

ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

– Some Points to Consider

Stephen L. Bakke – June 1, 2011

Israel has no better friend than America, and America has no better friend than Israel.

– Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

P-BOB Bumped Into the Prime Minister

Before I go any further discussing the Netanyahu/Obama “tete-a-tete,” I will discuss my understanding of some of the history surrounding the dispute. I will not attempt to untangle the many military attacks and counter-attacks – nor the rhetorical charges and counter-charges – you go ahead and tackle those tasks. My intention is for this report to provide information for use in learning about and evaluating the current status of the conflict, and the recent involvement by the U.S. in the process. This will not answer all the questions nor solve the problem.

I am suspicious that P-BOB and his staff either failed to gather, chose to disregard, or evaluated as no longer relevant, much of this historical information – which would show extreme naiveté. I choose to believe they considered it irrelevant in light of the “messiah’s” plan to transform U.S. policies regarding treatment of friends and enemies. That was possibly P-BOB’s intention until he coaxed an tutorial out of a reluctant but qualified instructor – Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (whose “sometimes” nickname shall now be **PriM-Net**”).



According to news reports, PriM-Net had recently addressed the Israeli Knesset in a manner that was uncharacteristically “dovish.” He apparently spoke of, or insinuated, several concessions he would be willing to support in order to end the conflict, and which he would be discussing during his upcoming visit to the U.S. to meet with Jewish/American groups and P-BOB. According to Caroline Glick, a writer for the Jerusalem Post, PriM-Net’s surprising tone “betrayed” a desire to set the stage for a meeting with P-BOB which would be devoid of conflict. She also stated:

Both strategically and ideologically, Netanyahu's speech [to the Israeli Knesset] constituted a massive concession to Obama. The premier had good reason to believe that his speech would preempt any US demand for further Israeli concessions during his visit to Washington. Alas, it was not to be. Instead of welcoming Netanyahu's unprecedented concessions, Obama dismissed them as insufficient as he blindsided Netanyahu on Thursday with his speech at the State Department So, just as he

was about to board his plane, Netanyahu realized that his mission in the US capital had changed. His job wasn't to go along to get along. His job was to stop Obama from driving Israel's relations with the U.S. off a cliff. Netanyahu was no longer going to Washington to explain where Israel will stand aside. He was going to Washington to explain what Israel stands for. Obama threw down the gauntlet. Netanyahu needed to pick it up by rallying both the Israeli people to his side and rallying the American people to Israel's side. Both goals, he realized could only be accomplished by presenting his vision of what Israel is and what it stands for. And Netanyahu did his job. He did his job brilliantly.

P-BOB is taking for granted the close relationship with our **only true friend and ally in the mid-east**. If his “blind-side” comments about Mideast negotiations were intended to somehow impress Israel’s Arab neighbors, then his motivations are incomprehensible and unforgivable! I believe he did it because he felt he could get away with it. With that attitude, and if his statements were intended to quench his thirst for “appeasement” – then he needs to “get a clue”!

Through the Years

The details in this section were gleaned from several internet sources and also include information selected from recent analyses/summaries prepared by analysts and writers Jack Kelly and Michael Brown. I have tried to integrate information from several sources and put these few points in a logical, understandable sequence. I learned a great deal in the process of researching this, and I hope you do as well! Here are some things I think you should keep in mind while analyzing and making judgments about the Israeli/Palestinian Conflict:

- There has been a Jewish state for more than 1,000 years in "Jewish Palestine," but there was never a sovereign Arab state in the region, which was known as "Judea" until the Romans changed the name to “Palestine” in the year 135 after crushing a Jewish revolt.
- I believe the relevant legal history of Israel's borders — **and those of Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Jordan** — go back to the end of World War I. For 500 years before then, all these lands had been provinces of the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire.
- The League of Nations, predecessor of the United Nations, carved out of the corpse of the Ottoman Empire four "Mandates" — for Syria, Lebanon, Mesopotamia (Iraq) and Palestine, which was later subdivided between what was intended to be the "Jewish National Home" and Transjordan (now Jordan).
- All 51 nations in the League of Nations signed the following declaration dated July 24, 1922: "Recognition has been given to the historic connection of the Jewish people with Palestine and to the grounds for reconstituting their national home in that country."
- The "Mandate for Palestine" gave Jews the legal right to settle anywhere in western Palestine, an area of 10,000 square miles stretching from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. The area set aside for "Jewish Palestine" **included the Golan Heights, all of the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip**.
- The League guaranteed the right of self government for Jews in the Mandate for Palestine, and for Arabs in the other three. The League gave responsibility for administering the mandates in Lebanon and Syria to the French; in Palestine and Iraq to the British.

- Logic leads me to conclude that, **according to the borders established by the League of Nations' Mandates**, Israeli settlers in the West Bank aren't squatting on Arab land. Rather, a much better case can be made that Arabs in the West Bank and Gaza are squatting on Jewish land.
- In 1947, the UN partitioned the land into Arab and Jewish states. I believe it's fair to say that no one was totally pleased with the partition. The Arab countries thought they should have been given more and the new nation of Israel had, if I understand this correctly, lost some of their territory from the 1922 Mandate.
- Israel declared its independence on May 15, 1948. The next day five Arab armies invaded to try to destroy the infant nation. They failed – but not entirely. Egypt seized the Gaza Strip and Jordan seized the West Bank during this war. Israel's borders from 1949 to 1967 were the UN-brokered armistice lines from the 1948 war.
- Arabs say Israel's present borders are illegitimate because they are the product of conquest. Israel took the Golan Heights from Syria, the West Bank from Jordan, and the Gaza Strip from Egypt in the Six Day War (June 5-10, 1967). Those borders too were a product of conquest — Arab conquest – during the war for independence in 1948. And if Israel's borders are illegitimate, so, too, are the borders of Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Jordan. But, to me it seems that the results of the 1967 war were to move, only partially, in the direction of reestablishing the borders which prevailed from 1922 through 1948.
- International law expert Eugene Rostow wrote this in 1993: "The mandate (for Palestine) implicitly denies Arab claims to national political rights in the area in favor of the Jews. The mandated territory was in effect reserved to the Jewish people for their self determination and political development, in acknowledgement of the historic connection of the Jewish people to the land."
- The Jews in "Jewish Palestine" started calling themselves "Israelis" after independence in 1948. Before then, it was they who customarily were referred to as "Palestinians."
- At no time before 1967 did these Arabs identify themselves as "Palestinians," nor did they seek to achieve any kind of statehood there. As expressed by former terrorist Walid Shoebat, "Why is it that on June 4th 1967 I was a Jordanian and overnight I became a Palestinian?"
- Indeed, there have been Arabs living in Palestine for centuries. And it is true that some of these families lived in Palestine without interruption for many generations. But before 1967, there was no such thing as Arab/Palestinian nationalism and apparently no attempt to develop the territory as a homeland for the Arabs who lived there.

- It seems to me that the concept of a Palestinian people is a modern invention, and it is part of the anti-Israel propaganda machine without any basis in fact.
- We are often told that Jews and Arabs coexisted peacefully in Palestine prior to the formation of the Jewish state in 1948, or at least, prior to the rise of strong Jewish nationalism. In reality, as Jews began to return to their one and only ancestral homeland in the late 19th century, hostilities began to rise among their Arab neighbors, despite the fact that there was more than enough room for both.
- By the 1920's, radical Muslim leaders were organizing intifadas against the Jewish population, with many Jewish lives lost. And what helped fuel Jew-hatred was the anti-Jewish sentiment found in the Koran and early Muslim traditions. Post-1948 Jew-hatred simply built on centuries of Islamic anti-Semitism.
- 800,000 Jewish refugees fleeing from Muslim and Arab countries were absorbed by Israel after 1948, whereas Arab refugees fleeing from Israel after 1948 were **not** absorbed by Muslim and Arab countries. Despite the fact that the Muslim nations surrounding Israel are 650 times the size of this tiny state, they seem to have made no effort to absorb approximately 600,000 Arab refugees who fled Israel in 1948 when war was declared on Israel by five neighboring Arab nations. **To this day, these refugees are not welcomed by other Arab states.**
- More than 20 years ago Ralph Galloway, former head of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees, stated the following: "They [the Arab states] want to keep it [the refugee issue] as an open sore, as an affront to the United Nations and as a weapon against Israel."
- The "right of return" for Arab/Palestinian refugees is one point of serious contention in the conflict. The machinations of this issue are not taken up here.
- The U.S. officially recognized the state of Israel after its formation. Remember the timing. In 1947, the U.N. was recognizing the survivors of the German Holocaust by essentially supporting the League of Nations' grant of this homeland to the Jews.
- In 1993 the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) actually signed the Oslo Declaration of Principles which, among other things, stipulated Israel's right to exist. Israel made major territorial control concessions but extremist Palestinian groups objected with violence and ultimately this agreement was never in effect.

Here is a map showing various things including the 1922 League of Nations Palestine Mandate:



*If the Arabs put down their weapons today, there would be no more violence.
 If the Jews put down their weapons today, there would be no more Israel*
 – Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

That is not to say that all Palestinians are warmongers and all Israelis are doves. But, as Michael Brown accurately (I believe) points out, the vast majority of Israelis are not driven by a radical ideology that calls for the extermination of their Arab neighbors, nor are they teaching their children songs about the virtues of religious martyrdom.

P-BOB's understanding of Middle Eastern history seems to go back no further than 1967.



Apparently P-BOB thinks Israel's borders should revert to essentially what they were before the 1967 Six Day War. That opinion is dangerously close to the Arab negotiating position, except that the Arabs contend that Israel has no right to exist as an independent country – in any form.