

speaking, fundraising, and serving as a resource where needed. Her work interviewing local elders for a video history project with the Sonoma County Museum will stand with her columns as a testament to this special region and the spirit of its people.

I can say personally that being included in a Gaye LeBaron column is a coveted experience. We will miss Gaye on a daily basis but will look forward to her continuing contributions.

DAVID A. HARRIS GIVES
THOUGHTFUL INSIGHT ON
ISRAEL'S DIFFICULT POLITICAL
AND SECURITY CHOICES

HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 31, 2001

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, finding a peaceful solution to the problems in the Middle East has long been an important concern of the United States. Attempts to reach a resolution of these difficulties, unfortunately have thus far failed.

While workable solutions have been found in short supply, a number of extremely helpful insights have been put forward. In this regard, I would like to call the attention of my colleagues to a particularly insightful article by David A. Harris, Executive Director of the American Jewish Committee. Although it was written before the inauguration of the new American President and prior to the latest of peace negotiations ending in a stalemate, the insights that Mr. Harris provides are still timely and important.

Mr. Speaker, I commend David Harris' thoughts to my colleagues and urge them to give his article careful attention.

AS ISRAEL MAKES FATEFUL POLITICAL AND SECURITY CHOICES, ITS FRIENDS ABROAD ALSO ARE CONFRONTING HARD TRUTHS

(By David A. Harris, Executive Director, The American Jewish Committee, Jan. 4, 2001)

In recent months, like many friends of Israel, I've had my share of sleepless nights. With only a few brief moments of either hope or respite, the news has been unremittingly disturbing and depressing. Israel is once again under siege. Every corner of Israel, every Israeli is a potential target. There is no distinction between soldier and civilian, between adult and youth, between dove and hawk, between believer and atheist, or between those living within and those living beyond the Green Line. It may not be all-out war as we saw in 1967 or 1973, but it is a calculated Palestinian strategy to obtain through violence what they have heretofore failed to achieve by negotiation.

Some Israelis and their friends abroad react to this volatile situation by beating their breasts and asking yet again what more Israel might do to meet demands of the Palestinians. Others, at the opposite end of the political spectrum, conclude that not only is the pursuit of peace a dangerous dream but, even more, a risk to the very existence of the state.

DECISIONS ON WAR AND PEACE

As I see it, Israel has no clear option, no obvious way to turn, and its predicament is further exacerbated by its complex and polarized domestic situation. In saying this, I

do not wish to second-guess the Israeli government and people. I have always taken the view that it is for them, first and foremost, to make the fateful decisions about war and peace and the steps that can lead in either direction. And the sheer survival of Israel over 52 years, not to mention its remarkable growth and development, adequately attests to its uncanny ability to overcome the odds, confound the skeptics, and disprove the doomsayers. Even as I openly worry about the future, then, I am inspired and reassured by Israelis' determination to go on, to fight when necessary, to negotiate for peace whenever possible.

Today we are confronted with a situation that few, especially in the West, might have predicted. A dovish Israeli government—prepared to cross its own red lines, especially regarding the future status of Jerusalem, in the pursuit of an historic peace agreement with the Palestinians—is faced with violence in the streets, calls for jihad, and terrorist attacks in the heart of the country, while the Arab world lines up foursquare behind the Palestinians and seeks to isolate Israel by depicting it as the trigger-happy-aggressor, the Nazi reincarnation.

Thus, instead of grasping Israel's outstretched hand and seeking to resolve outstanding issues, however challenging, at the bargaining table, the Palestinians perceived instead a weakened Israel. If proof was needed, it came for them in the unilateral decision to withdraw from Southern Lebanon after Israeli mothers led a campaign to bring their sons home before more were killed at the hands of Hezbollah; in Prime Minister Barak's determination to make peace before the end of the Clinton presidency, which was, in the final analysis, an artificial deadline; and in Israel's perceived vulnerability to the sting of international censure, given Barak's efforts to undo the global public relations impact of the Netanyahu years.

In effect, Arafat, though the weaker party by far, has skillfully leveraged his position, emerging stronger than might have been imagined. He has, for example, already managed to prove once again that violence does pay—the current deal being brokered by the White House and given tentative approval by Barak appears to go beyond the package on the table at Camp David in July. If so, why should Arafat, from his point of view, stop here?

VIOLENCE AND NEGOTIATIONS

Eager to see his long-sought Palestinian state emerge from the "honor and blood" of the martyred, ever mindful of the most radical elements among the Palestinians, and determined not to demand less than Anwar Sadat, King Hussein, or Hafaz el-Assad in insisting on Israeli compliance with all his territorial demands. Arafat continues his complete juggling act of encouraging violence and talking peace at one and the same time.

At the very least, we can expect from Arafat more of the same brinksmanship through the last days of the Clinton Administration, though we don't know what, if anything, will come of it. Knowing how eager the American leader is to leave the political scene with substantial progress to show in the Middle East given his extraordinary investment of time, energy, and the prestige of the presidency, and aware of how committed the Israeli leader has been to making this possible on Clinton's watch, Arafat will squeeze the moment for all it's worth, and then some, in an effort to improve still further his bargaining position.

Not quite, some observers will note. Arafat doesn't hold all the cards. After all, there's an Israeli election around the corner and, without a peace deal, the conventional wisdom is that Barak will fall and Arafat will

then have to face his old nemesis, Ariel Sharon, who will make the Palestinian leader's life a lot more difficult. Maybe, but then again, maybe not.

We in the West make a living out of failing to understand the Middle East. We're so busy superimposing our own deeply ingrained ways of thinking on the region—based in large measure on our rationalism, pragmatism, willingness to compromise, and tendency to mirror-image ("surely they're like us and want the very same things in life as we do")—that we too often end up surprised and puzzled when things don't go as we might expect.

We don't speak Arabic; we have little contact with Arab culture; we have minimal understanding of the nature of Islam and its pervasive role in the life of the Arab world; we spend too little time reading the writings of Judith Miller, Bernard Lewis, Fouad Ajami, and other knowledgeable observers of the region; and we embrace too quickly as representative those selected Arab voices that sound reassuring to us.

Yet none of this stops us from thinking we know enough about the region to offer grounded views on diplomacy and strategy. Indeed, the U.S. Government, with its far greater resources and expertise, has stumbled more than once, with fatal consequences, trying to make its way across the Middle East minefields.

Isn't it just possible that the prospect of a Prime Minister Sharon not only doesn't frighten Arafat but actually appeals to him? Taking a page from Leon Trotsky—the worse it gets, the better it becomes—Arafat may, in fact, perceive advantages in such an outcome: with Sharon demonized in the international news media and sharply criticized in world capitals, Israel could face new international pressures, including renewed calls for UN intervention and increased sympathy for a unilateral declaration of independence.

TESTS FOR BARAK AND SHARON

And this brings us back to Israel's domestic predicament. Barak, the pollsters say, needs a peace deal before February 6 if he is to have a chance at winning the election. Without it, he is saddled with negative images—accusations of political ineptness, willingness to yield to the demands of religious parties despite his calls to marginalize them, and inexperience and imprudence in dealing with the Palestinians. Thus, no matter what he says between now and February 6, no matter how tough his language may be at times, the prevailing assumption is that he needs Arafat to bail him out and both men know it.

On the other hand, Sharon is a known quantity who is a deeply polarizing figure in Israel. He is seen as representing a return to the Shamir years of a "fortress Israel" in eternal conflict with the enemies of the Jewish people. That will not sit well, not for long, I suspect, with many Israelis living in a prospering first-world country that longs for regional stability and even a chilly peace with its neighbors, so that it can finally one day turn to the future and away from the endless cycles of violence of the past.

After all, if the Israeli left was revealed to be the victim of its own illusions about creating a new Middle East, the Israeli right, illustrated by Sharon, has been the victim of its own illusions about the possibility of maintaining an indefinite status quo of occupation. If Barak is found wanting by the Israeli electorate in his ability to provide answers and solutions, then it's equally likely Sharon, if elected prime minister, will face the same prospect within short order, unless he is able to turn in entirely new policy directions.

Of course, whoever is elected, Barak or Sharon, will face the very same unruly and

fractionated Knesset, which further clouds the outlook for stable governance. This is precisely what Benjamin Netanyahu is counting on. Although polls showed him leading both Barak and Sharon, he chose not to run this time around unless the Knesset dissolved itself and also stood for new elections. It was a statesmanlike position, praised by many, including some who do not normally count themselves among Netanyahu's most fervent admirers; it was also a position calculated to elevate his standing in the expectation that whoever is elected in February will not be able to lead for long before yet another round of voting, including parliamentary elections, is needed. At that time, Netanyahu, seeking to cast himself as the true centrist, would almost surely step into the political fray.

OVERRIDING POLITICAL AND STRATEGIC FACTORS

In the meantime, as Israeli politics seeks to sort itself against the backdrop of the deep and seemingly irreconcilable fissures in Israeli society, certain things seem clear and best not be forgotten.

First, many of the claims of the Israeli right, especially since the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, have proved accurate, though they were largely ignored by those on the left who reflexively dismissed anything said by spokesmen on the right. For example, incitement to hatred among Palestinians has continued unabated and with devastating consequences. Moreover, the accumulation of weapons and the build-up of the Palestinian police and militia, in direct contravention of the Oslo Accords, have created a deadly adversary for Israel. And the wink and nod to Palestinian extremists—many arrested with great fanfare only to be released as soon as no one was paying attention—has undermined the chances for a peaceful settlement with Israel.

Second, many of the claims of the Israeli left have also proved strikingly accurate, despite attempts by those on the right to dismiss them. Palestinians who not docilely remain under Israeli occupation forever. Neither could Israel expect occupation to continue without some corrosive effects on its democratic values, nor could it absorb the Palestinians in the territories without undoing the Jewish character of the state. And sooner or later, Jewish settlers in remote outposts in Gaza, for example, would become flashpoints for violence between Israelis and Palestinians.

Third, as a consequence, no one school of thought has a monopoly of wisdom on what is best for Israel. Ideologues, whether of the left or right, become prisoners of their own preset views, and, as a result, tend to adjust the facts to their doctrinal thinking rather than the other way around.

Fourth, regardless of what happens in the short run respecting Israeli-Palestinian issues, the sad reality is that Israel will continue to face severe challenges in the region, requiring a powerful military, eternal vigilance, and close coordination with the United States.

Iran and Iraq pose dangerous, and growing, threats, particularly in the nonconventional field. Islamic extremist groups operating in the region will not soon go away. Syria possesses missiles and chemical warheads. Disturbingly, Egypt has embarked on a broad modernization program of its conventional forces and is known to be engaged in research on some nonconventional weapons systems as well. An emerging Palestinian state will alter the political and security landscape for Jordan, with unknown consequences.

PRESSURES ON THE ARAB WORLD

And, of course, the larger problems of the need for a true reformation in the Arab

world, of the glaring absence of democracy and the rule of law, of governmental lack of accountability to its citizens, of endemic corruption and nepotism, of high birth rates and insufficient jobs, of economic stagnation and fear of opening to the world, of the Islamists influence on society, all continue to plague this vast and important region of the world.

A few pertinent statistics illustrate the dimensions of the problems faced by the Arab world. Fouad Ajami of Johns Hopkins University has pointed out, for example, that Finland, with a population of 5 million, exports more manufactured goods than the entire Arab world combined, with its 22 countries and its population well over 200 million. Israel has a higher per capita GNP than its five contiguous neighbors—Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, the Palestinian Authority, and Egypt—combined, and more Internet users by far than all five put together. And impoverished Gaza has a higher birthrate by a multiple of nine than prosperous Bologna, Italy.

Fifth, we should be under little illusion about such notions as a “demilitarized Palestinian state” or “an end to the conflict.” A Palestinian state is coming, one way or another, and the debate about whether it is good or bad for Israel seems largely irrelevant. It will happen, and Israel no doubt will do its utmost to establish harmonious ties, but it must also recognize, as a recent CIA report looking ahead to the year 2015 predicted, that “chilly” relations are likely to prevail and surveillance and monitoring will be required.

That Palestinian state will not be demilitarized, I believe, regardless of agreements signed, which could pose a threat both to Israel and Jordan. And there will remain those Palestinians who will seek to continue the struggle with Israel, either because they see Israel proper as their real home, or because they see the Zionists as “infidels” and “modern-day Crusaders” who have no right to be there, or both.

Sixth, we need to take very seriously anti-Semitism emanating from the Arab world. Not only is it pernicious and contrary to the promotion of peaceful relations in the region, but it also fuels anti-Semitic attacks against Jews and Jewish targets throughout the world, as we have tragically seen in recent months.

And finally, we need to remind ourselves of the importance of our own role in making a difference on Israel's behalf. Both in our public education and advocacy efforts in the United States, in which we stress the mutual benefits of close U.S.-Israel ties as well as America's vital national interest in Israel's security in a stable Middle East, and in our diplomatic, exchange and public affairs programs around the world, the American Jewish Committee is making a unique contribution to Israel's well-being and its quest for peace and security. The political and security challenges that lie ahead for Israel will doubtless only heighten the importance of that work.

NOW IS THE TIME FOR CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

HON. STEPHEN HORN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 31, 2001

Mr. HORN. Mr. Speaker, they say the third time is the charm. This year the House will pass—for the third time—the Shays-Meehan or McCain-Feingold bill. By either name, this is

genuine, necessary and effective reform that will return power to the people and curb the endless money chase in our political campaigns.

This legislation ends the raising and spending of “soft” money. The parties have become addicted to huge checks from corporations, unions, and wealthy individuals. This bill puts both parties into immediate rehab.

This legislation also ends the sham “issue” ads that savage candidates of both parties in every election. It forces into the sunlight big money interests behind these ads.

The House has made it clear. It wants this reform to become law. This year, all of us hope that the Senate and our new President will look at this issue very carefully, offer constructive suggestions, and then join us in passing real campaign finance reform.

U.S. MIDDLE EAST POLICY

HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 31, 2001

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I want to share with my colleagues an article written by Douglas Bloomfield for the Chicago Jewish Star. The article provides an accurate summary of President Clinton's efforts to facilitate peace and dialogue in the Middle East during his service to this country. I agree with Mr. Bloomfield that “No other (U.S.) President has been so closely identified with Israel's search for peace.”

Mr. Bloomfield's article discusses the popularity of President Clinton in Israel and among the Jewish Community in the United States due, in large part, to the commitment he made to do everything within his means to bring peace to the Middle East. I share that appreciation for the priority President Clinton made of these important issues. I have often looked to Mr. Bloomfield's work for an accurate perspective on events and trends in the Middle East as well as a constructive evaluation of U.S. Middle East policy. Clearly the Bush Administration has a tough act to follow in ensuring that Americans and Israeli's feel comfortable in America's commitment to the security of Israel and her prosperity in the future. I urge all of my colleagues to take the time to read the following article.

[From the Chicago Jewish Star]

WASHINGTON WATCH—SHALOM, BILL

(By Douglas M. Bloomfield)

“If Bill Clinton is looking for a job, he can come over there and run for prime minister. He'd win easily,” said a caller from Israel the other morning. “He's still the most popular politician in the country.”

And he remains popular at home as well, particularly in the Jewish community, despite the controversies that plagued his administration. The peace proposal he revealed recently in a farewell speech to peace activists included proposals that made even left even some dovish followers uncomfortable, but no reasonable person could challenge the sincerity of his desire to help Israel find peace.

Nor can anything overcome the hysterical frenzy of the Clinton haters and those extremists who see any concessions to the Palestinians as selling out Israel.

No other president has been so closely identified with Israel's search for peace. He