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## Myths About Israel and the Middle East (1)

### Do the media feed us fiction, instead of facts?

We all know that, by dint of constant repetition, white can be made to appear black, good can be transformed into evil, and myth may take the place of reality. Israel, with roughly one-thousandth of the world's population and with a similar fraction of the territory of this planet, seems to engage a totally disproportionate attention of the print and broadcast media. Unfortunately, much of what the media tell us—in reporting, editorializing, and in analysis—are endlessly repeated myths.

### What are some of these myths?

■ **Myth:** The "Palestinians" are a nation and therefore deserving of a homeland.

■ **Reality:** The concept of Palestinian nationhood is a new one and had not been heard of until after the Six-Day War, when Israel, by its victory, came into the administration of the territories of Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") and the Gaza strip. The so-called "Palestinians" are no more different from the Arabs in the neighboring countries of Lebanon, Syria and Jordan, than Wisconsinites are from Iowans.

■ **Myth:** Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank"), and the Gaza Strip are "occupied Arab territory".

■ **Reality:** All of "Palestine"—east and west of the Jordan River—was part of the League of Nations mandate. Under the Balfour Declaration all of it was to be the "national home for the Jewish people". In violation of this mandate, Great Britain severed the entire area east of the Jordan—about 75% of Palestine, and gave it to the Arabs, who created on it the kingdom of Transjordan. When Israel declared its independence in 1948, five Arab armies invaded the new country in order to destroy it at its very birth. They were defeated by the Israelis. The Transjordanians, however, remained in occupation of Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") and East Jerusalem. They proceeded to drive all Jews from those territories and to systematically destroy all Jewish houses of worship and other institutions. The Transjordanians, now renamed "Jordanians" were the occupiers. Israel regained these territories following its victory in the Six-Day War and has

administered them ever since. They have not been annexed. Their final status will be decided if and when the Arabs will ever sit down to talk peace with Israel.

■ **Myth:** Jewish settlements in Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") are the "greatest obstacle to peace".

■ **Reality:** This is a totally new formulation, recently put forward by Secretary of State Baker. He and the president seem to be obsessed by it. Fewer than 100,000 Jews are settled in these territories, living among about 1.4 million Arabs. How can Jews living there be an obstacle to peace? Why *shouldn't* they live there? About 700,000 Arabs live in Israel proper. They are not an obstacle to peace and nobody, including the Israelis, consider them as such.

■ **Myth:** Israel is unwilling to yield "land for peace".

■ **Reality:** The concept that to the loser, rather than to the victor, belong the spoils is a radically new one, never before thought of in world history. Israel has emerged victorious in the five wars imposed on it by the Arabs. In order to make peace, it has returned over 90% of the territory occupied by it, specifically the vast Sinai Peninsula, to Egypt. That territory contained some of the most advanced military installations in the world, prosperous cities and settlements, and oil fields developed entirely by Israel that made it independent of petroleum imports. In the Camp David Accords (1983) Israel agreed to autonomy for Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") with the permanent status to be determined after three years. No responsible Palestinian representation has been available to negotiate with Israel about this.

The greatest myth of all is that Israel's administration of the Gaza Strip and of Judea/Samaria is the root cause of the conflict between Arabs and Jews. But that is nonsense and flies in the face of historical reality. The Arab desire to obliterate the Jewish presence in Palestine, and since 1948 the Jewish state long predates that territorial administration. The root cause of the conflict is the total unwillingness of the Arabs to tolerate any "non-believers" to be in control of even one inch of what they consider "sacred Arab soil". And they don't just mean Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") and the Gaza strip. They mean Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, the whole state of Israel. No change in the Arabs' attitude seems to be in the offing. But until there is such a change, no peace can possibly come to this troubled area.

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Facts and Logic About the Middle East

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