

Joe Biden, the “Two-State Solution,” and Peace Through Strength

by Hugh Fitzgerald



At the recent debate among Democrats running for President, Bernie Sanders was predictably the most anti-Israel of the candidates. He said he would not, hesitate, this “proud Jewish person,” to withhold aid from Israel to force it to do American bidding, which in Sanders’ view includes removing Jewish settlements from the West Bank. After all, he has previously said that “Jewish settlements in occupied territory are illegal.” He called Netanyahu a “racist,” though he provided no examples of such “racism.” Sanders explained, in his contribution to the squaring-the-circle problem, that “the US should craft a foreign policy that is favorable to both Israel and Palestine.” Sorry, can’t be done. “Israel has the right not only to exist, but to exist in peace and security,” said Sanders, who spent time on a kibbutz in Israel as a young man.

It's nice of big-hearted Bernie Sanders to grant Israel "the right to exist." He even grants it the right to exist "in peace and security." But what if Israel cannot exist in "peace and security" unless it holds onto those supposedly "illegal settlements" in the West Bank, which provide it with the necessary strategic depth against invasion from the East? What if every military man who has studied the matter, beginning with the American military men sent by the Joint Chiefs to Israel in 1967, on President Johnson's orders, and produced a report on the territory which, as a matter of military necessity, Israel would have to retain. They included most of the West Bank, and all of the Jordan Valley and the Judean Hills. We all know that Bernie Sanders spent time on a kibbutz; too bad he didn't spend time in the IDF. Military matters are not his strong suit.

Given the vast buildup in Arab militaries since 1967, to expect that Israel could once again pull off its victory in the Six-Day War is to ask that country to entrust its security to another such miracle. Israel could not reasonably expect to survive if it were squeezed back into something like the pre-1967 lines – that is, the 1949 Armistice Lines – which Foreign Minister Abba Eban, a famous dove, correctly defined as the "lines of Auschwitz."

On what evidence does Sanders think that the Muslim Arabs have given up their desire to eliminate Israel? Did Hamas change its charter, or the views expressed every day by its leading members, fighters, clerics? Has Mahmoud Abbas shown a sincere willingness to engage in peace talks with Israel, or has he repeatedly turned down the offer of such talks, as he does even today? Why would Sanders expect him to behave any differently in the future? Abbas is a Slow Jihadist, willing to use the salami-tactics of creating an ever-smaller Israel through "peace agreements," but his ultimate aim is the same as that of the Fast Jihadists of Hamas: no more Israel.

If Sanders, who refers constantly to his Jewish heritage and

the fact that he once spent time on an Israeli kibbutz, a transparent way to defend himself against charges of being anti-Israel, had taken the time to study the history of the Mandate, he might be surprised to learn that the entire West Bank was part of the territory assigned to the future Jewish National Home, and that Israel's legal claim to that territory never lapsed; when Jordan managed to possess the West Bank from 1949 to 1967, it did so as the military "occupier." When Israel took control of the West Bank as a result of the Six-Day War, this did not create Israel's legal claim; that already existed. It merely put Israel in a position to exercise that pre-existing legal claim to the territory.

Sanders not only has little sympathy for, but also no understanding of, the plight of the Israelis who have to secure their tiny state against many would-be aggressors. There is Hamas, sending hundreds of rockets into southern Israel from Gaza, and constantly attempting to breach, with Molotov cocktails, grenades, and incendiary kites, Israel's security fence. There are Islamic State elements that have regrouped in Sinai; for now their main target is Egypt, but at any time they might attempt to send terrorists into Israel. There is Hezbollah, with its terror tunnels snaking into the Galilee, and its 140,000 rockets stockpiled in southern Lebanon. There is Jordan, where King Abdullah has to keep the lid on his own people, who increasingly demand that the peace treaty with Israel be ended. There is Turkey, where President Erdogan has published a plan for a pan-Islamic military force capable of overwhelming the Israelis and destroying their country.

And most menacing of all is the powerful Islamic Republic of Iran, which never fails to remind Israel, and the world, that it can destroy the Jewish State. To this end, it has already supplied Hezbollah with those 140,000 rockets ready to be loosed upon Israel.

Elizabeth Warren and Pete Buttigieg have joined Sanders in

leaving the door open to using US aid to Israel as a means to leverage Israel to change its policies on the Palestinians.

But one Democratic candidate does not think aid to Israel should be used as a weapon. Joe Biden, alone among the major candidates, has said he would not use aid as a weapon to force Israel to change its policies. Some have hailed him, not quite accurately I'm afraid, as a "pro-Israel" candidate. The bar for being "pro-Israel" has been set very low this year. He may not call Netanyahu a "racist" as Sanders does, but he has described his behavior as "outrageous." What does he mean? Is it outrageous for Netanyahu to have the Israeli military prevent Hamas from breaching the security fence on the border with Gaza? Has it been "outrageous" for him to have those soldiers first use tear gas and rubber bullets to stop the participants in the Great March of Return, and if the fence is about to be breached, by those throwing Molotov cocktails and grenades, then to allow those soldiers to use live fire? Was it "outrageous" for Netanyahu to allow the IDF to kill the northern leader of Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Abu Al-Ata, as he was planning a major terrorist operation against Israel? Was it "outrageous," after PIJ fired 450 rockets into Israel, disrupting life in southern Israel, with everyone having repeatedly to rush to shelters, for Netanyahu to have the IDF retaliate against PIJ offices, launching pads, and weapons storehouses? What should he have done? Was it "outrageous" for Netanyahu to welcome the move of the American Embassy to Jerusalem? Is it perhaps his muscular policy of replying promptly to every Palestinian attack that Biden finds "outrageous," though he does not explain, because he cannot, what he would have had Netanyahu do instead? It would have been good, in the face of Sanders' absurd claim that Netanyahu is a "racist," if Joe Biden had gone on the offensive, and said "Bernie has called Netanyahu a 'racist.'" This is a preposterous charge, and he knows it. I've known Bibi for a long time. We have our policy differences, but he hasn't a racist bone in his body."

Joe Biden did distinguish himself from Sanders, Warren, and Buttigieg during the debate on the subject of aid to Israel. Unlike them, he has repeatedly said he would never use the withholding of aid as a weapon with which to force Israel to do America's bidding. Biden has, however, repeated the phrase, the formula, the mantra, of what he and many others call a "two-state solution." This already assumes what needs to be proved: is there a "solution" to the Arab war on Israel? And if there isn't, should that be cause for endless doom and gloom, or is there another way to see things?

Let's state what those who have studied Islam already know: it is impossible for the Muslim Arabs to permanently accept the existence of Israel, whatever its borders. It is unacceptable for Unbelievers to possess land that was once possessed by Muslims; such land must forever belong to Muslims. It is especially maddening when those Unbelievers are the much-despised Jews, who have managed to stave off repeated attempts by Muslims, the "best of peoples," to snuff out the Jewish state's young life. And Israel exists, just as maddeningly, smack in the middle of the Arab world, separating North African Arabs from those in the Middle East. Israel is likened by the Arabs, because of its shape, to a "dagger" thrust into their heart; another favorite metaphor is that Israel is a "cancer." You don't pull a dagger only part-way out of your body; you deal with cancer by removing every last cell of it.

Of course those who believe in the "two-state solution" assume that there is some giving up of territory by Israel that will sufficiently placate the Arabs so that they will beat their swords into plowshares. The reverse is true: any further withdrawal by Israel, which in returning the entire Sinai to Egypt has already given back 95% of the land it had won by force of arms in the Six-Day War, will merely whet, not sate, Palestinian and other Arab appetites. Were Israel to give up the West Bank, it would again have an eight-mile-wide waist from Qalqilya to the sea. It would have the highest length-of-

border-to-enclosed-territory ratio of any country on earth – hellishly difficult to police all of that long border. The “Palestinians” see any future agreement with Israel as a way station on the path toward their final goal, which remains, for both the Fast Jihadists of Hamas and the Slow Jihadists of the Palestinian Authority, the end of the Jewish state.

And the “Palestinians” have powerful allies to help them in this task. There is Iran, whose leaders never fail to claim they are quite capable of destroying the Zionists. There is Turkey, which if President Erdogan has his way, would also participate in some kind of pan-Islamic attack on Israel. The “Palestinians” of the “moderate” PA speak among themselves about the destruction of the Zionist state; to the outside world, Saeb Erekat, Hanan Ashrawi, and Mahmoud Abbas soothingly refer to the “two-state solution.” They find it goes over quite well.

Let’s replace that word “solution” and speak, more realistically, of how this Arab war on Israel can be “managed.” The answer is that it can be managed in exactly the same way that the United States “managed” the threat from the Soviet Union: deterrence. The U.S. remained sufficiently, and obviously strong, so as to deter Soviet aggression. We – Israel, America, the entire West – cannot change the Qur’an, with its commands to wage violent Jihad against Infidels. But by helping to ensure that Israel remains overwhelmingly stronger than its enemies, America can promote a very long peace.

Three trends should be noted that will only improve Israel’s ability to deter its enemies in the future. First, Israel’s technological superiority over the Arabs will continue to widen, as it has been doing for the past several decades. Second, the most important weapon of the Arabs and Iran remains their revenues from oil. But oil demand is static, and may soon decrease: electric vehicles, and the increasing use of solar and wind power, are steadily reducing oil’s share of

the energy market. This means less financial support for the Palestinians, affecting their ability to wage war. Third, demography is not, as everyone seems to assume, on the side of the Arabs. With an average of 3.1 children per woman, Israel has the highest fertility rate in the OECD by a considerable margin and much higher than the OECD average of 1.7. Over the past decade, the annual population growth among Muslims in Israel has fallen significantly, from around 3% to less than 2.2% by 2013, and continues inexorably to decrease, while the overall Jewish growth rate rose from around 1.4% to 1.7% in 2013 and continues, just as inexorably, to increase. If present trends continue, fears about a “Muslim population bomb” in Israel can be laid to rest.

Say it a dozen times a day: there is no “solution” – whether one-state, two-state, or n-state – to the Arab war on Israel. But Israel will be able to manage that conflict, while it goes from strength to strength, technologically, financially, demographically, through deterrence. “Peace Through Strength” – remember? That is good enough. That’s more than good enough. Now let’s try to get that message to Joe Biden.

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