

"Peace Process" is a "War Process"

By Daniel Pipes

My Testimony before the House Subcommittee on Israeli-Palestinian Negotiations

The Subcommittee on Middle East and South Asia of the U.S. House Committee on Foreign Affairs held a hearing on February 14, 2007, titled "Next Steps in Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process." Three witnesses appeared before the subcommittee: Martin Indyk of the Brookings Institution, David Makovsky of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, and myself. (A complete video of the hearing, nearly three hours long, can be seen on the committee website; the transcript <http://www.danielpipes.org/article/4322> is available on my website.) The Democrats chose Makovsky and Indyk, the Republicans chose me. Gary Ackerman is the chairman of the committee and Mike Pence the ranking minority member.

We three witnesses differ deeply in outlook on the topic of Palestinian-Israeli negotiations and our testimonies made those clear. Makovsky and Indyk endorsed the "peace process" while I likened it more to a "war process." Makovsky and Indyk differed less widely among themselves but their differences were still clear, with Makovsky seeing the impact of the Mecca Accord in a distinctly more negative way than did Indyk.

But the three of us, I believe, share a concern for the security and welfare of Israel, that it remain a Jewish state. In brief, we are Zionists. Our disagreements concern tactics to achieve this goal. Given that every poll over decades shows that an overwhelming majority of Americans agree with us, this would seem to be a banal position. But no longer. As a symptom, note the many vociferous attacks on the three of us being invited as witnesses, implying that there was something very amiss in not having anyone represent the eliminate-Israel position.

Daniel Pipes remarks: What I'd like to do is complement it by looking at what one might call the big picture. You asked in the title of this hearing, "Next Steps in the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process." I shall argue three points: First, the peace negotiations have so far been so counterproductive, they could better be called a war process; that their failure results from an Israeli conceptual error 15 years ago about the nature of warfare; and third, that the U.S. government should urge Jerusalem to forgo negotiations and instead return to its earlier policy of deterrence.

So first, Mr. Chairman, to review the peace process. It is embarrassing to

recall today the elation and expectations that accompanied the signing of the Oslo Accords in September 1993 when Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin shook hands with Yasser Arafat. For some time after this, "The Handshake," as it was known, served as a symbol of brilliant diplomacy, whereby each side achieved what it most wanted - - dignity and autonomy for the Palestinians; recognition and security for the Israelis.

President Clinton lauded that deal as, quote, "a great occasion of history," unquote. Yasser Arafat called it, quote, "An historic event, inaugurating a new epoch," unquote. Shimon Peres, the prime minister of Israel, discerned in it, quote, "the outline of peace in the Middle East," unquote.

These heady expectations were then grievously disappointed. Before Oslo, when Palestinians still lived under Israeli control, they benefited from the rule of law and a growing economy independent of international welfare. They enjoyed functioning schools and hospitals; they traveled without checkpoints and had free access to Israeli territory. They even founded universities. Terrorism was declining as acceptance of Israel increased. However, then came Oslo, which brought Palestinians not peace but tyranny, failed institutions, poverty, corruption, a death cult, suicide factories, and Islamist radicalization.

Yasser Arafat early on promised that the West Bank and Gaza would evolve into what he called, quote, "the Singapore of the Middle East," unquote, but the reality that he shaped became a nightmare of dependence, inhumanity and loathing. As for the Israelis, for them Oslo brought unprecedented terrorism. If the two hands in the Rabin-Arafat handshake symbolize Oslo's early hopes, it is the two bloody hands of a young Palestinian male who had just lynched Israeli reservists in Ramallah in October 2000 that represented its dismal end.

Oslo provoked deep internal rifts and harmed Israel's standing internationally. Israelis watched helplessly as Palestinian rage spiraled upwards, spawning such moral perversions as the United Nations World Conference against Racism in Durban in 2001. That rage also re-opened among Westerners the issue of Israel's continued existence, especially on the hard left. From Israel's perspective, seven years of Oslo diplomacy undid 45 years' success in warfare.

Palestinians and Israelis agree on little, but they concur that Oslo was a disaster. Now, why was it a disaster? Where did things go so badly wrong? Why did the war-the peace process turn into a war process? Where lay the flaws in promising-in so promising an agreement? Of its many errors-and I think all analysts will agree there are many-the ultimate mistake lay in Yitzhak Rabin's misunderstanding of how a war ends. And it's revealed in his catchphrase; what he said repeatedly: "One does not make war with one's friends. One makes"-I'm sorry; do that again. "One does not make peace

with one's friends. One makes peace with one's enemy."

The Israeli prime minister implied by this that wars concluded through a mix of goodwill, conciliation, concessions, mediation, flexibility, restraint, generosity and compromise, all topped off with signatures on official documents. In this spirit, his government initiated an array of concessions, hoping that the Palestinians would reciprocate, but they did not. Those concessions, in fact, made matters worse. Still in a war mode, Palestinians understood the Israeli efforts to "make peace" as signals, instead, of demoralization and of weakness. The concessions reduced Palestinian awe of Israel, made it appear vulnerable, and incited irredentist dreams of its annihilation. Each Oslo-negotiated gesture by Israel further exhilarated, radicalized, and mobilized the Palestinian body politic. The quiet hope of 1993 to eliminate Israel gained traction, becoming a deafening demand by the year 2000.

Rabin ensured-made a shattering mistake, which his successors then repeated. One does not in fact make peace with one's enemy; one makes peace with one's former enemy-former enemy. Peace nearly always requires one side in a conflict to give up its goals by being defeated. Rather than vainly trying to close down a war through goodwill, the way to end a war, Mr. Chairman, is by winning it.

"War is an act of violence to compel the enemy to fulfill our will." That's what the Prussian strategist Carl von Clausewitz wrote in 1832. War is an act of violence to compel the enemy to fulfill our will. And however much technological advancement there's been in the nearly two centuries since he wrote that, the basic insight remains valid. Victory consists of imposing one's will on the enemy by compelling him to give up his war goals. Wars usually end when one side gives up its hope of winning; when its will to fight has been crushed.

Arabs and Israelis since 1948 have pursued static and binary goals. Arabs have fought to eliminate Israel; Israelis have fought to win their neighbors' acceptance. The details have varied over the decades, with multiple ideologies, strategies, leading actors and so forth, but the goals have barely changed. The Arabs have pursued their war aims with patience, determination and purpose. In response, Israelis sustained a formidable record of strategic vision and tactical brilliance in the period 1948 to 1993.

Over time, however, as Israel developed into a vibrant, modern, democratic country, its populace grew impatient with the humiliating, slow, tedious task of convincing Arabs to accept their political existence. By now, almost no one in Israel sees victory as the goal; no major political figure on the scene today calls for victory in war. Since 1993, in brief, Mr. Chairman, the Arabs have sought victory while Israelis have sought compromise.

It is my view that he who does not win loses. To survive, Israelis must eventually return to the 1990 - pre-1993 - policy of establishing that Israel is strong, tough and permanent, the policy of deterrence. The long, boring, difficult, bitter and expensive task of convincing Palestinians and others that the Jewish state is permanent and that dreams of eliminating it are doomed.

This will not be quick or easy. Perceptions of Israel's weakness due to terrible missteps during the Oslo years and even after, such as the Gaza withdrawal of 2005, have sunk into Palestinian consciousness and will presumably require decades of effort to reverse. Nor will it be pretty. Defeat in war typically entails experiencing the bitter crucible of deprivation, failure and despair.

I look at this process, Mr. Chairman, through a simple prism. Any development that encourages Palestinians to think they can eliminate Israel is negative; any development that encourages them to give up that goal is positive. The Palestinians' defeat will be recognizable when, over a protracted period and with complete consistency, they prove that they have accepted Israel.

My third and final point: American policy. Like all outsiders to the conflict, Americans face a stark choice. Do we endorse the Palestinian goal of eliminating Israel, or do we endorse the Israeli goal of winning its neighbors' acceptance? To state this choice is to make clear that there is no choice-the first is offensive in intent; the second defensive. No decent person can endorse the Palestinians' goal of eliminating their neighbor, and along with every president since Harry S Truman and every congressional resolution and vote since then, the 110th Congress must continue to stand with Israel in its drive to win its acceptance.

Not only is this an obvious moral choice, but I think it's important to add that a Palestinian defeat at Israel's hands is actually the best thing that had ever happened to them. Compelling Palestinians finally to give up on their foul, irredentist dream would liberate them to focus on their own polity, economy, society and culture.

Palestinians need to experience the certitude of defeat to become a normal people-one where parents stop celebrating their children becoming suicide terrorists; where something matters beyond the evil obsession of anti-Zionist rejectionism. Americans especially need to understand Israel's predicament and help it win its war, for the U.S. government has, obviously, a vital role in this theater.

My analysis implies a radically different approach for the Bush administration, and for this Congress. On the negative side, it implies that Palestinians must be led to understand that benefits will flow only after they prove their acceptance of Israel. Until then, no diplomacy, no discussion of

final status, no recognition as a state and certainly no financial aid or weapons. On the positive side, the administration and Congress should work with Israel, the Arab states and others to induce the Palestinians to accept Israel's existence by convincing them the gig is up-the gig is up-that they have lost.

Diplomacy aiming to shut down the Arab-Israeli conflict is premature until Palestinians give up their hideous anti-Zionist obsession. When that moment arrives, negotiations can re-open with the issues of the 1990s-borders, resources, armaments, sanctities, residential rights-taken up anew. But that moment is years or decades away. In the meantime, a war needs to be won.