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Can We Afford an Israeli-Palestinian Peace?

Reaching a peace accord in the midst of today's Middle East turmoil could hand a victory to global jihad and a horror to the rest of the world.

Hamas, as well as terror groups ISIS, al Qaeda and Hizbollah, are waging a global jihad—seeking to conquer Arab lands, attack the West and establish an Islamist caliphate. Their numbers and conquests are growing. Though Israel recently repulsed Hamas militarily, the jihadi group's popularity among Palestinians has skyrocketed. Indeed, Hamas threatens to soon seize the Palestinian West Bank, as it did Gaza in 2007. Is this the time for an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement?

What are the facts?

Israel, backed by the U.S., has made bold, groundbreaking land-for-peace offers to the Palestinians: In 2000 and in 2007 Israel offered about 95% of the land captured by Israel in 1967 and a Palestinian capital in Jerusalem. In 2005, Israel also unilaterally withdrew from Gaza, leaving it under Palestinian control. Despite these Israeli overtures, so-called “moderate” Palestinians have rejected all offers and walked out of subsequent peace negotiations.

Of course, the Palestinian terror group, Hamas flatly rejects even the *idea* of peace with Israel. Though Hamas won a majority in Palestinian parliamentary elections in 2005, it violently conquered Gaza in 2007 and has since ruled the territory with an Islamist iron fist. Hamas jihadis have fired more than 14,000 rockets at Israeli civilians and started outright wars in 2008, 2012 and 2014. Hamas's charter implacably commits the group to “obliterate” the state of Israel, “fight Jews and kill them” and “raise the banner of Allah” over every inch of Muslim lands. Hamas's charter also specifically rejects “so-called peaceful solutions.”

Today, the situation in the Middle East has deteriorated dramatically, with the burgeoning strength and brutality of Islamist terrorists from Hamas, ISIS, al Qaeda and Hizbollah. But the greatest obstacle to peace between Israel and the Palestinians is the continued belligerence of Hamas. Israel soundly defeated Hamas in the latest Gaza war, eliminating dozens of the group's terror tunnels, hundreds of its fighters and thousands of its rockets. Ironically, Hamas is viewed by the Palestinian people as heroic, and its support has soared to 87%, according to recent polls. Polls also indicate that Ismail Haniya, the Islamist group's former prime minister, would handily defeat all opponents, including 79-year-old Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas, were elections to be held. What's more, Hamas brags that even after its devastating loss during the most recent war with Israel, it is already

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producing more rockets for future attacks on Israel.

There is also no question that Abbas—now serving the tenth year of a four-year term as president—is losing power over the corrupt Palestinian Authority. Under an agreement Abbas struck with Hamas in April 2014 to form a unity government, general elections are to be held in October 2014. While it's doubtful these elections will be held, it's highly likely that Hamas, if unchecked, will again

resort to violence to take control of the West Bank. Indeed most analysts agree that the only thing preventing Hamas's takeover of the West Bank is the security assistance Israel provides to the Palestinian Authority.

No nation on earth is more threatened by the Islamist jihad than Israel, which is now almost completely encircled by terrorists—ISIS and al Qaeda on Israel's Syria border, Hizbollah on its Lebanon border, and Hamas on its border with Gaza. Now Hamas threatens to seize the Palestinian West Bank, which would complete Israel's encirclement, as well as create a nightmare for Jordan and Egypt.

While recent U.S. and Israeli efforts to fashion a peace agreement with “moderate” Palestinian factions have been well intentioned, it's clear that Mahmoud Abbas has neither the authority nor a sincere wish to make a deal. Above all, Abbas refuses to acknowledge the right of Jews to have a state in Israel. Clearly, with Hamas on the threshold of taking control of the West Bank, any attempts to forge a peace with Abbas seem futile and frightening—for Israel, the U.S. and most Middle East nations. We know that Hamas can wreak havoc on Israel from Gaza even with relatively primitive missiles, but we can only imagine with horror the damage Hamas could cause if it were in control of territory on the edge of Israel's entire eastern flank, just yards from the holy city of Jerusalem, Israel's capital, and a few miles from Ben Gurion International Airport.

What's more, a peace deal with the Palestinians would be worthless were Hamas to take over. Rather this would represent a major new victory for global jihad.

New U.S. military actions against ISIS will be helpful in degrading that terror group's murderous capability. But the U.S. and Israel, as well as European and moderate Arab nations, must also support efforts of West Bank Palestinians to gain political integrity, develop economically and defeat Hamas. In any case, with the region's unprecedented instability and Hamas's ascendancy, this is not the time to press for a potentially disastrous Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement.

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