

Israel's Vision of Security and Peace:

An Address by the Israeli Prime Minister

Feb 18, 1997



Brief Analysis

Im still puzzled by the Syrian refusal to discuss our withdrawal from Lebanon. I find myself in the extraordinary position of being a prime minister of the state of Israel, a Likud prime minister at that, and I am saying that we want to withdraw from Lebanon, we're prepared to withdraw from Lebanon. We seek security arrangements that will enable us to withdraw from Lebanon. But I'm being told, including in official—well, sorry, unofficial—Syrian press, "Don't withdraw from Lebanon." Now Syria ostensibly seeks our withdrawal, but in practice impedes it. And, of course, this raises disturbing thoughts. Why? Does Syria want us to stay in Lebanon so we can have a constant clash, a constant shedding of blood? Is the pressure on the Golan to prevent us from withdrawing from Lebanon so there's no pressure on Syria from the Arab quarters to end its stay in Lebanon? One can posit many hypotheses. But it is clear that if Israel says that it doesn't want to stay on Arab soil, and there are calls coming from Arab capitals for Israel to stay on Arab soil, something is wrong. . . .

"I think the Syrians by now should realize that they can gain much more through negotiations and peace than through violence and war. And if President Assad does prove soon, I hope that he chooses the path of peace, he will find us reasonable and cooperative partners. If he chooses the path of violence, he will leave us no choice but to defend ourselves and to defend our interests. I think such a choice on his part would be a prescription for tragedy."

Jerusalem

Jerusalem is our capital. It's been our capital for 3,000 years. It's been no one else's capital. And we will continue to build it and develop it and make it grow for Jew and Arab alike. It will continue to be undivided and under our sovereignty. It will continue to provide, as we have, complete and free and unfettered access to all three great faiths. We will not redivide Jerusalem. We will not allow the reemergence or re-erection of a Berlin wall inside that city. And we will do everything that is necessary to do to ensure the united and undivided nature of Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty."

Peace with Security

You cannot draw a hypothetical political conclusion and then go back and check, what does it mean in terms of security? Because if you want a peace treaty with any Arab partner, and you're prepared to sign it at all costs, and then discover that the cost of security is such that you won't have security, you won't have peace. Peace without security is an oxymoron. It doesn't exist. It won't hold. It doesn't last. And therefore, my approach to all these problems begins by detailed consultations with our security and military chiefs, and I ask, what are our minimal requirements? What do we need to defend our people, to defend our children, to defend our cities, to defend our future, based on what we can see today, based on what we can project tomorrow? And I think that, unfortunately, this wasn't the process that was pursued in the Oslo Accords. . . .

"We have shown our bona fides, we keep our agreements, we have shown it. Now we need a similar reciprocity from the Palestinian side. That is necessary. First on the matter of security, they have to stop releasing these terrorists

that they're releasing and they have to start putting them back in jail. They have to amend the Palestinian charter to show that they are really committed to peace with Israel. They have to shut down, as they promised, their offices in Jerusalem and their activities there. They have to collect illegal weapons, they have to dismantle the terrorist organizations. These are commitments. They're not incidental statements. Just as the redeployment in Hebron is not an incidental statement and the nature of our commitments is such that while we do things that are irreversible, you go out of Hebron, you're not likely to go back into Hebron. You release these women terrorists, you're not going to go into Ramallah to take them away. The nature of their commitments is often reversible. They can shut down their activities in Jerusalem and they can open them again, which they've done, by the way. They can capture these terrorists and then release them again."

Education for Peace

"In the Middle East, the change of heart always goes from the top down. And one of the most important changes that has to take place is the education of hearts and minds that can only be done by leaders. And if there's a need in addition to everything that I've said, the effective fighting against terrorism -- we don't expect total results, we do expect total effort. And all these other elements of commitment that have to be undertaken by the Palestinian side, I would say that above and beyond them there's a larger issue and that is the issue of the position of leaders, the moral position that they communicate to their people. . . .

"The fate of relations between Arab and Jew will be determined in the schools and the universities and the editorial boards of the newspapers, and in the mosques of the Middle East. And it is in these places that the minds of the future are shaped and opinions are framed and attitudes are determined. And to date, almost 20 years after the first Arab-Israeli peace treaty, there is still no acceptance of Israel in these crucibles of Arab education: no map with the name of Israel; no textbook referring to Israel as a legitimate state exists today; no child is taught that Israel is a permanent neighbor; no newspaper avoids the most venomous incitement against Israel and Jews; no religious leader in the Arab world preaches tolerance for the Jewish state certainly not openly and not forcefully. . . .

"Education for peace is more important than anything we can achieve at the negotiation table. Education for peace is what can lay the foundations for true understanding and the growth of friendship. Education for peace means the mutual acceptance of Arab and Jew, and mutual trust between them. Treaties are important and necessary, and security safeguards built into these treaties is essential. But these are necessary, but ultimately insufficient conditions to ensure the kind of peace that we seek with our neighbors. . . . Real peace does not come from the hand that signs the treaties, it comes from the head and heart that formulates them and then forms the attitude towards these treaties, because true peace comes from the heart, or more precisely, it comes from a change of heart. And there can be no such change unless the educators and intellectuals and spiritual leaders of the Arab world join in calling for the acceptance of Israel."

Peace and Normal Relations

"And the question I ask [to the leaders of the Arab world] is: Where are you? Why are you holding up the normalization? Why are some of you stopping the normalization as we progress towards peace? Why don't you move forward? Why don't you prove that you can bring your people to peace? If you want peace, that's what you'll do. That's what all men and women of peace will ask you to do and expect you to do." ❖

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