

On Israel and the Palestinians:
A Conversation between an Israeli and an American

What follows is an exchange of views between Asher Susser, Senior Fellow and former Director of the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern Studies¹, and Kip Hagopian, of Los Angeles, a former venture capitalist and current Chairman of Maxim Integrated Products, a large American semiconductor company. Mr. Hagopian is a member of the International Board of Overseers of the Center.² The exchange took place between December 2007 and January 2009.

¹ **Professor Asher Susser** earned his PhD in Modern Middle Eastern History at Tel Aviv University (TAU) and is presently the Director for External Affairs of the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern Studies at TAU. He was the Director of the Center from 1989 to 1995 and again from 2001 to 2007 and has taught for over twenty-five years in the University's Department of Middle Eastern History. Professor Susser's research and teaching at TAU has focused on Modern Middle Eastern History, Religion and State in the Middle East and Arab-Israeli issues, with special reference to Jordan and the Palestinians. He has been a Fulbright Fellow, a visiting professor at Cornell University (1986-7), the University of Chicago (1990) and Brandeis University (1998, 2007-8), and a visiting fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (1987, 1996-7).

Professor Susser wrote the *Political Biography of Jordan's Prime Minister Wasfi al- Tall* (1994) and is the author or editor of seven other books, including:

* *Challenges to the Cohesion of the Arab State* (editor, 2008).

* *The Middle East: The Impact of Generational Change* (editor, 2007).

* *Jordan: Case Study of a Pivotal State* (2000).

² **Kip Hagopian** was a founding general partner of Brentwood Associates, one of the largest and most successful venture capital and private equity groups in the US. While at Brentwood, Mr. Hagopian headed the firm's high-technology venture capital operations and was responsible for many of its most successful investments. During his venture capital career, Mr. Hagopian held a number of industry leadership positions including President and Chairman of the National Venture Capital Association. Mr. Hagopian served on Ronald Reagan's "Business Advisory Panel", chaired the Panel's "Committee on Capital Formation, Innovation and Productivity" and wrote the Committee's position paper that was presented to the President-Elect. Subsequently he served on President Reagan's "Commission on Industrial Competitiveness". He is currently a member of the Board of Governors of the Pardee RAND Graduate School of Public Policy and the Board of Visitors of the Anderson Graduate School of Management at UCLA. In 2006 Mr. Hagopian received the Anderson School's "Distinguished Alumnus of the Year" award.

Mr. Hagopian currently serves as Chairman of the Board of Maxim Integrated Products, a large international semiconductor company.

Mr. Hagopian has lectured at the UCLA Law and Business schools, has testified before Congress, and has written two scholarly papers that have been published in reputable journals.

Mr. Hagopian holds BA and MBA degrees from the University of California, Los Angeles.

The paper below was written by Kip in the spring of 2005 and was submitted to the Bush Administration. It was sent to Asher on December 10, 2007:

The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict:

The 78% Solution

The death of Yasser Arafat has produced a change in the dynamics of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is not clear yet, however, whether this change will ultimately advance or impede the cause of peace. If the West Bank and Gaza fall into a state of anarchy, or if the militant wing of Hamas assumes control (by force or through popular support), the prospects for peace will be set back indefinitely. Alternatively, if the Palestinian people select or coalesce behind new leaders that are not bent upon the destruction of Israel, an opportunity for an historic breakthrough in the deadlock may emerge.

This paper sets forth a policy initiative that could change dramatically the nature of the conflict in a short period of time. It is based on two premises. First, there can never be a *lasting* peace between these adversaries until a substantial majority of the populations of *both* sides believes it has attained a just outcome; and second, the prospects for a lasting peace will be maximized if Palestine can be transformed into a fully sovereign, economically prosperous, *democratic* state.

If there emerges new, moderate Palestinian leadership that is deemed to have sufficient legitimacy with the Palestinian people, Israel and the U.S. should seize the opportunity to engage in new peace negotiations. In that event, Israel and the United States should be prepared to offer as much or more as is proposed in this initiative. Even if less might be acceptable to the new Palestinian leadership, in the long run, it is unlikely that less will be acceptable to the Palestinian people. Israel's priority should be to establish a durable peace, not to take advantage of the obvious power differential that exists between the adversaries by dictating terms that the Palestinian people will feel are humiliating.

While some of the specific elements contained in the proposed initiative are identical or similar to prior or currently existing peace plans, *conceptually* the initiative differs from these plans in two important ways: First, implementation would *not* be conditioned on the complete cessation of violence. The total cessation of violence is almost certainly unrealistic in the near term and requiring it effectively gives the terrorists veto power over the process. Second, except for some participation by the UN (to which it is almost certain to agree), all of the actions contemplated herein could, if necessary, be taken *unilaterally* by Israel and the US without the active involvement of the Palestinians. While a negotiated agreement would be preferred, if negotiations stall, Israel and the US should be prepared to implement the initiative unilaterally. Once implemented, the conditions would be in place for a peaceful coexistence between the adversaries, which could eventually lead to a comprehensive peace agreement.

The essence of the proposal is contained in the following hypothetical Joint Communiqué from the Prime Minister of Israel and the President of the United States:

Joint Communiqué

The Prime Minister of Israel:

For 56 years, Israel has been fighting for its survival. For most of those years, our nation has been locked in a struggle with the Palestinians, which has taken the lives of thousands of Jews and Arabs. It is time for this conflict to end.

Today, the Israeli government will begin a rapid and orderly withdrawal of 100% of its military personnel and equipment from the West Bank and Gaza to within a close approximation of the 1967 borders. This withdrawal will be completed within one year. During this time period, all Israeli citizens domiciled in settlements in this territory must return to Israel.

We take this action with great hope and with some trepidation. And we take it in the face of strong opposition from a vocal minority of our own citizens and with the knowledge that we will be imposing significant hardship on the 240,000 Israeli settlers in the West Bank and Gaza. We are willing to proceed on this course because we believe that, together with other actions we intend to take, as well as those to be taken by the United States, we will not be unduly compromising Israel's security. We are also motivated by our belief that the vast majority of the Palestinian people are as deserving of a state and the right of self-determination as any other people. In taking this action, we are ceding virtually everything that the Palestinian people need to create a state of their own. We are doing this in the hope that the rationale that Hamas, Islamic Jihad, the Al Aqsa Martyr's Brigade and some other Palestinian factions have used to justify attacks on Israeli soldiers and civilians will be eliminated and that the Palestinians who are truly desirous of peace will prevail upon those factions to put aside their weapons.

To those among our people who believe that the territory known to us as Judea and Samaria was granted to the Jews thousands of years ago by God, we say even if this is so, this land is not worth the death, the pain and the suffering of any more Jews and Arabs. To the settlers who must come home, we say we regret this disruption in your lives but that we cannot allow the interests of 240,000 to take priority over the welfare of over 6 million other Israeli citizens. We will provide financial assistance to relocate your families and reasonable compensation to mitigate your economic losses. While we cannot force you to return to Israel, you should know that the government of Israel will no longer protect you or your families if you choose to stay. If you do stay you will be residents of what will, in all likelihood, be the new state of Palestine, and your residency will be at the behest of and under the laws of the Palestinian government.

In order to protect Israeli citizens from radical elements still bent on the destruction of Israel, we will accelerate the completion of the protective barrier currently under construction and redirect its path where necessary so that it follows, to

the extent physically practicable, the line of the 1967 borders. We will then deploy the Israeli Defense Force inside Israel to patrol this barrier. The barrier will *not* encircle any large blocs of Israeli settlements located in the heart of the West Bank. It will, however encompass some settlements that are close to the border and most, but not all of the Israeli neighborhoods in East Jerusalem. To the extent that the barrier encroaches anywhere on the pre-1967 border (including that which runs through Jerusalem), Israel will compensate fully for such encroachment with a transfer of Israeli land in an equal amount and value. Thus, the new State of Palestine will be comprised of land in area and quality equal to that which existed before the 1967 war.

Jerusalem is and will continue to be the capital of Israel. Israel will agree, however, that East Jerusalem may also become the capital of a new Palestinian state, if that is the will of the Palestinian people. Unless sustained violence breaks out within the old city of Jerusalem, it will remain open to Jews, Arabs and Christians as a place where they can live and worship freely. Sovereignty over the Dome of the Rock and the Al Aqsa Mosque will be vested in the government of the new Palestinian State. Israel will retain sovereignty over the Western Wall.

In order to facilitate the building of a viable Palestinian state, within six months, Israel will begin building an elevated highway connecting the West Bank with the Gaza strip. This highway will be constructed in such a way as to prevent any infiltration of terrorists bent on doing harm to Israeli persons or interests.

Currently there are approximately 35,000 Palestinians who work within Israel. This is a substantially smaller workforce than the 125,000 that worked in Israel before the Intifada. The Palestinians that have worked in Israel have been valued employees. Provided there is an end to violence, Israel will permit the gradual reemployment of many of the workers who have lost their jobs. However, in an effort to deter further violence, for each future act of terrorism perpetrated against Israel, we will direct Israeli firms to freeze the hiring of new Palestinian employees and will expel 20% of the existing Palestinian workforce from Israel for a minimum of one year. This non-violent retaliation, if it becomes necessary, is in lieu of our more recent military attempts to deter terrorism and is a good-faith attempt to change the nature of the conflict. We will, however, continually reassess our policy with respect to military retaliation in light of events as they unfold.

We are most hopeful that these actions by Israel will satisfy the realistic objectives of the vast majority of both the Israeli and Palestinian populations and that the dissatisfied minorities on both sides will suppress their opposition for the greater good.

The President of the United States:

I commend the government of Israel, under the leadership of its Prime Minister, for taking a remarkably bold and courageous step toward bringing a resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We hope that by removing from the West Bank and Gaza, the primary objects of Palestinian enmity, namely the Israeli military forces and Israeli settlers, the vast majority of the Palestinian people—those for whom peace, self-determination and freedom are of greater importance than the destruction of Israel—will be accepting, if not completely satisfied.

The United States supports the creation of an independent, peaceful, secure and democratic Palestinian state living side by side with an independent, peaceful, democratic and secure Israel. Moreover, under certain conditions, the US is prepared to offer substantial financial aid to the Palestinian people to assist in the economic development of such a state. To this end, the US will provide \$2 billion in aid per year for five years to assist in the creation of the institutions of government and to build the physical infrastructure for a viable economy. However, this money will only be forthcoming if the government of Palestine: (1) again publicly acknowledges Israel's right to exist as a sovereign state within the 1967 borders as slightly modified by the action of the Israeli government; (2) makes demonstrable and rapid progress toward instituting a democratic form of government, with free speech, a free press, an independent judiciary and free and open elections; (3) does not sponsor or condone terrorism and uses its best efforts to prevent and interdict acts of terror and to track down and bring to justice the perpetrators of such acts; and (4) does not, during the five year period, build an armed military force. (Palestine is, however, encouraged to strengthen its internal security capability for the purpose of curbing terrorism.)

The US considers it particularly important that those nations that have been most vocal in their support of the Palestinian people also make a significant contribution to the establishment of a free and economically prosperous Palestinian state. For that reason, we are today asking that US funds be supplemented by \$700 million of annual contributions from the other industrialized non-Arab UN nations, and that another \$300 million be contributed by the Arab League states. The U.S. financial commitment is not conditioned upon the contribution of these additional funds.

While Israel's complete withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza should remove the principal rationale for further violence against Israeli citizens, the US recognizes that certain Palestinian factions exist that are so blinded by hatred that there is still a danger to Israel and, therefore, to peace for the Palestinian people. As a deterrent to engaging in further acts of violence against Israeli targets, for every such act the \$2 billion US aid package will be reduced in the year in which it occurs by \$400 million. We will ask that the other participants, if any, in the Palestinian aid package impose similar penalties.

During the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, up to 700,000 Palestinians and a like number of Jews were either forced to leave their homes or chose to leave to avoid danger. Most of the persons that were displaced were not compensated, and many were forced into refugee camps or moved to locations not of their choosing. As a means of addressing the reasonable grievances of the Palestinian refugees and others who lost their homes, the US will propose that the UN convene an international panel to consider the claims of displaced Palestinians and Jews and to arbitrate for reasonable compensation to be paid. We propose that this compensation be paid in large part by the countries that bear the responsibility for the displacement of these persons and that the balance of the compensation be provided by the international community of nations. Both the US and Israel are prepared to make substantial contributions to a fund to compensate these displaced persons, provided these funds are supplemented by other nations.

In early 2002, Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah put forth a peace proposal offering Israel “normal relations” with the Arab states in return for: (1) its full withdrawal to within the 1967 borders; (2) acceptance of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, with Jerusalem as its capital; and (3) a “fair solution” for the Palestinian refugees. At an Arab summit held in March 2002, all of the Arab league states (with the exception of Egypt and Jordan which did not attend but which have already made peace with Israel) endorsed this proposal. We hope that Israel’s concessions, together with additional US actions I will describe below, will be sufficient for the member states of the Arab League to declare that the conditions of the Saudi proposal have been met and to move expeditiously to establish normal and peaceful relations with the state of Israel. I hereby call on the Arab states to do so.

To further demonstrate our sincerity and our resolve to bring this conflict to an end, this month I will dispatch the Secretary of State and several other high ranking members of the State Department and the National Security Council to Palestine to hold a series of meetings with Palestinian leaders throughout the West Bank and Gaza. We will attempt to convince these leaders, that it is in the best interests of the Palestinian people to accept the peace and the aid that is being offered and to cease all attacks on Israeli citizens. We will also use these meetings for consultation on a plan for the development of Palestine as an independent democratic state and a timetable and conditions for the release of funds. At the same time these meetings will be going on, I will be personally communicating with the leaders of the Arab states, asking for a public declaration that the actions contemplated herein do in fact meet the conditions of the Saudi peace plan. I will also ask them to use their influence to convince the more radical Palestinian factions to cease all violence and to turn their attention to helping to create a viable, free Palestinian state.

While America is vitally interested in resolving this conflict and supports a two-state solution, let there be no mistake: The United States will use the full force of its military to protect Israel from any state sponsored foreign aggression intended to imperil its existence. Additionally, for as long as the new state of Palestine does not have its own military force, the US will also guarantee its security against any state sponsored aggression.

There are some in the Arab world who may see Israel’s actions as a sign of weakness. Others may view this dramatic gesture as a victory for terrorism. Both of these notions are false. Israel is making these concessions because it believes in the moral case for a Palestinian state and because it believes that a lasting peace cannot be realized until both sides achieve what they believe is a fair settlement. To those in Palestine that would seek to perpetuate the cycle of violence, I would remind you that Israel is fully capable of reoccupying the Palestinian territories within days if it feels compelled to do so. I urge all Palestinians to give this initiative a chance.

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Recapping the Proposal

The initiative comprises 10 distinct elements, many of which are not new. What distinguishes this proposal from others is: First, its attempt at reaching an end result that a majority of the populations of both sides will see as acceptable; second,

its focus on assisting the Palestinians in becoming an economically viable democratic state; and third, its emphasis on achieving resolution as quickly as possible.

An Acceptable Deal for Both Sides

1. Expeditious, orderly withdrawal of the Israel Defense Force from the occupied territories back to the 1967 borders (with minor modifications accompanied by land offsets equal in area and quality).
2. Expeditious, orderly relocation of substantially all settlers from the territories.
3. Substantial economic assistance to Palestine, including: Financial aid (\$2 billion per year from the US, and up to an additional \$1 billion from other nations) to help build an economically prosperous democracy; renewed hiring of Palestinian workers by Israel; and construction of an elevated highway between the West Bank and Gaza.
4. Sharing of Jerusalem's old city, including a division of sovereignty over the holy sites and the acceptance by Israel of Palestine's capital in East Jerusalem.
5. A means of arbitrating and satisfying the legitimate claims for compensation of *both* Arabs and Jews who were displaced as a result of the 1948 war.

Diplomacy

6. A major diplomatic effort by the US aimed at convincing the Palestinian leadership to embrace peace and to quell terrorism. An equally aggressive effort directed at establishing "normal relations" between Israel and the Arab states based on meeting the terms of the Saudi peace plan.

Deterrence

7. Huge economic penalties (\$400 million reduction in US aid in the year of each incident) for each act of terror.
8. Hiring freeze and expulsion of large numbers of Palestinian workers for each act of terror.

Security Enhancement

9. Completion of the security barrier together with concentration of the Israel Defense Forces within the borders.
10. US guarantee of Israel's security against state aggression.

The core of the proposal is contained in its first five points, which are aimed at affecting a Palestinian "change of heart." Daniel Pipes, a well-known Middle East

expert, wrote in a February, 2003 article in *Commentary* that Israel's war with the Palestinians would not end until the Palestinians have a "change of heart", which will occur only when they are "convinced that they have lost." Currently, the way Israel is attempting to achieve that is through a continuation of the occupation (at least in the West Bank) and aggressive retaliatory military attacks, which include the killing of known terrorist leaders and the destruction of the homes of suicide bombers' family members.

Pipes is almost certainly correct as to the end objective: Convincing the enemy not to fight is the most effective way to achieve peace. But there is arguably a better means of effecting a change of heart, at least with respect to mainstream Palestinians. The initiative outlined herein suggests such a means. Instead of attempting to destroy the adversary's *will* to fight—a dubious prospect in the foreseeable future and morally troubling in any event—the initiative aims to *remove the reason to fight*. The majority of Israelis believe in a pragmatic case for a Palestinian state. Points one through five of the proposed initiative provide the means by which the Palestinians can create that state. While not all Palestinian hearts (and minds) will be changed by these five actions, based on surveys of the Palestinian people, most will. And those who change may be able to do much more to persuade the others than Israeli tanks and missiles ever will.

Point six is a renewed effort at diplomacy based on the impact of the initiative itself. Points seven through ten are designed to provide a measure of deterrence and security enhancement to mitigate the risks represented by the Palestinian intransigents whose hearts might take longer to change.

Situation Analysis³

Depending on one's perspective, the roots of the Arab-Israeli conflict go back either 3,300 years when the Jews first settled in the area that became known as Palestine, or about 120 years, which marked the beginning of the Zionist movement. Prior to the onset of Zionism, the Jews had been absent from the region for almost 1800 years.⁴ The objective of Zionism (which was given birth and impetus by a wave of violent anti-Semitism spreading across Europe and Russia) was to bring about the return of the Jews to Palestine—"the promised land"—for the purpose of creating a state in which the Jews would be a majority of the population. When it became clear that the Zionists intended to create a "Jewish" state in Palestine (which was correctly interpreted to mean that Muslims were not welcome except in a minority status), Arab hostility toward the Jews erupted. The hostility soon turned violent, eventually escalating into sporadic rioting and armed conflict that continued intermittently for decades. Significant casualties were taken on both sides.

³ In Chapter one of his book, "The Missing Peace", the author, Dennis Ross (who was one of the principal advisors to both the George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton administrations on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict) presents an excellent historical review of the adversaries' competing narratives. This is highly recommended reading for anyone who is interested in how the parties reached their present point of impasse.

⁴ The vast majority of the Jewish population was driven out of Palestine by the Romans between 70 A.D. and 135 A.D.

At the beginning of the Zionist movement in the early 1880s, the number of Jews in Palestine was only 25,000, or about 5% of a total population of roughly 500,000. By 1947, several waves of Jewish immigration had increased the Jewish population to roughly 600,000, or about 32% of the then 1.9 million total. At that time, therefore, the Arabs were about 68% of the population. Despite this population advantage, in 1947, the UN mandated the partition of Palestine into two states, giving the Palestinians 43% of the territory while granting 56% to the Jews. Jerusalem (the other 1%) was established as an international territory. Centuries of Jewish persecution, which had reached its zenith with the Holocaust, had caused most nations in the world to be supportive of the creation of a Jewish state despite the bitter objections of virtually the entire Arab world.

Once the partition was announced, the battle lines were drawn between the Jews, who believed the land was not just UN mandated but God given, and the Arabs throughout the region and within Palestine, who believed they were being elbowed out of land in which for 13 centuries their population, religion, culture and language were dominant in the region. Israel accepted the UN edict while the Palestinians and the surrounding Arab states rejected it, declaring that the UN had no legal or moral authority to take this action. In 1948, Israel declared statehood, and several of the surrounding Arab states (Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq) initiated the first of several wars intended to drive the Zionists out of the region. Israel won the 1948 war decisively and, in the process, increased its territorial control to 78% of historic Palestine. Consequently, most Palestinians, who for 13 centuries were free to live anywhere in Palestine, were crowded into 22% of the territory or into refugee camps nearby in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Egypt. In 1967, Egypt, Syria and Jordan precipitated another war (the “six day war”), which again was won decisively by Israel. In this war, Israel took control of the West Bank (from Jordan) and Gaza (from Egypt), and soon thereafter annexed the city of Jerusalem. Israel has occupied the West Bank and Gaza ever since.

After 56 years of intermittent war, some progress has been made toward resolving the conflict. Most notable milestones are: Israel’s peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan; the neutralization of Iraq and Libya as serious threats to Israel’s security; the general acceptance by the non-Arab community of nations that Israel is here to stay; a worldwide consensus that the Palestinians should be ceded land for a state of their own; and, beginning in 1988, several Palestinian declarations accepting Israel’s right to exist. (Progress has also been made with the Arab League, which in March 2002, unanimously endorsed a proposal put forth by the Saudis, that stated that the Arab states would establish “normal relations” with Israel if Israel pulls back to the 1967 borders, accepts the establishment of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, and provides a “fair solution” to the Palestinian refugee problem.) The conflict has been mostly narrowed to a dispute between the state of Israel (with the strong support of the US) on one side and the Palestinian people (with the support of some of the Arab states) on the other. Considering Israel’s total military dominance in this face-off, the Palestinians’ actions in the West Bank and Gaza could reasonably be termed a resistance movement against an occupying force. As the Israelis have learned, quelling such a movement—particularly one that believes so fervently in its cause—is in many ways the hardest contest to win militarily.

The conflict is currently being sustained by acts of provocation perpetrated by each side. For their part, the Palestinians (or radical elements among them) have committed countless acts of terrorism, particularly suicide bombings of Israeli civilians, including women and children. These terrorist attacks continued even after the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993 and have continued throughout the period since Arafat embraced the principles of President Bush's road map; this despite specific agreements by the Palestinians to use their best efforts to curb terrorism.

More humane than terrorism (there can be no moral equivalent to the premeditated slaughter of innocent children), but arguably no less provocative from the Palestinians' point of view, is Israel's increasingly oppressive military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, together with the continued construction in the territory of Israeli settlements, which now number over 150, housing almost 240,000 settlers (not including about 200,000 Israelis that have taken up residence on the eastern side of the "green line" in Jerusalem). The importance of these settlements to the Palestinian people cannot be overstated. The Israelis have been building them since soon after the 1967 war. Since the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, which called for a freeze on settlements, the number of settlers has almost doubled. Since Israel's basic acceptance of the "road map", which calls in its first phase for a freeze of all settlements and the dismantling of a few, hundreds of additional housing units have been built and more are planned. To the Palestinians, the steady flow of Jewish settlers into the West Bank and Gaza, together with open declarations by some influential Israelis that the West Bank and Gaza belong to the Jews, could reasonably be interpreted as an expansion of the Zionist movement with the ultimate goal of annexing the occupied territories. Whatever the rationale for the settlements and the occupation, together they have served to completely humiliate and degrade the Palestinian people, resulting in a sense of hopelessness and rage.

There are many who believe that the Arab-Israeli conflict is a religious war perpetrated by Muslims out of hatred for the Jews. A reading of the history of the region, however, does not seem to support this view. The Jews have had a presence in historic Palestine for over 3,000 years. For the last 1,800 years they have been a tiny minority of the population. For over 1,200 years of that period—from the time of the Muslim invasion in the 7th century until the advent of Zionism in the late 19th century—by all accounts, this minority Jewish population lived relatively peacefully amidst its Arab neighbors—more peacefully in fact than did Jews in Europe and Russia. This would appear to belie the notion that the conflict has religious roots. A better explanation for the *origin* of the conflict is simply that it was and is a dispute over land.⁵ In the case of Israel, its claim on the land is based on a number of considerations. These include: Jewish hegemony in Palestine from 1000 BC to 720 BC (the period of the first Israelite Kingdom)⁶; a presence in the region for over three millennia (albeit this presence was quite small for most of this period); the fact

⁵ Of course, after thousands of casualties on both sides, the conflict has become about much more than just land.

⁶ The Assyrians conquered the Israelite Kingdom in 720 AD. They were subsequently conquered by the Babylonians, who were in turn conquered by the Persians who were then conquered by the Macedonians, who were conquered by the Romans during the time of Christ. The Romans expelled virtually all of the Jews from the region between 70 AD and 135 AD. Muhammad's Arab armies conquered the territory in the mid 7th century and converted substantially all of the population to Islam.

that the land acquired by the Zionists in the late 19th and early 20th century was legally purchased (not confiscated); and the reality that the Jews' aspirations for statehood targeted relatively undeveloped land in a region where no formal state then existed or had been proposed by the indigenous people. The Palestinians, for their part, believe that the fact that a Jewish kingdom existed more than 2,500 years ago is of little relevance to the present situation and that, in any event, their dominance in the region with respect to population, culture, religion, and language during the 1,200 years prior to the Zionist migrations, entitles them to superior rights. They also believe that the Jews have usurped these rights through political and military conquest and have added insult to injury by creating a state in which they, the indigenous people, have never been truly welcome.

The solution to the conflict has been debated and negotiated so hard and for so long that there is almost a clear consensus among all but the most radical fringes as to what each side must do if there is to be a lasting peace. The core elements of an achievable resolution are as follows: (1) Assurance of Israel's permanent existence as a Jewish state; (2) Creation of a sovereign, *contiguous* Palestinian state in *all* of the West Bank and Gaza, without an Israeli military presence; (3) Cessation of terrorist attacks by Palestinians against Israeli targets; (4) Complete withdrawal of the Israeli military, closing down of most Israeli settlements, and relocation of substantially all of the Israeli settlers that cannot be encompassed within slightly modified borders; (5) Mutual acceptance of Jerusalem as the capital of both Israel and Palestine; (6) Palestinian sovereignty over the Dome of the Rock and the Al Aqsa Mosque, and Israeli sovereignty over the Western Wall; and (7) A fair process for addressing the reasonable claims of the Jews and Palestinians that were forced to leave their homes because of the 1948 war. (Some would say that a Palestinian "right of return" to Israel is also a prerequisite for peace but even the Palestinians know this is impossible for the Israelis to accept and it is likely that peace can be achieved without it.) Both the Geneva Accords and the Ayalon-Nusseibeh proposals encompass this set of principles. Many, but not all, of these principles were also embodied in the proposals made by Prime Minister Barak and President Bill Clinton at Camp David in July, 2000, or subsequently in Taba in December, 2000 and January, 2001.

Based on how close the two sides have come to agreeing on just this solution, it is likely that a substantial majority of both Israelis and Palestinians would accept it. Now with the death of Arafat and the prospects for more moderate Palestinian leadership, the chances are even better that a resolution along the above lines could be achieved. Unfortunately, the cause of peace may recently have been set back immeasurably. Ariel Sharon's announced intention to annex several large blocs of Israeli settlements in the West Bank (which is part of his plan to "disengage" from the Gaza Strip and dismantle four tiny settlements in the West Bank) together with President Bush's acquiescence to this plan, has served to inflame the Palestinians once again. This will put the new Palestinian leadership in an almost untenable position. It is unlikely that any Palestinian leader can survive if he accepts the annexation of any part of the West Bank or Gaza without fair compensation. Sharon has offered no such compensation.

Sharon's ultimate intentions for the West Bank and for the peace process have been called into question by an October 8, 2004 interview in Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz with Dov Weisglass, one of Sharon's senior advisors, and his primary

interface with the White House. In this interview, Weisglass, who is considered the architect of Sharon's "disengagement" plan, is quoted as saying: "The significance of the disengagement is a freezing of the peace process. And when you freeze that process, you prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state and you prevent a discussion on the refugees, the borders and Jerusalem. Effectively, this whole package that is called the Palestinian state, with all that it entails, has been removed from our agenda indefinitely. And all this with authority and permission. All with a presidential blessing and the ratification of both houses of Congress." While Sharon has distanced himself from his aide's remarks, he has not fired Weisglass and he has yet to explicitly repudiate his statements. If Weisglass's remarks with respect to Sharon's intentions are even partially true, the prospects for peace in the near term are nil. (The reader is urged to read Weisglass's full interview.)

Sharon's statement of his intent to annex parts of the West Bank, Weisglass's interview in Ha'aretz, and President Bush's announcement of his support for Sharon's policies came before Arafat died. One can only hope that Arafat's death will cause both governments to reassess the situation and to consider a fresh approach. If so, the initiative described herein could form the basis for such an approach.

Shortening and Ensuring the Road to Peace

The "road map" outlined by President Bush on behalf of the "Quartet" (the United States, Russia, the UN and the European Union) in May 2003, is intended to achieve a resolution of the conflict by the end of 2005 through a three-phase process requiring a number of reciprocal acts by the two adversaries under the supervision of a committee of the four sponsors. Structurally, the road map is not materially different from the Oslo Accords that were signed in 1993. Substantively, however, the road map comprises three important attributes that distinguish it from Oslo. First, the road map *explicitly* calls for a democratic Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza; second, the road map has broad international support; and third, the road map has President George Bush's personal commitment to its success. When it was introduced, the road map was met with considerable enthusiasm by the Palestinians and the world community (but much less so by the Israeli government). Unfortunately, it wasn't long before the road map was derailed. It remains to be seen whether it can be revived.

The initiative proposed herein is an improvement over the road map in several important ways that should enhance its prospects for success:

- The road map is conditioned upon or heavily dependent upon the cessation of terror attacks. The initiative is not. On its face, conditioning the peace process on the cessation of terrorism is quite reasonable, but as events have proven, it is also unrealistic. As Israeli journalist and author, Yuval Elizur has observed, making peace talks contingent upon the complete cessation of violence is tantamount to giving terrorists veto power over the process. Even if the Palestinian Authority were resolved to rein in the terrorist factions, any process that can be defeated by a single individual's decision to blow himself up is at great risk of failing.

- In the road map (as in Oslo), the most contentious issues separating the two adversaries—e.g., specific borders, settlements, Jerusalem, the right of return—have been left open for future negotiation. In the case of the initiative, a resolution of these issues is set forth at the outset. While this proposed resolution will not satisfy everyone, there is considerable evidence that it will satisfy a clear majority of the populations of both sides.
- The road map's original timetable was lengthy. This increased the risk of its going off track due to deliberate acts of violence (which have transpired) or for more benign reasons such as impatience, frustration, or changes in leadership. The initiative proposed herein can, if necessary, be implemented unilaterally, without consultation with anyone, and therefore can be achieved relatively quickly. From the Palestinian point of view this is extremely important. They believe they have waited long enough for the establishment of their state. A process that could take years to accomplish is less likely to succeed than one that can be completed in a short period of time.
- As contrasted with the road map (or, for that matter, with any other peace plan that has been proposed), the initiative proposed herein, introduces two entirely new elements. First, it provides for a substantial economic aid package for the Palestinians *conditioned* upon the new Palestinian state moving demonstrably and rapidly toward democracy. Assisting the Palestinians in becoming an economically prosperous democracy is critical to ensuring a lasting peace. Second, it imposes severe financial penalties on the Palestinians for each subsequent act of terrorism. Thus, economic deterrence is effectively being substituted for military deterrence. This feature has the potential to turn the Palestinian people into aggressive allies in the Palestinian government's efforts to quell Palestinian terrorism.

The initiative proposed herein does not differ materially in its ends from the road map. It is, in a sense, a means of flying to the destination—over the potholes—rather than walking. The initiative incorporates virtually all of the principles deemed necessary and acceptable to a majority of the populations of the adversaries, and comprises actions that Israel and the US can take unilaterally if necessary. In the best case, these actions have the potential to create either an actual peace agreement or a peaceful coexistence between the two peoples (with the attendant possibility of a subsequent peace agreement), and in the worst case should not materially weaken Israel's security.

Why should Israel do this?

Given its history with the Palestinians, Israel's government will have difficulty embracing this initiative.

The first challenge will be to convince Israel to make concessions without there being a complete cessation of terrorism. Historically, the Israelis have been unwilling even to negotiate without this condition having been met. However, the

current exigencies in the territory, together with the potential benefits of the initiative, suggest Israel should abandon this requirement. Here's why:

- As noted above, under current circumstances it is unrealistic to expect a complete moratorium on terrorism, even if the new Palestinian leadership does its best to bring this about. To require such a condition places too much power in the hands of the terrorist groups. Hamas, et al. win in this scenario. At some point, Israel must start treating terrorist attacks as the criminal acts of rogue political factions rather than as acts of war perpetrated by the body politic of Palestine. In the context of a possible peace breakthrough that might be precipitated by the proposed initiative, this is a good time to try it.
- It is possible, if not likely, that the added security measures and deterrents incorporated in the initiative will result in lower casualties from terrorism than are currently being experienced. Just the evacuation of more than 300,000 Israeli soldiers and settlers from the West Bank and Gaza should substantially reduce casualties.
- The concessions, incentives and penalties proposed in the initiative may serve to further marginalize the terrorists so that their operating effectiveness will be curtailed.

The second major issue for the Israelis will be the actual concessions themselves. Heretofore, Israel's strategy has been to give ground grudgingly on all of the critical issues (most notably, Palestinian statehood), while demanding concessions in return. Here are the reasons why Israel should change its strategy and implement the proposed initiative:

- It is in Israel's best interest. Implementing the initiative is potentially the fastest way to resolve the conflict with the lowest casualties and lowest risk of failure. But this is not the most important factor. In order for Israel to achieve a *lasting* peace, the Palestinian people must believe that *their* deal is reasonably just and that they have achieved at least some measure of victory. The concessions of land proposed in the initiative are the minimum that a majority of Palestinians might consider reasonable, given their belief that they have already lost most of their historical birthright. This and the other concessions, particularly the large financial aid package, could lead to the creation of an economically prosperous, democratic state in Palestine. Inasmuch as history has shown that the incidence of war is substantially less likely between democratic states, if Palestine becomes a real democracy, Israel will be the primary beneficiary. At a minimum this requires Israel to "settle" for no more than 78% of historic Palestine. While this may be painful for the Israelis to accept, it is an extraordinarily low price to pay for a lasting peace.
- It is the morally right thing to do. For over 30 years radical factions among the Palestinian people have perpetrated hundreds of atrocities that have killed thousands of Israeli civilians, including women and children. Because of this historical experience it is understandable that there would

be little moral sentiment in Israel, toward conciliation. But this view ignores two very important facts. First, the vast majority of Palestinians are not terrorists. Estimates of the combined membership of Hamas (the militant wing), Islamic Jihad and the Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade total 15,000 to 20,000 out of a Palestinian population of about 3.4 million. (To be sure, during much of Israel's 37-year occupation a significant percentage of the Palestinian people have sympathized with the terrorists. The percentage has tended to vary with the severity of Israeli military retaliation.) Second, the Palestinians' case for statehood is arguably no less compelling than that of any other ethnic or indigenous group of people, including the Israelis themselves. Inasmuch as the Palestinians once represented 95% of the population of the region, and are now relegated to only 22% of the land on which they once lived, their grievance is not without merit and their entreaties are not unreasonable. All of this suggests there is a moral case to be made that Israel, the US and the world community should take the actions necessary (consistent with minimizing the erosion of Israel's legitimate security needs) to fulfill the Palestinians' aspirations.

- There is no better alternative to achieving a lasting peace. Consider the options:
 1. Status quo. Continued Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza at enormous cost in dollars and human suffering. Palestinian terrorist attacks, which kill Israeli civilians, alternating with Israeli reprisals, which kill Palestinian combatants and some civilians.
 2. Annexation of the West Bank and Gaza with three possible scenarios (all bad): (a) Absorption of the Palestinians into an expanded Jewish state resulting in an Arab majority in Israel within 20 years; (b) Permanent military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, requiring repressive control of the entire population of Palestinians—morally repugnant, prohibitively costly and virtually impossible to achieve without significant continued casualties; and (c) Expulsion (or “transfer”) of all Palestinians from the territories, which would cause a massive expansion of refugee camps in the proximate region, resulting in morally unacceptable human suffering. All three of these annexation scenarios will almost certainly increase Palestinian terrorism and will dramatically worsen world opinion of Israel.
 3. Partial Annexation. To date, the Israeli security barrier, currently under construction, has enclosed significant portions of the West Bank and, unless its planned route is changed, will eventually enclose substantially more. In addition, as noted above, Israel's Prime Minister Sharon intends to annex several large settlement blocs in the heart of the West Bank (presumably by encircling them with the security barrier). Commenting on this situation, Palestinian negotiations minister, Saeb Erekat said: “The maintenance of six settlement blocks in the West Bank is a recipe for closing all the doors in the peace process and its destruction.” Sharon's plan is tantamount to throwing gasoline on a fire. There is little doubt that this path will

keep the conflict at “status quo” for the indefinite future. While Israel may be willing to accept this prospective state of events, the U.S. must not be.

- The downside risk to Israel is modest. Attacks on Israeli citizens in the West Bank and Gaza will be obviated by the evacuation of Israeli soldiers and settlers. Moreover, it is possible, if not likely, that the completion of the security barrier and the concentration of the IDF inside this barrier will increase Israel’s ability to prevent suicide attacks within Israel. And if the Palestinian radicals are able to secure weaponry (mortars, rockets, etc.) that can inflict casualties by other means, and if the Palestinian government is unable or unwilling to disarm them, Israel has the power to reoccupy the territories within days.
- It has the potential to change dramatically the dynamics of the conflict. One can only imagine the reaction if the initiative were implemented. First, what would be the reaction among the Palestinian people? Would they be more likely or less likely to embrace peace? And what would be the effect on suicide bombings—would there be more or less? What would the Arab states do? Would they be more likely or less likely to make peace with Israel? What would the Palestinian leadership do? Would it be more likely or less likely to crack down on the terrorists? Finally, what about anti-American sentiment in the Arab world—would it increase or decrease?
- It could do more to stop Palestinian terrorism than occupation and military reprisals. Heretofore, Israel’s response to suicide bombings has been immediate military retaliation. While this strategy is eminently rational, it can have very negative side effects. Collateral damage—particularly the death of innocent non-combatants—is an unavoidable consequence of military action. When this occurs it serves to inflame the Palestinian people, whose anger is invariably directed, rightly or wrongly, at Israel (and the U.S., whose weapons systems make up the most visible part of the Israeli arsenal) rather than the terrorists. This initiative gives the Palestinians real hope of realizing their dreams. In this context, it is quite possible that the severe economic penalties built into the initiative will cause each suicide bombing to be met with Palestinian outrage directed at the terrorists, rather than at Israel and the U.S. If this occurs, it may, over time, go further toward ending terrorism than could even the harshest of military actions.
- The US needs this conflict to end. The US has been and is Israel’s only truly reliable and indispensable ally. Since 1974, the US has given Israel about \$75 billion (not including over \$10 billion in loans) in economic and military aid, and currently gives it over \$2.7 billion per year. In addition, the US gives Egypt and Jordan combined over \$2.3 billion per year as part of deals made in 1979 and 1994 respectively to induce them to make peace with Israel. Finally, the US has been one of the only countries that has been consistently supportive of Israel in UN deliberations and its resolutions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In return for all of this, the

US has asked for little. Now bringing peace to this region has become sufficiently vital to US national interests that the United States needs to call upon Israel to do things it may find difficult to do. Israel's debt to the US is of sufficient magnitude that—provided its security is not unduly compromised—it should look favorably on a request to do so.

Critique of the Initiative

The initiative proposed herein contains many attractive elements and raises several issues of concern. These are some of the concerns:

- **Under this initiative, Israel would be making significant concessions without comparable concessions by the Palestinians.** From the Palestinian point of view they would be permanently ceding 78% of their homeland. Arguably, 78% is enough for them to give up.
- **In the short term it is not realistic to expect that terror-attacks will cease entirely.** In order for this approach to work it must be given time. Once the Palestinian security forces are substantially strengthened (hopefully within the year that it will take for Israel to completely withdraw from the territories), Israel will have to rely on the Palestinian government to deter and interdict terrorist activity. For a reasonable period of time, Israel will have to refrain from military retaliation of its own. If the Palestinians do not use their best efforts to stop terrorist acts, the US could cut off funding. If after a reasonable period of time, violence against Israeli interests becomes intolerable, Israel would have the option of taking whatever action it deemed necessary to protect its citizens.
- **If the IDF pulls out, the Palestinians may rearm themselves, which could result in a greater security risk to Israel in the future.** It is unlikely, however, that this could be done without the US and Israel knowing, in which case funding could be immediately cut off. Moreover, it would take years and a massive investment for the Palestinians to acquire the kind of weaponry necessary to seriously threaten Israel.
- **Dismantling virtually all of the settlements (or withdrawing military protection for them) will be extremely difficult for Israel.** Some of the Israeli settlement blocs have been in existence for decades. But Israel has said repeatedly that these “facts on the ground” could be sacrificed if such action served the cause of peace. In any event, achieving a lasting peace for all Israelis must take precedence over the interests of the 3% of the Israeli population that would be affected.
- **Many Israeli settlers might refuse to leave their homes.** This prospect has become painfully clear, as Prime Minister Sharon has attempted to implement a phased withdrawal from the Gaza strip where only about 7,500 settlers reside. Israel must be prepared to use whatever legal means it has available to convince the preponderance of settlers to return to Israel. At a minimum it must be made clear to the settlers that they will no longer be protected.

- **The security barrier will not be completely impervious to infiltration by suicide bombers.** (“Any defense can be penetrated,” goes the military maxim.) But once the barrier is completed, the populations are separated, and the IDF is redeployed, the degree of difficulty in entering Israel should be substantially increased and the number of successful attacks inside Israel should be reduced.
- **A complete withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza will result in the loss of Israel’s early warning systems.** This is true, but these systems (settler communities, early warning towers, military outposts) have significantly diminished in importance since peace treaties were signed with Jordan and Egypt (which make up almost 90% of the Israel and Palestine borders). Moreover, it is likely that the U.S., through its use of satellite surveillance, would be able and willing to provide this early warning function.
- **Inasmuch as the existing “government” of Palestine is largely corrupt, it is possible that a portion of the aid package will be stolen.** This may change under new leadership. In the event of continued corruption, contributions could either be curtailed or accepted as a cost of making peace.
- **There are no examples of Arab democracies. And despite the recent elections there is no assurance that the Palestinians are ready for or are capable of achieving true and durable democracy.** There are reasons to believe that the Palestinians are more susceptible to democratic reform than any other people in the region, including the people of Iraq. This is because they are, for the most part, religiously homogeneous; are largely secular; are relatively well educated (particularly among the elite class) and are some of the most industrious people in the region. Perhaps most importantly, Palestinians have demonstrated both an affinity and a facility for achieving democracy through the elections that just took place. All of these factors suggest that the prospects for a successful democracy in a new Palestinian state are encouraging.
- **It is unclear how practical it is to keep the old city of Jerusalem completely open while adequately protecting Israeli citizens and tourists.** But this problem exists today and, arguably, can only be improved by the actions contemplated herein.
- **The “right of return” issue is not addressed.** Many analysts believe that the majority of Palestinians are willing to concede this point in favor of making peace and winning statehood. Moreover, in a poll taken last year, about 90% of Palestinian refugees said they would not exercise a right of return if it were offered. In any event, the climate for negotiations may be sufficiently enhanced by the actions proposed (particularly the provision to provide compensation to those that lost their homes), that agreement on this issue could be reached more easily in the future.

- **Israel's actions could be seen as a sign of weakness – an indication that the terrorists have won.** This should be of minimal concern. After winning four major wars with the Arab world and militarily dominating the West Bank and Gaza for the last four years, only a fool would characterize Israel as weak, either in power or in will. And if there is a perception that the Palestinians have “won” something, so be it. Such a perception could very well enhance the cause of peace rather than undermine it, particularly if Israel and the U.S. couch the reason for the initiative in moral terms.

Offsetting these concerns are several positive factors that could completely change the dynamic in the region:

- **This initiative can be enacted quickly.** One of the major drawbacks to Oslo, the road map and other proposed peace plans has been the long time table imposed on the Palestinians before they were allowed to exercise complete autonomy over their state. The Palestinians believe they have waited long enough. This initiative can be accomplished within a year.
- **These actions essentially give the Palestinians all of what they “need”:** The right to create their own democratic state with Jerusalem as it’s capital, complete control of a full and contiguous 22% of historic Palestine (all of the West Bank and Gaza, modified as necessary but with land swaps to compensate fully for any encroachment on the 1967 borders), the financial assistance they need to develop their economy, and a process by which Palestinian refugees can seek fair redress for their grievances. For the vast majority of Palestinians, this initiative eliminates the rationale for further attacks on Israel.
- **By offering substantial financial aid conditioned on moving toward democracy, this initiative provides enormous incentives for the Palestinian people to assert their right of self-determination.** And if, in fact, Palestine becomes a democracy, the likelihood of a lasting peace with Israel increases many fold.
- **Penalizing Palestine by reducing the aid package by \$400 million or more and freezing hiring or expelling Palestinian workers from Israel for each act of terror will further marginalize Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Al Aqsa and their like.** Whereas military retaliation has served to fan the flames of Palestinian hatred toward Israel, economic retaliation is more likely, over time, to cause the Palestinian anger to be directed at the terrorists who would undo the gains they have won.
- **By evacuating its people from the occupied territories and concentrating its defense forces within its borders (inside the wall), Israel’s security may be enhanced and its casualties curtailed.**
- **The actions contemplated by this initiative essentially meet all of the conditions set forth in the peace plan proposed by the Saudis and unanimously endorsed by the Arab League states.** While they cannot

be counted upon to accept this assessment, these actions could produce a major breakthrough. It may even be possible to get the Saudis and a few of the other moderate Arab states simultaneously to issue their own Communiqué declaring their intention to establish normal relations with Israel. If this could be accomplished, the prospects for peace would be further improved.

- **The guarantee that the US will protect Israel in the event of an attack by an aggressor nation will virtually eliminate that risk and allow Israel to focus entirely on internal security.**
- **A gesture this dramatic has the potential to transform world opinion of Israel and the US overnight.**

Conclusion

There is both a pragmatic case and a moral case for implementing the initiative outlined herein.

The Pragmatic Case. While many Israelis might prefer to annex the West Bank and Gaza, and many Palestinians might prefer that Israel be pushed into the sea, neither notion is realistic. Israel is here to stay. So are the Palestinians. It is wholly impractical for Israel to annex the occupied territories, even if it could somehow make a moral case for doing so, which it cannot. And it is foolish for the Palestinians to believe that they can win a war of attrition with Israel. The cycle of alternating acts of provocation must be broken. It is clear that the Israeli government has the power to do this, and it seems equally clear that, unless new leadership can effect major changes, the Palestinian people do not.

The best hope for a durable peace is to remove the motivation the Palestinian people have for tolerating or supporting terrorism and to replace it with the means of transforming their nation into a successful democratic state. Taking action toward this end would be consonant with the “Bush Doctrine” (which is aimed at spreading democracy in the Middle East), and arguably would be a higher value, lower risk application of that doctrine than is possible in any other Arab state. Maximizing the prospects for success in this endeavor requires Israel to cede control over 100% (not 88%, or even 97%) of the land the Palestinians believe is rightfully theirs and to make certain additional concessions necessary to satisfy the Palestinians’ other reasonable needs, including such critical intangibles such as self-respect and dignity. It also requires the US, Israel and the world community to provide sufficient economic and technical assistance to ensure that this democratic state is viable and prosperous. This initiative could achieve all of these things while, arguably, enhancing Israel’s security in the process.

The Moral Case. Because of the long history of Jewish persecution, which reached its zenith with the holocaust, there are few people outside of the Islamic world that would deny the Jewish people a state of their own. Regrettably, however, the establishment of the state of Israel came at someone else’s expense—someone who had no history of significant conflict with or persecution of Jews. Notwithstanding the historical attempts by the Arab states to destroy Israel and the

deplorable acts of terrorism perpetrated by radical Palestinian factions, punishment of the entire population of Palestinians for the sins of a few, cannot be seen as just. Currently, there is a worldwide consensus, including a majority of Israelis, that a contiguous Palestinian state on the 22% of the land retained by the Arabs after the 1948 war, is not only inevitable but is a morally right outcome. As for Jerusalem, the intense religious attachments both sides have for the holy sites and the merits of their historical claims to these sites require that they be shared. This also is both an inevitable and a morally right outcome.

* * * * *

Viewed up close, the Israeli concessions proposed herein may seem painful, and even generous, particularly since Israel would be ceding territory it won in wars that were not of its choosing. But viewed from high altitude, these concessions are trivial when compared to the enormous potential benefits to be gained, not just by Israel and the United States, but by the entire world.

Comments by Asher to Kip, December 22, 2007—Kip's Responses are in Red italics.

Dear Kip,

I have read your paper, which I found, not to my surprise following our discussion, to be superbly well informed on the issues, very well argued and very well presented too. You have done a truly masterful job. What I found especially intriguing is the subscription to an essentially unilateralist approach, which as you may recall was one of the options I also spoke of. I really think we have to keep it in mind as a last resort, but also as a realistic option. I therefore fully agree with the key point of your argument that Israel should withdraw from the occupied territories and even do so unilaterally if need be.

However I would beg to differ on the assessment of what this would bring about. Basically we differ in one crucial sense, namely, I would see this as an essential step of **conflict management**, whereas if I understand you correctly, you would tend to believe that this is about **conflict resolution**. *I do believe that. I feel that we have already been through enough interim "plans", "proposals", "confidence building measures", "reciprocity steps", "accords" (Oslo) and "Road Maps" (the Bush plan). It seems to me that everyone knows what the end point has to be. Why don't we just get on with it? I fear that more "conflict management" would only serve to further anger, frustrate and humiliate the Palestinian people while putting the current Palestinian leadership in an untenable position. I also feel that an interim approach would strengthen Hamas and the other jihadists at a time when they are in a weakened position. From the Palestinian perspective, they have waited almost 60 years to resolve this issue. After decades of hoping for more, they (or the majority of them) have, accordingly to many polls, resigned themselves to accepting only 22% of what they believe deeply is their birthright. This is only half as much land as they would have had under the 1947 UN partition plan. While their leaders have not stated that they will give up the right of return, everyone knows (including the Palestinian people) that they must. (As you know, ninety percent of the refugees have said they would not exercise a right of return if it were offered.) In my view, Abu*

Mazen is the best the Israelis and the US have had to deal with since 1948. If he does not win some clear victory for the Palestinian people, I fear he will be thrown out and we will have to go back to the drawing boards. You yourself wrote in an article I just read that time is going against Israel and in favor of the Palestinians. I think we need to seize the moment. In my opinion it is only to place Israel in a better position to fight yet another day, not because this is our choice, but rather that of our Palestinian neighbors. This does not sound very optimistic, but unfortunately I fear, is realistic. We must however do our level best to reduce the friction and intensity of conflict, in the hope that better times will come.

But why and where exactly do you and I differ? It is not about facts. You master them brilliantly. It is about interpretation and assessment, and here all we humans are on equally shaky ground. My comments would be as follows:

On History:

For the great majority of Israeli Jews the role of God in determining what the borders of our country should be is rather marginal. The whole Zionist enterprise originated in a profound Jewish disappointment with God and a loss of faith in what He had to offer for the solution of the Jewish problem. The Zionists were driven by the belief that Jewish dignity and self respect (we are as concerned for our dignity and self respect as the Arabs are for theirs) and self defense would only be guaranteed by Jewish self determination in a state of our own. This state would have to be in Palestine not because God so ordained but because that was the only place to which the Jews had any real national historical attachment. You will find no synagogues in any of the hundreds of Kibbutzim that were the backbone of the state in the making. The Orthodox Jews were never great supporters of the Zionists precisely because of the Zionists' secular reduction of God's role in the man-made creation of Jewish statehood. Jewish **self-**determination was a **substitute** for deliverance by the Almighty. The post 1967 settler movement is an attempt to hijack classical Zionism by religious fundamentalists, who do indeed believe in the patrimony of God. But they are a misguided, albeit over-influential, minority who do not represent where most Israelis are coming from.

It is very true that Jews enjoyed far more tolerance under Islamic rule than in Christian Europe. But in the Muslim world Jews were tolerated as a subservient religious minority. *Yes, but hasn't this been true for all ethnic/religious minorities for all of history? Consider the blacks in America; the Turks in Germany; or the Muslims in France. And most on point, consider the Arabs in Israel. The reason I raised the point in the paper about how well the Jews and Muslims got along over those 1200 years before the advent of Zionism, was to dispel the notion espoused by the hard liners in America (Daniel Pipes and Norman Podhoretz, for example) that this war is a religious war that "has nothing to do with land". This is what Americans have been led to believe and I think there is little if any evidence to support that statement. To the contrary, if this were a religious war, the Jews that stayed in Historic Palestine after the Roman expulsion in the 1st and 2nd Century AD, would have been wiped out centuries ago.* That is exactly what Israel is not. In fact Israel stands the historical pyramid on its head turning the Jews into a predominant majority and the Muslims into a minority in their own country. That

for most Muslims is an intolerable affront and an overturning of the cosmic order. For them the conflict has profound religious significance and in recent years this is becoming only more and not less so. So long as Hamas and co. continue to refer to the Jews as the "sons of pigs and monkeys" the chances of real reconciliation are remote. *I think you need to make peace before you can "make up"*. I can just imagine the international outrage and universal condemnation of Israel if the village idiot in some remote Israeli town were to say something like that about Arabs!! *I understand your frustration: Both Israel and the US ("the great Satan") are judged by a double standard. I believe, in a perverse way, that is a compliment. "To whom much is given, much is expected."*

On the nature of the conflict:

If the Palestinian struggle was just for their statehood, things would have been a lot easier. Unfortunately their struggle has not been for their statehood as much as it has been to deny us ours, which they regard as a great historical injustice. I can understand their grievance, and if I were in their place I probably would have felt just the same. But I am not in their place. I am in mine. That is why the conflict is so real and severe. It is not because we do not understand each other. We understand each other extremely well. That is the problem. And it does not make matters any simpler. That is why they rejected partition in the first place. Many Palestinians are now reconciled to the idea of a two state solution but many are not. *My reading of the polls over the last several years is that the percentage of Palestinians who support a two state solution (within the '67 borders) has ranged from a bare majority to a vast majority. The percentage seems to wax and wane depending on the extent and severity of Israel's military retaliation against the jihadists, and the amount of collateral damage that is done in the process.* The election of Hamas is no great encouragement in this regard. *It is a huge disappointment. It is perhaps a waste of time to dwell on the past, but I believe that Israel and the US played a part in the Hamas electoral victory by not embracing Abu Mazen after Arafat died. When Abbas failed to get anything out of either Israel or the US, (in fact I thought he was treated in a condescending way by both of our countries) I suspect that a large number of the Palestinians turned to Hamas out of desperation. The only reason to raise this is so that we don't make the same mistake again. Abbas is now in a stronger position than Hamas who is more or less isolated in Gaza and losing popularity in the polls. If he can be seen to be getting results from us, it is possible that a much larger majority of Palestinians will turn to him.* Some say the Palestinian vote for Hamas was not in support of Hamas's policies and ideology but a vote against Fatah's corruption and mismanagement. Maybe. But I would ask why did the masses not vote for other secular moderate parties? Salam Fayyad and Hannan Ashrawi, the much admired moderates of the West, got two seats, whereas Hamas won 74. *I believe this might have more to do with testosterone than with ideology. No matter what you and I think of their tactics, Hamas was seen to be standing up to the devils (Israel and the US); Fayyad and Ashrawi were just talking. Besides, the old way--talking, begging actually--wasn't working.*

On Terrorism and Deterrence:

I fear your suggestion of economic penalties for terrorism would not work. *I fear that as well. There is no guarantee; in fact there is no guarantee that anything we do will work. The one thing we know for sure is that what we are doing now is not working. Before rejecting the notion of economic penalties out of hand, I hope you will consider the context in which these penalties would be levied. If Israel has completely withdrawn from the West Bank and Gaza; has agreed to a Palestinian state within the '67 borders; has agreed to a Palestinian capital in "Al Quds" and Palestinian dominion over "Al Haram Al Sharif"; and has supported a "fair solution" for the Palestinian refugees, we would be in a dramatically different environment than we are now. And if on top of that all 22 states of the Arab League are in the process of establishing "normal relations" with Israel, while at the same time, the US, Israel and other international donors are pumping billions into the West Bank and Gaza economy, with the result that jobs are being created, and incomes are rising, wouldn't most of the Palestinian people be loathe to give that up and return to the horrible conditions of the last 40 years? When I wrote the paper, rockets were not a major problem; it was suicide bombers that were creating havoc. I don't have a perfect solution for the rockets but I think that economic penalties might be a deterrent to the rockets for the same reason that they might be a deterrent to suicide bombings. If Hamas is seen to be perpetrating or condoning rocket attacks, the penalties should further marginalize them in the eyes of most Palestinians. It may also be possible in a negotiation with Abu Mazen to gain his acquiescence to continue the Israeli targeted military strikes in Gaza on jihadist leaders that perpetrate rocket attacks. This assumes that Abbas does not have any control over Gaza. If attacks are launched from the WB, Abbas should be given some time to arrest and punish the perpetrators. Clearly it will be in his interests to do so. But we should not expect miracles out of him. I was at an AEI (American Enterprise Institute) World Forum meeting a few of years ago when Olmert (who was then Sharon's deputy) was denouncing the Palestinians for not stopping the jihadists from acts of terror. An American in the audience asked Olmert how he expected the Palestinians, who had virtually no military power, to do what the IDF--the most powerful military in the Middle East--had been unable to do. Olmert didn't really have an answer to that.*

Moreover, I assure you that the moment Israel resorted to such economic penalties Israel would be condemned universally for engaging in collective punishment, for punishing the entire population for the deeds of one or two people, and it is we who would be isolated and not the terrorists. *I am not suggesting that Israel would be the one that would decide whether or not to levy economic penalties. The initiative I proposed in the paper has the US making that decision. However, it may be best for this to be left up to either the "quartet", the UN or some other objective group we could empanel. In a brainstorming vein I would propose the following: Whenever rockets are fired on Israel or some other terrorist act is perpetrated, a five party panel consisting of the four members of the quartet (although I would prefer that the Russians not be involved), plus Israel, would vote as to whether to levy a penalty and if so, how much. The majority would rule and the vote would be by secret ballot so the politics that would inevitably be involved would be minimized.* We live in a strange world and we the Israelis feel this on our own skin almost daily. Israel has been condemned for much less than what you are suggesting. Just about every response of Israel to terrorism is condemned internationally. From taking out the perpetrators without due process,

as if this were about “cops and robbers” and not war, to the building of the security fence. It is always somehow excessive, or wrong for some other reason. *I showed this paper to a political science professor at UCLA whose field is the Middle East. He felt that the notion of using economic penalties instead of military attacks was one of the strongest concepts in the paper. He felt that when Israel strafed a village or bulldozed Palestinian homes, the Palestinian people hated the Israelis for it regardless of what had been done to Israeli civilians to provoke such an action. But if Hamas sent a suicide bomber into Israel and blew up a school bus, resulting in the withdrawal of tens or hundreds of millions of dollars from the Palestinian people, this professor thought the people would take out their anger on Hamas. Again, please keep in mind the context: The Palestinians would finally have most of what they have wanted for so long. Now someone (Hamas or Islamic Jihad, etc), is trying to take away their dream. In any event, what do we have to lose? If the bombings and rocket attacks continue, the donors would not have to put up the money; if they cease, the large investments in the Palestinian economy could create a precondition for a prosperous state.*

The problem of the Palestinians rearming to seriously threaten Israel is, as you say not a great risk. But that is not the most acute problem. The real problems are the suicide bombers and the rockets. They are not sophisticated modern weapons but the most simple imaginable. They do not threaten Israel's existence but they can make life in Israel intolerable. Just imagine rockets on Tel Aviv's financial district every morning and a few on the tarmac of Israel's one and only international airport. Just one a day would suffice. Therefore before any withdrawal from the West Bank we must complete the fence and find some solution, military or technological or political, to the rockets.

The incidence of attacks by suicide bombers and rocketeers might become negligible if Israel simply accepts the Hamas offer of a 10-year cease fire. This is something I believe it should do. My observation from afar is that Hamas is in a very difficult spot and they know it. They do not seem to know what to do right now. This first became noticeable to me when they won the election. Once they realized that they were no longer just a rogue group and actually had to govern, they toned down their rhetoric. The number of suicide attacks also abated. When Zahar, who was nominally in charge of foreign policy at that time, was interviewed on CNN, he was asked several times if the Hamas government was still committed to the destruction of Israel. He ducked the question several times. I am sure when he speaks Arabic he tells a different story, but I thought his reticence was interesting nonetheless. More recently, Haniyeh has been making overtures to Abbas to have reconciliation talks. I think this is a clear sign of weakness. But here again, dealing with this overture by rejecting it out of hand, would be, in my opinion the wrong tactic. I don't think we should stand in the way of the possibility of a reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas. Israel, however, seems to want to do just that. Hamas is in a box and this may be the one time when it might be the better part of valor to help them out of it. Accepting their cease fire proposal might accomplish that. This is where your concept of "putting Israel in a position to fight another day" might be most useful. This may be anathema to Israelis, but I think Israel should deal with Hamas as a separate entity. Make a deal with Abu Mazen on final status terms and enter into a 10 year cease fire with Hamas.

In any event, there can be no progress without risk. Any decision Israel makes must be measured against the risk of doing nothing. Of course, I may have a different view than you on this because I think the status quo is simply intolerable, at least for the US. I keep thinking about how utterly trivial the concessions are that Israel is being asked to make (this assumes reparations for the refugees, NOT a right of return) compared to the upside. In addition to being able to sleep nights, think of what will happen to the Israeli economy if this war is ended. There is no reason I can see that the per capital income of Israel can't be equal to the US. Right now it stands at about 60-65%.

On Israel and the US:

The US guarantee to protect Israel sounds a lot better than it might really be in practice. In the post-Iraq US I do not see any appetite in the US for military commitments elsewhere. We have always said that we ask only to have the means to defend ourselves. In the US of the Walts and the Mearsheimers there are not too many in Israel who would want to rely ultimately on a US guarantee. We are already accused of masterminding the US war in Iraq and pushing the US to act in Iran on our behalf. None of which is true. But in such an atmosphere US guarantees for Israel would be seen from our side with some misgiving. Israelis will never forget that after Israel withdrew from Sinai after the Suez war in 1957, we were given guarantees by the Eisenhower administration to ensure the freedom of navigation through the Straits of Tiran. When Nasser closed the Straits in May 1967 we came to the US and asked them to live up to their guarantee. We were told that they could not find the paper in the State Department and anyway that was a long time ago, another President, and the US had a war on its hands in Vietnam etc etc. And so came the Six Day War. We are not mad about guarantees, just learning from experience. Indeed our whole enterprise from a to z is just about learning from experience, usually the hard way. *I take this point. The guarantee is more a political statement than anything else. The truth is even in the event of an attack by the entire Arab League, Israel probably wouldn't need our help.*

As ever

Asher

Comments by Asher to Kip, December 28, 2007—Kip's Responses are in Red italics.

Dear Kip,

In continuation of our dialogue:

- 1) “Everyone” knows the endgame so why don't we just get on with it. I fear that this assumption is wrong. Who is the "everyone" here? “Everyone” in the West? Maybe. But clearly NOT “everyone” in Palestine and that is the “everyone” that counts. No matter how many times we say this, Israelis and Palestinians do NOT agree when they sit down to work it out. This is especially so on the refugees. No Israeli government will judge this existential matter on the basis of an opinion poll, rather than on what the Palestinian negotiators tell us. Would the US make critical foreign policy and security decisions on the basis of a poll? *Of course not. But I think that understanding what the other side is thinking is vital in any negotiation. What I meant by my statement is that certain basic peace terms which seem to have popular support with the Palestinians ('67 borders; a capital in E. Jerusalem; dominion over the Dome of the Rock) also seem to have considerable support in Israel. If that is true then we have some common ground upon which we can build. If I am wrong, I don't know how we get to a peaceful resolution. With respect to the refugees, I agree with you that the Palestinians have not completely come to terms with this issue. That is why when I wrote my paper I envisioned my "solution" as something that would be carried out unilaterally, so that the Palestinian leadership would not have to be on record as giving the ROR up. My hope was that, if Israel and the US did the other things in the proposal, and the UN began the process of providing reparations to the people who were displaced by the 48 war (both Jews and Palestinians), we would eventually create the conditions for a real peace treaty. I am assuming that any refugee that accepted money would give up their Right Of Return.*
- 2) But time is indeed not working for us, therefore, we must get out with or without an agreement on everything.
- 3) The Palestinians on 22%. True that is what they ask for now, but this is not because they are being especially generous. It is because when they were offered 80% in 1937 they refused and in 1947 when they were offered 45% they refused again and launched a war of genocidal intent against us. We won instead of losing as was our usual historical wont, and will not apologize for that. Moreover we have reason to believe that the moment they could dispense with us they would. I have no fear of that happening. We are much too powerful for that. That is the only reason they would accept 22%. *I agree with everything you have said. I don't doubt that the vast majority of Palestinians would like Israel to disappear and that most would happily participate in its demise if they could. The reason I made the point I did in my email is that--as you and I have agreed--it always good in a dispute, to try to get into the shoes of the other side. I am already in the shoes of the Israelis. If you doubt that, I have not done a very good job of communicating.*
- 4) Arguing that Palestinian views harden because of Israeli retaliation places hardly any responsibility on the Palestinians. *I don't believe you are being fair with this comment. I believe I have made it clear in my paper and in my meeting with you in LA how much I abhor the actions of the Palestinians. There is NO action that is morally equivalent to blowing up a school bus. To call people who do this, "animals" would be an insult to animals. The reason I made the comment about retaliation is to explain why Palestinian opinion about a two state solution waxes and wanes. I didn't say it was rational. In fact I think it is irrational. Anyone who condones*

terrorism, should expect a strong response. That is rational. Remember: I support the wall. And, on a case by case basis, I support targeted killings of known terrorist leaders. No terrorism no retaliation. Palestinian suicide bombers were unfortunately very popular in their own society irrespective of the effects of Israeli retaliation. In fact the more effective and pinpointed the Israeli retaliation the greater likelihood of the Palestinians accepting a truce. This is exactly what is happening now.

- 5) Whether it is about ideology or testosterone does not make any difference to the Israelis who face the music. The poor folk in Sderot and Ashkelon, where the rockets tend to fall, would not know to pronounce testosterone. But rockets for breakfast they understand and that should not be so. It is not right. We left every inch of Gaza, kicked out the settlers, and ploughed the settlements into the ground. Everything we were always told to do. The rockets continue to fly and somehow it is still just our fault.
- 6) The Hamas offer for the long-term truce calls for full withdrawal and refugee return in exchange. *I am embarrassed to say I didn't know that return of refugees was a precondition. Of course I concur you can not agree to that. This makes me think the unilateral approach may be the wiser course.* If they mean that, it will not be accepted and we should not accept. What the PLO demands for a peace treaty they demand for a truce. Why should we agree to that? If they drop the refugee issue then we can get serious and we should talk to them about this. But that would require of them to agree to talk to us. There are two sides to this conflict and they are not less of a player than we are, and they are not less responsible for the outcome than we are. *This is a true statement on the surface. But unfortunately for all of us, Abu Mazen is at a disadvantage relative to Israel in that he cannot control Hamas. I am not even sure that Hamas can control the radicals in its own group. Israel can follow through with its end of the bargain, but I am not sure the Palestinian leadership can. This, to me, is the most difficult part of this problem. This is why I originally conceived the solution as something that would be done more or less unilaterally. If we can create the conditions for peace--a better life for the Palestinians and most of what they want to create a state--over time peace will be more likely to be achieved. At least that is my hope, however naive that it may seem. Otherwise, status quo is what we are looking at, which I think is unwise. There is an old saying from my business world: "Do something, even it is wrong."*
- 7) I am not rejecting the economic penalties out of hand. I am just not sure it will work. I am not sure the US or anyone else would really do it because of its collective nature. They will not be able to do it even if they wished to. But if they could they should and if it works great. It would certainly be worth the try.
- 8) Nothing ventured nothing gained. Very true. Peace is better than what we have. We realize that. It is not about the desirable but about the feasible in the tough world we live in.

All the very best for 2008,

As ever,

Asher

From Kip to Asher, December 29, 2007

Dear Asher,

I sent you something yesterday that I probably should have explained better. I have just begun to write a book entitled, "The Good News About America". It is aimed at America's critics both at home and abroad. In particular I hope to address the rampant anti-Americanism in the world by reminding people (including our own citizens) of the great good America has done and continues to do. It will also debunk the myth that America seeks "empire" or is "imperialistic". There will be three audiences for the book: 1) International critics, including our European "allies"; 2) American critics of both our foreign and domestic policy; and 3) Islamic critics who are, of course, the most virulent. There will be a section of the book entitled, "America and Islam" which will speak to the claim that America is "at war with Islam" by pointing out how much good America has done for Muslims everywhere compared to the Islamic states. (For example, I am sure you are aware that the US is by far the biggest contributor to the UN's Palestinian refugee fund, contributing about 30% of the annual total which dwarfs the combined contributions of the Arab states). One of the chapters will explain why the US favors Israel in the Israel-Arab conflict. What I sent you is a synopsis and a work in progress. I'm hoping you can provide further insights.

By the way, I reviewed the Hamas proposal for a 10 year truce to see how I got that wrong. I think I was just out of date (things change rapidly in your part of the world). It appears that Hamas originally proposed a truce in return for just a withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza (that is what I just read; perhaps it was inaccurate). They also seemed to endorse the Saudi peace proposal. Then, it seems, that in Feb of 2006 Khaled Mashal added the Right Of Return condition to the "offer". Is it worth proposing that they reinstitute their original offer? This is perhaps something that the US or a surrogate might propose. They are now in a weakened position and may agree to that. They have made it clear that their agreement to a truce is only so they can build an army to fight another day. But when it comes to Hamas, I think time is on our side, not theirs. If, during the 10 year period, the Palestinians form a state, it is democratic and it prospers economically (all big ifs, I realize), I think Hamas could wither on the vine. Why isn't that worth a try?

Best regards,

Kip

This is a proposal for a chapter of a possible book to be written by Kip. It was sent by Kip to Asher for comment on December 28, 2007

DRAFT

Why the US Supports Israel

In my opinion, there is no US foreign policy that is a greater irritant to the Muslim world—or at least to the Arab-Muslim world—than America's perceived one-sided support for Israel. Many in Israel and the American Jewish community would disagree that our support for Israel plays a paramount role in radical Islam's war on the US. But countless polls have shown that there is little question that America's policy toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is extremely important to Muslims everywhere. This chapter would attempt to explain why the US sides with Israel instead of the Arabs in this decades old conflict. Here are some of the reasons that will be cited.

- **Israel is a democracy.** The US supports all true democracies because it believes in freedom and self-determination for all people. Unfortunately there are few Muslim democracies. But America has friendly relations with all of them, particularly Turkey, Indonesia, and Malaysia. If Israel were a democratic Muslim state the US would still support it, just as America now supports the Iraqi people in their fight to become a free nation.
- **Compassion.** At the birth of Israel, compassion and guilt evoked by the Holocaust produced an outpouring of sympathy and support among Western nations for the notion of a democratic Jewish state. The deep sense of guilt came about because the death of six million innocent human beings occurred under the noses of the Western nations, particularly the Europeans. The centuries of Jewish persecution in Europe and Russia that preceded the Holocaust was an additional cause for shame and compassion.
- **A Strategic Ally.** Israel was an important strategic ally to the US during the cold war when many of the most powerful Islamic nations supported the Soviet Union. The Soviets were the sworn enemy of America (and the free world) and threatened its very existence. That made many Muslim nations de facto enemies of the US. It was vital that America have a strong ally in this region.
- **Belief in Israel's Right to Exist.** The US believes in Israel's right to exist within secure borders. The US has also declared that it believes in the Palestinians' right to their own state. There is no question that the Palestinian people, having lived in the region for almost two thousand years, have a legitimate claim on at least part of the land of historic Palestine. But the US believes that Israel's claims also have merit. The land occupied by the Jews at the time of the partition of Palestine was purchased by them at fair prices from Arab owners. It was not confiscated. At the time that Zionist Jews were migrating to the region, the indigenous people were not part of a state nor did they aspire to becoming a state. In fact, until the end of WW I, the entire region was part of the Ottoman Empire. After WW I the area in dispute became part of the British Mandate. After decades of conflict over the land between the Zionists and the Palestinians, the UN partition of historic

Palestine was an attempt at compromise by creating two states, each with an ethnic majority. The borders were drawn accordingly. This was, in the view of the US and all of the Western nations, a reasonable compromise to deal with the competing claims for the land and to settle an almost 70-year old conflict (from the advent of Zionism in the early 1880s to 1947 when the land was partitioned). Rather than accept this compromise, six Arab countries declared war on Israel and five Arab countries attacked it. Rightly or wrongly, from the US point of view, this was an inappropriate reaction.

- **Cultural Compatibility.** Israelis (like all Jews) are part of a Western Judeo-Christian culture that has been extant for two thousand years. This culture is very similar to the culture in the US, whereas the Islamic culture is not. Since it is human nature to gravitate to that which is most comfortable and familiar, it should be understandable that Americans relate more to the Israeli cause than to the Palestinians’.
- **Shared Values.** Americans place a very high value on human life and abhor the killing of non-combatants for any reason. And the killing of women, children and babies is total anathema. The enormous number of acts of terrorism perpetrated, first by the PLO and more recently by Islamic Jihad, Hamas, the Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, and other radical Arab factions, has created in many Americans, a deeply antagonistic feeling toward the Palestinians in particular and Arabs in general, thereby making Israel the most sympathetic party in this conflict.
- **Political Influence.** Jewish-Americans, because of their significant accomplishments, have economic and political power in the US that is substantially greater than their numbers (while there are more Jews in the US than there are in Israel, they are just two percent of the US population). They have gone to great lengths to convince American lawmakers and the American people that the Israeli cause is just and that Israel’s interests and America’s interests are substantially the same. In the absence of a countervailing lobby, they have largely succeeded. They have done this with a combination of persuasion and sizable political contributions. Arab-Americans have not been effective in countering this lobbying effort.

This section needs more thought but the notion is to make a compelling case that, seen from the US perspective, our support for Israel makes great sense and is not based on an anti-Muslim bias per se.

From Asher to Kip, January 5, 2008

Dear Kip,

I have read the outline and it looks very good and fair to me. I have 5 comments:

1) US policy on Israel does play a part in the war of radical Islam against the US, but not that central and not only Jews and Israelis would make this argument. I refer you to a great French authority on the subject of Islamic radicalism, Olivier Roy and his book on "Globalised Islam".

Basically I would argue that the Muslim world has a profound grievance against the West of which the Israeli issue is part, but the root of all evil is the Western political, economic and cultural encroachment and defeat of the Muslim world. The beginnings predate the Zionist matter by some two centuries. We could start at the failure of the Ottoman siege of Vienna as the beginning of this rollback of Muslim expansion, culminating in the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire in 1918.

2) Indeed the Palestinians have a legitimate claim to the land. But it sounds a little a-historic to assert their presence on the land for 2000 years. The Arab conquest came in the 7th century and Arab nationalism and Palestinian identity are products of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This does NOT detract from the Palestinian case. It is just to clarify a historical point.

3) Land purchases were made in part but not in the main from absentee landlords. (Kenneth Stein, "The Land Question in Palestine.") Stein studied the deeds of sale in the Zionist archives and prepared an appendix with all the names of the land sellers. It was a convenient myth to promote by the Palestinians, who were ashamed of their forebears for selling the land, and by the Jews who were bothered by the displacement of Palestinians, and preferred to convince themselves that the locals didn't own the land anyway. Factually they were both wrong.

4) What you say of the Arab states in the war of 1948 is right but you exclude the Palestinians who started the war on the very next day after the partition resolution. A civil war between Jews and Arabs raged in Palestine for 6 months before the Arab invasion. Had the Palestinians not initiated the war and begged the Arabs to fight on their behalf there probably would have been no war at all.

5) Today there are more Jews in Israel than in the US and this will remain so as Israel's population continues to grow and that of the US at best will remain static but will probably continue to decline because of low birth rates and much intermarriage.

All the very best

Asher

From Kip to Asher, January 5, 2008

Dear Asher,

Thank you for this. It is very helpful and I will revise this piece to reflect most, if not all, of the changes you suggest. Here are my comments:

1) I am very aware of the arguments that suggest that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not central to Arab hostility toward the US. And many of them have merit. But I continue to believe that this conflict is such a rallying cry for Arab Muslims that it is a

major factor in our war with radical Islam. If the Muslims can be humiliated by being defeated at Vienna, how must they feel when a population of 150 million cannot defeat a population of 600,000 (in 1948). Nonetheless, I will temper my comments on this issue to make it clear that the Arabs have other issues that drive their feelings about the West. I may even get into the Muslim loss at Vienna, because it shows that, from the founding of Islam, the Arabs were, without provocation, invaders themselves. Losing in an effort to conquer another nation may be embarrassing but it is not a logical basis for hating the people who successfully defended themselves. If I am successful in getting the book published, the part of the book that deals with Islam will be lifted out and translated into Arabic and most of the other Muslim languages. This "booklet" will be aimed at educated Muslims in hopes of giving them a different perspective on the US.

2) Good point. I will clarify this along the lines you suggest. But please help me out on one point: I know that Muhammad's armies invaded Palestine in the 7th century. I also understand that Palestine was then inhabited by a mix of many ethnic groups (remnants of all of the conquerors for example: Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Macedonians, Romans), but wasn't the preponderance of the population Arab, even if not yet Muslim?

3) This is very helpful. I will revise accordingly. The important thing is to make clear that all of land controlled by the Zionists up until the 1948 war was acquired legally, and not by conquest.

4) I am very aware that there was violent conflict between the Arabs and the Zionists for several years prior to the war. I wasn't aware the conflict had devolved into what you call a "civil war" just prior to the invasion or that the Palestinians played such big part in the actual fighting when the 1948 war started. I will revise my comments accordingly.

5) This is probably not worth spending time on but I am under a different impression. There is some dispute about how many Jews there are in the US; the best estimate I have seen is about 6 million. And the estimates I have read about the Jewish population in Israel is 5.3 million, with 1.2 million Arabs added in to get to a total population of 6.5 million. Am I out of date?

Again, thanks for taking the time to read this.

I hope you are well.

Best regards,

Kip

From Kip to Asher, December 31, 2008

Dear Asher,

It has been a long time since we have communicated and I wanted to take the occasion of the New Year to say hello and to give you my very best wishes for a great year in 2009.

Unfortunately, 2009 is starting off very badly. Aside from the precipitous decline in the world economy, which is affecting the entire world community, I am very sad to see Israel back at war. Clearly, Israel had to do something about the rockets and I believe this retaliation was necessary. Not being on the ground there and in possession of all of the facts I can't express an opinion as to the wisdom of the tactics and the severity of the attacks. Suffice it to say that I despair that these events are going to take us back to suicide bombing and a restart of the cycle of violence. I am anxious to hear how you see this unfolding. Is there any hope that a new cease fire can be negotiated? Or do you even want one at this juncture?

I continue to think that Israel needs to negotiate with Abbas and make peace with the West Bank Palestinians (and any Gazans that will accept it) as soon as possible, leaving Hamas and Gaza for later. Of course making a *lasting* peace with the Palestinians would require Israel to make the kind of concessions you and I have talked about--not easy to swallow but much better than the alternatives Israel is facing. In such an arrangement I would envision opening the West Bank to immigration of Gazans to the West Bank where they are more likely to prosper. As you know I would favor some kind of long term truce with Hamas without a requirement that they accept Israel's right to exist. The hope in such an approach would be that over time the people of Gaza would become prosperous enough that Hamas would be marginalized enough that a real peace could be negotiated. Now that Hamas's manhood has been challenged anew, achieving such a truce may not be possible for some number of months or years, but that should still be the goal, it seems to me. My sense has been for some time that Hamas is between a rock and a hard place. It knows it and is looking for a dignified way to put this conflict on long term hold. If you don't like being in Israel's position, how would you like to be Hamas?

As to the settlements, I still believe it is worth exploring the notion of getting the Palestinians to allow the settlers to become legal residents of Palestine, but still citizens of Israel (Israel might consider doing something reciprocally on a highly selective basis). This would avoid the horrible scenario of Israeli soldiers evicting Israeli settlers from their homes.

As you can imagine, the TV coverage depicting dead Palestinian women and children is pretty horrifying and is undoubtedly doing great damage to Israel's image in the world. For Israel's sake, I hope this phase of the war will be over soon.

Shalom and warm regards,

Kip

From Asher to Kip, January 1, 2009

Dear Kip,

Great to hear from you again and may I wish you all the very best for the New Year. Indeed 2009 is not starting off so well. First let me say that the major aim of the war is to obtain a lasting, stable and sustainable cease fire. That is what it is all about, from our point of view. The civilian casualties on the Arab side are very very distressing and very damaging to our cause. We are acutely aware of it and make a great effort to avoid them. But bear in mind that Hamas is making the most of this media manipulation in the most cynical of ways. Which ever way you look at the numbers (not through the decontextualizing medium of TV footage, which essentially does NOT provide information but has become a distorting medium of disinformation) Israel has managed for most of the time to hit the right people. In the history of modern warfare Israel would compare very well with any other Western military, including the US in Kosovo and Iraq and the US and its allies in Afghanistan. In one bombing in Syria the US wiped out a whole wedding party if you recall killing more innocent civilians than Israel has done in days of bombing in Gaza. I would not even mention the Russians in Chechnya and Georgia. So all I ask is for the media to contextualize. They will not, of course, because that is the nature of the medium far more in TV than radio or the print media where there is more space for the word and not just the images.

As for the deal in the end I wish you were right about Fatah but I do not think so. These days Mahmud Abbas could not deliver much and a year of negotiations in the so called Annapolis process was a waste of time. We must withdraw from 95 % of the occupied territories and take the settlers who are in the wrong place with us. Israelis cannot be left in Arab territory. They will not survive to tell the tale unless protected by the Israeli army and that means occupation. Settlements mean occupation--no occupation no settlements. Very simple. We cannot avoid that and if that means removing the settlers by force that is tough luck. We will just have to do it. They should never have been there in the first place. If this war produces the desired result, that is, a stable and sustainable cease fire then Israelis may begin to consider getting out of the West Bank too. But it will be very difficult to convince the public that we must leave the West Bank if the rocket problem is not solved once and for all.

As for the suicide bombers, the only reason they are not operating of late is because of Israel's presence in the West Bank and the checkpoints etc. It is not that they in Hamas are giving us a break out of the goodness of their hearts. The threat to renew the bombings is an empty threat. The moment they will be able to renew them they will. It will not matter whether we are at war in Gaza or not. By the way even in the worst of times suicide bombers hardly ever came from Gaza, because there is a fence all around Gaza. In all the many suicide bombings only two came from Gaza: one was carried out by British Muslims who fooled our people with their British passports and blew up a popular restaurant in Tel Aviv, and one who smuggled himself in a container into the port of Ashdod.

On a more personal note: Kip, you are such a decent well meaning human being that you tend to underestimate the cynical viciousness of the neighborhood in which we operate. Mosques and schools are being used to store rockets and as firing zones too. Hamas leaders are hiding in the hospitals. They will stop at nothing. Their intent towards Israel is genocidal. One can only hope that people understand what it is that we are up against. We are not above criticism. We are not saints. But who is?

Again, my very best wishes to you and yours for 2009.

As ever,

Asher

From Kip to Asher, January 4, 2009

Dear Asher,

Thanks for taking the time to write such a thoughtful response. There is nothing in your note that I disagree with, although I think you were too kind in characterizing me as a "decent well meaning human being". All of my life I have thought of myself as a tolerant, unbigoted person. But over the last several years I have found myself becoming increasingly prejudiced and angry toward Arab-Muslims. As I have said to my friends, "These people are not like us". I know this view is unfair—I have several Muslim-American friends who are great people. Not all Arab-Muslims behead people and blow up school buses. But enough of them do, to leave an indelible impression. This is from someone who has never lost a loved one to a suicide bomber.

As to your comments about "contextualization", I agree that Israel is judged by a double standard. Of course you are aware that Israel is not alone in this regard. The fact is that the US has done more good *for* and less harm *to* Muslims in the 20th Century than any other nation, or, for that matter, all of the Arab nations combined. We have expended blood and treasure to protect Muslim lives and Muslim national sovereignty on no less than three occasions in just the last 20 years. And this was *prior* to the Afghanistan and Iraq wars in which we have, at an enormous cost in money and American lives, created the conditons under which 50M Muslims can live in freedom for the first time in history (that is, IF they choose to do so). Even after accounting for the deaths of Iraqis and Afghans in these two wars, we have killed far fewer Muslims than the Muslims themselves. In addition to the \$2.6B we give to Egypt and Jordan each year, we give more money each year to the UN fund for Palestinian refugees than all of the Arab states combined. (The last time I looked, which was a few years ago, the US provided about \$90-\$100M of the \$300M raised for refugees, in a year in which the Saudis gave \$5M and the Egyptians gave \$10,000.) This is the *context* in which the Muslims should judge the US. But despite this, we are despised by Muslims as an enemy of Islam. (You probably won't agree, but I believe this is primarily because of our support for Israel, but I suspect they

would hate us anyway.) And to add insult to injury we are disdained by our own allies, who call us imperialist but who are happy to take full advantage of our defense umbrella, which has been purchased at enormous cost to American taxpayers. So you are not alone, my friend. Sometimes I think the only people that like Americans are Israelis!

I hope you don't think I believe Hamas can be reasoned with. I don't use terms like "evil" very much, but if I were to, I would apply it to Hamas. My point has always been that I don't think the members of Hamas can be defeated with bombs and missiles. Even if you killed every member of Hamas, another anti-Israel group with another name would spring up to take its place. The only solution is to discredit and to marginalize Hamas in front of the Palestinian people. And I just don't think that is going to happen until the Palestinians have a viable state. That will require Israel to make the concessions you and I have discussed. If Israel is willing to remove all of the settlements that would clearly be best for all concerned. As you well know, a good start would be to stop building them in the first place--not just in the West Bank but in E. Jerusalem as well. I think the addition of one house in the West Bank or Jerusalem is as infuriating to the Palestinians as one Hamas-launched rocket is to the Israelis. To the Palestinians the settlements are "context". Until the Israeli leadership comes to terms with this, and does something about it, I don't think Israel can turn world opinion around.

As to the reference you make to Abbas in your second paragraph, I am not sure what you mean when you say "he could not deliver". Do you mean a peace agreement on terms Israel would accept? Or do you mean an acceptance by Hamas of Israel's right to exist and a cessation of the Hamas rocket attacks? I don't think Abbas will ever be able to deliver Hamas. I think Hamas has to be made obsolete by events on the ground. The more we can all do to make the "good Palestinians" truly free and prosperous, the less influence Hamas will have and the sooner it will wither on the vine. The hard part is stopping them from terrorizing Israelis without making them martyrs. Having said that, I do not fault the Israelis one bit for this incursion. The question is, what now? I believe in both carrots and sticks. To paraphrase a great Israeli leader (Ben Gurion?), what I wish would happen is that the Israelis would move rapidly to negotiate peace with Fatah (for the West Bank) as if there were no war with Hamas, and wage war with Hamas as if there were no negotiation with Fatah. What I also wish is that, while bombs are falling on Hamas, carrots are being offered to Abbas--lots of carrots. Further, I wish that Israel would reach a cease fire with Hamas within days not weeks, but only on the proviso that every time a rocket leaves Gaza en route to Israel, an F-16 would hit a Hamas target in Gaza. Five rockets, five targets. This can be done unilaterally if necessary.

As to the putative weakness of Abbas, isn't he weak in large part because he hasn't produced results for his constituents? Isn't it time we made Abbas a hero to the Palestinian people instead of Hamas? In any event, he is what we have and he is better than the current and historical alternatives. Remember when the Israeli mantra was "we have no partner for peace"? Isn't Abbas that partner?

Warm regards,

Kip