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Facts & Logic About the Middle East

August 22, 2017

If we want an Israel-Palestinian peace, it's time to drain the swamp in the U.S. State Department

Dear Friend of FLAME:

While the appointment of Rex Tillerson as Secretary of State earlier this year was a welcome improvement over John Kerry when it comes to Israel-Palestinian peace prospects, even the most pro-Israel leader of the U.S. State department could not quickly reform its bureaucratic swamp. It remains mired in outdated, even fantastical beliefs about the conflict.

Let's also be clear that while Mr. Tillerson is an improvement, he is by no means a model of support for Israel. He seems committed to a false moral equivalency of the two sides and the belief that the Palestinians tell the truth about their commitment to peace.

The Trump Middle East envoys Jared Kushner and Jason Greenblatt, and our new ambassador to Israel David Friedman, show much greater propensity to appreciate Israel's security needs and to challenge Palestinian obstinacy.

What's more, the State Department recently received officials from leading American Islamist organizations, such as CAIR (Council for American Islamic Relations), which has ties to the Muslim Brotherhood and the Hamas terror group. CAIR and other Islamist organizations visited Tillerson's agency to discuss "the ongoing Al-Aqsa Mosque crisis and Israel's denial of religious freedom in Jerusalem," according to the U.S. Council of Muslim Organizations. *Really?*

In short, the State Department's career bureaucrats embrace an antiquated analysis of the Middle East in which, in order to achieve peace, they must remain neutral in the Israel-Palestinian conflict. This means lapping up the lies and nonsense fed them by the Arabs and pretending they are true and valid.

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You deserve a factual look at...

U.S. Funds Palestinian Terrorism

Yens of millions of U.S. taxpayer dollars are spent annually to pay salaries to Palestinian terrorists who murder innocent civilians in Israel.

In prep up the virtually bankrupt Palestinian Authority (PA), the U.S. sends Palestinians more than \$400 million a year and the P.A. however spends some \$140 million annually to reward jihadists and their families for murderous acts that kill innocent Americans and Israelis.

What are the facts?

In June 2016, 13-year-old Hallel Telleh lived was snatched to death in her bed by a Palestinian terrorist who broke into her family's home. In March of this year, 28-year-old Rachel Price, a West Point graduate and honor U.S. Army aviator from Texas, was killed as he traveled with his wife to Italy by a terror...

What are the facts?

For more than 20 years, the Palestinian government has openly used aid donations from the U.S. and other countries to recruit and reward terrorists. Depending on the number of people murdered in a terrorist attack, salaries range from \$20k to \$2,500 per month. Terrorists with families and who die in the act or are captured and sentenced to 20 years or more receive the highest allowances. These expenditures—a hefty \$140 million per year—amount to an estimated 10% of the Palestinian Authority's total budget.

In addition to financial incentives for terror, jihadists also receive abundant moral support from the Palestinian government. Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas has said, "We welcome every drop of blood spilled in Jerusalem. This is pure blood, clean blood... With the help of Allah, every martyr will be his hero, and every martyr will get his reward."

U.S. Payments to the Palestinian Authority. According to a Congressional Research Service report, the U.S. since the mid-2010s has contributed more than \$3 billion in security assistance and bilateral economic aid to the P.A., and American taxpayers' current annual commitment is now some \$400 million. In fact, Palestinians are the world's largest per-capita recipients of international aid.

"While a 2016 State Department report praised the Palestinian Authority for making "terrorism financing a criminal offense," the P.A. still has been on its heels in order to achieve a seven and a half year moratorium on the Palestinians, convicted terrorists or other those who while committing terrorism must not compensated by the Palestinian government for these crimes. It is a travesty that American taxpayer dollars subsidize the heinous practices, and Congress should move urgently to stop it."

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IF YOU SUPPORT PUBLISHING FLAME'S BOLD PR MESSAGES,

This week's FLAME *Hotline* featured article, below, by Bruce Thornton, makes the case that we'll never create peace as long as the State Department nurtures the pretense of dispassionate diplomacy. In fact, we don't have an Israel-Palestinian peace because the Arabs for 70 years have refused to give up their obsession with removing Jews from the Holy Land and destroying Israel.

In short, Thornton, who is a Shillman Journalism Fellow at the Freedom Center, a Research Fellow at Stanford's Hoover Institution, and a Professor of Classics and Humanities at the California State University, methodically savages the State Department's assumptions that both sides in the conflict have valid positions. Sometimes there's a right and a wrong side.

While we at FLAME support the Trump administration's efforts to end the U.N.'s unfair attacks on Israel, we urge a more rational and realistic stance from the Secretary of State (starting with a bureaucratic housecleaning of its old-school swamp-dwellers). I think after reviewing this compelling analysis, you will as well.

Finally, on an even more pressing issue, I hope you'll also quickly review the P.S. immediately below, which describes FLAME's long-running *hasbarah* campaign to promote a Congressional bill that withdraws U.S. funding to the Palestinians as long as they use \$300 million a year of foreign aid to pay salaries as an incentive to terrorists

Best regards,

Jim Sinkinson

President, Facts and Logic About the Middle East (FLAME)

PLEASE HELP US!!

FLAME is the only organization that defends Israel with paid editorial *hasbarah* messages placed in media nationwide every month: The dire threats from Iran, Hamas and Hizbollah, the injustice of BDS, Palestinian anti-Semitism and more. If you support a bold voice that tells the truth about Israel in American media, please donate now.

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FLAME'S WEEKLY HOTLINE E- NEWSLETTER



FLAME's Hotline e-newsletter keeps you up to date on the most important pro-Israel advocacy issues and features our choice of the week's most informative and thought-provoking article on Israel and the Middle East. If you only subscribe to one pro-Israel news service, make it the FLAME Hotline.

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P.S. Did you know: By subsidizing the corrupt Palestinian Authority (P.A.) with aid of some \$400 million taxpayer dollars a year, the U.S. is also funding the P.A.'s program of paying salaries to Palestinian terrorists who have killed innocent Americans and Israelis? In order to make Americans—especially college and university students—aware of this Palestinian practice of rewarding jihadi assailants and murderers with U.S. funds, FLAME has recently been publishing a new position paper: "[U.S. Funds Palestinian Terrorism](#)" This paid editorial has appeared in magazines and newspapers, including college newspapers, with a combined readership of some 10 million people. In addition, it is being sent to every member of the U.S. Congress and President Trump. If you agree that this kind of public relations effort on Israel's behalf is critical, I urge you to support us. Remember: FLAME's powerful ability to influence public opinion—and U.S. support of Israel—comes from individuals like you, one by one. I hope you'll consider giving a donation now, as you're able—with \$500, \$250, \$100, or even \$18. (Remember, your donation to FLAME is tax deductible.) To donate online, just go to [donate now](#). Now more than ever we need your support to ensure that the American people and the U.S. Congress end our support of blatantly anti-Semitic, global jihadist organizations.

As of today, more than 15,000 Israel supporters receive the FLAME *Hotline* [at no charge](#) every week. If you're not yet a subscriber, won't you join us in receiving these timely updates, so you can more effectively [tell the truth about Israel](#)? Just go to [free subscription](#).

Our Reactionary State Department

Fantasies about the Palestinians' "commitment" to peace

By Bruce Thornton, *Front Page Magazine*, August 11, 2017

If a reactionary is someone who stubbornly opposes change, the State Department is a prime example of an institution mired in fossilized paradigms and narratives. Unable to discard received institutional wisdom in the face of historical facts both new and old, Foggy Bottom continues to live up to its moniker, blind to the historical realities and ideologies that should be determining our foreign policy.

The State Department's recently released, and suitably criticized, Country Report on Terrorism 2016 is filled with examples of rote adherence to exploded analytic clichés. It takes a monumental effort of willful blindness to write of Mahmoud Abbas and the PA that "explicit calls for violence against Israelis are rare and the leadership does not generally tolerate it." You have to go back to September 1938 and Neville Chamberlain saying that Hitler "was speaking the truth" and "would not deliberately deceive a man whom he respected" to find such a preposterous misreading of plain facts.

But such myopia is endemic in the foreign policy establishment. Another example comes from a recent column by CNN talking-head and long-time Middle East hand Aaron David Miller. Writing in Politico, Miller analyzes the leaked (of course) transcript of some remarks by Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law, who's been charged with working on an agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Arabs. Miller, at least in this essay, is no knee-jerk anti-Trumpian, and treats Kushner with respect. But this makes his repetition of long-exploded "expert" comments about the conflict even more depressing than if they came from a wild-eyed partisan.

Miller, for example, gently reminds Kushner that "history and the past" matter. Indeed, they do. But rarely are the facts of history evident in the standard State Department narrative. Take this comment from Miller: "Israeli and Palestinian officials can overwhelm you with intricate stories about which patch of land belonged to whom when and who double-crossed whom in previous negotiating rounds." As written, this remark suggests the classic "he said-he said" moral equivalence usually trotted out by those who refuse to see that one side in the conflict is the aggressor, the other the victim. Instead, two peoples are fighting over a "homeland" and its religious shrines, and just need a neutral negotiator to persuade each side to give up something to make a deal.

The facts of history plainly do not support the stereotypical "both sides have just claims" argument. The territory of Israel, including Judea and Samaria (aka the "West Bank"), was for three millennia the homeland of the Jewish people. It was never an Arab "homeland." Arabs came as conquerors, stayed as occupiers, and multiplied through migration. World War I, and the Ottomans' drastic blunder of allying with the Central Powers, led the new Turkish nation to dissolve the Ottoman Empire and abandon the Middle East from Turkey to Egypt. As were their rights as victors, the French and British reorganized those territories into nations, including Israel, in recognition of the

Jews' historical ties to the region, and the previous decades in which Jews had returned to that homeland and begun to develop it.

These decisions by the victors were ratified under international law by several treaties and the League of Nations. The Arabs did not accept this outcome, and continued to use violence to reverse it. In 1948 this violence culminated in the withdrawal of the British as the mandatory authority; the declaration by Israel, per a United Nations resolution, that it was an independent state; the rejection once again by the Arabs of the resolution by the UN of which they were members; and a full-scale multi-national invasion to wipe out the new-born state—a war they started but lost. Twice more the Arabs attempted to use war to change facts on the ground created by international law, and twice more they lost. Since then they have used terrorism and stirred up global opprobrium against Israel to retake the ancient homeland of the Jewish people from “the river to the sea.”

This history can be read by anybody, and it is not “intricate” or a question of “which patch of land belonged to whom.”

History and international law have long answered that question. Of course, for the Arabs it was a catastrophe, but so for the Germans was the one-third of Germany lost after its wars of aggression in the 20th century, and the ten million Germans forced to leave those lands their ancestors had dwelled in for five centuries. History teaches us these are the costs of losing a war. Only in the case of Israel are we told to forget this historical truth and turn aggressors and violators of international law into victims.

Another bit of received wisdom follows from the “each side has a legitimate claim” argument. That is, only diplomacy can resolve the conflict in a way fair to each side. Miller brings up the Egypt-Israel peace agreement as a diplomatic success that should be emulated. But that worked not because Egypt accepted Israel's right to exist, but because Anwar Sadat made a realist calculation that it could not defeat Israel with war, but would coexist in a cold peace if the U.S. continued, as it does today, to pay \$2 billion a year in the foreign aid equivalent of danegeld (*editor's note: Danegeld is a land tax that was introduced in Anglo-Saxon England in 991 in order to raise money to pay the Danes not to attack southern England*). And don't forget, Sadat's assassination by jihadists sent a powerful message to other Arab leaders that settling with Israel is a capital offense against Islam.

Apart from the agreement with Egypt, the record of diplomacy in the region for half a century has been one of abject failure. Like

the Oslo Accords, which merely encouraged the Arabs to pocket concessions, rake in the dollars and Euros, and then hold out for more. This is another hard lesson from history, going back to Philip II. He brilliantly used interstate diplomacy and institutions as a tactic for buying time and gulling rivals until the matter could be settled by force, as Phillip did when he ended Greek freedom at Chaeronea in 338 B.C. In our day we have seen the same failures on numerous fronts, from the phony “peace treaty” with Vietnam in 1973, to the arms control agreements that the Soviets, Russia, North Korea, and now Iran have serially violated.

Of course, diplomacy is the métier of the State Department, so they think “smart diplomacy” is the silver bullet that will end conflict and foster peace. But diplomacy works only if backed by a credible threat of force to punish violators or bring them to the table, just as Israel’s defeat of Egypt in 1972 focused Sadat’s mind and convinced him that cold, bribed coexistence was better than another humiliating defeat. But we in the West have become increasingly unwilling to use adequate force to deter violators or drive them to an agreement. The most glaring example of this failure is the decades-long violations of the 1994 Oslo Accords by the PA, a fig-leaf for the terrorist Fatah and PLO. Indeed, rather than punish the Palestinian Arabs, we have continued to finance and arm its “government,” a corrupt gang that enriches itself even as it executes its “stages” strategy for destroying Israel, one tactic of which is terrorist violence, the other negotiating in order to extract money from the West and concessions from Israel.

Miller’s final advice for Kushner encapsulates the false assumptions on which the State Department has operated for decades: “Don’t be Israel’s lawyer.” This is particularly peculiar, given the outright hostility and brow-beating of Israel that was practiced by the Obama administration, and that apparently will continue under Trump, judging by the recent State Department report. Miller’s advice again assumes that, as in most divorces, two equally aggrieved parties with equal claims require a neutral arbitrator. But there are no equal claims in the Israel-Arab conflict. Israel’s claim is based on history, tradition, and the decisions of the League of Nations and the United Nations, decisions violently rejected by the other side. Miller’s advice is akin to a divorce arbitrator considering the “claims” of a wife-beater who got shot by his injured victim to be equal to hers. This is just another iteration of the “moral equivalence” and “cycle of violence” lies that outsiders find useful for helping them to avoid moral clarity and take the side that is right.

That fact makes this comment by Miller astonishing: “But the fact is we do have to see this conflict from both sides, regardless of our special bonds with the Israelis. Unless we’re prepared to exercise independence when it comes to mediation, we won’t succeed.” We know the Israeli “side”: a free, democratic, open country that recognizes human rights and confessional tolerance, a country founded on the territory their ancestors had continually inhabited for three millennia, a country willing to live in peace with its neighbors yet has been subjected for nearly a century to war and terrorist attacks at a frequency and lethality that no other country would tolerate for five seconds.

We also know what the State Department thinks is the other “side”: an indigenous people driven from their land by imperialists, victims of colonialism’s depredations, “occupied” by an alien power, subjected to “settlements” and “checkpoints,” and denied their longing for “national self-determination.” A people who want only to live peacefully side-by-side with Israel.

This interpretation of the conflict has been proven false over and over again. The Arabs have made it clear in word and deed that they hate Israel and want to destroy it, not because it is a neo-colonial outpost of the West that denies Arabs a national homeland, but because Israel is inhabited by infidel Jews, the scions of “apes and pigs,” the historical impediment to Muslim expansion, and the unjust “occupiers” of an Islamic waqf, a conquered territory that becomes a perpetual “endowment” of the Muslim peoples, and the destiny of which is to be brought back under Muslim suzerainty. Thus it is the sacred duty of Muslims to restore such territories to the umma by waging “jihad, jihad, jihad,” as Yasser Arafat used to preach, or by negotiating temporary “truces” that allow the faithful time to become strong enough to defeat the enemy.

Of course, our sages in the foreign policy establishment dismiss such obvious motives as the irrational residue of confessional bias or even “racism” —even though 14 centuries of Islamic history, scripture, doctrine, and jurisprudence consistently describe these motives for aggression evident today in the conflict with the Israelis. And this brings us to the premier reason why a government bureaucracy—which is headed by political appointees, funded with taxpayer money, and freed from accountability for failure—continues to repeat analyses and policies that fail year after year. As the great historian of the Soviet terror Robert Conquest put it, “It is easy enough to fall into the trap of thinking that others think, within reason, like ourselves. But this trap is precisely the error that must be

avoided in foreign affairs.” That is, a failure of imagination, the inability to think past our own arrogant Western, modern assumptions and instead see the conflict through the eyes of the enemy.

At the end of his column Miller at least admits that these decades of failure might mean that “Maybe it just can’t work,” that no negotiated solution is possible, and that Kushner like those before him will “remain trapped in a peace-process Bermuda Triangle, wandering around between a two-state solution that’s too hard to implement and one that’s still too important to abandon.” Why is he so pessimistic? Because he’s finally realized that we’ve utterly misinterpreted the motives of the Arabs, and ignored their religious doctrines and traditional practices? That they really don’t want a “two-state-solution”? That we’ve continually practiced a moral equivalency that is in fact moral idiocy, an unwillingness to say there is a right and a wrong, a just and an unjust, set of motives on each side?

No, just at the moment when you hope Miller might think outside the foreign-policy box, he retreats into the flabby banality that “you need real leadership and commitment by the two sides.” Commitment to what? The Palestinian leadership has had “commitment” all right—to destroy Israel as a state and return the ancient homeland of the Jewish people to its divinely ordained superiors. Yasser Arafat and Mahmoud Abbas have failed to be “real” leaders in our eyes only because they won’t make the effort to commit to our alien ideals we arrogantly assume are desired by everyone.

We, on the other hand, have failed not so much because of mediocre leaders, but because guided by our State Department, we continue to shoehorn the conflict into our Western paradigm of anticolonialism, nationalist self-determination, and the desire for our goods like human rights, democracy, and individual freedom. We are repeating the same old failure of imagination, and so will end up with the same old failure of diplomacy. And the wages of that failure will continue to be the blood of Israelis.

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About the Middle East

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