



THE HENRY JACKSON SOCIETY
CONVERSATION SERIES

THE HENRY JACKSON SOCIETY'S
BARAK M. SEENER
in conversation with
AMBASSADOR DORE GOLD

**After the Johnston Affair: Re-evaluating the Links Between
the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and the Threat of Global Jihadism.**

B.M.S. Your new book, 'The Fight for Jerusalem', is unique as it effectively manages to fuse both contemporary realities and policy analysis with the historical, cultural, religious and even archaeological backgrounds to the region. This is rarely achieved as focus is usually granted to only one of these factors at best. You demonstrate how historically, territorial concessions that are made as part of conflict resolution have become springboards for further terrorist attacks elsewhere in the world. In over a decade's worth of experience with the 'land for peace' paradigm, has Israel not realized that this has generated further attacks? Why does it continuously revert back to this failed approach?

D.G. We have a deep perceptual problem across the Western alliance about how to halt the advance of radical Islam. Unfortunately many in the West believe that radical Islam springs up from ongoing political grievances with respect to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Indeed many European leaders are

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convinced that if they could resolve tomorrow the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, this would lower the flames of radical Islamic rage, weaken al-Qaeda, and improve the security of the Western alliance including the security of Europe.

However in 'The Fight for Jerusalem', I demonstrate that this assumption is completely false. In fact what leads to the spread and growth of radical Islam are not political grievances, but rather a sense of victory. That is the gasoline that is fuelling the engine of al-Qaeda. We also see this in several historical examples. al-Qaeda was not formed in relationship to any of Israel's wars whether it be in 1948, 1948 1956, 1967 or 1973, but in 1989 when the Soviet Union was defeated in Afghanistan and withdrew. That led the founders of al-Qaeda to conclude that they had just defeated a superpower. They had scored a huge victory against the great powers of the day and they were replicating Islamic history. In the 7th Century, the armies of Mohammed and the early Caliphs eventually decimated both the Persian and Byzantine empires, and spread Islam from N. Africa to China. Essentially what we learn from the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan is that the sense of victory that the Arab mujahadeen who fought there had, led them to

conclude that they should form al-Qaeda and challenge the other great Superpower-the US along with its allies. A second time a withdrawal has a powerful impact upon the growth of Jihadism is when Israel withdrew from Southern Lebanon. That led to the perception that, "Israel had a national will as thick as a spider web", to quote Sheikh Hassan Nasralla, the Secretary General of Hezbollah. It was followed by a massive rearmament of Hezbollah by Iran.

In May 2000, the Barak government withdrew Israel's forces from the security zone in southern Lebanon. Arafat had then complained to Sholomo Ben-Ami who was to become Barak's foreign minister, that Hezbollah's perceived victory had created pressure on him to emulate Hezbollah's violent tactics. This is exactly what he did by launching four months later the second Intifada. Perhaps even more illustrative of this phenomenon of the perception of victory and the spread of Jihadism was Israel's unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. Many in the international community suspected that by addressing the grievances of the Palestinians through the Israeli pullback from Gaza, this would lead to the establishment of infrastructure for a Palestinian state. This would be combined with the great prospect of agricultural exports to Europe, development of offshore gas fields (being developed by British Gas), and even shore front hotels that could spring up in Gaza with money from the Gulf States. Many thought that Israeli unilateral withdrawal would usher in a new era of Palestinian moderation and stability.

But what happened after Israel pulled out in August 2005? Hamas grew in power and was convinced that it had just

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defeated the Israelis. Ultimately Hamas won the Palestinian parliamentary elections in January 2006. As a result of that victory, Hamas decided to open up the Gaza Strip to Jihadi organizations from around the region including al-Qaeda. Thus Mahmoud Abbas told the London Arabic daily, al-Hayat, in March 2006, that he had received intelligence indicating the presence of al-Qaeda operatives in both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. One month later, al-Hayat reported that al-Qaeda operatives from Egypt, Sudan, and Yemen had infiltrated post-withdrawal Gaza. Hamas leaders like Mahmoud al-Zahar

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expressed confidence that Israel's withdrawal from Gaza would invigorate the mujahidin fighting against the U.S in Iraq and in Afghanistan. So while the West thought that the Israeli pullout from Gaza with its inherent relinquishing of territory would be a great antidote for the problem of al-Qaeda and radical Islam, more generally, what the West ultimately obtained from that pullout was a new sanctuary for al-Qaeda on the shores of the Mediterranean.

B.M.S. It would be prudent for strategists to consider the worst case scenario first and make contingency plans for that rather than being optimistic. If Israel is on the front lines of

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global Jihad, and there are individuals such as former Chief of Staff Moshe Ya'alon, and Maj. Generals Doron Almog, and Yaakov Amidror predicting exactly what you have now described occurring in the aftermath of disengagement. It makes no sense for the Israeli government to either fire them or merely ignore them. Furthermore it appears that Israel does not have a strategy to deal with Jihadism which is on its doorstep, or have an alternative paradigm to advance other than "Land for Peace." Israel can not even conflict manage, let alone resolve the conflict. This is a concern of the rest of the world as Israel is on the front lines in the fight against Jihadism.

D.G. Israel is being reflective of what is going on with the rest of the Western alliance. President Clinton in the year 2000 had one foreign policy initiative which he could initiate and that is because an administration in its last days of office can not do

two or three things simultaneously. President Clinton could have destroyed Bin-Laden in Afghanistan or he could have attempted to broker a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. President Clinton and many of his advisers believed that placing all his remaining presidential time into brokering an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement would act as a remedy to the problem of radical Islam, the spread of al-Qaeda and the new threat that was on the horizon. All were completely wrong. The intelligence on Arafat was misdirected. And while Clinton advanced the peace process in the 1990s—from the first Oslo Agreement in 1993 to Camp David in 2000—al-Qaeda nonetheless continued to grow and conducted increasingly more brazen operations in Saudi Arabia in 1995, in East Africa in 1998, in Yemen (against the USS Cole) in 2000, and finally 9/11 in 2001. There simply was no correlation in all these high profile peace initiatives on the White House lawn, with the spread of al-Qaeda's operational cells from East Africa to India.

B.M.S. In 'The Fight for Jerusalem' you mention that in a way both the Israeli Prime Minister and the US President did not have a mandate to advance the peace initiative they sought with Arafat. Ehud Barak had been subjected to a vote of no-confidence in the Knesset. The US Congress almost unanimously supported a united Jerusalem in the form of the Jerusalem Embassy Act which was passed in the Senate by a vote of 93-5. Yet the President ignored this and sought to grant the Palestinians sovereignty over the Temple Mount. Furthermore this took place in the context of both leaders ignoring the violence that was occurring on the ground. Thus they were pursuing abstract initiatives that did not correlate with circumstances that they found themselves in. As Israel is on the front lines of global Jihad, Israel does not have a robust democracy to scrutinize and hold accountable its Prime Minister, and is not proving itself to be a robust buffer for the West against radical Islam.

Is it not ironic that critics of Israel on the left speak of a Washington DC based neo-conservative or right-wing conspiracy that is closely networked with the 'hawkish' Likud party. Ironically, settlements have grown exponentially under Labour governments, and not Likud governments. Furthermore the Netanyahu government for whom you acted as Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's foreign policy advisor did not reject the Oslo process or the 'Land for Peace' paradigm. Did Netanyahu's approach not go against the grain of your worldview that ceding territory fosters Jihadism around the globe? If I was on the left, I would be actively hoping for the Likud party to win elections, as the Likud does not ideologically reject ceding territory, but maintains the status quo which has led Israel to go down a left-wing trajectory culminating in Sharon's 'Disengagement'.

D.G. I will address your last question first. The national security establishment of the State of Israel was more concerned with a nuclear Iran and the strategic threat that it posed. It was not as concerned with Sadaam Hussein's Iraq, and thus did not lobby for the U.S. led war in Iraq. It is indeed ironic that rumors are at times given credence by spurious scholarly works that speaks of the impact of the 'Jewish' or 'Israel' lobby. Regarding the Likud government's willingness to make territorial concessions in the Oslo years, the world at the time assumed that Arafat was a Mandela who had jettisoned his Jihadi past. The Netanyahu government in the 1990s sought to test that proposition by insisting that Arafat fulfill his security obligations and dismantle Islamist organizations in his midst. When Likud governments previously faced on the other side of the negotiating table a partner like Anwar Sadat, they demonstrated their readiness to make a forthcoming territorial compromise. Indeed it was Menachem Begin, a Likud Prime Minister who gave every square inch of the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt. Prime Minister Netanyahu was prepared to engage in peace negotiations with the Palestinian Authority, but only on the basis of reciprocity—that is if Israel pulls back from land, the Palestinians must correspondently fulfill their treaty obligations, particularly in the area of security. When Israel is confronted by an ideologically hardened Hamas for whom armed struggle is a religious obligation, then Israel is not dealing with an Anwar Sadat or King Hussein, but rather with an uncompromising adversary who sees itself as part of a global Islamist network. The slightest compromise with radical Islam will only exacerbate the global struggle we face. However in the future with moderate Arab counterparts, Israel can compromise as long as it protects its vital interests such as its right to defensible borders.

Going back to your first question, the U.S. Constitution which sets out a system of separation of powers grants the President the status of being Commander in Chief. He is in charge of foreign policy. He however needs the US Congress to support him as they retain control of the purse strings. Clinton kept the initiative with Arafat alive until his last days in office right up to the inauguration of President George W Bush. The U.S. press did not feel up to critiquing what Clinton was doing at the time. Perhaps with the benefit of hindsight and learning how this approach has fostered greater terrorist attacks they will in the future. Finally Mr Barak left his own record in 2000 that many people hold serious questions about including Natan Sharansky who organized the largest demonstration in Israeli history against him. Israel has its own problems as a young democracy. One of the conclusions reached by the press in Israel after the 1973 war is that Israel's intelligence errors that stood at the foundation to the outbreak of the conflict, causing a lack of Israeli preparedness were partially caused by a single world-view of "conceptia" as the word was used at the

time in Israel. This affected Israel largely because there was no pluralistic thought in the Israeli press. This problem repeated itself in 'Disengagement' from Gaza, and Camp David in 2000. The best way to ensure that a democracy is strong is to have ideological and intellectual pluralism. Without this democracies can face the current crisis that Israel faces today.

B.M.S. Despite it being Clinton's executive privilege granted by the US Constitution, it takes a great degree of audaciousness to go against a political milieu in the US as Congress was unanimously supportive of an undivided Jerusalem.

D.G. Yes I agree with you on that point and Clinton did just that.

B.M.S. Clinton did not base his policy approach on intelligence, but arbitrarily considered that resolving the conflict between Israel and the Palestinian would solve all the regional ills that threaten the security of the international community. It is also of no surprise that Tony Blair has taken the uncoveted post of the Quartet's envoy to the Middle-East peace process, as he has was previously quoted in the Associated Press on November 4, 2004 that revitalizing the peace process is, "the single most pressing political challenge in our world today." Similarly Blair had forcefully advanced the notion at the Iraq Study Group that advancing peace initiatives between Israel and the Palestinians would assist allied efforts in Iraq. Individuals such as George Soros or former British Conservative Cabinet member Sir Malcolm Rifkind also state that the threat of Jihad is not an organic and seamless threat, but rather separate differentiated conflicts such as Chechnya being separate from Somalia, or Afghanistan being separate from the rise of Islamism in Indonesia. Ironically they tie the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to being the root of these conflict zones. Is this perception which is a counter-intuitive approach conveniently cultivated as the West does not have the resources and know-how to manage these threats simultaneously?

THE SEAMLESS GLOBAL ISLAMIST THREAT

D.G. In my judgment the notion that current waves of Jihadism are separate conflicts in different regions is utterly baseless. One only has to look at the multinational nature of the mujahideen who came and trained in Osama Bin-Laden's camps in Afghanistan in the 1990s. They came from the Philippines, Indonesia, Russia, China, Egypt, and obviously

Saudi Arabia and Yemen. Thus the training for these different battlefields of Jihad involved Islamist volunteers from all over the world, and not from just a single conflict area. The literature that is being developed by the clerics of Jihad are in many different languages. They usually all have a single source which is radical Wahhabi clerics or other radical clerics that are based in the Gulf, and are supportive of the Muslim Brotherhood. While people think that the Palestinian situation is unique, and separate from global Jihad, one has to just look on Hamas' website to discover that it has multi-lingual capacity including Russian, Urdu, and Malay. This shows that Hamas is trying to reach out to the wider global Jihad world. Much of its internal literature, propaganda, posters and films identify with the leading figures of global Jihad and not simply with Palestinian grievances. Furthermore Islamism has permeated the Palestinian society at large. An example of this is that a Palestinian Islamist wrote a bestselling book in the territories that identified Osama Bin-Laden as an apocalyptic figure who would defeat the U.S.

B.M.S. Is there a growing financial link between Hamas, Fatah, Wahabism and al-Qaeda? Just very recently al-Qaeda's deputy leader Ayman al-Zawahiri just recently called on Muslims to back Hamas with weapons, money and attacks on US interests. He stated, "Provide them (Hamas) with money, do your best to get it there, break the siege imposed on them by Crusaders and Arab leader traitors."

HAMAS'S LINKS TO ALAN JOHNSTON'S HOSTAGE TAKERS

D.G. The conventional wisdom of commentators on Middle-Eastern affairs is to place Hamas and al-Qaeda into separate categories. Israelis however recall that two British Islamists - Asif Hanif and Omar Khan Sharif - who were involved in the April 30, 2003 suicide bombing at "Mike's Place" bar in Tel Aviv (right next to the U.S. Embassy) were in fact recruited from an al-Qaeda cell in the UK to perpetrate this attack by the Hamas military command in the Gaza Strip. In other words, Hamas demonstrated that it was able to cooperate with al-Qaeda on the operational level.

Just recently, a self-declared al-Qaeda offshoot in the Gaza Strip, known as Jaish al-Islam (Army of Islam), gained notoriety, when it kidnapped BBC journalist, Alan Johnston. Jaish al-Islam demanded the release of Abu Qatada, one of the heads of the al-Qaeda fatwa committee, from a British prison. Reportedly the mastermind of the kidnapping was a Gazan

who fought for al-Qaeda in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan. Jaish al-Islam was not an organization that operated alone; indeed, it had strong military ties to Hamas, with whom it carried out the kidnapping of the Israeli soldier, Corporal Gilad Shalit in June 2006. It was extraordinarily revealing that when Johnston was finally freed in early July, Hamas did not dismantle Jaish al-Islam, but let it keep its arsenal intact. According to al-Quds al-Arabi (July 5, 2007), Hamas may have even paid Jaish al-Islam five million dollars and over a million rounds of Kalashnikov bullets in order to obtain Johnston's release.

B.M.S. What do you say then about the fact that after Johnston's release, 20 British parliamentarians called for talks

David Miliband, has sought to legitimise and appease Hamas, an Islamist terrorist organisation as he "fully acknowledged the crucial role" played by Hamas in securing Johnston's release. This is especially striking as just yesterday Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas told Italian state television channel RAI, "Through Hamas, al Qaeda is entering the Gaza Strip." "It is Hamas that is protecting al Qaeda, and through its bloody behaviour, Hamas has become very close to al Qaeda,"

with Hamas? They put forward a motion in the House of Commons. Moreover, Britain's new foreign secretary, David Miliband, has sought to legitimise and appease Hamas, an Islamist terrorist organisation as he "fully acknowledged the crucial role" played by Hamas in securing Johnston's release. This is especially striking as just yesterday Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas told Italian state television channel RAI, "Through Hamas, al Qaeda is entering the Gaza Strip." "It is Hamas that is protecting al Qaeda, and through its bloody behaviour, Hamas has become very close to al Qaeda," he told RAI. "That is why Gaza is in danger and needs help." (This declaration on RAI was in an interview in the West Bank city of Ramallah ahead of a meeting on Tuesday with visiting Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi.) Furthermore Miliband's statements undermined the Quartet's intentions to reinforce Fatah's position against that of Hamas.

D.G. Unfortunately, all this praise for Hamas is not based on a careful analysis of the facts on the ground. For Hamas has essentially recognized a self-declared affiliate of al-Qaeda as a legitimate armed party in the Gaza Strip. It is ironic that while the United Kingdom has thousands of British troops in Afghanistan fighting the Taliban for providing sanctuary for al-Qaeda, some British politicians want to open a dialogue with another Islamist group, Hamas, that is doing precisely what the Taliban have been doing.

Looking at the financial side, moreover, we see that it became completely spurious to separately compartmentalise Hamas and al-Qaeda as financial donations from Saudi Wahhabi charities, that had been backing global jihadi efforts as far as the Philippines and Bosnia, also accounted a few years back for between 50 and 70 percent of the annual expenditures of Hamas. For example, the Saudi-based International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO) was designated by the U.S. Treasury Department as a conduit for the funding of al-Qaeda on August 3, 2006, through its Indonesian and Philippine branches. The Israeli Army found IIRO payment forms showing its contributions to Hamas in 2002. In short, al-Qaeda and Hamas shared many of the same funding networks.

One of the revelations I provide in 'The Fight for Jerusalem' is an April 2006 fundraising event in Yemen for Hamas. I obtained a photograph of that get together in which on the backdrop you can see Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the founder of Hamas, Khaled Mashaal, the secretary General of his political wing, and in the foreground is an elderly Muslim cleric with an orange-tinted beard of the name Abdul Majid Al Zindani who according to the US Treasury is an al-Qaeda supporter. Sheikh Zindani was known to dispatch young Yemenis for Bin-Laden's training camp in Afghanistan. He is also known for being a close aide to Osama Bin-Laden. So here is an al-Qaeda Chieftain at a 2006 fundraising event for Hamas in Yemen. The Syrian-based Hamas leadership, headed by Khaled Mashaal has also met openly with al-Qaeda supporters in Pakistan, Yemen, and in Saudi Arabia. These examples are only the tip of the iceberg. There are many intimate fundraising links between Hamas and al-Qaeda that are known among US authorities.

One of the most illustrative examples of these links on the ideological sphere was a poster found by Israel's Defense Forces in several Palestinian cities in the West Bank, featuring

a pantheon of Jihadi heroes including Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, founder of Hamas pictured next to Khattab, who used to head the Chechen Mujahadeen. Next to Khattab was pictured Osama Bin-Laden. The poster detailed different battlegrounds of Jihad in Arabic. References are made to Chechnya, the Balkans, Kashmir, Palestine, and Lebanon. This poster was a Hamas commissioned poster which clearly demonstrates an affiliation with the larger global Jihad.

B.M.S. As opposed to Rikfind and Soros, at least the minds of the Jihadists they are part of an organic seamless endeavor. They are not differentiated threats, and this is just one example.

D.G. In 'The Fight for Jerusalem' as well as my other works, despite my assertions could be controversial, I make the point of documenting everything. When I wrote my first book about Saudi Arabia entitled, 'Hatred's Kingdom', many Americans opposed me due to their business operations in Saudi Arabia. Over time however, my research became respected and I was asked to testify before a Senate Committee on terrorist financing. 'The Fight for Jerusalem' provides the same kind of documentation in order to substantiate my arguments.



THE ISLAMIST NATURE OF FATAH

B.M.S. It is realistic to ask how moderate is Mahmoud Abbas due to his Islamist declarations. Abbas dedicated his victory to "brother Shahid [martyr] Yasser Arafat," and to the "Shahids and prisoners." He further declared that the period of the "little Jihad has ended, and now the big jihad is beginning." The crowd responded, "A million Shahids marching to Jerusalem." He has never arrested terrorists operating within his jurisdiction. Abbas explicitly stated, "It wasn't my intention to confront Hamas or Islamic Jihad." "We treated the different organizations as different branches of the Palestinian society." He has never condemned suicide bombings because they are immoral in and of themselves, but has condemned them from time to time merely due to tactical considerations. Thus he has said in the past that the Intifada "Is not the proper time"

for violence. Mahmoud Abbas also sponsors a Funds Distribution Ceremony organized by the Iran-funded Al-Ansar charity association which on October 13, 2005 distributed a sum of one million dollars granted by Iran to family of Shahids. This causes me to wonder whether there is really a fundamental difference between Fatah and Hamas. Even from its early days, the PLO was backing Islamist causes. It backed Khomeini's Iranian revolution by supplying them weapons. Arafat in turn was hailed as Khomeini's friend and was given the Israeli embassy in Tehran with the PLO flag flying over it. Finally due to the adoption of Jihadist principles by Fatah and Hamas, do the Palestinians feel a takeover of Islamist culture in the territories?

D.G. I personally met for many hours with Mahmoud Abbas during the years that I was foreign policy adviser to PM Netanyahu. What I detected was that he was a pragmatist, and that regardless of his ideology and personal beliefs, he was willing to compromise with the Israeli leadership. His own

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ideas and belief system may be very different, and it is known that he engaged in Holocaust denial in his doctoral thesis done in Moscow. In 'The Fight for Jerusalem' I document that Mahmoud Abbas also dabbled in 'Temple Denial', which is a phenomenon identified in the book with more people in the Arab world who reject the contents of the Old Testament, its narrative of the Jewish presence in Jerusalem, and the existence of the Temple of King Solomon. Mahmoud Abbas has been pulled in that direction. In terms of the difference between Fatah and Hamas, it is important to remember that Fatah does not have its own clerics. Even in the days when Arafat ruled in the PA, he had to rely on many Hamas religious leaders to fill the positions of heads of religious endowments in the West Bank. So it has been extremely easy for Hamas ideology to infiltrate Fatah. The Iranians are now major players

in Palestinian politics, and they have been willing to join forces with Fatah, pulling Fatah in an even more radical direction.

B.M.S. You mention Mahmoud Abbas's pragmatism. Arafat also demonstrated pragmatism as a Trojan Horse mentioned in 'The Battle for Jerusalem'. Can that part of one's actions be divorced from the ideological aspect of one's psyche? Is it not plausible that Mahmoud Abbas's pragmatism is a tactical Trojan horse for Israel that obfuscates his true intentions? In this manner Israel would be disarmed by pragmatist speech while Islamism would be energized.

D.G. Mahmoud Abbas is not a radical Islamist. When I negotiated with him the first meeting between Netanyahu and Arafat, one of my preconditions was that he close illegal Palestinian offices in Jerusalem that spread during the period of a previous Labor government. As a result of our discussions, Mahmoud Abbas ordered the closure of Palestinian offices in Jerusalem and came under tremendous criticism as it was seen that he was relinquishing a Palestinian state in Jerusalem. That was a pragmatic move on his part in order to open up a dialogue with the Likud government. It does not mean that he has relinquished the claim to Jerusalem or his ideological proclivities. He has been willing to suspend them in order to deal with a tactical diplomatic situation. What I would conclude is that Israel can not rely on Abbas's intentions, but must retain in any arrangements with him, if they become possible, its defensive capabilities in the event that any of these agreements fall apart.

B.M.S. Why did the EU and US invest so much time and money to resolve the conflict while ignoring the Trojan horse that Arafat sought to implement?

D.G. On two separate occasions, Faisal Hussein, the PA's Minister for Jerusalem Affairs, described the Oslo Process as a Trojan horse saying, "We could never have gotten into the bastion of Israel without it having voluntarily opened the door to the PLO which had come all the way from Tunis to enter the

Husseini openly declared that Arafat used the Oslo peace process as a Trojan horse that enabled the PLO to get the Israelis to open "their fortified gates and let in inside their walls." He explained that the real strategic goal of the PLO was to destroy Israel, and replace it with a Palestinian state that stretched "from the [Jordan] river to the [Mediterranean] sea."

West Bank and Gaza." Before he died, Hussein openly declared that Arafat used the Oslo peace process as a Trojan horse that enabled the PLO to get the Israelis to open "their fortified

gates and let in inside their walls.” He explained that the real strategic goal of the PLO was to destroy Israel, and replace it with a Palestinian state that stretched “from the [Jordan] river to the [Mediterranean] sea.” Marwan Barghouti, one of the heads of Fatah admitted in an interview appearing in the July 9, 2001 edition of The New Yorker, that even if Israel withdrew from 100 percent of the territories it had captured in 1967, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would not end. He also demanded the replacement of Israel with “one state for all the peoples.” Because so many Chancelleries of Europe were concerned that the solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, in particular the Palestinian-Israeli component was the panacea for Middle-Eastern stability, they were willing to believe anything including the idea that Arafat was the Nelson Mandela of the Palestinians. They as a result had an extremely difficult time if you presented them with intelligence data to the contrary.

B.M.S. Why would Israel and the international community ignore intelligence data that revealed the collaboration between Fatah and Hamas, whether it be sharing logistical resources or Arafat’s signed checks to the family of suicide bombers?

D.G. When I was in government, the military had gathered intelligence of a meeting of Arafat with the leaders of Hamas in the Gaza Strip, and had separate intelligence capabilities on the meeting. In that discussion Arafat gave a “Green light” to Hamas to open up a wave of suicide attacks against Israel. The existence of that meeting and messages that were passed between Fatah and Hamas were shared with the leaders of most of the Western community. In fact I accompanied PM Netanyahu to the White House for the day that it was presented before Clinton in the Oval Office.

B.M.S. What was Clinton’s reaction?

D.G. The fact of the matter is that we presented data, and people did not want to hear it. It was however indisputable.

THE FLAWED APPROACH OF DIPLOMACY

B.M.S. When one is attempting to advance peace or any diplomatic endeavor, one strips away ones hopes and needs, and bases their advances upon empirical facts. How could this intelligence information be perceived as an obstruction to peace?

D.G. The entire Western alliance placed political capital in the

Oslo process. You must remember that after Israel suffered from four brutal suicide bombings in Feb/March 1996 that led to 90 Israeli civilians to be killed, most of the top leaders of Europe joined the US President in a summit meeting in Sharm el Shiekh where they all held hands with Arafat, the Saudi foreign minister, and Peres who was the serving PM at the time in a joint demonstration for the Oslo peace process. There are precedents for this type of activity. When Western democracies get behind a certain treaty or agreement that proves to be an act of folly, or has been massively violated by the other side, the Western governments ironically don’t want to admit those violations. Winston Churchill told the story of PM Stanley Baldwin who at one time commented that if his government would admit the German violations of the Versailles treaty after WWI, then Baldwin’s government would not be re-elected in the British Parliament. That phenomenon not to admit failed diplomatic initiatives is a problem that did not only exist after WWI, but has lived on in the 1990s when the Oslo process did not work out.

B.M.S. Diplomats that claim to be rational and ‘realists’ are often irrational and unrealistic. While ‘The Fight for Jerusalem’ synthesizes all the historical, cultural realities together, the realists of the Clinton administration divorced these components from their diplomatic initiatives. On the contrary these components were termed as ‘narratives’ and in disregarding them, they held at Camp David rational brainstorming sessions between the parties. A favorite term of realists is to find an opening of a ‘window of opportunity’ which is identified by pure opportunistic rationalism without any consideration of historic or cultural trends.

D.G. You need to see what is on the other side of the window. You could jump out of the window and land in a garbage dump.

B.M.S. Many people consider that it is the US that pressures Israel to make territorial concessions, however Ehud Barak

Bush had told Sharansky when he visited the White House that, " Sharon had brought me the plans for 'Disengagement,' and quite frankly I don't understand it."

instigated that high-risk summit at Camp David, and Sharon

initiated the policy of 'Disengagement' from Gaza. I heard from sources within the US administration that Bush had told Sharansky when he visited the White House that, "Sharon had brought me the plans for 'Disengagement,' and quite frankly I don't understand it." This had occurred after the Bush administration formally notified Sharon's representatives that Clinton's approach to resolving the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians was history.

D.G. I was the representative.

B.M.S. Why does Israel do this? It goes against its national security interests.

D.G. Israel is in a situation that is full of contradictions. It sits in territories that are vital strategic buffers for defending Israel from either multi-divisional armies in the East, or al-Qaeda terrorism that may emanate from Iraq. Yet those territories are populated by a substantial Palestinian population, and therefore Israelis often feel that they have to make a choice between its defensible borders, and a country which they might lose the democratic majority. Because Israel faces these tough alternatives, its policies may at times be erratic as they at times prefer one or the other. In 'The Fight for Jerusalem', I demonstrate that it has been a consistent position of the Israeli leadership in the past that Israel is willing to compromise to pull out of those areas that are heavily populated by Palestinians while obtaining those strategic zones in the West Bank which would have provided it with defensible borders. The same is true of Jerusalem. Israel is willing to recognize the religious autonomy of the three great faiths, and in fact allows the Jordanian ministry of Religious Endowments to administrate the two Muslim shrines in the Temple Mount, while Israel retains national sovereignty over the area. There is a way of squaring the circle, and undertaking Palestinian initiatives which address the concerns of Palestinian Arabs without Israel agreeing to a complete collapse of its national security doctrine. That is following the Rabin legacy which I outline in, 'The Fight for Jerusalem', that Israel retains the Jordan Valley in the wider sense of the term, and other strategic areas of the West Bank adjacent to Israel's vital areas, and of course keep Jerusalem united under the sovereignty of the state of Israel. If Israel sticks to as its foreign policy doctrine, it can address both its needs for its security, preserve its national heritage, and deal with demographic issues created by the Palestinian population in the West Bank. I want to stress that the Rabin legacy was stated by Rabin in the Knesset in 1995 one month before he was assassinated, so it is not some outdated speech that I selectively picked out.

B.M.S. Whereas its conventional wisdom that Islamic proslitization has traditionally been a precursor for global Jihad, what is startling in 'The Fight for Jerusalem' is that

militant Islam has reversed the equation and therefore the sequence of Jihadism. You further mention that al-Qaeda had in the 1990s a clear order of priorities which was first, to remove Westerners, especially the U.S. from Saudi Arabia, then to free Iraq from UN sanctions. Only finally was it to focus

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upon Jerusalem, which al-Qaeda generally listed as only a tertiary priority. Now Jerusalem is a springboard for global Jihad, rather than being the culminating point in it. Individuals such as former Secretary of State Madeline Albright, and former chief counter-terrorism adviser on the U.S. National Security Council, Richard Clarke did not comprehend the paradigm shift that Islamism had undergone, and thought that peace resolutions could change the Middle-East, and the Muslim perceptions towards the U.S. What we see now is that conquering Jerusalem is the initial battle before directing its attentions against the West.

D.G. European Chancelleries as well as top officials in the U.S. Department of State hoped that the unilateral pull-out from Gaza would lead to a more stable situation and help undermine the Jihadi cause. Similarly today it is a common belief among foreign policy elites that were Israel to agree to the Clinton parameters to re-divide Jerusalem, that this would provide a tremendous weapon in the hands of the West against al-Qaeda and its supporters. 'The Fight for Jerusalem' demonstrates that the exact opposite is true. Before undertaking research for 'The Fight for Jerusalem', I had no idea that Jerusalem figured so prominently in Islamic apocalyptic thought. My Arabic team found incredible references to the idea that the assault on Jerusalem is a first stage of a renewed Jihadi effort against the rest of the world. This appears in the literature of Hezbollah on the Shiite side, and it also appears in much of the Sunni apocalyptic literature as well.

For example, there is a core military unit for the 'end of days,' known as al-Ta'ifa al-Mansura (The Victorious Community), where by Sheikh Yusuf Qaradhawi, the leading spiritual authority for the Muslim Brotherhood around the world, referred to this in one of his Al-Jazeera appearances in 2002. This apocalyptic unit which is meant to figure prominently in

the war against the Antichrist, known in Arabic as the 'Dajjal', is not to be formed in the distant future—let's say 1000 years

Sheikh Qaradhawi's Saudi-based charity, "the Union of the Good," had been funneling hundreds of thousands of dollars to Hamas in Jerusalem in order to give the organization a foothold on the very sensitive Temple Mount.

from now. Qaradhawi states that the "Victorious Community" is already in place in Jerusalem ready for immediate combat. He even says that Hamas is part of this force. This is not obscure theology. The Israeli Security Agency disclosed on July 2, 2007, that Sheikh Qaradhawi's Saudi-based charity, "the Union of the Good," had been funneling hundreds of thousands of dollars to Hamas in Jerusalem in order to give the organization a foothold on the very sensitive Temple Mount. Stories about apocalyptic clashes with the Antichrist on Jerusalem's Temple Mount have seized the imagination of a groups of ardent believers in the Arab world who have consumed popular newsstand books in Cairo and Amman that have become runaway bestsellers (the US and British embassies probably know little about these trends). While Jerusalem has not been a high priority for the architects of global Jihadism like Abdullah Azzam, Bin-Laden's mentor, or Ayman al-Zawahiri, his deputy, were the West to present Jerusalem on a silver platter to the Hamas regime, there is good reason to believe that such a move could very well ignite these growing sentiments and thus boomerang against Western security interests. For one thing such a diplomatic initiative they would confirm for many the veracity of this kind of narrative and hence lead to a much more empowered radical Islamic movement around the world.

B.M.S. The failure of Western diplomacy exists not merely at

a bi-national level, but also at a multi-lateral level. This reinvigorates global Islamism. Jeanne Kirkpatrick was one of the first to comment upon how the make up of the UN lead to deadlock between permanent Security Council members. This had the effect of perpetuating conflicts. In your previous book, "Towers of Babbble" you go further and describe how this type of deadlock within the UN can actually generate conflict. An recent example is the UN doing nothing at Hezbollah's repeated violations of Security Council Resolution 1701 that put an end to last summer's 34-day war between Israel and Hezbollah. This resolution authorized UN peacekeepers to extend their authority through southern Lebanon and to disarm Hezbollah. Hezbollah still is firing missiles at Israel and there is a continuous weapon flow to Hezbollah in southern Lebanon from Syria and Iran.

D.G. A more glaring case can be provided on how the UN Security Council can exacerbate conflict. Ahmadinajed repeatedly exhorts for Israel to be wiped off the map, or states something to the effect that the countdown to the destruction to the state of Israel has begun. Yet the UN Charter has made it absolutely clear that member states can not threaten the use of force against one another, and therefore whether one is a superpower or critic of Israel, the very fabric of the UN Charter has been threatened by the statements of the Iranian President. One would anticipate that the UN Security Council would adopt a resolution condemning these Iranian threats, but it is extremely difficult to draft an agreed text that all members of the UN Security Council could sign on to. This reinforces the Iranian perception that they can threaten member states with impunity.

B.M.S. How credible is the UN Charter as the Soviet Union was included at the UN's inception despite being Communist and lacking human rights. Is it not inevitable that non-democratic states will threaten democratic states, as democracies do not go to war with one another? Thus the UN Charter itself is not tenable.

D.G. The UN Charter in my eyes is a very good document and if it were lived up to, we would have a much more peaceful world. The problem is that the structure of the UN leads to

The structure of the UN leads to the situation whereby the Charter is violated by the UN itself.

the situation whereby the Charter is violated by the UN itself, and unless that is corrected it is going to be very hard to see how you can use the UN as an effective force for peace and security. What makes the situation all the more serious however is if you subscribe to the view that the authorization of the use of force requires a UN Security Council Resolution. Yet the UN Security Council is repeatedly deadlocked from acting even in circumstances of genocide such as Darfur Sudan due to the different interests of the permanent five members. Thus you would be condemning the international community to be in a state of inertia while genocide is taking place. This is why Clinton acted in contravention of the UN Security Council by intervening militarily in Kosovo while ethnic cleansing was taking place there. The only way to create a stable international order in the future is if the states that threaten aggression against their neighbours are stopped. That was the vision of President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill when they conceived of the UN during the dark days of WWII.

ISLAMISM'S ABUSE OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

B.M.S. One of the leading Islamists that lack religious tolerance mentioned in 'The Fight for Jerusalem' is Shaikh Yusuf al-Qaradhawi who refers to the "victory of Islam," including its impending conquest of Europe. He further relates prophecies that both Istanbul and Rome will be conquered. Yet this character had sat next to Ken Livingstone who had invited him in 2004 to city hall in London. On a separate occasion in a debate with Daniel Pipes in London, Livingstone referred to Qaradhawi as a Muslim leader that it is important to maintain dialogue with him as he is, "The way forward". Clearly the evidence militates against that approach. His religious commentaries are extremely troubling. He was ultimately supportive of the destruction of the Buddhist statues that were 2000 years old in the Bamiyan valleys in Afghanistan by the Taliban. This is an indicator for his lack of religious tolerance for any pre-Islamic institutions or faiths. He has also commented concerning Egypt's pre-legacy. Qaradhawi has more disturbingly supported attacks against coalition forces in Iraq and against Israeli civilians.

D.G. Sheikh Qaradhawi lives in Qatar and is regarded as the spiritual head of the Muslim Brotherhood. He has a weekly popular television show on Al Jazeera. Qaradhawi has more disturbingly supported attacks against coalition forces in Iraq and against Israeli civilians.

B.M.S. Has the treatment accorded to Christianity and its holy sites by apocalyptic Islamic doctrines in Gaza and the West Bank been a reflected of broader religious intolerance by Islamists around the globe? About 2,000 Christians live in the Gaza Strip, which has a population of over one million. Recently Sheikh Abu Sager, leader of Jihadia Salafiya stated that Christians can only continue living safely in the Gaza Strip under Hamas rule if they accept Islamic law, including a ban on alcohol and on women walking in the street without head coverings. He further stated that there was "no need" for thousands of Christians in Gaza to maintain a large number of institutions in the territory. This comment was in the context of gunmen recently attacking Gaza's Latin Church and adjacent Rosary Sisters school, destroying crosses, bibles, and pictures of Jesus. Interestingly while it appeared to be conducted by Hamas' al-Qassam Brigades, Hamas directed the blame at Fatah. Samir Qumsiyeh, a Bethlehem Christian

When the West Bank was under Israeli administration, the Christian population of Bethlehem was over 60%. Today the Christians make up less than 15% of the population

leader and owner of the the Beit Sahour-based private Al-Mahd (Nativity) TV station stated, I believe that 15 years from now there will be no Christians left in Bethlehem." When the West Bank was under Israeli administration, the Christian population of Bethlehem was over 60%. Today the Christians make up less than 15% of the population. This quest for Islamist primacy is connected not only with denying Christians of their religious freedoms, but also with the, Islamists including the Palestinian Authority having engaged in a type of revisionism of destroying archaeological evidence on the Temple Mount of remnants of Solomon's temple. This ironically has occurred while Jerusalem is never once mentioned in the Koran

D.G. In 'The Fight for Jerusalem,' I had detected what I termed an, "evil wind" blowing across South Asia and the Middle East which the immunity enjoyed by holy sites for large periods of Middle-Eastern history has been completely compromised. As I point out in the course of several chapters, right after the early Islamic conquests, there was a surprising degree of inter-religious tolerance in Jerusalem, that today's radical Muslims have completely forgotten with their mounting attacks on places of worship in recent years. Of course, not everything in the past was ideal under subsequent Middle Eastern regimes.

For example, Israel experienced similar acts of destructions of its sites by the Arab Legion in 1948 in the Jewish Quarter in Jerusalem and received no immunity for Jewish religious sites. Yet in the last decade, there has been a sharp escalation in the attacks on religious sites across the entire region. In 1998 when the Taliban regime first assaulted the 2000 year old Buddhist statues in the Bamiyan valley in Afghanistan, they set off a dangerous precedent, soon to be copied by others. The statues were finally destroyed in 2001, but as the war in Iraq heated up you saw Shiite Mosques being repeatedly bombed by al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia. There were attacks in 2000 against religious sites in the West Bank such as Joseph's Tomb. The Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem in 2002 was invaded by a joint Fatah-Hamas force where 200 clergy were kept as hostages for over a month. Israel was reluctant to storm the site with troops because of its religious sensitivity as here was the birthplace of Jesus according to Christian tradition.

Just prior to Hamas' electoral victory, a Hamas member of the Bethlehem city council suggested that the traditional Islamic

Finally the Temple Mount area which had been managed by the Jordanian Ministry of Religious Endowments had ultimately been taken over by Islamic radicals, many of which were associated with the Palestinian Authority. They went into the Temple Mount, pulled out tons of unsifted archaeological rubble and tried to destroy anything that reminded the world of the religious heritage of either Judaism or Christianity. And finally during the Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip, in June 2007, yet again a Latin Church and convent were attacked by militant Islamic forces. All this raises the fundamental question of if Israel were to turn over most of the Old City of Jerusalem to a Hamas regime, what would happen to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, the Temple Mount, and the ancient Synagogues that were built in the Middle Ages? Many of them would be compromised. Therefore I reach the conclusion in 'The Fight for Jerusalem' that only a free and democratic Israel would protect the great holy sites for all three faiths, and for all mankind. It is unrealistic to expect that an international regime under the auspices of the U.N. will show any more responsibility for Jerusalem than the UN showed Rwanda, Bosnia and other disaster areas in the 1990s.

Ambassador Dore Gold was the eleventh Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations (1997-1999). Previously he served as Foreign Policy Advisor to the former Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu. Ambassador Gold's new book, entitled 'The Fight for Jerusalem: Radical Islam, the West and the Future of the Holy City' is available on Amazon (see page 13).

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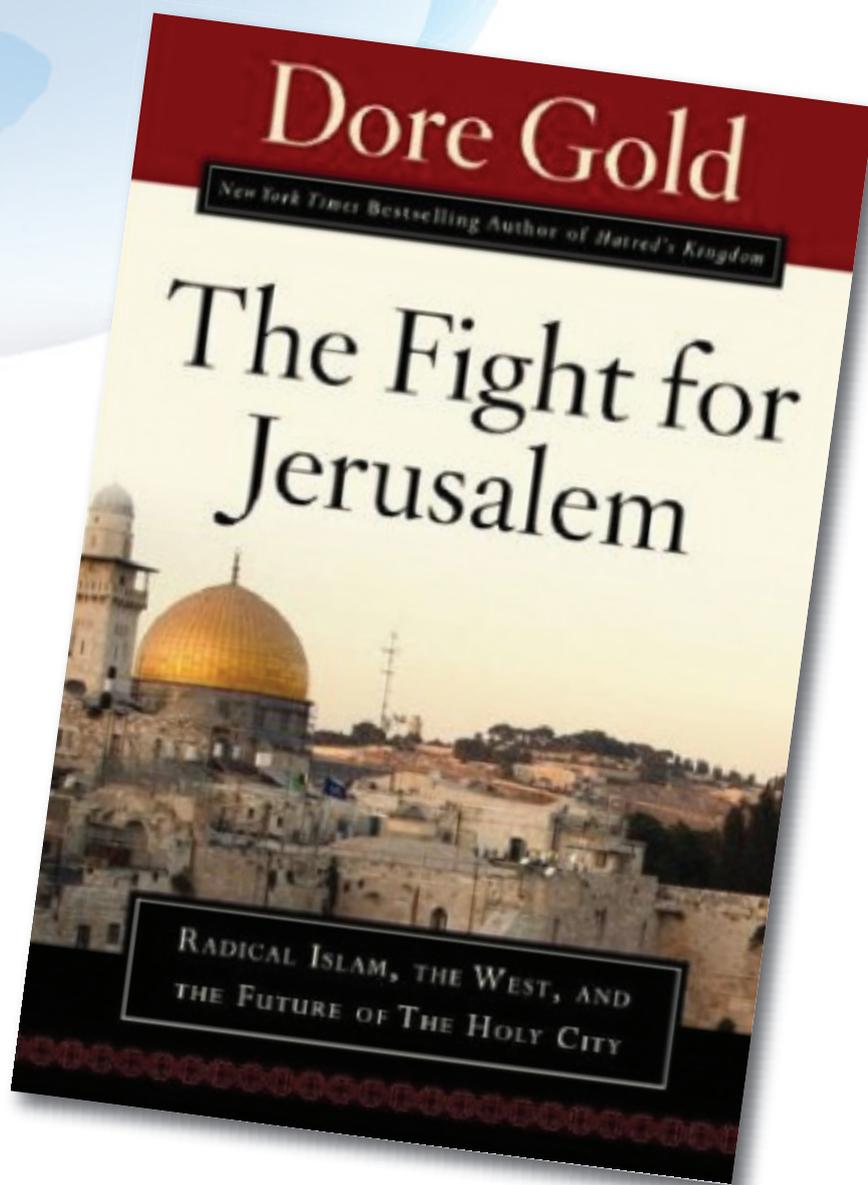
Only a free and democratic Israel would protect the great holy sites for all three faiths, and for all mankind

tax on non-Muslims, the Jizya or poll tax, be reinstated for Palestinian Christians as part of the imposition of Islamic law.



Pictured from left to right: Ambassador Dore Gold, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, President Clinton and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright at the Oval Office in the White House.

After the Johnston Affair: Re-evaluating the Links
Between the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and the
Threat of Global Jihadism.



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