

The Israeli Lust For Peace: Illusion, Tragedy, And Prospect by Lloyd Cohen*

There is a widely indulged pretense that our political views and policies are derived from reason and study. The truth is more nearly the opposite. In international politics as in all else simpler, baser emotions lie at the root of much of what is dressed up as reasoned thoughtful argument. Lust, fear, pride, hatred are all powerful driving forces. These emotions are not necessarily bad substitutes for reason. They sometimes serve as a shorthand for getting at a deeper truth. But, not always. Sometimes emotions short circuit thought and lead to wishful thinking and blindness to the empirical reality. It is lust--the lust for peace--in my view, that at bottom has led to the mis begotten Israeli (and American) policy forays at peace with the Arabs in general, and most egregiously, with the Palestinians in particular.¹

The Israeli wish for peace is neither foolish nor evil. The sin of lust is not a mistaken object of desire, but rather a desire too strongly held, a desire that has metastasized into a passion, a passion so strong and misdirected that it perniciously undermines the very well-being it is thought to foster. As so often with sexual lust so too with Israel's peace lust the object of desire is hopelessly out of reach. And as with sexual lust so too with peace lust, accepting that the object of desire is unattainable makes life a good deal easier, and happier. And, perhaps most important, just as with sexual lust, so too with peace lust, the lust itself is, more often than not, a barrier to its own satisfaction; Who gets the girl, the self-assured and aloof suitor or the desperate and needy one?

With the metaphor introduced let us look at Israel's peace lust more closely. My thesis is that those, both in Israel and in the West, who most forcefully press for a negotiated peace between Israel and the Palestinians are fundamentally misguided and self-deceptive. They are driven by an admirable, thoroughly decent desire, but one not rooted in reality, and one that leads to policies that have brought, and will continue to bring, not peace, but more nearly its opposite. The more fruitful path is a rocky road that does not have a visible endpoint. Israel must accept that peace with the Arabs is not likely achievable in the foreseeable future. She must vigorously assert her interests, prevail in all disputes large and small, and generally manage the conflict until by this "process" in the fullness of time consciousnesses change and some more stable equilibrium is achieved.

The Birth of the Peace Lust

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¹ There is a well known Yiddish aphorism that runs like this "When the penis stands up, the head goes into the ground." The thesis of this paper is that the truth that lies at the heart of this maxim applies not merely to sex but to the myriad human desires that one might crave with such unreasoning single-mindedness that one becomes oblivious to the price, the possibility, and the proper path to satisfying that desire.

Israel, and its Zionist predecessor the Yishuv, have, for more than a century, precariously rested in the midst of a hostile Arab nation. That Israeli sense of being besieged and threatened is but a single modern accretion to a Jewish self-consciousness ingrained over more than three millennia of a small people suffering continual domination and oppression by more populous and powerful nations. It is perfectly reasonable that Israelis should long for a period of sustained quietude and security, free of external threats, i.e., for peace.

Prior to 1967 the Israelis harbored no serious illusions on the question of peace. Although they very much wanted it, they understood that the Arabs were not reconciled to Israel's existence and would not temper or amend their desire for its annihilation. Not willing to acquiesce to Arab desires, Israel prepared and trained to fight wars of national survival, and indulged few fantasies about a "peace process." The Six Day War of June 1967 radically changed Israeli consciousness.

Everything about the 1967 war was remarkable, including that this most spectacular of all their wars was in its timing and unfolding an un-premeditated surprise to both sides.² While the hostility of the Arabs to Israel was longstanding and visceral, the particular incident that got the ball rolling was one of many relatively minor artillery and air duels between Israel and Syria. Syria held the high ground of Golan and periodically lobbed shells on the Israeli farms below. Israel could not effectively reach the Syrian gun emplacements with its own artillery and so would intermittently retaliate by bombing the Syrian positions. One clear day in early April 1967 when the Syrians shelled Kibbutz Gadot Israel responded by sending its Mysteres to bomb the Syrian artillery emplacements. Unlike on most prior occasions, however, this time Syrian Mig fighters rose to challenge the Israelis. Apparently unbeknownst to the Syrians, Israeli Mirages were flying high cover. They swooped down on the Syrian planes, shooting down six.³

At the time Egypt and Syria had a mutual defense treaty. Although it is hard to see what the Egyptian military could have done given that the battle was over in a matter of minutes, Egypt's failure to intervene was an embarrassment to its President, Gamel Abdel Nasser. Nasser apparently felt compelled to do a bit of saber rattling. We can only guess at his thought processes and intentions, but seemingly without prior forethought or much calculation Nasser proceeded to rapidly escalate tensions to a state where war was all but unavoidable. First, he mobilized the large, well equipped Egyptian military and deployed it in force hard against the Israeli border. Then he reversed a policy of prior hostility to King Hussein and formed a mutual defense agreement with Jordan, sending a general to the kingdom to coordinate a joint military effort. Meanwhile, both Syria and Jordan placed their armies on a war footing, receiving contributions of troop from various other Arab nations as well. Finally Nasser closed the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping and demanded that the United Nations' troops serving as a buffer between Egypt and Israel exit the region.

² As evidence of Nasser's lack of pre-meditation, a not insignificant portion of the Egyptian army was at the time employed in some internecine squabble in Yemen and would be unavailable for action against Israel.

³ I note in passing that all this took place almost directly over my head on kibbutz Kfar Hanassi along the Jordan River north of Lake Tiberias.

The population of Israel at the time was slightly over two and a half million, its standing army in the range of eighty thousand troops. The defence plan of the Israeli military in the event of a major crisis required the activation of all reserves swelling the military to something in the range of 300,000 troops. Even at that size Zahal was considerably smaller in men and arms than the combined Arab regular forces arrayed against it. The strain on the Israeli economy of such a massive call up could not be sustained for an extended period of time. Following some feckless efforts by third parties to resolve the conflict peaceably, on the morning of June 4th 1967 Israel struck.

Zahal, under its then Chief of Staff, General Yitzhak Rabin, fought the war for which it had prepared. Israel's victory, though not a surprise to the cognoscenti, exceeded even the most optimistic predictions in its one-sidedness. Not only did it bring joy, pride, and relief to Israel, it had an enormous practical impact as well. In a mere six days, and at the price of fewer than 700 dead, Israel succeeded in giving its enemies a thorough drubbing, killing perhaps 18,000 trained soldiers, destroying the Egyptian, Syrian and Jordanian air forces as well as most of their armor, and capturing the Sinai peninsula from Egypt, the Golan Heights from Syria, and all of the Kingdom of Jordan lying west of the river of the same name. Israel now had strategic depth and the natural defensible borders of the Suez Canal on one side and the Jordan River on the other. All this made Israel a considerably safer and more secure place. But, despite its titanic victory Israel had not realized its most cherished goal--peace. Enter lust!

Land For Peace: The Vision

The capture of land from the neighboring Arab nations fed an illusion in the hearts of the Israeli people. Almost from the very moment that the fighting ended the talk in Israel was of trading land for peace. This was not the only talk of course. There were also those who spoke of a "Greater Israel," one that incorporated all the captured lands. Each of these visions resonated with the Israeli people. The two visions, though competing, were not entirely in opposition. Those more moved by the "Greater Israel" sentiment were not unconcerned with peace. They hoped that the Arabs would now be disheartened, and not only abandon their dream of destroying Israel, but that they would even reconcile themselves to its expanded and more defensible borders. With the Egyptian initiated "War of Attrition" of 1970 along the Suez Canal it became apparent that the Arabs would not be so compliant, they would not quietly accept the status quo. This disappointing turn of events did not kill the "Greater Israel" dream, only the millenarian version of it that imagined an untroubled Israel behind more expansive borders.

But it is the other dream, the one of "land for peace" that concerns us. That dream was awakened by the capture of extensive territory in 1967, and was strengthened by the evidence of continuing Arab bellicosity thereafter. In dreaming of a fundamental change in their condition Israelis are not unique--not even peculiar. We all have such dreams. Generally, however, we do not waste time and resources in their pursuit unless satisfaction is a realistic possibility. To appear so to the Israelis, the land for peace formula required more than the possession of tradable land. It also required that the Israelis believe two things about the Arab view of the question: (1) the land was sufficiently important to the Arabs that they would be willing to accept Israel as a permanent and legitimate state in order to retrieve it; and (2) the

overwhelming unmitigated defeat the Arabs had suffered would crush their hopes of recapturing the land by force, and *a fortiori* of destroying the alien Jewish state.

The Israelis were wrong on both counts. The Arabs cared little for the land *per se*. Do not misunderstand me. They were eager to reacquire it, and might spend much blood and treasure in the effort, but they would surrender little or nothing to Israel in exchange. The captured lands were not vital to Arab political, military, economic, or demographic interests.

Egypt had lost by far the largest amount of geography, Sinai and Gaza. The former is a barren wasteland, and the latter a tiny, crowded, resource poor strip of land to which Egypt had no historical attachment or claim. The issue of narrow economic self-interest was of so little moment to the Egyptians, that though they could have re-opened the Suez Canal at the paltry price of permitting Israeli transit they refused to do so.

Syria lost the Golan heights including its sole city, Kuneitra. The economic and social importance of the city counted so little in the Syrian calculus, that even after they had re-acquired it through negotiations following the 1973 Yom Kippur War they still declined to re-inhabit it and instead to this day maintain it as a ghost town, symbolic of their continuing unfinished war against Israel.

As for Jordan it lost the most populous and historically significant land, Judea, Samaria, and the eastern portion of Jerusalem. This land had been acquired by what had been the Hashemite kingdom of Trans-Jordan as a result of the Arab Legion's⁴ invasion of Palestine in the 1948 Israeli war of independence.⁵ Rather than facilitate, or even permit, the establishment of an Arab state in this territory, as envisioned in the U.N. sanctioned partition plan, and in the teeth of opposition from other Arab states, King Abdullah succumbed to the seductive allure of opportunistic territorial aggrandizement and gobbled up the captured territories. In 1950 he dropped the "Trans" from Trans-Jordan and formally incorporated the captured lands into his own state. The "west bank" of the Jordan proved to be an indigestible meal for the Hashemite kingdom. The Arab population in Judea and Samaria though religiously, culturally, and linguistically cut from much the same cloth as the Hashemites felt no fondness for, to say nothing of fealty to, Abdullah. The Hashemite clan was not native to the lands adjoining the Jordan River over which their king now had sovereignty. It had acquired title to the portion of Palestine lying east of the Jordan River by a kind of historical accident. The Hashemites had rendered service to Great Britain in the First World War. When, at the end of that war, they were dispossessed from power in Arabia by Ibn Saud and his clan, the British rewarded them the consolation prize of a kingdom in 3/4 of its League of Nations' Palestine Mandate. For Abdullah's grandson, King Hussein, the dark cloud of defeat in 1967 had the silver lining of ridding his kingdom of the less than loyal population of Judea

⁴ The Jordanian armed forces were known in 1948 as "The Arab Legion." The Legion had been formed by agreement with the United Kingdom in the 1920s and had been organized and trained by the renowned British officer John Glubb (*Glubb Pasha*). Prior to 1970 it was--for its size--the pre-eminent military establishment in the Arab world.

⁵ An event referred to in Arab history as "The Catastrophe."

and Samaria.⁶ He ratified this loss in a series of steps in the 1970s and 1980s, finally surrendering to the Palestinian Liberation Organization the last vestiges of all territorial claims and administrative functions on the west bank of the Jordan River in 1988.

So, in sum, the land *per se* was not of great value to the vanquished Arab states. Its importance was almost entirely symbolic. Its loss was a constant reminder of their massive, unmitigated and humiliating defeat at the hands of the contemptible Jews. That defeat was a stain on their honor, a stain that could never be cleansed by reacquiring the land by trade. Only triumph could bleach it out.

The second conviction required to make the dream of land for peace appear realistic was that the overwhelming defeat the Arabs had suffered would crush their hopes of destroying the alien Jewish state. Here too the Israelis were wrong. It is not that the Arabs are blind to Israeli military pre-eminence. Though Arab pride requires that they assert that it is only the United States that prevents them from crushing Israel in battle,⁷ in truth they know better than anyone that Israel alone has repeatedly defeated any combination of Arab armies. No, they know that Israel has the stronger military, but, that is not the same as being persuaded that the Arabs will not ultimately win.

The deep Arab humiliation at being thrashed by Israel is because she is so tiny. It is no dishonor to be defeated by a giant, but by a pygmy! But the very source of the humiliation ironically gives them confidence in their eventual triumph. The Arabs know that while Israel can defeat them in war it can not conquer them; it can not displace them. They on the other hand are the demographically dominant nation on the vast lands to the east, west, north and south of Israel. In the end they will win.

The prevailing Arab view of Israel and its inevitable and just fate is symbolized by the choice of the sole picture to adorn the walls of the late President Hafez el-Assad's office in Damascus. It is a picture of the battle site at Hittin in Galilee where Saladin's armies decisively defeated the Crusaders on July 4, 1187. The European Christians, despite being supported by the population and resources of a continent, dominated a corner of the region

⁶ In September 1970, anticipating a *coup d'etat* by the Palestine Liberation Organization, King Hussein unleashed the Arab Legion and drove the PLO out of Jordan, killing thousands of Palestinians in the process. The PLO then set up shop in the more hospitable--because politically weak and fragmented--Lebanon, until forced out by Israel in 1982. In a marvelous illustration of politics making strange bedfellows, during the 1970 conflict, when Syrian armored divisions marched south across the Jordanian border to intervene in support of the PLO, Israel countered by deploying its air force over the Syrian tanks suggesting its willingness to intervene to maintain the Hashemites in power. The Syrians then retreated back across the border.

⁷ During the Six Day War when the Israeli Air Force had already destroyed both the Egyptian and Jordanian Air Forces, President Nasser and King Hussein agreed in a telephone conversation--recorded by the Israelis--to publicly declare the same lie to the effect that it was American planes that were responsible for the destruction.

for but a century and then were washed away by a Muslim-Arab tide, that had preceded them by four centuries and would continue to dominate the region to the present day. So too, these alien Jewish interlopers with their shallow and dead roots in this land will--when the time is ripe--be plucked out; and the proper order of Muslim-Arab dominance restored.

If prior to the Six Day War the Arabs had been unwilling to treat with Israel as an equal, after the war they certainly would not stand before her as a miserable and pitiful supplicant. And for what? Land? They had more than enough land to maintain their national identity, while to recognize Israel's legitimacy would undermine that identity. The choice was easy. So, the military debacle of 1967 rather than making the Arabs compliant, enraged them all the more; it was a further insult to Arab martial honor.

Anwar Sadat, Nasser's political heir, may have had a different view. While he understood and probably shared the Arab shame at their repeated military humiliations at the hands of the Jews, he wanted to free himself and Egypt from such concerns and lead it into the modern world. Had things worked out otherwise in the 1973 Yom Kippur War he certainly would not have spurned victory and conquest, but his initial military conduct of the operation and his later successful political displays and manoeuvres suggest that his principal goal was more limited, that he wanted to achieve a sufficiently honourable result to permit an end to the pernicious Arab fixation on Israel. If he could do well enough militarily to expunge the stain of ignominious defeat, he hoped to bring an end to hostilities with Israel, and thus allow Egypt to direct its energies to internal economic, social, and political transformation. The Arab (particularly Egyptian) success in the first three days of the 1973 Yom Kippur war restored Arab pride, indeed rejuvenated it out of all proportion to their modest military success. In the Arab consciousness (and in much of the Israeli consciousness as well)⁸ the war lasted only those first 72 hours. So, although Israel recovered from its initial shock, and achieved a spectacular victory in 18 days,⁹ the Yom Kippur war was treated as a triumph by the Egyptians.

While the notion of an exchange of land for peace had entered Israeli and world consciousness following the 1967 war it was not until Egyptian pride had been restored by a successful, well planned and well executed crossing of the Suez Canal against a surprised and undermanned brigade, that even a sham of that exchange became a political possibility. That pale military triumph freed the Egyptians to make a "peace"--of sorts.

The Fraud of Peace Agreements, The Fantasy of a Peace Process

The words we use, if employed with honesty and intelligence, can clarify and inform; a precise vocabulary supplies the bridges of reason. But a creative vocabulary employed by

⁸ The Israeli reaction to those opening seventy-two hours of the 1973 war speaks volumes to the difference in consciousness of the Arabs and the Jews with respect to their national security. Deep in the Israeli soul there is a sense of being only one defeat away from annihilation as a national state, and perhaps as a people. The Arabs, like almost every other people, have no similar sense of national vulnerability.

⁹ At the point that the United States forced a cease-fire on Israel, the Israeli Defense Forces (Zahal) were on the brink of destroying or capturing the entire Egyptian army, then stranded on the east bank of the Suez canal.

those lacking character and wisdom more often yields the opposite. It erects obstacles to clear thought--often intentionally so. Some words are particularly baneful and prone to abuse. The mind is addled at their very utterance. Peace is such a word. Who is against peace? Anything to which that sacred word is attached is thereby imbued with limitless virtue, even when the thing with which it is associated is counterfeit (the peace agreements between Israel and its neighbours Egypt and Jordan), or is more likely to result in its opposite (the "peace process" between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization).

Peace Agreements

In 1979 Israel and Egypt signed a peace treaty and opened formal diplomatic relations. A peace treaty may honestly bear that title if it either resolves a dispute, or signifies and memorializes the end of enmity. The 1979 peace agreement between Israel and Egypt did neither. It neither resulted in nor represented a reduction in Egyptian enmity. The simple truth is that from 1948 to the present there has been no fundamental change in the attitude of the Egyptian people. They regard the Jewish state as illegitimate and the Jewish people as vile and contemptible.

But putting aside sentiment for the moment what of the practical effect of the treaty on Egyptian behaviour? It is true that there has been an absence of war these last 24 years. But that is less significant than it first appears. The current absence of violence along the Egyptian Israeli border is nothing new. Over the last half-century episodic short violent wars have interrupted long periods of calm. The current military situation along the border between Israel and Egypt is hardly distinguishable from the period from 1957 to 1967. Now, as then, the border is quiet and lightly defended. Similarly the political, social, and economic relations between the countries are not much different. It is true there is now formal diplomatic relations and unhindered transit of Israeli shipping through the Suez Canal. But at the same time trade and tourism remain severely limited and more importantly the Egyptian population and press express, if anything, even more extreme paranoia and demonization of, and hostility to, both Israel and Jewry now than they did in the past. On balance the practical effect of the peace agreement is not substantially different from that of the various armistices and cease-fires that prevailed between Israel and Egypt from 1949 to 1979.

Why has so little changed? The Israelis indulged the illusion that they had disputes with discrete Arab governments that could be resolved by peace treaties. They do not. They have a dispute with the Arab nation of which Egypt and Jordan are only a part. And the fundamental claim that the Arabs have against Israel will not be settled by any number of "peace treaties."¹⁰ Do not misunderstand me I am not arguing that the peace agreements with Egypt and Jordan are of no value, or even that on balance they were not worth concluding--I remain an agnostic on that question--only that they did not accomplish what they purported to; they did not bring peace.

¹⁰ Despite the peace treaties with Israel resulting in the recovery of the entire Sinai, explicitly requiring that Israel achieve a settlement with the Palestinians, and doing little more to bring about normal amiable relations between the nations than the armistice that had prevailed after the founding of Israel, neither was popular with the Arab "street."

Nor am I saying that the dispute with the Arabs will not come to an end. Indeed it can and it will. Numerous ancient enmities are now alive only in the minds of historians: Trojans versus Greeks, Persians versus Babylonians, Persians versus Athenians, Athenians versus Spartans, Romans versus Carthaginians, Ottomans versus Byzantines. All these and countless more once vital hatreds and rivalries are now lifeless. We know of them principally because of their expression and resolution through the cataclysm of war. Other ancient enmities, once visceral, dissolved in a more evolutionary fashion. The Genoese and Venetians once bitter enemies eventually saw their rivalry displaced by other more pressing antagonisms. And remember the history of French-German relations. These two nations had been bitter rivals and enemies, now they are allies, even friends. Or, consider the United States and Canada. They have the friendliest of relations. But it was not always so. In 1812 the United States fought a particularly vicious war with its northern neighbour. So I repeat, my point is not that the dispute will not come to an end, only that it has not, and I believe will not, through peace agreements no matter how many their number.

Peace Processes

Why do relations of enmity dissolve? Those who wax poetic about the “peace process” are at least correct in appreciating that there is a process involved in moving from a state of enmity to one of peace. But judging by historical precedents they have mis-identified the process. Enmity and hostility dissolve because of a fundamental change in vision. One or both parties no longer sees themselves or the world as they once did. What brings about that change in vision? Why are Germany and France now at peace without the slightest hint of potential violent conflict? A facile answer that would support the case that Israel would be far better off employing violence rather than discourse and concession in its effort to achieve peace is to note that it was the campaigns of General Eisenhower and Marshall Zhukov in 1944-45 that were instrumental in bringing about a peaceful Germany. Theirs was a peace process of unrivaled success. But the importance of that military triumph in bringing peace is not at bottom that the victorious powers defeated Germany. It is that the defeat fundamentally changed German political consciousness. We now live in an era when neither Germany nor France seriously indulges the vision of itself or the other as a major power or can imagine itself or the other having hostile ambitions. The process that led to this more pacific consciousness consisted principally of two world wars, and for France a pair of nasty colonial wars and a misadventure in partnership with Great Britain, another former world power, at Suez in 1956.

War is not the peace making process envisioned by those who favor “*the peace process.*” What they have in mind is set of negotiated agreements enacted over an extended period of time. Proponents of this sort of process seem to be of two minds about why and how it will prove efficacious. One theme seems to be an analogy to a business negotiation. If the parties get together and dicker a bit they will reach a mutually beneficial agreement. The second more dewy eyed theme is a belief that at the heart of the dispute between the Israelis and the Arabs is some sort of misunderstanding. Sometimes this is expressed inaptly as a lack of “trust.” If this ill-will can be ameliorated by a series of successful interim agreements then everything will fall into place. Both justifications for negotiations are seductive, but neither is an accurate representation of the reality of relations between Israel and the Arabs or the prospects of achieving peace.

As a general matter negotiations are sometimes a sensible way to achieve mutually satisfactory agreements. When? Two conditions must be satisfied. First, there must be overlapping reservation prices. That is, the most that each party would willingly surrender must exceed the minimum that the other would accept. Second, the agreement must be enforceable. That enforcement can come from a third-party, the self-interest of the parties in avoiding abrogation by the other side, or internalized ethical norms.

Even in the fantasies of those Israelis and others who favor negotiations these conditions are at best only marginally satisfied. The notion was that Israel would reluctantly surrender the majority of the land of Judea, Samaria and Gaza in exchange for non-belligerency that would eventually evolve into peace. The guarantee of performance by the Palestinian Arabs would ultimately be their interest in having a state of their own. All parties would understand that the Israeli army could bring the Palestinian proto-state to an abrupt end if the Arabs violated the agreement that brought it into being.

But that vision is merely a comforting and seductive illusion. As I shall argue more fully below no negotiation between Israel and the Palestinian Authority had or have realistic prospects of satisfying either condition. First, there is no overlap; the Arabs are not prepared to accept a free strong Jewish state in the heart of the Arab nation, and the Israelis can accept nothing less. Second, the Palestinians have no passionate longing for a state of their own and thus no agreement is enforceable. If the gravamen of the Palestinian claim was merely a desire for a state of their own and to be free of Israeli rule, no elaborate peace process would have been necessary in the first place. Peace would long since have been achieved. Issues of Jewish villages, holy places, borders, water rights, etc., are of secondary importance. While the bargaining and bluffing over these questions would have been vigorous, the gains to both parties of achieving agreement would have overwhelmed the costs, and peace would now prevail.

It was out of the illusion that there was a peace to be achieved through negotiation that Prime Minister Ehud Barak offered Arafat perhaps more than he could actually deliver. In putting all his chips into the game--including those he could not be at all certain that he had the cash to cover--he likely thought he was admitting that he had lost the bargaining game. It then came as a shock that rather than jumping at the agreement, or even bargaining for still more, Arafat terminated the negotiations and then resurrected and reinvigorated the Intafada.

Even if those who believed that there was an overlap in reservation prices had been correct, still there are differences between political negotiations and business negotiations that make the achievement of peace through treaties highly problematic. One difference that should have been more prominent as an obstacle to success is the absence of a higher power to enforce the agreement. There is no dominating legal system to which an aggrieved party can appeal. The fact that this has been less of a problem than it should have been is much like the hound that did not bark in the Arthur Conan Doyle story. It highlights and strengthens a central theme of this paper that it is Israeli peace lust that lies close to the root of the present tragedy.

The second (or perhaps the first) great appeal of the negotiation model to the “peace-process-niks” is that of building trust. Why is trust necessary? The simple answer is that even in an orderly country like the United States legal enforcement of business agreements is costly and unpleasant. One is wise to do business with people one trusts and so be able to rely on their presumed good will and good character, and not merely on their *ex-ante* self-interest and the threat of *ex-post* outside enforcement to ensure their adherence to agreements. The need for trust is far greater in the disorderly, largely lawless environment of international relations where there is no higher authority to which to appeal for reliable enforcement. But the need for trust is not symmetrical between the parties, whether businesses or nation states. Often one party or the other must perform first and so has more to fear from the unreliability of its interlocutor.

The relative needs for trust by the Israelis and the Palestinians could not be more divergent. Because the centerpiece of the peace plan is some exchange of “land for peace” in which it is the Israelis who surrender land in exchange for the Arabs acquiescing to peace¹¹ there is a fundamental asymmetry in the need for trust. Land is tangible, peace is not. Land comes in discrete units, peace lies on a continuum.

The point is that the Arabs need not trust Israel. If the exchange is sensible from the Arab point of view they take no risk by agreeing to go forward. They need risk nothing, but can simply wait and see if Israel performs. For the Israeli’s it is a different matter; they must give up real territory, the surrender of which entails substantial costs and risks. It requires dismantling or abandoning valuable installations. It means surrendering strategic depth and the costs and hazards that entails. It demands the payment of a human and material price to retake the land if necessary. And, most important, it exacts a heavy--perhaps unaffordable--political price if peace fails and the land should be retaken.

Although there is some surface plausibility to the notion that if the Palestinians fail to live up to the terms of a peace agreement Israel could simply reoccupy the ceded territories and return to the *status quo ante*, as a practical matter things are not so simple. The ambiguities of the current situation were all too predictable. How serious must a Palestinian violation be in order to justify abrogating the treaty? How complicit must the Palestinian Authority be to be held liable for the violence of its population? And then there is the inertial force of “facts on the grounds.” Once a Palestinian government has come into existence in the disputed territories--call it a state, or not--it acquires a measure of legitimacy. There is a great irony in that a hope of some Israelis and a fear of some Arabs was that the Jewish villages established in Judea and Samaria were “facts on the ground.” That is, once established, they would acquire a political solidity to match the physical and become difficult to undo. In fact those Jewish towns and villages now seem rickety indeed while the Palestinian Authority has become a formidable “fact on the ground.” Though it is merely a creature of the Oslo Accords to which it has failed to adhere, The Palestinian Authority is now treated by the world as both the *de jure* and *de facto* government of the Palestinian people with quasi-sovereignty over the

¹¹ Why isn’t the opposite exchange ever envisioned, the Arabs surrender Damascus and Amman in exchange for the Israelis acquiescing to peace?

disputed lands. So the *ex-post* political cost to Israel--to say nothing of the cost in blood and treasure--of trusting the Arabs has been high indeed.

But trust they did. Despite the asymmetric need for trust, and the absence of any reason to justify such trust, Israel supported the establishment of a hostile Arab government on its territory in the hope that it would move to build peaceful relations between itself and the Jewish state of Israel. As "the peace process" ground its way forward the Palestinians did nothing to justify the trust the Israelis had already shown in permitting the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, let alone to justify a further show of trust on the part of the Israelis; They have not significantly amended their charter;¹² They have not curbed their anti-Semitic and anti-Israel rhetoric; They have not restrained the most violent elements within their population. And yet the Israelis pressed forward with negotiations and concessions. What explains this great leap of faith?

Why despite the lack of any reciprocity on the part of the Arabs have a series of Israeli governments continued to pursue this mad path? The answer I supply is the one with which I began this essay, lust. The Israeli lust for peace is so strong that regardless of how much more improbable its achievement becomes they--with government leaders at the head--press forward.

Rather than accepting such a psychological interpretation there is always the temptation to find some more pragmatic explanation for this behaviour, some convoluted Machiavellian scheme. So, for example, one might note that the Palestinian population is an unwanted social, political, economic, and police burden to Israel. Given that they could not expel the Arabs (it was both internally and externally unacceptable), many Israelis ultimately preferred to abandon the land on which the Arabs reside. If they gain peace in the process all the better, but abandoning the Arab occupied land is a good deal in any case

Yes, there is something to this. It is not merely that peace is desired, but occupation of a hostile people has been fatiguing, demoralizing, and unpopular both at home and abroad. But this explanation can not take one very far. There remains the question of whether surrendering land to a Palestinian Authority administered by Yasser Arafat and the PLO could possibly result in a more salutary situation than that which had existed for the prior quarter century? The Israeli participation in the tragic farce of Oslo has meant: (1) resurrecting Yasser Arafat--a man dedicated to the violent elimination of Israel--from his ignominious exile in Tripoli; (2) surrendering some of Israel's bargaining chip in future negotiations; (3) admitting an antagonistic armed military force of forty thousand men within its borders--indeed supplying them with arms; (4) relinquishing the power to police a hostile

¹² Article 9 states: "Armed struggle is the only way to liberate Palestine and is therefore a strategy and not tactics" Article 15 states: "The liberation of Palestine, from the Arab viewpoint, is a national duty to repulse Zionist, Imperialist invasion from the great Arab homeland and to purge the Zionist presence from Palestine." Most importantly and unambiguously Article 19 states: "The partition of Palestine in 1947 and the establishment of Israel is fundamentally null and void, whatever time has elapsed, because it is contrary to the wish of the people of Palestine and its natural right to its homeland."

population with ready access to Israel proper; (5) abandoning the Palestinian Arabs to the governance of a band of kleptocratic thugs unlikely to foster economic development;¹³ and (6) suggesting weakness to the Arabs and thereby whetting their appetite for further, more significant, capitulation.

The hound that should have been barking ever more loudly since 1993 was the absence of a reason for Israel to trust the PLO. In an act of quasi-religious faith the recent Israeli Labor party leadership persuaded itself that statehood was a powerful enough motivator for the Palestinians that they would change their heart and curb their ways. The explanation for Israel's willingness, nay eagerness, to go forward despite the abundance of evidence that the PLO was not trustworthy is that Israelis are exhausted by conflict and lust for peace. They so desperately want peace that they blind themselves to the clear evidence that trusting Arafat and his organization was beyond reckless.

As the violent terrorist attacks and suicide bombings escalated in fury from late 2000 through 2001 and 2002 and into 2003 many pundits were so numb to the underlying dynamics that they continued to talk of the need for trust. It should be obvious to all that lack of trust is not possibly the reason for the failure of the "peace process." The Israelis trusted too much, not too little, surrendering more and more of their land and prerogatives, despite the absence of any demonstration by the Palestinian Authority of a willingness and effort not only to nurture peaceful relations with the Jews but to build the successful peaceful civil society among the population allotted to its care.

There is a sense in which the word trust is being used by its promoters as a synecdoche for something richer--a shared appreciation, respect, and affection for the other. If such "trust" could be cultivated peace would come. Those who promoted and adopted this view apparently believed that what divided Israel and the Arabs was a mere misunderstanding, a failure to appreciate the position of the other. If they would only sit down and talk with one another then surely they would come to see one another's humanity, etc., etc.

¹³ My point here is not an altruistic concern with the welfare of the Arabs by the Israelis, but rather that the failure of ordinary Arab civil life to provide an environment of economic, social and political hope redirects energy and enmity towards Israel and the Jews.

This is nothing more than a child's fairy tale. The minimal position of the Arab street does not permit acceptance of Israel. So peace not achievable through negotiation, nor will it be in any way directly facilitated by face to face contact--anymore than it would have been by dinner parties hosted by Carthaginians for Romans.¹⁴

Palestinian Nationalism or Arab Nationalism?

Some Israelis and their supporters voice a rather un-thoughtful complaint about the failure of the land for peace formula. They say the Arabs do not want peace. True enough. But, if the land for peace formula makes sense at all it is not because the Arabs want peace, rather it is because they want land. The deal is supposed to be that the Arabs get land and the Israelis get peace. A better way to understand the failure of the formula is that it reveals the perhaps shocking fact that the Palestinians do not want land. If the Palestinians wanted land, more precisely, if they wanted land currently occupied by Palestinians of sufficient size to establish a homeland that could rapidly evolve into a sovereign state, if they wanted this with anything approaching the passion that the Jews longed for a Jewish state prior to the establishment of Israel, they would be eager to make substantial sacrifices and compromises to achieve it. And, peace would be no sacrifice for them, rather it would be a requirement for their state to thrive and prosper.

Why was Israel so wrong in thinking that the Palestinians were driven by the desire for a state of their own? First--and most important--there are different threads in the Palestinian discourse and one surely is for the establishment of a state. That thread generates the most sympathy in the liberal mind both in Israel and in the West, so it is the one that is magnified in public discussion. Second, just as in lusting for an unattainable woman one must imagine that she wants whatever peculiar virtue one has to offer--precisely because that is all one has to offer--those who lust for peace must believe that the Palestinians want a state, and want it passionately, for that is all that Israel has to offer. Third, the Israelis had the model of their own history. The Jews were desperate for, and now jealously guard and sacrifice for, their tiny nation. They imagined that the Palestinians felt the same. The evidence is that they do not. Why not?

Until recently many Israelis argued quite correctly, albeit futilely, that there was no Palestinian nationality, and that to the extent there was a pale imitation of one, that nation already had a state, Jordan. Palestinian public relations quite understandably wish to present the world a decidedly different image, one of the Palestinians as a unique long-suffering nation entitled to a state of their own. Judged by the standards applied to the national aspirations of others, however, the Palestinians do not have a very strong claim to nationhood. Do they have a unique language? culture? religion? Are they of a particular and distinctive race? Do they have a long peculiar history? Are they without other states near or far, where those of their religion, race, culture, and language are sovereign? By these standards the

¹⁴ In the discussion above and throughout this essay I have treated the Israeli and Arab consciousness as though each were a unity. This, of course, is solely for ease of exposition. Each population has a distribution of sentiment. I am trying to capture what might be described as the critical center, the views not so much of the median "voter", as the median committed member of the community.

Palestinians have considerably less of a positive claim to nationhood and normative claim to a state than the Sikhs, the Vlachs, the Ossetians, the South Moluccans, the Mormons, the Ndebele, the Afrikaners, the Kurds, and scores of other peoples without states of their own. Indeed, they have scarcely more of a claim to nationhood and a state than the people of Yorkshire, Minnesota, Silesia, Tuscany, or South Cholo.

And, *a fortiori*, it is even more difficult to take seriously the claim of a deep Palestinian desire for a state on every inch of the specific disputed lands of Gaza and the West Bank. First, there is no historic state of Palestine, or even vintaged use of the name. Thus, this can hardly be some centuries old, culturally embedded, longing, or attachment to any precise swath of territory. Second, the lands currently in dispute are so as the result of little more than an historical accident. They correspond to the portions of the British mandate of Palestine occupied by Egypt and Jordan from 1948 to 1967, following the armistice in the war of Israeli independence. They represent nothing more symbolic than serendipitous cease-fire lines. And, in that war the indigenous Arabs fought under the banner of the Arab Liberation Army against the establishment of a Jewish state in any portion of the British mandate of Palestine--not for the establishment of an Arab state. Third, during the years prior to 1967 there was no major Arab organization¹⁵ lobbying for a Palestinian state in the territory of Gaza and the West Bank then controlled by Egypt and Jordan.

For the purpose of this essay my point here is not principally one of normative justice, but of positive purpose. While Minnesotans might find it in their interest to make a nationalist claim, and might even persuade themselves of its justice, the truth is that they could not feel it, and be driven by it in the same way as, for example, Poles. So it is with the Palestinians--a term by the way that would have more likely been used to describe a Jew than an Arab in 1940s Palestine¹⁶--contrary to popular perceptions they are not a nation desperately in search of their own state.

The fundamental reason why the attempt to negotiate a deal with the Palestinians has failed is because they are motivated far more by Arab nationalism than Palestinian nationalism. This deficit of parochial nationalism is not something peculiar to Palestinians. In the Arab world it is Arab nationalism co-mingled with and reinforced by a powerful thread of a pre-enlightenment religious identity with an Islamic proto-nation, that triumphs over the more local national allegiances. In 1990 though a number of Arab governments--especially those in the line of march--were eager to eject Saddam Hussein from Kuwait (or as he put it, "Iraq's eighteenth province") the Arab street was ambivalent. They were attracted to the notion of a powerful Arab leader unifying the Arab nation. This sentiment in favour of Arab nationalism

¹⁵ The Palestine Liberation Organization was created in 1964 by the Arab League, not the Palestinian people. Its central mandate was to liberate a portion of the Arab homeland and not to establish a Palestinian state. Thus it is not an anomaly that its chairman, Yassir Arafat, is an Egyptian, and not a Palestinian.

¹⁶ For example, The Palestine Symphony Orchestra was an entirely Jewish body. Similarly, the antecedent of The Jerusalem Post, the English language newspaper of Israel, was The Palestine Post.

over more parochial Syrian, Jordanian, Saudi, Iraqi, Omani, Kuwaiti, Moroccan, Bahreini, Algerian, Lybian, and even Egyptian varieties is neither of recent vintage nor mere idle talk. From 1958 to 1961 Syria and Egypt were briefly joined together as the United Arab Republic. That eponymous title captures it all.

The absence of Palestinian nationalism highlights a central theme of this paper. The Palestinian war against Israel is in a sense more about Jews than about Palestinians. That is, it is not about acquiring individual liberty or a vehicle for communal expression for Arabs, but rather of limiting and curtailing the national expression of Jews in the Arab world. The Arabs abhor the notion of Jewish sovereignty over lands that the Arabs occupy in numbers or once called their own. Further, they take their military defeat by the Jews as a deep humiliation. It is the need to right these wrongs rather than the desire to have a state in which they can speak their own language, practice their own religion, educate their children as they deem appropriate, and find a place of refuge from a hostile world where they may be sovereign. That is the Jewish dream, not the Arab one! The Arabs are sovereign in a score of countries in which they constitute the dominant culture. As for the Palestinians they have all the common personal and communal liberties under Israeli rule, lacking only national sovereignty. In this lack their situation is no different from scores of peoples who find themselves without sovereignty in their native lands, many of whom, unlike the Palestinians, can look to no other state in which their nation is sovereign (e.g., the Ossetians, the Kurds, the Ndebele, the Ibo, and the Moluccans).

It is victory that the Arabs seek, not a national home for the Palestinians. The latter goal, if achieved, would be little more than a totem of their triumph.

The Pernicious Peace Process: Compelling and Encouraging Violence

The aggressive search for a permanent resolution of the conflict between Israel and the Arabs is not merely futile it is pernicious. It exacerbates the conflict in two distinct ways: first by *compelling* Arab intransigence and violence, and second by *encouraging* it.

It seems a paradox that aggressively pursuing peace would compel a violent response from the Arabs. A common linguistic distinction is useful in getting to the bottom of this paradox. Consider the subtle difference in meaning between accepting something hateful and merely putting up with it. Outwardly both yield the same behaviour; one refrains from going to war against something one loathes. But, the inner sense of the two acts are entirely different. To accept something implies that one acknowledges its permanence and legitimacy, while to put up with it is merely to bow to current circumstance. One's acquiescence is (or feels) only *temporary*.

The dream of the peace-process-niks is of a Palestinian state living side by side peacefully with Israel. But for Yasser Arafat, The Palestinian Authority, and the Arab people that is a nightmare not a dream because it entails accepting Israel's legitimacy and permanence. The catastrophe of the establishment of Israel, this alien presence in the heart of the Arab nation is unacceptable. On the other hand, it may be put up with, that is, temporarily tolerated--even for centuries. Thus the effort to achieve a final peaceful resolution to the conflict forces the Arab hand. If it ever appears that a final agreement is on the verge of being concluded they must

bring the process to an end. They do so in two ways: (1) they make unsatisfiable demands; and (2) they permit and encourage ever more extreme acts of violence against Israelis.

The Signalling Problem

The second pernicious element to the negotiations turns on the signal it sends. Unlike in the case of business negotiations, because enforcement of the agreement rests on one's interlocutor rather than an all-powerful and reliable third party, reservation prices are largely endogenously determined. That is each side's reservation price is a function of its judgment of the will, strength, and intent of the other to enforce the agreement and to press forward with its own agenda in the absence of an agreement. So the eagerness with which Israel enters negotiations and participates, offering more each time, undermines its position and encourages the Arabs to believe that Israel is weak and that the Arabs will ultimately get everything or nearly so that they want. Rather than negotiations making the Arabs more compliant by making the Jews seem more human, they make the Arabs more intransigent and bellicose by conveying the impression--possibly correct- that the Jews are weak.

The Israelis were likely not unaware of this relationship. They perhaps thought that their case was an exception in that they were negotiating out of strength rather than weakness. So their willingness to be forthcoming would be understood as an act of confidence and magnanimity rather than weakness. After all, when Oslo began Arafat and the PLO had long since been expelled from the region and were withering in Tunisia, Israel's economy was booming, its military had repeatedly established that it could thrash any number of Arab armies, and she now had peace agreements in place with Egypt and Jordan.

But that is but one view of the cathedral, there is another that I alluded to earlier. Israel while strong in some dimensions is weak in those that are perhaps more important. The Arabs are the majority. We live in an odd time. In a reversal of the ancient world, numbers seem to count for less and less on the battlefield and in the economy and more and more in the political realm. Israel will have much trouble maintaining itself as a Jewish state as the number of Arabs living under Jewish sovereignty rises. And for the Moslem fanatics it is neither cleverness, nor wealth, nor numbers that count as much as spiritual strength and will. They believe that God is on their side and they have the stronger will.

But, even if the Arabs inferred that the Israelis were making concessions from strength that would not unambiguously enhance the prospects of negotiation. The Arabs are a proud people. They have a sense of themselves as heirs to a magnificent culture and descendants of a great people somehow having fallen on hard times. The Arabs had a five hundred year run from the 7th century to the 12th. The Turks, though not Arab were Moslem, and piggy backed on this for their own four centuries of triumph. The Arab world has been in relative decline since the 13th century and the rest of the Moslem world since the 16th. This descent has occurred on allfronts, political, military, economic, scientific. To the Arabs, Israel, this strong modern Jewish nation in their midst, is a grievous insult. It represents a world turned upside down. Jews may--or at least in the not too distant past, did--live amongst Arabs, but not as a nation. That they should be so powerful as to arrogantly offer crumbs to the Arabs is a further humiliation.

At first blush it seemed puzzling that with each Israeli concession the prospect of peace receded rather than approached. But the explanation is clear. While the Israelis may have thought they were signaling their confidence, generosity, magnanimity, flexibility and seriousness. The Arabs received a different message. To the Arabs (and in a sense to the Israelis as well) these concessions are a product either of Israeli arrogance and contempt, or alternatively weakness and guilt and each interpretation has a pernicious effect. If the former, the Arabs become still more enraged at their own humiliating condition. If the latter, the inference to be drawn from Israeli willingness, nay desperate enthusiasm, for negotiation is a spiritual weakness and a recognition of the justice of the Arab side. It feeds the Arab vision of Israel as a modern reprise of the Crusader states of the 11th century, ready to be washed away by the Arab tide.

Dueling Interpretations of Arab Terrorism

There is a well known aphorism that “the end does not justify the means.” The truth is more nearly the opposite. Only the ends could possibly justify the means, not only as an objective philosophical matter, but, more importantly for our purposes, in the mind of the perpetrator and the observer. That is why one man’s freedom fighter is another’s terrorist. It is each’s way of saying they attach different moral weight to the ends served and the means employed. With that as prelude let us examine alternative views of Arab terrorism to gain insight into the moral calculus of various players in this political drama.

Although terrorism has no single, clear, unproblematic definition, a reasonable starting point is the indiscriminate killing of civilians for a political purpose. The appeal of such a definition is that it captures--at least partially--the justification for the moral opprobrium that attaches to the word. It is because organized Arab violence falls well within the definition that it has been labeled as terrorism. Indeed, to characterize the violence as merely indiscriminate, gives the Arabs more than the benefit of the doubt. It is more accurate to say that the Arabs seek out old people, women, children and infants as targets; they machine gun private residences, bludgeon to death 14-year-old boys, ritualistically slaughter unarmed captives, blow up pizzerias, discotheques, Bat Mitzvah celebrations, and Passover Seders.

For the Arabs as for all people it requires a big end to justify an awful means. That this violence is carried out by organized Arab political groups, and approved of--indeed celebrated--by most Arabs implies that either they do not view these means as awful or they have in mind an end that justifies it. The behavior of the Arab populace suggests the former, that is, that the Arabs do not view the means as extreme and in need of special justification, that they see the wholesale killing of Jewish women and children as at most of trivial weight or more likely as a good in itself. Not only does one not hear Arab voices appalled by the slaughter of innocents, one also does not hear characterizations of the violence as a regrettable necessity perpetrated for some greater good. Instead, successful terrorist attacks including the one on the World Trade Center are occasions for joyful celebration where candies are handed out. Consider also the sermons of imams invoking God and calling for more such killings, or the gleeful party atmosphere as hundreds of people gathered outside the police station in Ramallah to witness and cheer the cold blooded ritualistic stabbing to death of two unarmed Jewish reservists. It is not an anomaly that there is repeated reference in the Arab press to

“Hitler of Blessed Memory.” The Arabs are comfortable with the Nazi position on the proper treatment of Jews.

For the Arabs the ends and means are melded into a unity. The end which justifies the means of purposely killing infants in their beds is the destruction and displacement of the state of Israel as a strong independent predominantly Jewish state. That immediate end is part of a larger longing to return the world to its proper order of Arab/Muslim dominance. In their view the Jews are merely infidel thieves--all of them. They deserve a harsh fate.

But it is not only Arabs who do not judge the terrorists harshly. Many on the left of the political spectrum in Europe and America also express sympathy and understanding for the Arab violence. For them, the Arab *ends and means*, a resurgent Islam and Arabdom, the destruction of the Jewish state and the death and expulsion of a large number of that vile race, can not have much resonance. Their sympathy for the Arab cause is based on an invention of ends for the Arabs that are more palatable and grounds for their behavior that remove that behavior from the moral realm of means.

In judging the justice of a cause we are all slaves of metaphors and analogies that emanate from and reflect an ideology. The ideology that lies at the base of European sympathy may be described as infantile and ignorant leftism. For the new left of Europe and America attaching the title “Liberation” to any cause of a somewhat exotic non-Western people imbues it with a dignity and righteousness that makes difficult any further reflection. For the Westerner the end served by Arab violence is the realization of the national aspirations of an oppressed people. The means employed, if extreme, are reflections of the extraordinary desperation of their plight. This claim of desperation is a move to grant something of a moral pass to the Arabs. It is the political equivalent of an amalgam of judicial claims of insanity and self defense.

From the perspective of a westerner bereft of an all-consuming ideology the idea of being a suicide bomber is nearly incomprehensible. To the extent he can imagine himself undertaking such an act it could only be out of the overwhelming desperation and destitution. So the European believes that that must be what lies at the back of the Oriental mind as well. And if the Arab is so desperate that it drives him to kill himself and numerous anonymous others then someone must be at fault. As it is Israel that oppresses the Arabs, it is Israel that is to blame for the terror that it has driven the Arab to commit.

Because modern Europeans and Americans have lost not only strong faith in God, but also strong faith in anything that transcends the self they can not contemplate such self-sacrifice for a cause--any cause. And, because they have been imbued with the modern liberal ethic of the dignity and brotherhood of all men they find it hard to imagine a purely philosophical, national and religious hatred of the other not rooted in some egregious mistreatment. There is a great irony at play here. It is the modern liberal European and American who talks of “seeing the other.” Yet in this case they lack the openness and imagination to appreciate that “the other” is different than themselves. The Arabs do not indulge the modern liberal Western conceit of a concern and affection for all people. To the Arabs the political/moral/communal/legal rights and interests of minorities--Jews in particular--are at most of little weight, and for many less than that.

But what of the claim both of some Arabs and the vast majority of sympathetic Westerners that the end sought by the Arabs is a Palestinian state? At a minimum the historical evidence suggests that it is a very small end, certainly not one worthy of such horror. In 1947 the Arabs could have had a state of their own and rejected that choice out of hand. From 1947 to 1967 when Judea, Samaria, Gaza, and the eastern portion of Jerusalem were under Arab control no broad based movement existed clamoring for such a state. The PLO was formed in 1964 when all the currently disputed land was under the control of Arab states and yet none of its effort was directed at wresting control of that territory for the Palestinian people. Add to this the botch that the Palestinian Authority has made of self-government these last nine years and in sum it hardly suggest that we have a people desperately striving for a vehicle of national expression.

Perhaps more importantly, in reckoning what are the ends served by the means employed one must ask whether a putative end is facilitated by a particular means. If it is not, one is then compelled to ask whether one has mis-identified the end of the actual participants, and substituted something one finds more congenial. So, is the prospect of Palestine helped or hindered by terrorist murder? If the goal is a two state solution in which Palestine rests peacefully against Israel it will be with Israel's acquiescence. But Israel will not acquiesce if it believes that the Arabs are simply riven with hatred for the Jews and that the Palestine that comes into being will simply be a more powerful and secure base for terrorist attacks. The spirit of visceral hatred displayed by the bombings and other murders and their approval by the Arab public has had an unambiguous political effect in Israel. The Israeli center has moved sharply and clearly away from concessions and accommodation. Now, it is of course possible that the Arabs have merely mis-calculated, but the more respectful conclusion is that the vision of the Palestinian cause as a national liberation movement seeking its own national expression and prepared to accept Israel is little more than a fantasy of the unimaginative western mind.

Another theme of the Arab apologists is that the terrorism is a legitimate response to Israel's egregious treatment of Arabs under her rule. In the Arab press and elsewhere there is often an attempt to draw offensive parallels between Israeli treatment of Arabs and Nazi treatment of the Jews. If this parallel were even remotely accurate and were the recognized and shared policy of the Israeli people then extreme Arab violence would earn a measure of excuse--even justification--in the Western mind. But calling such parallels hyperbolic is itself an absurdly gross understatement.

By almost any measure the Arabs in the disputed territories have done as well or more often better under Israeli rule than under the rule of sovereign Arab states. Until the renewal of extreme violence the Arabs of the disputed territories were welcome to work in Israel. Even now they continue to receive medical care from Jewish hospitals. Their standard of living, life expectancy, and infant mortality rates had all improved immensely under Israeli rule. And though the Israelis had little reason for affection for the Arabs they do not take pleasure in their suffering. While one can of course find individual instances of abuse these must be put into context. Given the character, amount, and purpose of Arab violence, Israeli restraint has been extraordinary. When on the very rare occasion an Israeli takes vengeance on Arabs as in the case of Baruch Goldstein gunning down of two dozen Arabs in a Hebron mosque/shul

there is near universal condemnation of the act not merely by all members of the government but by the Jewish public as well. This is in contrast to the ceaseless Arab praise of more heinous and frequent acts of violence against Jews. None of this is to suggest that the Arabs were (or should have been) pleased with Israeli rule, only that they were not being persecuted. When one persecutes a people their living conditions do not improve!

Perhaps it is merely a political desperation that the apologists have in mind? If that were the case one would expect that when Palestinian political prospects are worse terrorism would be more common and *vice versa*. The opposite has been the case. Prior to the Oslo agreement of 1993 the Arabs of the disputed territories had experienced 25 years of Israeli military rule. During that period the PLO was first driven from Jordan by King Hussein in 1970, then expelled from Lebanon to far away Tunisia by the Israelis in 1982. And, it was in the two decades prior to 1994 that Israel re-settled Jewish communities in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria. Yet in the twenty-seven years prior to the Oslo agreement of 1994 terrorism was minimal. Since then Israel has permitted the PLO to return to the territories and form a proto-government as part of an attempt to finally settle the matter and establish a Palestinian state. The result is that terrorism has exploded. The correlation between the degree of Israeli control over Palestinian life on the one hand and Arab violence on the other is negative rather than positive.

The meaning of Arab terrorism should be clear. It is not desperation, but more nearly its opposite that inspires the upsurge in violence. Arabs are willing to sacrifice their own lives in order to kill non-Arab non-Muslim civilians because: (1) they are dedicated to a cause--as inchoate and fantastic as that may be--that transcends their own life; (2) they have a renewed hope in victory; and (3) at its most generous they have a complete indifference to the lives of those who oppose them.

Charting The Path Forward

I have painted a bleak picture, but no bleaker than the daily news reports. To summarize: (1) the Arabs do not accept the legitimacy of Israel; (2) the Israelis have nothing to offer them that will induce them to do so; (3) negotiations are more likely to lead to violence and instability than peace; and (4) the presence of the Palestinian Authority in the disputed territories has made things considerably worse in every dimension. So where do we go from here?

We begin with the continuing gruesome violence of the Second Intafada. A common lesson of history is that the losing side in any contest must either adapt or be defeated again and again (consider the French from Crecy to Agincourt). For the Palestinians and other Arabs conventional warfare has proven ever more futile.¹⁷ Even if it offered some prospect of success the endgame for the Arabs is sufficiently horrific to dissuade them from that path. Only the most optimistic fool would attach a high probability to Israel's desisting from a massive multi-national nuclear response if she were actually threatened with destruction. So instead they have chosen unconventional "terror" attacks. They have adapted.

¹⁷ Egypt's performance in the 1973 is a limited exception. Sadat cleverly managed to convert a military defeat into a political victory.

From one perspective suicide bombers and other low-level non-conventional attacks while serious, are not life threatening to Israel. Imagine that the Arabs increased their attacks by a factor of five and thereby succeeded in killing an average of 40 Jews per week. The annual cost to Israel would be 2080 lives. This number represents a fatality rate roughly double the recent rate of highway deaths in the United States--far from crushing. But that perspective fails to capture the extraordinarily multi-layered damage to the Israeli psyche. First, there was the immense disappointment in the failure of the peace process the attacks signified. Second, there was the sense of isolation, dismay, and frustration at the hostile reaction of the European left to Israel's restrained attempts to defend itself. Finally, there was the fear of the attacks themselves and the inability of the security service to bring them to an end. Their random, chaotic nature and the multiple nodes from which they originate had the quality of a bacterial attack. Though the physical danger may be objectively small one feels constantly vulnerable. This sense of their physical situation combined with grave disappointment over the failure to bring an end to the conflict after so much sacrifice and unappreciated good will has demoralized much of the Israeli populous.

The Israeli military and security services are desperate and dedicated in their effort to counter terrorism. They cultivate informants, rigorously interrogate captives, raid Palestinian communities, arrest likely enemy fighters, assassinate known terrorist leaders, intercept and kill terrorists in the act. If they succeed in bringing a sufficient measure of peace to the Israelis the ball will be back in the Arabs' court. For both parties, sufficiency is a matter of perception. If the Israelis become depressed at their situation the Arabs will believe they are winning and continue along the same path. If the Israelis can reduce the terror attacks to an acceptable level then it will be the Arabs turn to be demoralized once again and abandon this costly weapon.

These tactics and operations by the Israeli government will shift the balance but ultimately they are secondary to, and should be in furtherance of, a new strategic initiative. The peace process was an ill-conceived pernicious game. It must be brought to an end and its progeny uprooted and replaced. This first requires a psychological move by the Israeli people that will be reflected in national policy. They must accept the fact that peace is not possible in the foreseeable future. A general acceptance of this proposition will have a cascading series of beneficial consequences. It will change the focus from some sort of millenarian resolution of the conflict to a more mundane set of continuing accommodations to difficult circumstances. If this view were shared by the United States government it would of course carry more weight in all quarters. But whether or not the United States explicitly concurs the change in Israeli outlook will have a salutary effect. Contrary to conventional wisdom it will gradually lessen the impulse for Arab violence. By abandoning its desperate search for a final peaceful resolution to the conflict Israel will no longer signal that it is a weak supplicant on the verge of capitulation, and will relieve the Arabs of their sense that they must rush to achieve their ends--which can only be satisfied by the violent destruction of Israel--or otherwise fall into permanent acceptance of the Jewish state. Instead they could maintain their lack of recognition of Israel for as long as required for the Arab sea to wash the Jews away.

Replacing The Palestinian Authority

I return to an earlier theme of this essay. Peace will come-- if at all--from a change in consciousness. I can no more than guess as to what it will take to reconcile the Arab world in general and the Palestinians in particular to Israel. But my guess is that the Arabs must emerge from what seems to be an irredentist mind set fixating on the alien Jewish state and transform themselves into a vibrant modern people. How will this come about? And what can Israel do to facilitate it?

It is here that the Oslo accords did their greatest damage. If the mass of Palestinian Arabs living in the disputed territories developed middle class aspirations that they could realize in their own communities not only would they have a much more substantial stake in a peaceful settlement with Israel, but more importantly the focus of their lives and consciousness might change. To whatever limited extent the Israeli government had succeeded in creating the environment for that transformation prior to 1994, that process has been sharply reversed since then.

The Palestinian Authority is all vice and no virtue. It is the single greatest obstacle to an amelioration of relations between Israel and the Arabs. Most visibly, it provides no security for any Israeli interest, and substantial cover for its enemies. Not only are Hezboullah, Islamic Jihad, and Hamas able to plan, move, and act unencumbered by the official Palestinian security forces, but organs of the Palestinian Authority itself such as Tanzim and Force 17 are themselves engaged in violent assaults against Israeli forces and on their own non-compliant population. As to the latter, it is extraordinary and telling that Israel has had some success in recruiting agents among the Arab population. It suggests that there are some cracks in the totalitarian structure of the terrorists and their protector, the Palestinian Authority. Arabs living in Palestinian Authority areas who are known to have cooperated with Israeli authorities have forfeited their lives.

It is long since clear that the original hope that a Palestinian government would have an interest in sharply disciplining and controlling militant violent elements within their own population was a peace lust induced fantasy. But the Palestinian Authority's support for and complicity in terror and the assiduous spreading of venom against Israel and Jews that takes place under its indulgent eye are only part of the problem. What is perhaps worse is that it has simply misgoverned its population. The Palestinian Authority is characterized by inefficiency, thievery and tyranny. The baleful effects of this mis-governance are many. Most important is that rather than encouraging the development of ordinary civil life among the Arabs it has gone in the opposite direction. The PA controlled territory has in effect become a giant refugee camp. This economic calamity is not some unfortunate accident. The terrorist violence and the economic failure are really part and parcel of the same phenomenon. The PLO is a revolutionary organization whose *raison d'etre* is the violent overthrow of Israel. To build the institutions of a functioning society and state would undermine that goal and be contrary to its nature.

The litany of harmful effects of the PA mis-governance is endless. One of the less visible is that it brings about a pernicious demographic shift. Those Arabs most concerned with their family's safety and economic, social and educational mobility find legal and illegal means to emigrate. For example, while in 1994 Christians made up 80% of the population of Bethlehem, by 2002 their share was down to 20%.

It would be nice if the Palestinian Authority got the blame for this. And they do--to a point. As long as Israel surrounds and constrains the Palestinian entity the Arabs will be inclined to put the lion's share of the blame for the economic and social failings of their society on Israel. So, by tolerating the continued existence of the Palestinian Authority the Israelis get the worst of both worlds; they can not provide the environment in which the Palestinians can prosper and they receive the blame for their poverty, misery, and oppression.

This economic problem is intertwined with a deeper cultural problem. While it is true that there is a fanatical religious motif in Arab culture that is something of a reprise to the 11th century, one can make too much of this. The Arabs are not as deeply wedded to this Islamist strain as first appears. They--like all people--are searching for their personal salvation. As a people they are cycling through the various candidates for transcending their finite unsatisfying existence. Over the last century socialism, communism, and various forms of nationalism, in addition to sybaritic egoism (think Kuwait) have all been candidates. If religion has appeared more popular of late it is largely because it has been a winner on the political battlefield both in the distant past and more recently. For the Arabs, their rise as a nation was intimately tied to the adoption of militant Islam. With economic, social, and political failure the nostalgia for a regnant Islam becomes all the more appealing and satisfying.

It would have been better for all concerned had Israel never permitted Arafat and his crew to enter the country. But she did. Israel's goal must be to either eliminate or transform the Palestinian Authority. Unfortunately, it has now become a formidable "fact on the ground." Disarming the Palestinian security forces and expelling or incarcerating the leadership of the Palestinian Authority would be costly militarily, and far more so politically. Circumstances could arise however that make this more acceptable--albeit never completely so. Strong and permanent Israeli action is politically more acceptable if it is in response to some egregious Arab act. Time is of the essence however; the political sentiment on these questions is a delicate flower. If Israel's actions are immediate in response to a bus bombing or some other mass killing she will have more political leeway as to the weight, strategic character, and permanence of her response. If she is slow and tentative however it will make the next Arab outrage more politically acceptable to the rest of the world and any future Israeli response less acceptable. Think once more of ends and means and the signal they send. When after various terrorist acts Israel warned the Palestinians that would drop bombs on some official Palestinian building so that they may evacuate, it sent the message that the killing of Jewish civilians is not such an evil act, the Israelis merely blow up empty buildings in response.

Israel should use each terrorist act as a justification to permanently rescind a portion of the semi-autonomous status of the Palestinian Authority, perhaps linking the area chosen to the site or origin of the terrorist act. In the end if the violence continues Israel will progressively squeeze out the Palestinian Authority. And if by some miracle terrorism comes to an end, then the Palestinian Authority will remain in place but will have been transformed from a promoter and shield of terrorism to something more benign.

Beyond reducing Arab control over the disputed territories Israel should increase Jewish control, and presence, and should likewise link that move to Arab mis-behaviour. She should

announce a policy of expanding settlements and establishing new ones in response to acts of terrorism. The purpose of this is several. First, the policy would be consistent with the central Zionist project of exerting Jewish control over the Land of Israel. To continue with that project signals Israeli resolve. Second, when and if *some* Jewish towns and villages are abandoned it will be as a result of negotiation. Israel should not psychologically and politically surrender before the game begins. Most importantly if the increase in Jewish control and settlement is in response to Arab violence it changes the calculus of violence for the Arabs.

But controlling Arab populated territories is not an optimal permanent solution. If Israel can once more gain administrative control of Judea, Samaria, and Gaza she must make more serious efforts to establish orderly, honest, Arab administrations. There will be less political freight attached to the symbolism of such administrations if they are small in size and limited in jurisdiction, e.g., school boards, sewage authorities, highway departments.

Arab administrators will nevertheless doubtlessly be disparaged as “puppets.” Fear of such an epithet should not guide Israeli policy, nor should excessive concern that the administrators will not be compliant enough. On the one hand even were we talking about the establishment of a full fledged Palestinian state, Israel will insist on severely limiting the military capability and the foreign policy of such a state. If that makes for a puppet then half the world has always consisted of puppet regimes. Weak states that pose potential threats to more powerful ones must adjust their military and foreign policy in response. This is no more than the standard practice between nations. Think of Finland’s reluctant accommodation of life next to the former Soviet Union.

On the other hand, the Israeli concern with the internal governance of Arab administrative regions will be minimal, and largely coincide with that of apolitical Arabs. Israel’s principle interest is that the Arabs govern themselves well in the sense of providing efficient services at reasonable cost. Inducing the Palestinian Arabs to be more pacific will turn much more on developing in them a greater concern with their children’s education and job prospects than on any direct attention to reducing their hatred of Jews and Israel. For the foreseeable future Israel can not seek out Arabs who are actually friendly to the Jewish state. No Arab administration that was not somewhat adverse to Israel would have legitimacy for the Arabs. Within reason such antagonism is not a problem. Of course under the Palestinian Authority it has gone far beyond what is reasonable. It is appalling that Israel has permitted the widespread education of little children in the glories of martyrdom in the killing of Jews on land that she controls. While it is too much to hope, and unnecessary, that they be educated instead in love of Jews, it suffices that they are taught to be obsessed with learning auto mechanics, nursing, computer programming, protein folding, portfolio management, and soccer.

Removing the Palestinians

A less likely but nonetheless possible long run solution of the problem is the removal of a substantial portion of the Arabs from the disputed territories. This transfer can occur in a variety of ways. First, there can be cooperation of Arab countries in resettling Palestinians in other countries. At the moment this looks like an extreme longshot. It may become less so

depending on the direction and force of the American “war on terrorism.” Second, the Arabs may be induced to leave by the increasing poverty and violence that makes staying in the disputed territories less attractive. Third, the Israeli government can take actions to fight terrorism and establish order that *pari passu* will reduce the population. Consider the following specific initiatives: (1) barring all UNRWA activities from Israeli controlled territory thereby removing some of the financial incentives for the continuation of such camps in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza;¹⁸ (2) expelling all known members of terrorist organizations and their families; and (3) physically destroying all buildings in which terrorist activity takes place or originates. Each of these acts would have a double benefit. First, it would encourage Arabs--particularly those most violently opposed to Israel--to leave. Second, it would exact a real price for violence against Jews and their state.

Jewish Non-Governmental Organizations

The prior discussion was written under the assumption that the Israeli government by doing more of what they are currently doing and doing it better will be successful at sharply reducing Arab terrorist attacks. If they are not successful enough however then the Israelis will have to find a more radical response or see their state die.

One response that few wish to acknowledge is peeking around the corner, a reprise of a Jewish institution of some vintage, the non-governmental military organization (NGMO). While in the distant and recent past Jews have fought under the auspices of NGMOs it was always because they lacked a state and therefore a government sponsored army. Given that from a purely military perspective a national army is always immensely more powerful and effective than an NGMO, why would it ever serve Jewish interests to act through an NGMO?

¹⁸ The United Nations has played any number of baleful roles in this conflict. Perhaps its most pernicious has been in its provision of sustenance for Arab “refugees” in “camps” for the past fifty-five years. These “camps” have been the great hothouses of terrorist organizations. Rather than serving as vehicles for the Arab refugees to integrate themselves into their host countries and create new lives for themselves as refugees have done since time immemorial, including any number of times in the recent past, e.g., Germany 1945, India 1947, Pakistan 1947, and Israel 1948 to the present, they have instead been places that nurtured the irredentist dream of returning to a reborn Arab Palestine in triumph. I place both “refugees” and “camps” in quotation marks because each conveys a mistaken image of the state of things. First, given that Arabs became refugees in 1947, and the median age of the Arab population is the late teens or early twenties, the vast majority of those claiming refugee status never lived in British Palestine. Second, over the years the U.N. has expanded its definition of those eligible to claim such status to include indigenous populations of the host countries who never resided in Palestine. As for the word “camps,” it conveys the image of some primitive tent like accommodation. Indeed so it was at the beginning and is again in other places in the world in the immediate aftermath of some natural or political disaster, e.g., Kosovo. Now however these Palestinian camps are simply small towns with schools, grocery stores, gas stations, etc.

Civilized governments must operate under tight constraints and so must their militaries. There are politically effective tactics that private groups can employ that are morally and politically foreclosed to nation states--Israeli in particular. The wholesale and retail purposeful slaughter of unarmed civilians has proven an effective terror tactic for the Arabs. Whether it has been politically effective is a more difficult question. The answer depends on what their goals are and what the future holds in store. At the very least it must be granted that this terrorism has changed the nature of the game. It is likely that if the terrorist violence returns to its 2001-02 level that before very long the Jews will take a page from Arabs' book and form Jewish organizations dedicated to a symmetrical tactical mission of targeting Arab civilians for random mass killing.

Regardless of the motivation of the participants and sponsors of such groups, their strategic function would be three-fold. First, they would provide operational symmetry. While Arab NGOs, supported by the Arab population fight an unconstrained war against the Jewish people--a soft visible target, the Israeli military must sharply limit both its targets and its tools. It can make war only against Arab military NGOs---a hard, secretive target--and must employ only precision weapons. It can not make war on the hostile Arab population and must exercise extreme care not to hurt civilians even when it attacks a legitimate target. This is a matter not merely of outside political pressure, but perhaps more importantly of internal political/moral constraint. Jewish NGOs would not be so constrained

To this point although considerably more Arabs than Jews have died in the Second Intafada, the vast majority of those Arabs have done so by choosing to take the risk--indeed sometimes to embrace the certainty--of death, sometimes as combatants and sometimes as cheerleaders and sightseers. The Jews on the other hand have largely been going about the ordinary affairs of life: riding busses, attending Bat Mitzvahs, sleeping in cribs. Ordinary Arabs can for the most part feel safe in going about their activities, ordinary Israelis can not. So the Arab civilian can support the Intafada without its continuation constituting a direct threat to his life. If its continuation put him at significant risk of random retaliatory murder it would change the calculus of such support.

Second, these organizations would change the political debate. In what direction is less clear; they are something of a wild card. While on the one hand there is some danger that they would harm the Jewish cause by surrendering not merely for themselves, but for all Jews and the State of Israel, the moral high ground, on the other they may well have the opposite effect and strengthen the moral position of Jews in general and Israel in particular. How so? First, the negative effects may be small. For many people it is the Arabs that now hold the moral high ground and paradoxically this is reinforced, not undercut, by their terrorism. The terrorism is explained as the actions of the desperate and egregiously mistreated. And, as we saw in the response to the Israeli army's re-occupation of Jenin, most observers are not impartial. For Israel's opponents there is nothing that she can do to improve her moral standing, but capitulate. Thus the *marginal* effect of Jewish terrorism on the views of third parties may be quite small. Second, the NGOs could improve the political perception of the Jewish cause because, they would neither act nor speak on behalf of the Israeli government. Interestingly, their contribution would come from both making more ambitious and more modest claims. As an example of the former were they to demand the exit of all the Arabs from Israel and the disputed territories they would make the Israeli government

appear moderate by contrast. As an example of the latter an NGMO might announce that it has no political goals or demands aside from protecting Jewish lives and that it will only engage in terror attacks on a tit for tat basis and will desist from attacks if the other side refrains from killing Jewish civilians. While many would still condemn their tactics, who would condemn or even criticize their goal? And who could fail to see the natural relationship between the threat/offer and the goal?

Third, they would in effect give the Israeli government another bargaining chip in its efforts to reach a negotiated settlement. While the NGMOs would by definition not be a part of the government, given that their sentiments lie in the same place, the government could as a practical matter offer a cessation to the Jewish terror as part of a settlement.

This highlights a potentially serious problem such NGMOs pose for the Israeli government. The government could not of course either overtly nor covertly support such organizations. Indeed, there will be great domestic and foreign pressure to root them out and eliminate them. While Israel has had some recent success against some proto Jewish terrorist activities, that should not be taken as a basis for optimism on this front. Those were little more than half-baked efforts by visible figures. If Arab terrorism worsens the Jewish NGMOs will likely evolve in a form that makes them much harder to identify, uncover, and eliminate than their Arab counterparts.

While Jewish NGMOs will have some things in common with their Arab analogs, it would be wrong to think of them as parallel institution. The Jewish NGMOs will have an entirely different political purpose, and therefore a thoroughly different structure and dynamic. Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Hezboullah are fundamentally political organizations. Though they have terrorist violence as a centerpiece of their strategic and tactical agenda, their goals are grandly political. They seek to depose governments, establish governments, and implement policies. In their effort to acquire power they are engaged in political and military battles with other groups of a similar stripe. Thus it is in their nature to be visible, and to constantly seek new members and supporters. Hence they present a target. Jewish NGMOs would be different. They likely will have no grand political goal and not be affiliated with any party or organization. Thus they can not only start out small and invisible, but remain so for their entire lives and not lose any effectiveness. It is not hard to imagine twenty such organizations each consisting of fifteen members. As for their means and methods, this is far outside of my area of expertise so I will not speculate beyond noting that: (1) a good many Israelis are fluent in Arabic and so could pass into Arab communities un-noticed; and (2) the financial cost of such operations are relatively small and could likely be borne by numerous private parties in Israel and abroad without attracting notice..

This prediction of the rise of Jewish NGMOs that tactically mimic Arab groups is highly speculative. It would undoubtedly be a *shock* were it to arise. I am arguing that it should not be a *surprise*. It seems driven by at least two demands for symmetry. First there is the tactical symmetry I wrote of earlier. The Arab nation acting through Hamas can strike at the soft target of any unlucky Jews in its target area with all the weapons in its arsenal, while Israel can barely respond against Hamas itself and then only with pinpoint weapons. Second, there is the philosophical and moral symmetry. For the Arabs this is war against the Jewish people. Israel as a government is not permitted to--and a large proportion of the Israeli

people would not want her to--fight a symmetrical war against the Arabs. For those Jews who disagree the Jewish NGMO is the obvious response.

External Constraint and Support

Even large powerful countries must adapt their policy to the wishes of others. How much more so Israel, a small country with few friends. While this is true in principal, the strength of this constraint tends to be exaggerated. Nations spend neither blood, nor treasure, nor political capital on things not vital to them. So while nations will give way on issues peripheral to them when vital to another, even small nations will not give way on questions vital to them that are only peripheral to others. The existence, security, and prosperity of Israel are vital to her and the actions that she would take to vindicate those interests pose no threat to the vital interests of friends and neutrals. So as a general matter while those who disagree with Israel may fulminate they will generally not find it in their interest to take any significant action in opposition. With that introduction let us look more closely at two specific potential sources of external constraint and support: (1) "world opinion;" and (2) The United States.

World (European) Opinion

World opinion--a marvelously flatulent expression--is, in theory, to be given weight and deference for two distinct reasons: (1) moral and intellectual; and (2) political. As for the first category, those removed from a conflict are sometimes thought to have a more disinterested, detached view of the question that allows them to view it with greater wisdom and balance. As for the second category the weight given is a function of more pragmatic considerations. Third parties can change the calculus of decisions by imposing costs and offering bounties designed to affect policy.

Aside from the United States, which I will address separately, it is European opinion that carries the greatest weight in the Israeli mind. The rest of the world matters little because the Arab portion of it is inevitably hostile to Israel and the rest of the world is recognized as generally uninformed, biased, and powerless. That said, European opinion carries a weight out of all proportion to its intellectual, moral, or political force. Europe was the source and center of western civilization, thought, and power, so words emanating from that grand continent are gilded with the force of history. But things are not as they once were--if they ever were. Europe no longer has either intellectual or moral standing and is neither a reliable ally nor a stalwart foe.

European opinion, particularly on the left has been hostile to Israel for some time now. The European reaction to the Israeli Arab conflict represents a synergy of two disreputable pathologies. First, the Europeans are anything but disinterested. In addition to fears about access to Arab oil most European nations now have large Arab and Moslem populations within their borders. Thus they find it more than convenient to decry Israeli intransigence and brutality. This combines with a kind of self-righteous infantile leftism that sees the world in terms of cartoon like battles between righteous simple oppressed people seeking their national self-expression, and the wealthy violent imperialistic westerners. In this

children's story Arabs and Israelis each have their roles to play and facts need not interfere with the plot line.

On the practical side there is reason for more concern, though here too, not much. Europe is not what it once was. It is still an enormous economic force, but politically and militarily this is of little weight by itself. The question of whether to defer to the opinion and will of another is always one of marginal effect. Will any change in Israeli policy move a hostile or friendly party to behave significantly differently? With regard to Europe the answer appears to be no. Consider the treatment of Israel's re-occupation of portions of Jenin in April of 2002. Israel desisted from the use of aircraft and other long distance armament and instead used exclusively ground troops with small arms in order to reduce civilian casualties. As a result she suffered grievous casualties herself. Rather than receiving any recognition for this humane act she was accused by the Arabs of committing a massacre and the military action was widely described as such by Arab sympathizers in Europe. It is hard to imagine that the condemnation would have been significantly greater had Zahal employed planes and helicopters, thereby sparing the lives of its soldiers. The *marginal* effect of any effort on the part of Israel to modify its behaviour in deference to European opinion is therefore likely to be zero. Indeed, returning to an earlier theme of means and ends, the very diffidence that Israel displays likely suggests to her critics that not even the Israelis believe in the justice of their cause.

Were it not taken seriously it would be almost comic that Europeans seek to participate in negotiations between Israel and the Arabs. What role could they play? There are certain simple principles in these matters, unless you bring something significant to the table you will either be redundant or useless. Europe manages both. Europe is no longer a serious place intellectually or practically and should not be treated as such. It appears that at the beginning of a new millennium the Europeans have demonstrated a heretofore unrecognized principle of international politics, the less inclined a nation is to act in the world, project power, and take risks, the more inclined it is to offer vigorous self-righteous uninformed opinions.

American Opinion, Action and Influence

The only outside nation whose political opinion matters in this conflict (and in most others around the world) is the United States. Unlike Europe, The United States is a serious country. It has power and wealth and more importantly it is more willing and able--albeit not eager--to project force in places beyond its borders and on issues other than its narrow self-interest than all other western nations combined. That said, because it is a serious nation it is cautious and reluctant to get into disputes unless it must.

I have heard Israelis who were appalled by their country's misguided, self-destructive, policies in the 1990s say that Israel does not make its own foreign policy but must bend to the will of the United States. There is some truth to this. President Eisenhower compelled Israel to retreat from Suez in 1957, and President Nixon pressured Israel into refraining from destroying the Egyptian Army in 1973. But it is not so simple. Those two cases show how extraordinary it is that Israel can be compelled to give way over something of large albeit not vital significance.

In 1957 Israel was barely nine years old, much poorer and weaker than it is now. In October of the prior year in response to terrorist attacks from Egypt she invaded and captured Sinai and Gaza. She improvidently linked this operation with--and provided a cover for-- a British and French attack on the Suez Canal and attempt to topple Nasser. When the Soviet Union threatened England and France with a nuclear response, Eisenhower refused to support them. The British and French withdrew. It was that sequence of events that signalled the change in status of those nations to *former* world powers. Israel later also bowed to American wishes and withdrew from Sinai. In compensation Israel received unhindered transit through the Straits of Tiran and the imposition of the United Nations peacekeeping force as a buffer on the Egyptian border.

In 1973 Israel again bowed to American wishes. After undertaking a significant resupply of the Israeli military during the Yom Kippur War, and once more under Soviet nuclear threat, the United States pressured Israel to desist from destroying the Egyptian Army stranded on the east bank of the Suez Canal.

On the other hand Israel is anything but the lapdog of the United States. For example, it is reported that the Israelis had intelligence information of a pending attack prior to the truck bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut in 1982, and that they failed to inform the United States because the United States had refused to share some pertinent intelligence information with Israel.

So yes under certain rather extreme circumstances and on subjects of less than absolutely vital importance Israel will give way to American pressure. But this does not explain the Oslo accords or its blind implementation. In initiating Oslo and aggressively pursuing it the Labor party was the leader not the follower of the Clinton administration. And now in the Bush administration there are even more strong voices that would support a stalwart Israeli policy. The sentiment of Congress is even more unambiguously supportive of Israeli interests. Its agenda is not very different from the center/right of the Israeli electorate.

Congressional support reflects a well spring of strong pro-Israeli sentiment in much of the country. When Israel makes a well articulated case for its policies of self defense it will generate sufficient support such that the United States will at a minimum not turn against her. More likely, as Israel becomes more self-confident and assertive of its interests American political opinion will move with it to the right.

But the United States can do no more than support. There is a simple principle at play: It is politically impossible for the American president to be more of a Zionist than the Israeli prime minister. Indeed, the optimal political position for the American President is to be seen to be slightly restraining Israel. Thus in order to reach the best overall result the Israeli government must approach any discussions with the Arabs in which the U.S. will participate in any capacity with a position just a bit more intransigent than their optimum, thus allowing the President to get the credit of nudging things along.

Much that I write in this essay is depressing. But I think there is some reason for optimism. The time may now be ripe for The United States to play a truly transforming role in this

dispute. I have said that what is required is a fundamental change in Arab vision but to this point offer very little sense of where the path lies to bringing that about. The evil degenerate fanaticism of the Arabs seems deeply entrenched. It appears impossible to transform it into something more benign. But that is always how these things seem. We need not search deep into history to see the power of the United States to quickly and, in the end almost effortlessly, radically transform the thinking of a misguided people. Consider the transformation of German and Japanese consciousness following World War II. A victory by Germany in the war, would have given rise to hundreds of millions of sincere committed Nazis. But instead almost within days of the end of the war it appeared that there were no more than 50 in the entire Reich--and they were simply a bit confused. The erosion and transformation of Japanese fanaticism was equally dramatic. And these too were ideologies that had produced dedicated warriors who rather than surrender would bravely sacrifice their lives for the cause.

The instrument of that change in their consciousness was defeat and occupation. One should not make too much of the formal de-Nazification activities of the allies. The more important source of the change was self-generated by the occupied people. A set of comforting and satisfying beliefs that would have been much more widely and deeply held if the Axis had won dissolved like a soap bubble when the occupied peoples were implicitly offered the alternative of American style ordered liberty by a triumphant and seemingly all-conquering United States.

A similar moment is available to the United States now. Ironically the evil and horror of September 11, 2001 has created an opportunity for the United States. There is generally little sentiment in the United States for foreign adventures. We have no imperial aims and assume the role of the sole super-power by default and with some reluctance. Thus though there may be much good that we can do in the world we are generally loath to act unless compelled to do so. We were so compelled by Osama BinLaden.

We are currently engaged in a war euphemistically titled as a War Against Terrorism. In truth it is a war against a resurgent militant Islamism centered in the Arab world. I wrote earlier that Israel had failed to change Arab thinking despite having defeated Arab armies repeatedly and thoroughly. The Arabs know that while Israel can defeat them, she can not conquer them. Not so with respect to the United States. The United States has the power by itself to defeat and conquer the entire Arab world with far less effort and loss of life than it expended in the Second World War. But such a conquest is likely unnecessary. The demonstration in Afghanistan and Iraq may prove sufficient to trigger constructive changes in Arab consciousness. Why should it be impossible for the United States to transform the Arab world as thoroughly as she did Germany and Japan?

Conclusion

We are taken in by serious looking grown-ups in suits. They seem to speak with the voice of sweet reason. It would be less misleading if they offered their views drunk and naked. The peace process was merely an attractive fantasy, promoted and embraced by people who had tired of the hard work of managing insoluble problems. Like all easy attractive solutions it has been a costly failure. We now must pick up the pieces and move on. The path forward is

less than clear but in the fullness of time this dispute will resolve itself, either peaceably or not. But one lesson we should learn from this is that it is naive to think that seeking peace aggressively will make that result more likely.