

The United States and Israel: An Alliance or a Protection Racket?

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GIVEN THE CENTURIES of persecution against the Jewish people, threats by Arab neighbors to Israel's very survival in the early days of its independence, and decades of terrorist attacks by Palestinian extremists against Israeli civilians, it has been understandably difficult for many Israelis to recognize the willingness of the Palestine Authority (PA) to make peace.

As the principal mediator in the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, one would think that the United States would be eager to underscore the Authority's willingness to accept Israeli control of 78 percent of historic Palestine, allow for Israeli annexation of most of the major settlement blocs in the West Bank in exchange for an equivalent amount of land recognized as part of Israel, and the implantation of strict security guarantees, including the demilitarization of a Palestinian state, the disarming of Hamas and other militias, and the deployment of Israeli monitors and international peacekeeping forces.

Unfortunately, the U.S. government and leading American political figures have done just the opposite—engaging in a longstanding and persistent effort to persuade the Israeli people and supporters of Israel in the United States that the Palestinians are not really interested in peace and that a perpetually militarized Israel is therefore necessary.

In resolutions passed by unanimous consent or lopsided bipartisan majorities, Congress has repeatedly tried to convince Israelis that—despite repeated calls for peace—the Palestinians' recognized leadership in the dominant Fatah party, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and the Palestine Authority have actually wanted to destroy Israel. For example, Congressional leaders and top administration officials from both parties for many years kept insisting that Palestinian leaders such as Yasir Arafat and Mahmoud Abbas were talking about peace in English while rejecting it in Arabic—even though none of them actually understood the language. Terrorist attacks by Abu Nidal, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and other extremist Palestinian groups were falsely attributed to the PLO or the PA. Statements by Palestinian leaders have been repeatedly taken out of context to make them sound threatening, such as claiming that calls for a “jihad”—the Arabic word for “struggle”—in support of Palestinian independence meant a call for war to destroy Israel, or that praise by Palestinian leaders of “martyrs” killed in unarmed protests against the Israeli Occupation were actually referring to suicide bombers.

While the original PLO Charter called for the end of Israel as a Jewish state, this clause was made moot in a series of policy shifts by the PLO leadership in the 1980s, codified in the Oslo Accords of 1993, and formally repealed by the Palestine National Congress—with the full satisfaction of the Israeli government—in 1996, a decision reiterated by the Palestinian parliament two years later in the presence of President Bill Clinton. Yet a number of prominent members of Congress still claim to this day that the Palestinian Charter still calls for Israel's destruction.

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