



Israel and The U.S., 2011

by Herbert I. London

There is little doubt that Israel looks to the United States for support. It is somewhat like the picked on younger brother eager to have his older brother come to his aid. For the U.S. and Israel, that has usually been the case, albeit the 1956 war in the Suez was an exception.

Now something has gone sour. For reasons somewhat elusive, President Obama has arrived at the dubious conclusion conditions in the Middle East might improve if Israel and the Palestinians could arrive at an understanding about a Palestinian state.

Never mind that Assad kills his own Syrian citizens interested in regime change. Never mind that Egypt is unstable after Mubarak's unceremonious ouster. Never mind the civil war in the Sudan has led to the death of thousands. Never mind that the rebels in Libya may not be interested in a democratic republic. Never mind that Iraq is close to civil war as U.S. forces decline. Never mind that Afghanistan has a civil war with U.S. forces on the ground. Never mind that Pakistan is a friend by day and a foe by night. And never mind that Iran is about to acquire nuclear weapons. The issue for Obama is organic population growth on the West Bank. Now that is an issue worth the president's attention.

What most people do not know, including President Obama, is that most settlements are literally a stone's throw from Jerusalem. The communities about which the president complains about are the ones that allow Jerusalem to survive. They offer strategic depth, or at least some of it; and guard the aquifers. Without Judea and Samaria, Israel's waist is 81/2 miles wide - - or from the tip of Manhattan to Columbia University, as Israel's Prime Minister recently pointed out. Israel would simply be indefensible. In this scenario, a terrorist firing a shoulder-to-air missile from the Judean hills

could shoot every international plane taking off from and landing at Ben Gurion airport.

While the president has referred to Israel's recalcitrance about returning to the so-called pre-'67 borders, he overlooks the unwillingness of either Fatah or Hamas to recognize the state of Israel. On the contrary, even as they demand a state, they demonize Israel and launch almost daily attacks against it.

Israeli opinion is divided. The left believes that as Israel cannot incorporate the nearly 4 million Arabs in the West Bank, the creation of a Palestinian state is a safety valve that avoids a demographic nightmare. The right believes that a Palestinian state would be an apartheid, Jew-free, sanctuary for terrorism, disrupting Israeli lives now and into the future.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu contends that a state can be created if the Palestinian Authority renounces violence; disarms, and recognizes the state of Israel as a Jewish state, assuring Israel and the international community of an "end to the conflict." It is a reasonable stance politically, but one opposed by all parties in the Palestinian territory. Once again Palestinians seem to embrace the Abba Eban dictum in which "the Palestinians never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity." However this time the opportunity may be seized by the General Assembly, seemingly eager to impose, without any conditions, a Palestinian state on Israel. Fortunately the U.S. is likely to veto any proposal for a unilaterally-declared Palestinian state in the Security Council, halting at least for now a Palestinian national entity.

Within the White House there are very few divisions. President Obama is intent on mollifying Arab opinion. It is also much too complicated, as political cultures in the region are roiling; to try to sort out complex security issues, so why not try to solve the Israel-Palestinian issue by simply putting more

pressure on Israel? The only catch is that Obama is intent on reelection. For him to achieve this goal, he needs Jewish political and financial support. An active anti-Israeli agenda simply won't fly. So expect equivocation,

appeasement and sounds of sweet harmony. It will not be sincere; or probably long-lasting; but then again, it doesn't have to be: Jewish American voters are ready to support Obama even if it is not in their interest to do so.