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# “Peace in the Middle East (I)”

## Can it be achieved under the present circumstances?

After over fifty years of the bizarre notion of not recognizing the "existence" of the State of Israel, after eight years of the Oslo "peace process", and after being offered unbelievably generous conditions to bring an end to the long and bloody conflict, the Palestinians have rejected those terms and have instead chosen to continue on their path of violence. They have erupted in the bloody Al-Aksa Intifada, which so far has caused hundreds of dead and thousands of injured. The question can be raised whether peace with the Palestinians is possible at all.

## What are the facts?

**The Root of the Middle East Conflict.** Many observers of the Middle East believe that the root of the area's conflict lies in the dispute between the Palestinians and the Israeli Jews -- that peace could come to the area if that conflict could be resolved. And the way it should be resolved, these observers believe, is by Israel's yielding its heartland, Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank"), and the Gaza Strip for the creation of a Palestinian state and by returning the Golan Heights to Syria. But after the late Hafez Assad's brusque refusal to accept the return of the Golan (because it would not include the shores of the Sea of Galilee), and after Arafat's contemptuous refusal of Barak's generous offer, it is clear that the Arabs do not want peace -- they want confrontation and the destruction of Israel. People also overlook that the conflict between Pales-

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**"Real peace . . . can only happen through a complete change of mentality, policies, and historical ambitions in the Arab-Iranian block."**

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tinian Arabs and Jews long predates Israel's control over the administered territories, that Arab-Arab wars are endemic in the area, and that Israel would be defenseless and at the mercy of its implacable enemies if it were to yield control of these strategic territories without a full peace -- not just with the Palestinians, but with *all* the Arabs. **The Menace of Islamic Fundamentalism.** The clamor for yielding strategic territories to the Arabs is the first step in the immutable Arab attempt to liquidate Israel altogether. Because, certainly, Israel, with its fewer than 6 million inhabitants, compared to almost 300 million Arabs, and with its less than 10,000 square miles, compared to almost 5 million square miles of the Arab countries, cannot possibly be a threat to peace or a menace to the Arabs. And reducing the territory of Israel from 10,000 square miles to 7,000 square miles would not seem likely to bring peace one step closer. The main reason that real peace is so difficult to attain is the political and cultural context of the Middle East, which is domi-

ated by the menace of Islamic fundamentalism. By the tenets of this fundamentalism, Israel's size is not of importance; it is the very existence of Israel that, to fundamentalist believers, is an intolerable offense, an unacceptable insult to Islam. The fundamentalist Moslems -- Hamas, Hezbollah, Islamic Jihad, and all the others -- do not aim at peace with Israel or the recovery of some territory. Their publicly declared aim is the destruction of the Jewish State. On more than one occasion, the Islamic Jihad has stated: "[This is] definite and irrevocable . . . We will be satisfied with nothing but the destruction of Israel." **Real Peace Must Be Global.** The current upheavals in Israel, in its administered territories, and in the areas that Israel has transferred

to the Palestinian Authority, may give the impression that peace would come to the region if Israel would come to terms with the aspirations of the Palestinians. But that is impossible, because the destruction of Israel is the stated purpose of the Palestinians, as embedded in their never-revoked Covenant. But even if it were achievable, peace would not come about, because such a peace would be a non-global one. The most fervent enemies of Israel -- Iran, Iraq, and including even Egypt (with which Israel is technically at peace) -- have as their principal foreign policy goal the destruction of Israel, a goal that would not be altered even if Israel acceded to every wish of the Palestinians. Those Arab statesmen who have tried to come to terms with the Jewish State have invariably found a terrible end. King Abdullah of Transjordan was assassinated by the rejectionists, so was President Anwar Sadat of Egypt, and so was President Bashir Gemayel of Lebanon, all of whom envisioned peaceful cooperation and co-existence with Israel. Every Arab leader knows that any overt declaration of wishing to make real peace and to co-exist and to cooperate with Israel is a suicidal death sentence.

We all want peace, of course, especially the Israelis, who have been almost constantly embattled since the foundation of their state. But because of Arab-Islamic fundamentalism that cannot tolerate a Jewish presence on any part of "Arab territory", and because any peace arrived at would be non-global, such real peace would seem difficult to attain at this time. One hopes that real peace -- the Arabs' acceptance of a Jewish State and peaceful co-existence and cooperation with it -- will come eventually. But it can only happen through a complete change of mentality, policies, and historical ambitions in the Arab-Iranian block, abandonment of fanatic fundamentalism, and change to genuine democracy. And that may well take a very long time. In the meantime, Israel must keep up its guard and cannot afford to yield strategic territory, without which it would be vulnerable.

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