



Jerusalem 4:07 Toronto 4:46

ISRAEL NEWS
A collection of the week's news from Israel
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Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation

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The governments of Turkey, Russia, and China, among others, expressly condemned the statement. Maryam Rajavi of the National Council of Resistance of Iran, a leading opposition group, demanded that the European Union rid the region of the "hydra of terrorism and fundamentalism" in Tehran. Even the Palestinian Authority's Saeb Erekat spoke against Mr. Ahmadinejad:

"Palestinians recognize the right of the state of Israel to exist, and I reject his comments." The Cairene daily Al-Ahram dismissed his statement as "fanatical" and spelling disaster for Arabs.

Iranians were surprised and suspicious. Why, some asked, did the mere reiteration of long-standing policy prompt an avalanche of outraged foreign reactions?

In a constructive spirit, I offer them four reasons. First, Mr. Ahmadinejad's virulent character gives the threats against Israel added credibility. Second, he in subsequent days defiantly repeated and elaborated on his threats. Third, he added an aggressive coda to the usual formulation, warning Muslims who recognize Israel that they "will burn in the fire of the Islamic umma [nation]."

This directly targets the Palestinians and several Arab states, but especially neighboring Pakistan. Just a month before Mr. Ahmadinejad spoke, the Pakistani president, Pervez Musharraf, stated that "Israel rightly desires security." He envisioned the opening of embassies in Israel by Muslim countries like Pakistan as a "signal for peace." Mr. Ahmadinejad perhaps indicated an intent to confront Pakistan over relations with Israel.

Finally, Israelis estimate that the Iranians could, within six months, have the means to build an atomic bomb. Mr. Ahmadinejad implicitly confirmed this rapid timetable when he warned that after just "a short period ... the

process of the elimination of the Zionist regime will be smooth and simple." The imminence of a nuclear-armed Iran transforms "Death to Israel!" from an empty slogan into the potential premise for a nuclear assault on the Jewish state, perhaps relying on Mr. Rafsanjani's genocidal thinking.

Ironically, Mr. Ahmadinejad's candor has had positive effects, reminding the world of his regime's unremitting bellicosity, its rank anti-Semitism, and its dangerous arsenal. As Tony Blair noted,

Mr. Ahmadinejad's threats raise the question, "When are you going to do something about this?" And Mr. Blair later warned Tehran with some menace against its becoming a "threat to our world security." His alarm needs to translate into action, and urgently so.

We are on notice. Will we act in time? (New York Sun Nov 1)

Events...

Motzei Shabbat, Nov. 5, 8:00pm

Rabbi Yehoshua Fass, Founder of *Nefesh B'Nefesh*, and **Rabbi Aharon Adler**, *Rosh Yeshiva*, *Yeshivat Ner Tamid*, *Chashmonaim*, will speak at BAYT.

December 4-13

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Commentary...

Iran's Final Solution Plan By Daniel Pipes

"Iran's stance has always been clear on this ugly phenomenon [i.e., Israel]. We have repeatedly said that this cancerous tumor of a state should be removed from the region."

No, those are not the words of Iran's president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, speaking last week. Rather, that was Ali Khamenei, the Islamic Republic of Iran's supreme leader, in December 2000.

In other words, Ahmadinejad's call for the destruction of Israel was nothing new but conforms to a well-established pattern of regime rhetoric and ambition. "Death to Israel!" has been a rallying cry for the past quarter-century. Mr. Ahmadinejad quoted Ayatollah Khomeini, its founder, in his call on October 26 for genocidal war against Jews: "The regime occupying Jerusalem must be eliminated from the pages of history," Khomeini said decades ago. Mr. Ahmadinejad lauded this hideous goal as "very wise."

In December 2001, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, a former Iranian president and still powerful political figure, laid the groundwork for an exchange of nuclear weapons with Israel: "If a day comes when the world of Islam is duly equipped with the arms Israel has in possession, the strategy of colonialism would face a stalemate because application of an atomic bomb would not leave anything in Israel but the same thing would just produce minor damages in the Muslim world."

In like spirit, a Shahab-3 ballistic missile (capable of reaching Israel) paraded in Tehran last month bore the slogan "Israel Should Be Wiped Off the Map."

The threats by Messrs. Khamenei and Rafsanjani prompted yawns but Mr. Ahmadinejad's statement roused an uproar.

The U.N. secretary-general, Kofi Annan, expressed "dismay," the U.N. Security Council unanimously condemned it, and the European Union condemned it "in the strongest terms." Prime Minister Martin of Canada deemed it "beyond the pale," Prime Minister Blair of Britain expressed "revulsion," and the French foreign minister, Philippe Douste-Blazy, announced that "for France, the right for Israel to exist should not be contested." *Le Monde* called the speech a "cause for serious alarm," *Die Welt* dubbed it "verbal terrorism," and a London Sun headline proclaimed Ahmadinejad the "most evil man in the world."

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The Good Terrorists By Caroline Glick

Wednesday was a difficult day. First, on Wednesday morning Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad called for Israel's annihilation. Then, a few hours later, a Palestinian terrorist blew up at a felafel stand in Hadera and murdered five Israelis.

Israel's responses to these events revealed as much about its strategic confusion as Ahmadinejad's speech and the bombing revealed about our enemies' strategic clarity.

In the case of Iran, Israel's response was well-conceived and executed. In calling for the annihilation of Israel - a UN member state - Iran stands in grave breach of the UN Charter, which stipulates that member states must foster peaceful relations with one another. And so, Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom ordered Israel's ambassador at the UN to demand Iran's expulsion from the world body. Israel's emissaries throughout the world rapidly pointed out the fact that with its nuclear weapons program, its ballistic missiles and its active support for global terrorism, Iran is not just Israel's problem. It

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constitutes a clear and present danger to global security.

In sharp contrast to Israel's clear, understandable and constructive response to the Iranian threat, the government's response to the bombing in Hadera was marked by confusion, defeatism and absurdity.

How is this the case? First it should be recalled that in the immediate wake of last week's terror attack at the Gush Etzion junction, the Aksa Martyr Brigades - the terror group belonging to PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah party - issued an announcement claiming responsibility. Oddly, in the hours that followed, IDF commanders and government ministers denied Fatah's claim and insisted that Hamas, not Fatah, had carried out the attack that murdered three.

Although no evidence was ever presented to back up this claim, let's assume that it is true. Still, the question arises: What does the fact that Fatah claimed responsibility tell us about Abbas's Fatah party, on which Israel and the US are currently pinning all their hopes for peace and security?

After Wednesday's bombing, the Iranian-sponsored Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility. As is their habit, the terrorists claimed that the massacre of Israeli civilians was their response to the IDF's killing of their terror commander Luai Sa'adi in Tulkarm earlier this week.

But then something interesting occurred.

In Gaza City, masked Fatah and Islamic Jihad terrorists held a joint press conference where they claimed joint responsibility for the bombing. A Fatah spokesman further announced that any attack against Islamic Jihad will be viewed as an attack against Fatah as well. Disturbingly, no Israeli newspaper other than The Jerusalem Post reported on the press conference.

And that isn't all. Like the government, the Israeli media also ignored the fact - reported again exclusively by the Post's Khaled Abu Toameh - that in the same IDF raid where Sa'adi was killed, Majed al-Ashkar, a senior Fatah terror commander, was also killed. The Israeli Hebrew-speaking public has not been informed that the two had spent the past several months establishing joint Fatah-Islamic Jihad cells throughout Judea and Samaria and Gaza.

FOR HIS part, Abbas, whom the Sharon-Peres government and the Bush administration uphold as Israel's partner in peace and the fight against terrorism, has been making some interesting moves. Abbas has told the Americans and the Israelis that he is working to end Fatah terrorism by integrating the Aksa Martyrs Brigades into the Palestinian security forces.

But on Wednesday night, Channel 2's reporter in Gaza interviewed three such "former" terrorists as they stood in position outside the ruins of the community of Neveh Dekalim. The flag flying from the top of their tent was that of the Aksa Martyr Brigades. One man was in uniform and the other two were wearing civilian clothes. All were brandishing the same AK-47 rifles they received as terrorists. All claimed that they are still part of the Aksa Brigades.

As one Palestinian source noted to the Post, the fact that Fatah and Islamic Jihad terrorists are now operating in the same cells raises the prospect that Islamic Jihad operatives will infiltrate the Palestinian security services by claiming to be Fatah terrorists. As members of the security forces, these murderers will receive training at the hands of Russian security personnel who are now operating in Gaza.

And that's another thing. According to recent press reports, as the multitudes of foreign terrorists entered Gaza after the IDF abandoned the Philadelphia Corridor linking Gaza to the Sinai last month, Russian security forces also quietly entered the area. Without any prior coordination with Israel the Russians set up shop in Gaza, where they claim to be training Palestinian security forces which they also wish to arm with armored personnel carriers and other weapons systems.

Given Russia's intent to sell advanced anti-aircraft missiles to Syria and its continued support for Iran's nuclear program, the deployment of an unknown number of Russian security personnel in Gaza is an unwelcome strategic development that is liable to have disastrous and far-reaching consequences. Abbas himself spent a formative period of his terror career as a KGB underling in Moscow while he received his doctorate in Holocaust denial at the Soviet Institute for Oriental Studies in the 1960s.

Apart from all of this, the attack in Hadera on Wednesday showed - yet again - that the security fence that the Left touts as the ultimate anti-terror weapon is worthless. Officers in the Central Command claimed that the bomber was able to enter Israel by going through one of the several dozen gates in the fence. These passages were set up to enable both Israelis and Palestinians to pass through the fence legally and can be easily exploited by terrorists.

Even if Israel were to seal the gates (a move that would induce immediate protest from the Palestinian "human rights" camp), the terrorists would still find a way to infiltrate into Israel. As they did two years ago on the Trans-Israel Highway, they can dig a tunnel. Or as they did four years ago along the

fence separating Israel from Lebanon, they can build a ladder. Since the time of the Assyrian Empire 2,700 years ago, there has never been a defensive wall that cannot be breached by an enemy with sufficient will to do so.

IN THE aftermath of the bombing in Hadera, and in the face of the integration of Fatah and Islamic terror groups, Abbas's continued collusion with terrorists, Russia's uncoordinated deployment in Gaza, and the unraveling of the fence as a defensive strategy, what did the government do on Wednesday night?

It declared "war" on the Islamic Jihad.

In so doing, the government maintained its earnest denial of all the essential components of Israel's current security reality. The government stated at the outset that the IDF's offensive against Islamic Jihad must necessarily be limited to prevent the operations from weakening the irreplaceable Abbas. And so, on the Gaza front, the "war" was immediately reduced to a renewal of the IAF's sound and light show over Gazan skies and the artillery corps' renewed pummeling of open fields in northern Gaza.

As for operations in Judea and Samaria, without knowing how many terrorists will be rounded up or killed in the coming days, it is already certain that their arrests or deaths will make no lasting impact on the terrorist infrastructure in the area. This is so because the IDF, in attempting to carry out the mission it was given by the government, is acting against a problem that doesn't exist while ignoring the problem that does exist.

The Sharon-Peres government, like every other leftist government since 1993, insists on making a distinction between "good" terrorists from Fatah and the Palestinian Authority and "bad" terrorists from the Islamic Jihad and Hamas. Yet the Palestinians themselves make no such distinctions. Since Yasser Arafat signed his accord with Hamas in Cairo in November 1994, the PA and Fatah have enthusiastically and continuously cooperated with Hamas and Islamic Jihad. The fact that in all the PA's calls for the release of terrorists from Israeli prisons, it has never distinguished between Fatah terrorists and Hamas or Islamic Jihad terrorists is just one clear example of this cooperation. Wednesday's bomber, for instance, was supposedly from Islamic Jihad and yet he was recently released from an Israeli prison as part of a "confidence-building measure" aimed at strengthening Abbas.

During Binyamin Netanyahu's three-year tenure as prime minister, as well as during the period from the Passover Massacre in 2002 through Arafat's death in November 2004, Israel actually did have a clear and constructive policy towards the Palestinians that in many respects was similar to its policy towards Iran. It was the policy of the Right. During these two periods, Israel dropped its artificial and self-defeating distinction between "good" terrorists and "bad" terrorists and held Arafat and the PA responsible for all acts of terrorism emanating from the PA. But with Abbas's rise to power and Sharon's final transformation from a rightist to a leftist, Israel again sunk into strategic ambiguity.

Indeed, more than anything else, the government's "declaration of war" against Islamic Jihad is just new evidence of the fact that no matter what happens, the Israeli Left will never learn from its mistakes. Rather than contend with reality, it justifies its policies with defeatism and non sequiturs. As the security fence strategy collapses, we are told that we will just have to live with terrorism. In the face of the active collaboration between Fatah and Islamic Jihad and the PA and Hamas, we are told that we must strengthen Abbas.

Tragically, the Right today is in no position to enunciate policy options based on its clear understanding that terrorists must be defeated, not coddled and negotiated with. After Sharon splintered his Likud party, defeated his political camp and pummeled his support base by adopting the policies of the Left, the Right is in shambles.

Sharon's opponents within the Likud are so confused in the aftermath of their failed attempt to advance the date of Likud primaries that they cannot contend with Sharon, let alone the Palestinians. Knesset members from the National Union and the National Religious Party have been missing in action since the expulsion of the Jews of Gaza and northern Samaria. At the grassroots level, activists are too busy devouring the leaders of the Council of Jewish Communities in Judea, Samaria and Gaza, whom they blame for failing to prevent the expulsions, and hating the IDF for carrying out the expulsions, to pay attention to what the Palestinians are doing.

As with the delusional Left, so too the Right, in its weakness, is showing that it has no ability to learn from its mistakes and prefers to sink into neurotic self-obsession rather than act responsibly by pointing out a sane path for Israel to embark upon.

Ironically, Iran is a major beneficiary of Israel's willful strategic blindness. For even if Israel's responsible diplomatic moves against Teheran actually expedite the mullocracy's international isolation, Ahmadinejad can be satisfied with the fact that his Palestinian foot soldiers are destroying Israel

The Nightmare of Hamastan

By Dr. Rachel Ehrenfeld and Alyssa A. Lappen

Judging from how Hamas is treated by the U.S. Administration, you would not know that it sits at the heart of the Islamo-Fascist movement, which President George W. Bush concretely defined and condemned three weeks ago. In his press conference last Thursday with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, however, the President refrained from clearly objecting to Hamas participation in the Palestinian Authority election next January.

The Palestinian Authority promises, yet again, to disarm Fatah and the other terrorist groups under its umbrella. Meanwhile, it plans to retrain all terrorists and incorporate them into the PA Security Forces. Adding Hamas to this fray would guarantee that terrorism will remain part of the Palestinian agenda.

Compare Hamas statements and its charter to those of Al Qaeda, Hizballah and other Islamist organizations: all strive to establish a Caliphate encircling the globe. Al Qaeda says: "We will turn the White House and the British parliament into mosques," as documented by Jonathan Dahoah Halevi, Director of Orient Research Group in Toronto. Similarly, Qatar-based sheik Yusuf al Qaradawi says "Islam will take over Europe by Dawa." The spiritual leader of HAMAS, the late Ahmad Yassin said: "The 21st century is the century of Islam," and his successor Mahmoud Zahar says, "Israel will disappear and after it the US."

President Bush declared: "the way forward is confronting the threat armed gangs present to the creation of democratic Palestine." But he stopped short of demanding that Hamas disarm. Still, that was enough to infuriate Hamas spokesman Sâmi Abu Zuhri, who protested, "We consider this as a serious American interference in our internal affairs aimed to create an internal conflict."

Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat insists that allowing Hamas to participate in the election would be the terror group's first step toward giving up its weapons. However, even Erekat knows, this is wishful thinking. Unlike the Irish Republican Army (IRA), which at last laid down its arms after being part of the political process for decades, Hamas does not wish to lay down its arms. It wants to use the democratic process to gain power, which would ultimately eradicate democracy.

The major difference between the IRA and Hamas is that the IRA only wanted to kill the British and the Protestants in Ireland. Hamas, in its charter, calls for "the propagation of Islamic consciousness among the masses on all local, Arab and Islamic levels. We must spread the spirit of Jihad among the [Islamic] Umma, clash with the enemies and join the ranks of the Jihad fighters."

In interviews given by Hamas leader Mahmoud Zahar, he lays out the character of the Islamist Palestinian state according to the Hamas vision: "This will be a state which will be based on the principals of the Sharia and will be part of the Arab Islamist Umma," he says. "In the Sharia-led Palestine, mixed dancing will be prohibited: "If a man holding the hand of a woman and dances with her in front of people, is this a way to serve the National interest?" In Hamas' Palestine, homosexuals and lesbians which Zahar defines as "a minority of moral and mental deviants" will have no rights.

Despite these draconian positions, Zahar rejects the claim that Hamas would try to repeat in Palestine what the Taliban did to Afghanistan. Hamas is not a duplicate of the Taliban, he said, but is much more sophisticated.

According to Hamas, materialism and fraternization between the sexes, the large number of homeless, and corrupted values of the West are the reasons for political corruption. "Westerners are interested in turning the family into a corrupt swamp, and they are distributing obscenity and terminal diseases in the name of total freedom." In the Islamist Palestinian state, says Zahar, each Palestinian citizen will be required to behave according to the Sharia.

The Islamist Palestinian state will also refrain from negotiations and cooperation with Israel, according to Zahar: "It is in our national interest to stop the cooperation with Israel in any field."

Hamas, Zahar says, will also use all the weapons in the Palestinian territory to create an Islamist Palestinian state in all of Palestine's territory - including Israel.

Hamas views the future Islamist Palestinian state as an extension of the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood, where all aspects of life would be controlled by radical Islamist laws. This state will also maintain close connections with other Arab Islamist states and movements, and will use terrorism to obliterate the Israeli state. In response to a question concerning the nature of Palestine under Hamas rule, from a Newsweek reporter on August 30, 2005, Zahar responded, "It should be Hamastan."

Yet, U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan argues that Israel should allow Hamas to participate in the election and that the Palestinian Authority should relax its pressure on the terrorist group to disarm. This follows Annan's well established pattern of legitimizing Hamas, which although listed on U.S. and E.U. terror lists, is still missing from that of the U.N.

For example, when Israel killed Sheikh Yassin, Annan said: "I do condemn the targeted assassination of Sheikh Yassin and the others who died with him." This is not surprising given the fact that Hamas won more than 90 percent of the vote in the 2003 UNRWA workers union election, according to Hamas London magazine, *Filastin Al-Muslima* in July, 2003 (p. 5).

Supporters of Hamas would have us repeat the errors of the Oslo era. In 1993, Israel gave the opportunity to one of the most notorious terrorists in the world to lead the newly created Palestinian Authority. In 1996, two years after receiving the Nobel Prize for Peace, Arafat was democratically elected president. But legitimizing Arafat did little to change his terrorist agenda. His Intifadas cost the lives of thousands of innocent Israelis and Palestinians, while destroying the PA economy.

Hamas' agenda like that of Arafat, is well advertised. Allowing it to participate in the coming PA election is a fool's errand. (FrontPageMagazine.com Oct 31)

Dr. Rachel Ehrenfeld, author of Funding Evil: How Terrorism is Financed—and How to Stop It, is director of American Center for Democracy and member of the Committee on the Present Danger. Alyssa Lappen is a freelance journalist who frequently contributes to FrontPageMagazine and other online journals.

Is the Choice Abbas or the Abyss? By Jonathan Tobin

Strategy on Palestinians a mockery of president's stands on democracy and terror

In any descent into folly, there is a tipping point. Before that happens, there's a chance to reverse course and avert disaster. But after the crucial moment arrives, failure is inevitable, and the only question is just how badly things will actually turn out.

No, I'm not talking about the Bush administration's Iraq policy, its hurricane recovery efforts or the fallout from the Valerie Plame leak case. Rather, the really bad mistake Washington is about to commit is one that has generated no outrage from the press or worries about declining poll numbers.

Ironically, it was at Bush's meetings with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas last week - an event that provided a respite from bad press - at which the greatest administration blunder of the month occurred: Bush gave Abbas the green light to allow Hamas terrorists to keep their arms and run in next January's Palestinian elections.

Not only does this contradict Bush's own challenge to the world that it must choose between terror and democracy; it also gives the lie to the administration's position on what is acceptable in the efforts to establish a government in Iraq.

Some of the administration's defenders will claim that excluding Hamas or any other Islamist movement would undermine democracy.

But nothing could be further from the truth. A political party in a democracy does not need an army, let alone a terrorist wing.

Excluding armed gangs from the status of genuine democratic parties is simple common sense. How, we must ask Bush, can an election be considered fair when the contending parties can intimidate voters and the media at will?

Of course, would it be fair to exclude Hamas while including Fatah, which has its own "armed wing" - the Al Aksa Martyrs Brigade - that murdered three Israeli teenagers in cold blood the day before the Washington meeting?

But to even ask such questions is to ponder issues that the administration is unwilling to face. The Bush team's approach to the Israel-Arab conflict has boiled down to a simple prayer that somehow Mahmoud Abbas can transform Palestinian politics and culture from one of terrorism and war to one of peace.

Needless to say, they're simply dreaming.

But rather than merely excoriate the administration and its cheerleaders in the press on the issue (often the same group that is screaming for Bush's head on every other topic), it would be more useful to ask why they're doing it, and what can possibly be done to rectify the situation.

What has made Abbas Bush's man in Ramallah?

Part of the answer lies in the fact that with the war in Iraq still hanging in the balance, the need to keep the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians calm has trumped the administration's ability to distinguish between fact and fiction about Abbas. Bush's team has apparently concluded that it must prop up Abbas no matter what he does - or doesn't do - to preserve any chance of

peace. Since they see the choice as being between Abbas and the abyss, they choose the former.

In Bush's defense, it must be admitted that the Israeli government has come perilously close at times to the same position. Since it feels it must have someone on the other side to talk to, even if peace is impossible, the conclusion has been better Abbas than anyone else.

But here in the United States, this realpolitik approach has been transformed into a genuine cheering section for Abbas among the foreign-policy elite. It makes sense that those whose careers were sunk by belief in the Oslo disaster would say this, but what in heaven's name are Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and her boss, who presumably are free of the Oslo infection, doing?

The answer is that they're slowly being sucked into the same pattern that characterized American policy during the Oslo era. So convinced was the Clinton administration of the need to preserve Yasser Arafat as a peace partner that they preferred to deceive themselves and others in order to avoid facing the truth about him. The same is going on now with Abbas, whose meeting with Bush last week had all the earmarks of Clinton's endless romancing of Arafat.

True, Abbas plays his role as would-be peacemaker much better than his former chief. He dresses properly, and adopts the right tone of conciliation when called upon to do so.

But when he uses his Rose Garden photo op to push for the release of blood-stained terrorists - whom he had the chutzpah to call "prisoners of freedom" - it is clear that it's still the terror chiefs who call the shots, not any would-be democrats.

Abbas is, after all, a veteran bureaucrat of Palestinian terror. That would not be crucial if he had genuinely changed his - and his government's - position, but he hasn't.

No matter how much American and European money he gets (and haven't we all seen that movie before?), Abbas can no more ask Hamas to give up killing Jews than he could ask his own followers to do so. Nor can he possibly end the incitement to violence and hatred of Israel that is routine within the official Palestinian media without undermining his own legitimacy.

So much for the virtues of "moderation."

The Bush administration is right to say democracy should apply to everyone, including the Arabs. But if Palestinian politics is predicated on terrorism, then we have to ask what value is democratic competition between armed gangs?

And that's the box that the increasingly hapless administration is about to find itself in.

Having stiffed Ariel Sharon on Hamas and signaled Abbas that he's under no pressure to disarm, Bush is heading toward a moment when he'll be forced to make a hopeless choice between two equally unacceptable alternatives: Once the Palestinian electorate speaks, Bush will have to recognize a Fatah-Hamas coalition government and thereby giving the lie to its anti-terror strategy. Or he can tell the Palestinians at that point that relations with terrorists are impossible and undermine his otherwise exemplary Middle East democracy project.

Either way, the stage will be set for a renewed intifada, whenever the Palestinians decide that violence will again gain them more than talk. One can hope that then Bush will react properly and again back Israel, but by then it will be too late to avert the damage. Israel will pay for this folly in blood. The United States will pay in damaged credibility that will hurt the war effort in Iraq.

Bush could have laid it on the line to Abbas about Hamas and his own killers. But the belief that this particular Palestinian is indispensable appears to have overcome any sense of danger.

The tipping point is fast approaching. But it appears that few in the administration realize that they have already struck a devil's bargain with Abbas. (Jewish World Review Oct 31)

The writer is executive editor of the Philadelphia Jewish Exponent.

Link Ma'aleh Adumim to the Capital By Efraim Inbar

The real test that lies ahead for Ariel Sharon is linking Ma'aleh Adumim to Jerusalem by building in Area E-1. The fate of the Jewish state depends largely upon Sharon's ability to take immediate action and populate E-1 with thousands of Jews.

Ma'aleh Adumim serves as the linchpin in establishing an effective line of defense along the Jordan River Valley against aggression from the East. Building a Jewish-populated corridor to Ma'aleh Adumim would prevent the division of Jerusalem and secure the only safe route via which Israel could mobilize troops from the coast to the Jordan Valley in case of emergency.

Jerusalem's importance to the Jews is not only historical and religious. The city also holds strategic importance in controlling the only highway from the coast of the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River Valley along which Jews can travel with little interference from Arab population concentrations.

OBJECTIONS TO a Jewish presence in Area E-1 express concern for Palestinian contiguity, which is a deceptive argument. Free travel between Samaria and Judea can be arranged quite easily by constructing overpasses or tunnels. (Ironically, the Palestinians suggest precisely these arrangements in response to Israeli concerns regarding the Palestinian demand for a corridor between Gaza and Judea that would divide Israel in two, as Evelyn Gordon pointed out recently in these pages.)

The main issue, however, is Jerusalem. The Palestinians plan to settle E-1 with Arabs in order to create demographic contiguity between Samaria and east Jerusalem, thereby facilitating the division of the city. Such a development would also isolate Ma'aleh Adumim and undermine Israeli claims to the Jordan Valley. The only way to prevent the realization of these Palestinian plans is to populate E-1 with Jews.

Some pundits claim Israel no longer needs the Jordan Valley as a shield against aggression from the east. They argue that the demise of the Saddam Hussein regime, the growing isolation of Syria and the enhanced American role in the region renders the threat of the eastern front and its proximity to Israel's centers of population and economic infrastructure a thing of the past.

Yet this is a very short-term perspective, motivated by the desire to convince Israeli public opinion that the Jordan Valley is militarily dispensable. Such a view ignores the immense potential for political upheaval in the Middle East.

For example, the US may decide to cut its losses and leave Iraq, which would constitute a huge victory for radical forces in the Middle East. The destabilization of Hashemite Jordan and Saudi Arabia, an emboldened radical Syria and the reemergence of the eastern front could then follow.

ADVOCATES OF turning over the Jordan Valley to the Palestinians discount its topographical importance by referring to current military technology that allows precision strikes from a distance. They argue that the ability to launch defensive strikes from the coast eliminates the strategic need for the Jordan Valley as a means of defense. Yet these armchair strategists overlook the history of military technology, which shows a clear oscillation between the dominance of offensive and defensive measures over the centuries.

The belief that the technology of today, which indeed temporarily reduces the importance of topography, will remain unchallenged constitutes a dangerous strategic fallacy.

Designing stable defensible borders in accordance with current, but transient, technological state-of-the-art and political circumstances is strategically foolish. Therefore, if Israel wants to maintain a defensible border it needs to secure the road from the coast to the Jordan Valley, via an undivided Jerusalem and via Ma'aleh Adumim.

SHARON WILL be put to the test to prove that his rhetoric about a united Jerusalem and the incorporation of settlement blocs into Israel has substance. President George W. Bush's promise to allow the incorporation of settlement blocs needs to be capitalized on in this context.

Now, in the aftermath of the withdrawal from Gaza and prior to the impending Israeli elections, is probably the best time to take action. In such a political context Sharon is least vulnerable to outside pressure. We should also remember that the US has opposed Israeli settlement efforts since 1967, and only rarely did American objections have an impact on Israeli decisions regarding this issue. Moreover, the Americans can be persuaded to go along tacitly with linking Ma'aleh Adumim to Jerusalem if a clear strategic vision based upon the principle of territorial compromise is presented.

While the strategic wisdom of indiscriminately settling the Land of Israel is not compelling, a selective settlement policy focusing on areas within the Israeli consensus, including Ma'aleh Adumim and the Jordan Valley, can be pursued with little foreign interference. Such a policy should be complemented with the removal of illegal outposts located outside the areas of consensus, and even with a gradual freeze in allocations to isolated settlements.

Area E-1 is of vital importance for the political future of Jerusalem and for Israel's chances to establish a defensible line along its eastern border. It is imperative that homes for Jews be built there. Hopefully, Sharon will put his bulldozers where his mouth is. (Jerusalem Post Oct 30)

The author is professor of political studies at Bar-Ilan University and director of the Begin-Sadat (BESA) Center for Strategic Studies.
