

The current paradigm governing Israel's strategic relations is flawed. Perhaps it is due to millennia of suffering that Jews, and by extension the Jewish state, are compelled to adopt a position of weakness *vis-à-vis* the external world; however, the fact remains: Israel is strong.

The Palestinians, on the other hand, are weak. Nonetheless, they have had ample opportunity to see the creation of "Palestine," yet time and again they rejected generous offers tabled by Israeli leaders, notably by Ehud Barack in 2000 and subsequently by Ehud Olmert in 2008.

The question arises: at what point is enough actually enough?

The "peace process" is a political charade, the effects of which are deadly: Israel continues to pay a steep price in the blood of its innocents. Notwithstanding the tragic loss of life, the result of Israel's continued acquiescence to the irrational demands of the "international community" is that a country that is superior to its adversary in virtually every way is made to reduce itself to the level of dysfunctional entities, in particular the Palestinian Authority.

The irony—and tragedy—is that an irresolute Israel cannot make peace. Peace can only be made in strength.

In their autobiography of former Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, "From Freedom Fighter to Statesman," authors Gertrude Hirschler and Lester S. Eckman confirm this truth by describing the events leading up to the signing of the historic 1979 peace agreement between Egypt and Israel:

"On Wednesday, November 9, 1977, Egypt's president Anwar el-Sadat made an

announcement to his parliament, the People's Assembly, which was received by...the rest of the world first with disbelief and then amazement.... [Sadat] told his people that he was ready 'to go to the ends of the world' in search of peace. 'Israel will be astonished when it hears me saying...that I am ready to go to their house, to the Knesset itself, and to talk to them.'"

To accentuate the enormity of Sadat's statement, the authors then remind us that only "four years earlier [in the prelude to the 1973 Yom Kippur War], Sadat told his nation that he was willing to commit a million Egyptian lives to war against Israel."

That bloody war, initiated and led by Egypt, took the lives of more than 2500 courageous Israelis. Furthermore, Egypt also was at the forefront of the Arab wars to eliminate the Jewish state in 1948, 1956 and 1967. Accordingly, one could not be faulted for thinking that Begin would bend over backwards to encourage Sadat to come to Jerusalem.

This was not the case.

In fact, "the day after Sadat's speech," Hirschler and Eckman continue, "Begin issued a public statement to make sure that Sadat was not coming to Israel under the illusion that Israel would be ready to capitulate to the Arab political and territorial demands for the sake of peace. [Rather, Begin asserted that] 'Israel categorically and absolutely rejects conditions named by President Sadat; i.e., total withdrawal to the June, 1967 lines.'"

Despite Begin's sternness—his "sticking to his guns," as Margaret Thatcher once said admiringly of Begin—on Monday, November 14, Sadat told American journalist Walter Cronkite that he was prepared to go to Israel, provided he received a "proper" invitation. The next day, Begin addressed an official invitation to "His

Excellency, Mr. Anwar el-Sadat, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, Cairo.”

It is true that Begin ended up making far-ranging concessions to Sadat—relinquishing the entire mineral- and oil-rich Sinai peninsula, a territory three times the size of Israel proper; however, Begin steadfastly refused to cross what is universally considered as Israel’s “red line,” namely a retreat to the “Auschwitz borders.” For Begin, “Everything was negotiable except the survival of the state of Israel.”

That peace between Egypt and Israel was only possible because Begin adhered to his convictions is reinforced by Hirschler and Eckman with an additional, invaluable anecdote. They recount a monumental occurrence in the lead-up to Sadat’s historic speech to the People’s Assembly, in which the Egyptian President visited Romanian President Nicolae Ceausescu. During their meeting, which followed Begin’s visit to Romania a few weeks earlier, Sadat and Ceausescu discussed the Israeli Prime Minister, and the prospects of a comprehensive Egypt-Israeli peace initiative.

According to Hirschler and Eckman, “In an interview with *Time* magazine [later that year], Sadat was to recall having asked Ceasescu whether he considered Begin a sufficiently *strong* leader to be able to make peace in the Middle East. Both presidents agreed that Begin’s predecessor [Yitzhak] Rabin, had been ‘weak.’ But then, said Sadat, ‘Ceasescu told me what he had discussed with Begin, and we reached the conclusion that [this] man is strong.’”

To reiterate: “Begin is strong.” And the result was peace.

For peace is made from strength.

CREATING PEACE THROUGH STRENGTH

isranet-publications

Blog, November 15, 2011

<https://www.isranet.org/blog/creating-peace-through-strength>

/

***(Charles Bybelezer is Publications Chairman
for the Canadian Institute for Jewish Research.)***