

OPINION and ANALYSIS

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**A selection of some of the more challenging and thought-provoking
local and international writings on the Middle East**

<http://www.sazionfed.co.za>

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This is not the time to discard the two-state solution, for no other option can possibly attract mutual assent; nor to give up on negotiations, for no outcome will be imposed from outside. It is time, though, to incorporate new issues and constituencies; rethink Palestinian strategy to alter the balance of power; and put in place a more effective international architecture.

6. Address by Minister Baird to the American Jewish Congress

I've got to tell you: our strong support for Israel is not about politics at home. And it certainly is not about winning popularity contests at the United Nations.

Radicals can be defeated

Alan Dershowitz, YNet News, 12 May 2012

<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0.7340.L-4227866.00.html>

I was gratified to read the article by Kasim Hafeez, a former anti-Semite who had become a Zionist. I was particularly gratified to learn that my book, *The Case for Israel*, played a role in his conversion from irrational hatred to support based on his own observations of the reality of Israel.

Hafeez's article came at a time when I was becoming skeptical of my own ability, and that of others who try to make the civil liberties case for Israel, to influence public opinion. The hatred for Israel in parts of Europe and on many university campuses has become so irrational that no evidence, regardless of how indisputable and powerful it may be, seems to be able to change closed minds hardened by years of unremitting falsehoods. These falsehoods take on an aura of undeserved credibility, particularly when espoused by people who identify themselves as Jewish or Israeli (or even formerly Jewish or formally Israeli.)

But whenever I get discouraged, I recall an incident several years ago at the University of California at Irvine, which is a hotbed of anti-Israel hate speech. This is the very same campus where radical Islamic students tried to prevent Israel's moderate ambassador, Professor Michael Oren, from speaking.

Use extremism against radicals

About a year before that incident, I spoke to a full audience of students that included some of the same radicals that tried to shut Oren down. About 100 of them sat to my right. Another 100 or so students, wearing pro-Israel shirts and kipot, sat to my left. Several hundred additional students were in the middle - both literally and ideologically. I know that because I asked for a show of hands before I began my remarks.

I first asked for students to raise their hands if they generally support Israel. All the students to my left and several in the middle raised their hands. I then asked how many students supported the Palestinian side. All the students to my right and several in the middle raised their hands. I then posed the following question to the pro-Israel group:

“How many of you would support a Palestinian state living in peace and without terrorism next to Israel?” Every single pro-Israel hand immediately went up. I then asked how many on the pro-Palestine side would accept a Jewish state within the 1967 borders, with no settlements on territory claimed by the Palestinians. There was some mumbling and brief conversation among the people to my right, but not a single hand was raised.

The debate was essentially over, as everyone in the middle now recognized that this was not a conflict between pro-Israel and pro-Palestine groups, but rather, a conflict between those who would accept a two-state solution and those who would reject any Jewish state anywhere in the Middle East. The pro-Israel view had prevailed because I was able to use the extremism of the anti-Israel group to demonstrate the ugly truth about Israel's enemies to the large group of students in the middle with open minds.

I have now used this heuristic repeatedly on college campuses, and with considerable success. The lesson, I believe, is not to try to persuade irrational anti-Israel extremists, but rather, to use their extremism - which often includes anti-American and anti-Western extremism - against them and in favor of a reasonable and centrist pro-Israel position.

The power of truth

The reality is that there are many open-minded people, even in Europe and on university campuses. Their voices are often drowned out by the much more vocal anti-Israel extremists. I saw this last year when I was invited to Norway by a Christian Zionist group. The group offered me, as a speaker, to the law faculties of Norway's three major universities. All three universities refused to invite me to speak, even though my appearance would cost them nothing. One of them said I would be invited, but only if I did not speak about Israel.

When students at the universities heard of the faculties' refusal to invite me, the students themselves asked me to appear. I spoke to packed houses at all three universities, and was told afterwards that I had changed the minds of many students who had never before heard the centrist kind of liberal case for Israel.

I will not give up despite, perhaps because of, the increasingly vocal hatred directed against Israel. It is imperative to continue to appeal to the open minds of rational people who want to hear all sides of this complex and nuanced issue. In the end, I have confidence that the power of truth will overcome the lies of anti-Israel extremists. If we believe in the marketplace of ideas, we must persist in our efforts. The conversion of Kasim Hafeez from an irrational anti-Semite to a thoughtful Zionist should encourage us to keep telling the truth.

Israel's coalition is about a fair draft, not Iran

Noah Feldman, Bloomberg View, 9 May 2012

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-05-09/israeli-coalition-is-about-a-fair-draft-not-iran.html>

Israel's newly expanded governing coalition may be more cautious about bombing Iran, and it may be marginally more open to serious negotiations with the Palestinians. But

neither issue was the immediate reason the centrist Kadima party joined the government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on May 8.

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Noah Feldman is a professor of constitutional and international law at Harvard and the author of five books, most recently "Scorpions: The Battles and Triumphs of FDR's Great Supreme Court Justices."

A looming crisis in Israeli politics was created when the country's highest court ruled in February that ultra-Orthodox men studying in Israeli yeshivas, academies of higher Talmudic learning, must be drafted into the Israeli army as of Aug. 1. Since Israel was founded in 1948, ultra-Orthodox yeshiva students have been exempt from compulsory military service, as have religious Jewish women and Palestinian Arabs who hold Israeli citizenship. Those exempt can choose nonmilitary national service, but few do.

The exemption was the product of a deal between David Ben-Gurion, Israel's legendary first prime minister, and the ultra-Orthodox minority, which was then tiny. At the time, many ultra-Orthodox Jews in Israel and abroad rejected the very idea of a Jewish state, believing that only God had the authority to re-create Jewish sovereignty in the land of Israel. To hasten the messianic age was a sin, and secular Zionism was its incarnation.

Exemptions for Support

What was more, in the 19th and early 20th centuries, the great yeshivas of Eastern Europe lived in constant fear of military conscription into the Russian army. It seemed monstrous for a Jewish state to draft yeshiva students. In the end, Ben-Gurion traded the military exemption for the political support of ultra-Orthodox leaders. Such backing has proved valuable to successive prime ministers, as none of Israel's major parties have ever won parliamentary majorities outright and so have often relied on religious parties to form governing coalitions.

Since Israel's founding, the ultra-Orthodox community has grown enormously, fueled in large part by state subsidies. From several hundred yeshiva students claiming the draft exemption, the ranks have risen to some 60,000. The number of people studying the Talmud full time is now far greater than at any point in Jewish history. To the ultra-Orthodox, this is not just a virtue in itself. Many believe the students are providing a spiritual defense for the state, earning divine merit that ensures Israel's continued existence.

At the same time, almost all the ultra-Orthodox have come to terms with the existence of Israel. Their leaders engage in shaping the way the government does its business. They have successfully lobbied for subsidies for their community and for a large share of control over the rabbinate that regulates marriage and divorce for Jewish Israelis. They keep the Israeli airline, El Al (ELAL), as well as the national bus companies from operating on the Sabbath, and they block Saturday traffic in their neighborhoods.

Yet Israel is mostly secular. Only 27 percent of Israelis say they keep the Sabbath in the traditional manner. And secular Israelis have become increasingly angry about what they consider ultra-Orthodox freeloading on the public goods of defense and social welfare. Secular Israelis consider it outrageous that small religious parties have been able to extract concessions from parties, left and right, as they try to build governing coalitions.

Breaking the Cycle

The latest round of coalition building may have broken that cycle. Netanyahu feared that passing a new law to address the high court's ruling might bring down his government, and had called early elections to avoid the conflict. He canceled that plan two days later, however, after expanding his government. With 94 of the 120 seats in parliament, the new government can address the ruling without fear of collapsing because of defections. The centrist and secular Kadima, led by former military chief of staff Shaul Mofaz, is likely to see eye to eye with Netanyahu's Likud party on this issue.

A new social contract will probably emerge between Israel's secular and ultra-Orthodox citizens. It's improbable that all yeshiva students will be drafted. This might lead to civil disobedience by students horrified at the prospect of being forced into secular society. The military certainly doesn't want the task of bringing 60,000 Talmudic scholars into the modern world and putting them through basic training. But one can expect that yeshiva students will have to perform various kinds of nonmilitary national service. Alternatives might include teaching, providing basic health care and administrative work.

The result will be a far-reaching transformation of Israel's ultra-Orthodox community. Torah study has weathered infinitely greater challenges, most recently the Holocaust, and it will survive. But the ranks of those who devote their entire lives exclusively to the practice will shrink to those who can do it particularly well.

Resolving the draft exclusion won't eliminate the rift between secular and ultra-Orthodox Israelis. Notably, there remains the issue of religious control of marriage and divorce. Indeed, ultra-Orthodox political demands may become more credible once the ultra-Orthodox community is carrying some of the burden of sustaining the state. Greater integration of the ultra-Orthodox into mainstream society may make Israel less secular, not more. Israelis will still have to decide how religiously Jewish the Jewish state ought to be. That question matters as much to Israel's future as the problems of war and peace.

The rights of indigeneous people and the rest of us

Shoshana Bryen, American Thinker, 11 May 2012

<http://www.jewishpolicycenter.org/3010/the-rights-of-indigenous-people-and-the-rest-of-us>

In early 2011, President Obama announced that the United States would sign the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Now the U.N. wants us to give Mt. Rushmore to the Indians. James Anaya, U.N. special rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, spent twelve days in the U.S. meeting with representatives of Native Americans. Returning to Geneva, he urged the government to turn over control of lands considered sacred to the tribes, including the Mt. Rushmore site.

It was bound to happen.

With typical overstatement, the president said as he announced U.S. participation in the Declaration, "The aspiration it affirms, including respect for the institutions and rich cultures of native peoples, are ones we must always seek to fulfill."

Always? Americans happily adapt and adopt parts of other people's cultures (Chinese food unlike anything served in Beijing, pizza Italians wouldn't recognize, St. Patrick's Day and Cinco de Mayo parties) and respect other parts (forms of dress, holy days and fasting for Ramadan). But there are aspects of "native" cultures that simply do not warrant respect: honor killings, female genital mutilation, slavery, stripping trees for cooking fuel, clubbing baby seals, and governance by the sword come to mind.

The Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is a prescription for endless warfare. "Indigenous peoples have the right to the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired," according to Article 26. Article 28 states that qualified groups "have the right to redress," which can include "restitution" or "just, fair and equitable compensation" for land or resources that have been "confiscated, taken (or) occupied."

Applied to American Indian tribes, it not only covers Mt. Rushmore, but also may include reparations and mineral rights.

Applied to Palestinians and Kurds, not to mention minorities from Azeris in Iran to Uighurs in China to Armenians, Hmong tribesmen, and Guatemalan Indians, it could wreak havoc.

The Kurds form a tribal/national grouping that spans Iraq, Iran, Turkey, and Syria. They are unquestionably an "indigenous people" with a distinct language and culture. Is the United States prepared to support border changes to allow them the right of self-determination? American lives were expended in the quest for a unitary Iraq, and we supported Turkey's determination not to allow Kurds to secede during the PKK war. But how can we deny the Kurds while supporting a Palestinian "right to self determination"?

This raises the question of whether the Palestinians are actually a separate grouping outside their multigenerational refugee status and determination to erase Israel. Certainly they are less separated from West Bank, Israeli, and Jordanian Arabs than the Kurds are from Turks and the Arabs of Iraq. Palestinians are largely descended from the people of the Ottoman vilayet of Syria and the British Mandate. But Jordan's King Abdullah is a Hashemite from the Hejaz of Arabia.

This in turn raises the question of which set of people is the "indigenous" one, and which is the usurper. How long does it take before a former indigenous people are lost to history and their usurpers become the new indigenous people? Those who call themselves "Palestinians" are not the descendants of the indigenous Philistines; they are the descendants of Arab tribes that arrived in the 7th century.

Today, one of the few things upon which Hamas and Fatah agree is that all of Israel and Jordan are "occupied" Palestinian territory. While it is surely pushing for the establishment of Palestine in *part* of the old British Mandate territory, is the United States prepared to turn Jordan over to its "indigenous peoples" so they can have the rest of it? Or replace Israel with "Palestine"?

It is noteworthy in this context that the Jewish people constitute the ultimate success of an indigenous people reclaiming sovereignty and rights in their historic space. Jews have been there from the time of the Bible. Most but not all of them were expelled in the early part of the last millennium, but Jews maintained religious, cultural, linguistic, and tribal ties to the land until the establishment of the Third Jewish Commonwealth in 1948.

The conferring of "rights" on "peoples" implies a corresponding debt to be paid to them by others. Doing so without responsibility (the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is non-binding) is a prescription for demands by people determined to wrest something from others who may not be prepared to pay or even acknowledge that the debt is real. And the debt may not be real.

Far from a harmless exercise in multicultural sensitivity, the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples sets the stage for an endless series of "small wars" that may have big consequences. Mt. Rushmore is only the beginning.

Sanctions are only a stop-gap

Patrick Clawson, Foreign Affairs, 8 May 2012

<http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/137617/patrick-clawson/sanctions-are-only-a-stop-gap>

To judge the effectiveness of Western sanctions against Iran, it is important to first establish their purpose. U.S. officials and their European counterparts have set out a number of different goals for the sanctions regime, including deterring the proliferation of nuclear technology across the Middle East, as other countries imitate Iran, and persuading Iran to comply with the UN Security Council's orders to suspend all nuclear enrichment. The sanctions have met some of those aims and failed to meet others. But for the Obama administration, they have succeeded in one crucial way -- bringing Iran back to the negotiating table. The question, then, is not whether sanctions have worked but whether the strategy they serve is correct.

To begin with, Tehran's decision to reenter discussions about the future of its nuclear program represents a dramatic about-face. During the January 2011 round of negotiations between Iran and the so-called P5 plus 1 (the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and Germany), for example, Tehran rejected any talk of its nuclear program. For the next 15 months, it refused to meet until the P5 plus 1 accepted

the precondition of Iran's right to enrich uranium. In new talks in Istanbul this past March, however, Iran agreed to discuss its nuclear efforts and dropped its precondition.

The question is not whether sanctions have worked but whether the strategy they serve is correct.

The Islamic Republic did not do this out of goodwill but because of tougher sanctions. By demonstrating a willingness to negotiate and working closely with Europe, the Obama administration has rallied many countries behind its efforts. This broad coalition has established increasingly severe sanctions -- results that the United States could not have achieved alone. In March, for example, the European Union banned the largest Iranian banks from the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication, the main institution used for transferring money between banks across the globe, thereby crippling the ability of Iranian financial institutions to conduct business. And earlier this year, the European Union began imposing an oil embargo on Iran that has already reduced the country's oil exports. In the last six months, these measures, along with Iran's erratic economic policies, have robbed the currency of half its value and, according to Iranian estimates, caused inflation to soar above 20 percent (and likely much higher). Iranian Central Bank Governor Mahmoud Bahmani described the sanctions "as worse than physical war," proclaiming Iran "under siege." And Iranian business leaders worry that more sanctions are on the way, since the United States and Europe have made clear that the longer the impasse over its nuclear ambitions continues, the more economic and political trouble Iran will face.

The sanctions have also helped Washington slow Tehran's nuclear progress. Alongside sabotage, defections, cyber attacks, and assassinations, sanctions -- such as the UN ban on the acquisition of so-called dual-use items, seemingly benign technologies that could be applied to the nuclear program -- have hampered Iran's technological advancement. For example, the Islamic Republic, despite its best efforts, continues to use a poor, outdated design for its centrifuges, which frequently break down because the country cannot obtain better technology or high-quality materials.

Yet the sanctions do have limits. The EU oil embargo and U.S. and EU financial restrictions have largely failed to decrease Iran's oil revenue. Those sanctions would have had much more impact a decade ago, when Iran averaged \$19 billion a year in oil income. Oil prices are now so high that Iran can compensate for Western pressure. Prior to the recent sanctions, the International Monetary Fund estimated that revenue from Iran's oil and gas exports in 2012–13 would reach \$104 billion, \$23 billion more than in 2010–11. In March, *The Wall Street Journal* cited estimates that sanctions could cut Iranian oil income in half -- painful but still equal to the \$54 billion Iran earned from oil sales in 2005–6, the year when it decided to provoke the West by resuming nuclear enrichment after a three-year pause. Even if sanctions could somehow decimate Iran's economy, there is still no guarantee that the regime would end its pursuit of nuclear technology.

Whether or not diplomacy results in an agreement, the sanctions have already fulfilled the core objective of the Obama administration -- namely, kick-starting negotiations. But that is not the right goal. Given Iran's poor track record of honoring agreements, negotiations remain a gamble because they may never lead to an agreement, let alone one that can be sustained. Rather than focus on talks that may not produce a deal, then,

the United States should place far more emphasis on supporting democracy and human rights in Iran. A democratic Iran would likely drop state support for terrorism and end its interference in the internal affairs of Arab countries such as Iraq and Lebanon, improving stability in the Middle East. And although Iran's strongly nationalist democrats are proud of the country's nuclear progress, their priority is to rejoin the community of nations, so they will likely agree to peaceful nuclearization in exchange for an end to their country's isolation.

The United States could assist democratic forces in Iran by providing money and moral support. It could fund people-to-people exchanges and student scholarships; support civil society groups providing assistance to Iranian activists; work closely with technology companies such as Google on how to transmit information to the Iranian people; and overhaul Voice of America's Persian News Network, where journalistic standards have suffered under uneven management. It could also raise human rights abuses in every official meeting with Iranian officials, such as the ongoing nuclear negotiations, and bring Iranian rights violations to the United Nations and the International Court of Justice. Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, understands the danger of a popular revolution in his country and has done everything in his power to prevent it. If the United States is going to take a risk, it should aim not for a partial, insecure nuclear arrangement but the best return possible -- a democratic Iran.

The Emperor has no clothes: Palestinians and the end of the peace process

Middle East Report 122, International Crisis Group, 7 May 2012

<http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/israel-palestine/122-the-emperor-has-no-clothes-palestinians-and-the-end-of-the-peace-process.aspx>

To judge the effectiveness of Western sanctions against Iran, it is important to first establish their purpose. U.S. officials and their European counterparts have set out a number of different goals for the sanctions regime, including deterring the proliferation of nuclear technology across the Middle East, as other countries imitate Iran, and persuading Iran to comply with the UN Security Council's orders to suspend all nuclear enrichment. The sanctions have met some of those aims and failed to meet others. But for the Obama administration, they have succeeded in one crucial way -- bringing Iran back to the negotiating table. The question, then, is not whether sanctions have worked but whether the strategy they serve is correct.

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The sanctions have also helped Washington slow Tehran's nuclear progress. Alongside sabotage, defections, cyber attacks, and assassinations, sanctions -- such as the UN ban on the acquisition of so-called dual-use items, seemingly benign technologies that could be applied to the nuclear program -- have hampered Iran's technological advancement. For example, the Islamic Republic, despite its best efforts, continues to use a poor, outdated design for its centrifuges, which frequently break down because the country cannot obtain better technology or high-quality materials.

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Address by Minister Baird to the American Jewish Congress

May 3, 2012 - Washington, D.C.

<http://www.international.gc.ca/media/aff/speeches-discours/2012/05/03a.aspx?view=d>

Thank you very much for that warm welcome. It is an honour to be among the distinguished guests speaking today. And it's a real pleasure to be back in Washington.

Beyond being a close observer of American politics, I quite love this city as I think it embodies the hopes and aspirations of a truly great nation. Even in times of political gridlock!

This visit, though, is particularly special for me. The AJC [American Jewish Congress] does such important advocacy work. Not only for the Jewish people of America and of the world, but in supporting dignity and respect for all peoples.

It is truly commendable—and important—work.

And in that work, you have a reliable partner in Canada, represented here in Washington by our ambassador—and my good friend—Gary Doer. Let me state at the outset, and for the record, that Israel has no greater friend in the world than Canada. I make that point around the world often.

In fact, I will make that point again when [Israel's] President Shimon Peres visits Ottawa next week.

I've got to tell you: our strong support for Israel is not about politics at home. And it certainly is not about winning popularity contests at the United Nations. Canada has the scars to show for it. You see, for us it's all about values.

Canada and Israel—like the United States—share the same values. We respect freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Dignity for the people we serve. We have a history of defending the vulnerable, challenging the aggressor and confronting evil.

In the conduct of our foreign policy we do not simply “go along to get along.” Over the course of our history, Canada has not shied away from standing up for what is just and what is right. Indeed, Canada has aggressively fought against hatred and intolerance in all forms. And we have paid a high toll for the principles that guide us.

In two world wars—and in conflicts before and since—we have paid in blood spilled and lives lost. All in defence of freedom, democracy and dignity. We back our principles with action. Canada is no small player in this regard.

In Afghanistan, we have invested billions and billions of dollars and sacrificed more than 150 lives to ensure that country never again becomes a haven for terrorism. We don't take these stands and espouse our values for popularity's sake. We take these stands because we know there is no moral equivalence between right and wrong. At the UN and elsewhere, we make it clear that Israel's right to exist is non-negotiable. We vote against one-sided and unfair resolutions.

When Assad murders thousands and thumbs his nose at the world, as Iran continuously abuses the fundamental rights of its people while fuelling international terror and unrest, the United Nations Security Council seems overcome with paralysis. We say directly to UN member states that the greatest enemies of that organization are those that sit idly by, watching its slow decline. We believe what's right is right. And what's wrong is wrong. And it is in defence of those beliefs that we act.

In our view, liberal democracies and international terrorist groups are not equal. They do not deserve equal treatment. The concept of moral relativism in international relations is something we reject. We fight it constantly, regardless of whether our position is popular, convenient or expedient.

Over the past 20 years, I have visited Israel on a number of occasions. On one such visit, when I was a provincial legislator, in my briefing over dinner, overlooking Jerusalem's majestic old city, I asked a Canadian official in Israel one simple question:

Why does Canada continually vote with one-sided resolutions condemning the liberal-democratic state of Israel?

At that time, we did. The official paused, peering down at me like I was a provincial politician—"provincial" both figuratively and literally—and gave me a 'go-along-to-get-along' response. The official said that these resolutions were meaningless, they occur every year and nobody pays attention. That is no longer how Canada operates. Not under this foreign minister. And not under this prime minister.

We pay attention, we think the resolutions are relevant, and we believe this type of anti-Israel rhetoric undermines the very institutions that should be promoting liberal democracies instead of cutting them down.

We will not apologize for the positions we take, because we stand for what is right. Just like Israel, we stand for the freedom and dignity of the individual.

We see these fundamentals are still missing in areas confronting the most substantial changes. These areas of unrest and violence are aching for freedom. And for dignity.

Families want the dignity of providing for their children, of practising their faith, of going about their daily lives in peace and security. Prosperity is central to this discussion.

The absence of jobs, hope and opportunity leads to violence, unrest and instability. In Canada, we realize this fundamental truth; the impact that the national economy has on the average household—and on the aspirations of our people—is why we have made economic matters our government's top priority. Jobs, growth and long-term prosperity. Everything we do, we do with those goals in mind for Canadians.

Many people I meet are surprised to know that Canada has the third-largest oil reserves in the world. We are one of the world's leading mining nations. And we produce more hydroelectricity than almost any other country. We are blessed, indeed.

This is why we continue to drive our country forward. Reducing regulations, balancing our books and developing our resources responsibly and trading them around the world. You may have heard of the infamous Keystone XL Pipeline. This is just one project of many that can create jobs and opportunity—not just for Canadians but for Americans, too.

Tens of thousands of jobs, billions of dollars in spinoffs and the energy security that America has sought for generations. We are confident progress will be made. But we cannot simply sell to one market. That is why we have looked to Asia, to the fastest-growing economies across the Pacific. Canada, like the United States, is a Pacific nation and a trading nation at its core. And our government continues to work on trade deals with countries around the world. The European Union members, Jordan, Japan and India, just to name a few.

We are expanding our trade horizons. And other countries are very willing to deal with us. People are slowly realizing that turmoil in one part of the world can hit home—and hit hard.

In the last year, even some countries that are resource-rich have been fraught with unrest. In parts of the Arab world, for example, that's because bountiful resources haven't translated into basic rights for more than a select few.

That can't last forever.

Nor should it.

Canada, though, is a liberal democracy. A country that respects the human rights and dignity of its people. One that practises responsible development; one that is built on the foundations that all prosperous and stable nations share.

Canada can be a source of stability in uncertain times.

We are what is called a “smart power.”

A country that punches above our weight.

An energy powerhouse.

An example to the world.

There are great challenges that like-minded countries around the world need to confront. Our interests and our values are very much connected—rooted in the fundamentals that countries like ours hold so dear.

Freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

The dignity of our people.

We fight for these fundamentals at every turn. Through the G-8 and the G-20, through the United Nations and the Commonwealth.

We protect and promote the values that Canadians believe in.

We will not “go along” or look the other way when a minority is denied its human rights or its fundamental freedoms.

It is our common duty to uphold the rights of the afflicted, to give voice to the voiceless.

As citizens of the global community, we have a solemn duty to defend the vulnerable, to challenge the aggressor, to protect and promote human rights and human dignity at home and abroad.

For women, Christians, Bahá'ís and other victims of persecution in Iran. For Roman Catholic priests and other Christian clergy and laity, driven to worship underground in China. For Christians driven out of Iraq by al Qaeda and Copts assaulted and killed in the streets of Egypt.

Gays and lesbians are threatened with criminalization in far too many countries.

Our nationalities are many, but we share only one humanity.

Over the past century, the world was infected by a lethal combination of utopian ideology and brutal despotism that spawned totalitarian regimes that enslaved their own peoples.

Apologists tried to persuade us that the ideology of communism was benign. Canadians knew better. We took a stand for freedom and fundamental human rights. We stood against oppression in the very early days of World War Two. We stood with its brave people and with those of the other captive nations of Central and Eastern Europe. One of those Canadians was my grandfather. He embodied the Canadian tradition of standing up for what is right and what is just.

He believed, as I do today, that going along with the common thought was a dangerous road to travel—far more dangerous than risking his life to protect our values, our freedoms and our dignity.

Just as fascism and communism were the great struggles of his generation, terrorism is the great struggle of ours. And far too often, the Jewish people are on the front lines of this struggle.

Some 20 years ago, I had a summer job at the very ministry of foreign affairs that I am pleased to lead now. As a bright-eyed, idealistic young person, I was being briefed on the daily goings-on: once, I was told, simply, that it was raining in Metula.

Most of you in the audience probably know that when one says it's raining in Metula, one means that there are rockets being indiscriminately launched into one of Israel's most northern towns.

Thoughts of what actions to take ran through my head. Should we release a statement of condemnation? Should we take this to the United Nations? Naïve as I was then, I asked the official: What do we do next? What should Canada do?

His response was something that will stay with me for the rest of my life. He said, "John, on this issue, it's difficult to tell the white hats from the black hats." I sat there, doodling. White hat, black hat. Israel, Hezbollah. Liberal democracy, terrorist organization. Canada's best friend, our worst enemy. "The differences," I replied, "couldn't be more stark."

That exchange—like others I've shared with you tonight—helped shaped my views on the world more than I could ever have known at the time. More strongly than ever, I believe that Israel is a country we should not just stand behind but one we should stand shoulder to shoulder with.

The international criticism thrown upon Israel should never equate it with an international terrorist organization. With an organization that indiscriminately launches rockets with the goal of death, destruction and chaos. With an organization that makes the complete destruction of Israel fundamental to its charter. Israel is subject to protests and international criticism on a daily basis. We are under no illusions that Israel is perfect. But as [Israel's] Prime Minister [Benjamin] Netanyahu rightly put it to [pro-Palestinian] protesters landing in Israel last month:

"You could have chosen to protest the Syrian regime's daily savagery against its own people, which has claimed thousands of lives. "You could have chosen to protest the Iranian regime's brutal crackdown on dissent and support of terrorism throughout the world. "But instead you chose to protest against Israel, the Middle East's sole democracy."

This is what drives me, and this is what drives our prime minister: fighting this unabashed moral relativism that runs counter to our values and our core interests. In these pursuits, we must constantly remind ourselves that we are neither hopeless nor helpless moving forward.

The massive wave of change that has swept through parts of the world in the last year or so has a voice. It is our voice.

And if we continue to speak the same words, if we continue to promote the same values, if we continue to stand against evil, oppression and despair, then those calling for change will have their voice.

And I can tell you here tonight, with great confidence, that if we continue to speak out, for our values, for shared prosperity and shared dignity, that Israel—like the United States and like Canada—will be on the right side of history.

Thank you.

NOTE: The views expressed in certain articles are not necessarily those of the SAZF

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