

Tolerating Israel's Land Grabs

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Secretary of State John Kerry and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. (State Department photo)

Secretary of State John Kerry's Israeli-Palestinian peace talks have reached their predictable collapse, but the U.S. news media still shies away from blaming Israeli intransigence and expansionism – nor advocating stern action against the land grabs.

In 1988, Yasser Arafat declared independence for Palestine based upon the notion of two states living in peace in historic Palestine. The border between those two states was to be set roughly at the armistice line established at the end of the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. The Palestinian state's capital was to be located in East Jerusalem.

That was 26 years ago. Finally, on April 14, 2014, the editorial board of the New York Times decided that Arafat was correct and the “principles” that “must undergird a two-state solution” are those he had proposed. Of course, the board did so without ever referencing the great Palestinian leader.

Not only did the Times declare the pre-1967 border and a shared capital at Jerusalem necessary and valid, but it called on the U.S. government to do the same: “It is time for the administration to lay down the principles ... should the Israelis and the Palestinians ever decide to make peace.”

Before anyone gets too excited over this seeming miracle on Eighth Avenue (where the paper is headquartered), it should be noted that the Times' editorial board made this pronouncement at a point when its fulfillment was impossible. And the editorial board knew this was the case:

“The pointless arguing over who brought the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks to the brink of collapse is in full swing. The United States is still working to salvage the negotiations, but there is scant sign

of serious purpose. ... President Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry should move on and devote their attention to other major international challenges like Ukraine.”

Having reached this point in the editorial board's text, one starts to suspect that the board is being disingenuous. First of all, why is it “pointless” to discuss the reason these talks are collapsing? Secretary of State Kerry's explanation (the famous “poof” heard around the world), made before Congress, lays blame right where it has always belonged — with Israeli acts of sabotage of those very principles the Times now espouses. Why does the Times say that stating this increasingly obvious fact is “pointless”?

It is also interesting that the editorial board suggests in what direction the subject should be changed — toward the “major international challenge” of Ukraine. I am not sure the board thought this suggestion through. After all, what is the core Western complaint about happenings in Ukraine? It is the Russian land grab in the Crimea as well as the alleged threat of more such moves in eastern Ukraine.

Yet just how different is Russian behavior in this regard from that of Israel in the West Bank and Golan Heights? Obviously the Times’ editors do not think it is “pointless” to discuss land grabs when the Russians do it. It is only pointless when the Israelis do it.

The editorial board also surrounds its declaration of principles with an archaic effort to present Israel and the Palestinians as equally at fault. It is not only the Israelis who have decided against making peace, it is both the “Israelis and Palestinians.” It is not just “the obstinacy of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu” that is a problem. That “obstinacy” has to be coupled with “resistance from the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas.”

It is not just Israel which is unwilling to “move on to core issues,” it is “the two sides” that are unwilling. This insistence on dualism is an illusion hiding the fact that the two sides are not at all equal and, with the exception of the red-herring issue of Palestinian recognition of Israel as a Jewish state, 99 percent of the obstinacy and all the resistance has been on one side — the Israeli side.

The Times’ editorial board has the same problem as the Obama administration: they both know the truth but are unwilling to do something about it. They both know the problem is that the Israeli government is not interested in genuine peace (actually, has never been interested in it).

Israel is only interested in continuing its conquest of Palestinian land. And thanks to the West, most particularly the United States, Israel has the military wherewithal to ignore not only the Palestinian protests but also those of the rest of the world.

Both the U.S. government and the U.S. “newspaper of record” refuse to act on their knowledge of Israel’s history of sabotage and call for punitive action against a nation that is hurting U.S. national interests in an important part of the world.

Their main concern is to avoid a confrontation with Zionist lobbyists and Times’ advertisers whose devotion to Israel is wholly uncritical. This appears to still be the most favored position even though standing firm over negotiations with Iran has proved the Zionists are not omnipotent.

It’s that old two steps forward, one step backward shuffle: heading in the right direction while ensuring we never reach the proper destination.

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