Reveal the True Extent of the Destruction Inflicted Upon the Gaza Strip," 19 March 2009, available online at <http://www.pchrgaza.org/files/PressR/English/2008/36-2009.html>.



**ADDRESS BY  
HIS MAJESTY  
KING ABDULLAH II  
JOINT MEETING OF CONGRESS**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.**

WEDNESDAY  
17 SAFFAR 1428 A.H.  
7 MARCH 2007 A.D.



## Joint Meeting of Congress\*

Abdullah II\*\*

*Madam Speaker,  
Mr. Vice President,  
Honorable Senators and Members of Congress,  
My friends,*

Thank you for such a warm welcome. It is an honor to stand, as my father did, before this historic institution. Allow me to thank you, on behalf of all Jordanians.

Jordan and the United States have had a long friendship. It is a special privilege to be here in the year that the American Congress welcomes its first woman Speaker, and its first Muslim-American member of Congress. These milestones send a message around the world about the America I know so well, a place where individuality is nurtured, a place where hard work is rewarded, a place where achievement is celebrated. The America I know so well believes that opportunity and justice belong to all.

In my days in Massachusetts, I also learned something of New England virtues. There wasn't actually a law against talking too much, but there was definitely an attitude that you didn't speak unless you could improve on silence.

Today, I must speak; I cannot be silent.

I must speak about a cause that is urgent for your people and for mine. I must speak about peace in the Middle East. I must speak about peace replacing the division, war, and conflict that have brought such disaster for the region and for the world.

This was the cause that brought my father King Hussein here in 1994. With Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin beside him, he spoke of a new vision for the Middle East. Their courageous work for peace received bipartisan support from your leaders. And there was tremendous hope for a new era. There was tremendous hope that people would be brought together. There was tremendous hope that a final and comprehensive settlement of all the issues would be achieved.

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\* This speech is King Abdullah's address to a joint session of Congress on 7 March 2007.

\*\* King Abdullah II: the King of Jordan.



Thirteen years later, that work is still not completed. And until it is, we are all at risk. We are all at risk of being victims of further violence resulting from ideologies of terror and hatred. It is our greatest and most urgent duty to prevent such dangers to our region, to your country and to the world. The choice is ours: an open world full of promise, progress and justice for all; or a closed world of divided peoples, fear, and unfulfilled dreams. Nothing impacts this choice more than the future of peace in the Middle East.

I come to you today at a rare, and indeed historic, moment of opportunity, when there is a new international will to end the catastrophe. And I believe that America, with its enduring values, its moral responsibility, and yes, its unprecedented power, must play the central role.

Some may say, 'Peace is difficult, we can live with the status quo.' But, my friends, violent killings are taking place as part of this status quo. Palestinians and Israelis are not the only victims. We saw the violence ricochet into destruction in Lebanon last summer. And people around the world have been the victims of terrorists and extremists, who use the grievances of this conflict to legitimize and encourage acts of violence. Americans and Jordanians and others have suffered and survived terrorist attacks. In this room, there are representatives of American families and Jordanian families who have lost loved ones. Thousands of people have paid the highest price, the loss of their life. Thousands more continue to pay this terrible price, for their loved ones will never return. Are we going to let these thousands of lives be taken in vain? Has it become acceptable to lose that most basic of human rights? The right to live?

The status quo is also pulling the region and the world towards greater danger. As public confidence in the peace process has dropped, the cycle of crises is spinning faster, and with greater potential for destruction. Changing military doctrine and weaponry pose new dangers. Increasing numbers of external actors are intervening with their own strategic agendas, raising new dangers of proliferation and crisis. These are groups that seek even more division: faith against faith, nation against nation, community against community. Any further erosion in the situation would be serious for the future of moderation and coexistence, in the region and beyond. Have we all lost the will to live together in peace celebrating one another's strengths and differences?

Some may say, 'But there are other, urgent challenges.' How can there be anything more urgent than the restoration of a world where all people, not only some people, all people have the opportunity to live peacefully? This is not only a moral imperative, it



is essential to the future of our world, because long-term, violent crisis is the enemy of all global prosperity and progress.

Certainly, our era faces critical issues. There is great public concern here, just as in our region, about the conflict in Iraq. The entire international community has vital decisions to make about the path forward, and how to ensure Iraq's security, unity, and future. But we cannot lose sight of a profound reality. The wellspring of regional division, the source of resentment and frustration far beyond, is the denial of justice and peace in Palestine.

There are those who say, 'It's not our business.' But this Congress knows: there are no bystanders in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, there are no curious onlookers, there is no one who is not affected by the division and hatred that is present in our world.

Some will say: 'This is not the core issue in the Middle East.' I come here today as your friend to tell you that this is the core issue. And this core issue is not only producing severe consequences for our region, it is producing severe consequences for our world.

The security of all nations and the stability of our global economy are directly affected by the Middle East conflict. Across oceans, the conflict has estranged societies that should be friends. I meet Muslims thousands of miles away who have a deep, personal response to the suffering of the Palestinian people. They want to know how it is, that ordinary Palestinians are still without rights and without a country. They ask whether the West really means what it says about equality and respect and universal justice.

*Yes, my friends, today I must speak. I cannot be silent.*

Sixty years of Palestinian dispossession, forty years under occupation, a stop-and-go peace process, all this has left a bitter legacy of disappointment and despair, on all sides. It is time to create a new and different legacy, one that begins right now; one that can set a positive tone for the American and Middle East relationship; one that can restore hope to our region's people, to your people, and to the people of this precious world. Nothing can achieve that more effectively, nothing can assert America's moral vision more clearly, nothing can reach and teach the world's youth more directly, than your leadership in a peace process that delivers results not next year, not in five years, but this year.

How do we get there? Not by a solution imposed by one side. A lasting peace can



only be built on understanding, agreement and compromise.

It begins with courage and vision. We, all of us, must take risks for peace. The Arab states recognized that reality in 2002, when we unanimously approved the Arab Peace Initiative. It puts forward a path for both sides, to achieve what people want and need: a collective peace treaty with Israel and normal relations with every Arab state, collective security guarantees for all the countries of the region, including Israel, an end to the conflict, a dream every Israeli citizen has longed for since the creation of Israel, and an agreed solution to the refugee problem, a withdrawal from Arab territories occupied since 1967, and a sovereign, viable, and independent Palestine.

The commitment we made in the Arab Peace Initiative is real. And our states are involved in ongoing efforts to advance a fair, just, and comprehensive peace. His Majesty King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia initiated the 2002 proposal; today, he continues to rally international support. Momentum is also building among Muslim countries outside the Arab world. Ten days ago, in Islamabad, the foreign ministers of key Muslim states met. They came together to assure Palestinians and Israelis that they are not alone, that we back their effort to make and build peace.

The goal must be a peace in which all sides gain. It must be anchored in security and opportunity for all.

It must be a peace that will free young Palestinians to focus on a future of progress and prosperity.

It must be a peace that makes Israel a part of the neighborhood, a neighborhood that extends from the shores of the Atlantic Ocean, across the breadth of the southern Mediterranean, to the coast of the Indian Ocean.

It must be a peace that enables the entire region to look forward with excitement and hope, putting its resources into productive growth, partnering across borders to advance development, finding opportunities, and solving common challenges.

This goal is visionary, but my friends, it is attainable. History shows that longtime adversaries can define new relationships of peace and cooperation. The groundwork for a comprehensive, final settlement is already in place. At Taba, as in the Geneva Accords, the parties have outlined the parameters of the solution.

But we need all hands on deck. The international community, especially the United States, must be engaged in moving the process forward to achieve real results. Above all, we must make our process serve our purpose. We must achieve an agreed solution to the conflict.



*Madam Speaker,  
Mr. Vice President,  
Honorable Members,*

Your responsibility today is paramount. Your potential to help Palestinians and Israelis find peace is unrivalled. This is because the people of the region still regard the United States as the key to peace, the one country most capable of bringing the two sides closer together, holding them accountable, and making a just settlement reality.

Time after time, there has been progress towards peace when Americans have actively engaged. Camp David, Madrid, Wye River: nearly every breakthrough was accomplished when America was determined to help the parties succeed.

On behalf of all those who seek and strive for peace in my part of the world, I ask you now to exert that leadership once again. We ask you to join with us in an historic effort of courage and vision. We ask you to hear our call, to honor the spirit of King Hussein and Yitzhak Rabin, and help fulfill the aspirations of Palestinians and Israelis to live in peace today.

Let me reaffirm that Jordan is committed to playing a positive role in the peace process. It is part of our larger commitment to global co-existence and progress. Ours is an Islamic country with a proud record of diversity, moderation, and shared respect.

Allow me to say, we thank the Congress and the Administration for supporting Jordan's progress and development. I deeply value the partnership between our peoples, and the contributions of so many Americans to the future of our country.

*My friends,*

“A decent respect for the rights and dignity of all nations, large and small.” That's how President Roosevelt – the great F.D.R. – described the basis of American foreign policy. He pledged American support for the four freedoms, freedom from fear, freedom from want, freedom of speech, and freedom of religion, everywhere in the world.

The Four Freedoms speech was given right here, before Congress. And that's entirely fitting. Because it is here in the People's House, that the voices and values of America have made hope real for so many people.

Today, the people of the Middle East are searching for these four freedoms. Today,



the people of the Middle East are searching for new hope, hope for a future of prosperity and peace. We have seen the danger and destruction of violence, hatred, and injustice. But we have also seen what people can achieve when they are empowered, when they break down walls, when they commit to the future. And we know that Middle East peace can be a global beginning, creating new possibilities for our region and the entire world.

We look to you to play an historic role. Eleven American presidents and thirty American congresses have already faced this ongoing crisis. For not the future generation, but the generation alive today, let us say together: No more! Let us say together: Let's solve this! Let us say together: Yes, we will achieve this!

No Palestinian father should be helpless to feed his family and build a future for his sons and daughters. No Israeli mother should fear when her child boards a bus. Not one more generation should grow up thinking that violence and conflict are the norm.

As Roosevelt also said, "the justice of morality must and will win in the end." But he knew that it was up to responsible nations to stand up for justice when injustice threatens.

This is our challenge as well. And we must not leave it to another generation to meet this challenge.

Thirteen years ago, my father was here to talk about his hopes for peace. Today, we are talking about a promise that is within our reach.

We can wait no longer and that is why I am here before you. We must work together to restore Palestine, a nation in despair and without hope. We must work together to restore peace, hope and opportunity to the Palestinian people. And in so doing, we will begin a process of building peace, not only throughout the region, but throughout the world. How much more bloodshed and how many more lives will it cost for this grave situation to be resolved?

I say: No more bloodshed and no more lives pointlessly taken!

The young boy, traveling to school with his brother in Palestine, let him have a life of peace.

The mother, watching with fear as her children board a bus in Israel, let her have a life of peace.

The father in Lebanon, working hard to provide an education for his children, let him have a life of peace.



The little girl, born in Iraq, with her wide eyes full of wonder, let her have a life of peace.

The family, together eating their evening meal, in Asia, Africa, North America, South America, Europe, Australia, and the Middle East, let them all have a life of peace.

Today my friends, we must speak; we cannot be silent.

The next time a Jordanian, a Palestinian, or an Israeli comes before you, let it be to say: Thank you for helping peace become a reality. ■

*Thank you very much*

WEDNESDAY  
17 SAFFAR 1428 A.H.  
7 MARCH 2007 A.D.