

## It's the settlements, stupid

By David Horowitz

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'The next few minutes will be personally rather painful for me... I was a friend of Israel long before I became a Tory. My wife's family were instrumental in the creation of the Jewish state. Indeed, some of them were with Weizmann at the Paris conference [of 1919]... In the Six Day War, I became personally involved. There was a major attempt to destroy Israel... Six years later, in the Yom Kippur War in 1973, the same situation happened again...

"I have stood by Israel through thick and thin, through the good years and the bad. I have sat down with ministers and senior Israeli politicians and urged peaceful negotiations and a proportionate response to prevarication, and I thought that they were listening. But I realize now, in truth, looking back over the past 20 years, that Israel has been slowly drifting away from world public opinion. [The annexation of the 950 acres of the West Bank](#) just a few months ago has outraged me more than anything else in my political life, mainly because it makes me look a fool, and that is something that I resent...

"I am not yet convinced that it [Palestine] is fit to be a state... Under normal circumstances, I would oppose the motion tonight; but such is my anger over Israel's behavior in recent months that I will not oppose the motion. I have to say to the Government of Israel that if they are losing people like me, they will be losing a lot of people."

– *Sir Richard Ottaway, Conservative MP for Croydon South, who visited Israel with his wife on a Conservative Friends of Israel trip three years ago. Ottaway abstained in Monday night's House of Commons vote urging British government recognition of Palestine.*

"Who can defend settlement building — the colonization of another country? We are talking about 600,000 Israeli settlers planted on Palestinian soil."

– *Andy Slaughter, Labour MP for Hammersmith. Slaughter voted for the motion, which was carried by 274 votes to 12.*

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is right.

He's right to argue that viable Palestinian statehood can only be achieved through negotiation and compromise with Israel.

He's right to worry that giving an independent Palestine full sovereignty in the violent, unstable Middle East exposes Israel to potential existential threat. Indeed, his emphatically pro-compromise chief negotiator, Justice Minister Tzipi Livni, [told The Times of Israel](#) just three weeks ago that it has always been plain to Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas that "any agreement (on Palestinian statehood) would not include full and complete sovereignty... It's clear that the sovereign Palestinian state must accept limitations. Certainly demilitarization."

Netanyahu's right to highlight the ease with which Hamas ousted Abbas's forces from Gaza in 2007 and built a terror state on Israel's southern border, and he's right to raise the profound concern that it would do the same in the West Bank if Israel were to relinquish security oversight there in the foreseeable future. [As he told the UN last month](#), "Israel



Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addresses the 69th session of the United Nations General Assembly at UN headquarters, Monday, Sept. 29 2014 . (photo credit: AP/John Minchillo)

cannot have territories from which it withdraws taken over by Islamic militants yet again, as happened in Gaza and Lebanon.”

He’s right to stress that Hamas remains avowedly committed to the destruction of Israel. And he’s right to castigate Abbas for having endorsed a government of “reconciliation” and unity with Hamas, a terrorist organization that killed hundreds of Israelis in suicide bombings in the Second Intifada and held all of Gaza hostage as it used its war machine against Israel this summer.



Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas addresses the 69th Session of the UN General Assembly on September 26, 2014, in New York. (photo credit: AFP/Timothy A. Clary)

Netanyahu’s right to lambaste Abbas bitterly for the despicable charge of “genocide” the PA president leveled at Israel from that same UN podium last month, before hundreds of millions of impressionable viewers around the world. He’s right to rail about such pernicious incitement against Israel, carefully calculated to ratchet up Palestinian and wider Arab hostility to the very fact of Israel’s existence.

He’s right to complain about double standards in the treatment of Israel by the international community, and about the abysmal misreporting of this summer’s Israel-Hamas

war.

He’s right to protest the iniquities of the UN, with its inbuilt anti-Israel bias and obsession, its cynically stacked war crimes probes, its central role in the perpetuation of the Palestinian refugee crisis. In their hour of need, to our north, its hapless peacekeepers flee to the safety of Israel from the clutches of Islamist terror groups. But to our south, it returns rockets found in its Gaza facilities to the Strip’s Islamist terrorist rulers for use against us.



UN Fijian peacekeepers members of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) wave as they ride on top of a vehicle while leaving the Syrian side of the Golan Heights into the Israeli side of the strategic plateau, on September 15, 2014 (photo credit: AFP/ JALAA MAREY)

Netanyahu’s right, if not to equate Hamas with Islamic State, then certainly to underline their common perversion of religion, disrespect for human life, and brutality.



He’s right to underline the dangers facing tiny Israel in a region beset by Islamic extremism, with Hamas still ruling Gaza and constantly seeking greater

Hezbollah armed to the teeth in southern Lebanon, Syria an anarchic, unpredictable hellhole, Islamic State on the march there and in Iraq, and Iran funding terrorism in the region and beyond while relentlessly upgrading its expertise on the road to a nuclear weapons arsenal.

Netanyahu's right about all of that, and it just doesn't matter. Because as the latest installment of Israel's debilitating [dispute with its essential American ally](#) underlined, as [the new Swedish government's declared policy](#) confirmed, and Monday's [British House of Commons debate](#) hammered home, those vital arguments don't resonate the way they need to in the Western world. They are not merely overshadowed, but sometimes eclipsed, by the issue of settlements. Their credibility is undermined by the issue of settlements. And thus crucial support for Israel is eroded by the issue of settlements.

Even some of its best friends are falling deaf to Israel, to an Israel with legitimate, existential concerns

Settlement construction was cited pejoratively some 40 times in Monday night's Westminster debate. No matter that building at Givat Hamatos — the subject of the most recent US flare-up — has yet to begin, or that Givat Hamatos is barely over the Green Line, and lies within Israel's claimed sovereign, unified Jerusalem. Never mind that the planned West Bank land annexation so galling to Sir Richard Ottaway is in the Etzion Bloc area, immediately south of Jerusalem, much of it privately purchased by Jews before the establishment of Israel, and envisaged by many Israelis as an area that would be retained by Israel as part of a land swap-redefined border under a permanent accord with the Palestinians. It makes no difference that the 1,000 acres at issue are near to the spot where three Israeli teenagers were seized and murdered by a Hamas terrorist cell on June 12.

Israel is building over the Green Line. Israel is deaf to the entreaties of even its best friends to stop doing so until the status of the disputed territories is resolved through negotiations. And even some of its best friends are now falling deaf to Israel, to an Israel with legitimate, existential concerns.

Netanyahu is also right to argue that each time a Sweden promises recognition for Palestine, or a British parliament urges such recognition, they reinforce Palestinian maximalist positions on the parameters of such a state, and thus stave off a successful resolution of Israeli-Palestinian two-state negotiations. But an ever-growing proportion of the international community just doesn't care about that any more, so fed up is it with the constant expansion of settlements. For how, runs the subtext, can Netanyahu credibly protest against unilateral pro-Palestinian political activity, how can he expect to be heeded, when his Israel is unilaterally remaking the facts on the ground?

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