



DORE GOLD is heavily involved in Israel's diplomatic affairs and has taken his key messages to international forums.

Jerusalem of Gold

As president of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, former ambassador to the UN Dore Gold, this year's recipient of the 'Guardian of Zion' award, focuses on defending Israel's security. A self-described 'occasional consultant' to the prime minister, he tackles Israel's multifarious challenges in an interview with 'The Jerusalem Post'

• **JEREMY SHARON**
Photo: **MARC ISRAEL SELLEM**

'Guardian of Zion' is a grand title. Epic, almost. Images of ancient crusader knights come to mind, adorned in full armor and standing at the entrance to Jerusalem, swords in hand, prepared to lay down life and limb for the honor of the Holy City and all that it stands for.

Sitting at his desk in the pleasant environs of the capital's leafy German Colony neighborhood, former ambassador Dore Gold notably lacks shining armor. But despite his more modern attire, he was still the recipient this month of the annual "Guardian of Zion" award from the Ingeborg Rennert Center for Jerusalem Studies at Bar-Ilan University, an honor given to those who have "dedicated their lives to strengthening Jerusalem."

And Gold has certainly spent his career doing exactly that. An adviser to then-deputy foreign minister Binyamin Netanyahu at the Madrid peace conference in 1991, he has been heavily involved in Israel's diplomatic affairs ever since. A negotiator in the lead-up to the signing of the Wye River Memorandum in 1998, Gold was also an adviser to former prime minister Ariel Sharon at the Aqaba summit in 2003,

and served as Israeli ambassador to the UN from 1997 to 1999.

At his office in the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, he explained how his work in the last 10 years as president of this think tank has been geared toward tackling some of the most serious challenges the country faces.

"Israel is engaged in a war of ideas," he says "with adversaries who seek to manipulate international law, make historical arguments which are highly questionable and distort the policies of regional players."

So, to counter this ideological onslaught, Gold has gone about assembling an elite unit of legal, diplomatic, military and academic experts, and establishing an infrastructure within which they can do battle against the foes arrayed against the Jewish state.

Citing some of the center's most qualified associates and contributors, such as Israel's former ambassador to Egypt Zvi Mazel and former ambassador to Canada Alan Baker, along with reserve IDF generals and colonels and academic experts, Gold says the JCPA is uniquely placed to provide analysis on the situation in the Middle East, especially regarding the recent upheaval in the region – much of which he views with concern.

"While one hopes that the new regimes which will arise will be based on democracy and accountable government, one has to realistically understand that the best organized groups in the Sunni Arab states and the best placed to inherit control are related to the Muslim Brotherhood, which is still an extremist organization, advocating a global caliphate and supporting the concept of jihad."

Dismissing rose-tinted analyses of a Middle East that will soon blossom into a liberal, democratic Eden, Gold bluntly advocates an analysis of the current turmoil "not based on conjectures of what makes political sense for what you as a Westerner would do if you were running an Arab country, but on what the leaders of groups like the Muslim Brotherhood are actually saying.

"The general guide of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Muhammad Badie, issues regular statements that talk of continuing the struggle against Israel. So if he loses influence, then great, but if he gains influence, we've got a problem."

AND GOLD, a self-described "occasional consultant" to Netanyahu, is still on the front lines of the idea battlefield, having been invited – along with other foreign policy experts – to accompany the premier on his recent visit to Washington, where the prime minister's address to a joint session of Congress was rapturously received.

But what was the whole "1967 lines" brouhaha with President Barack Obama about? What was so offensive about Obama's speech to the US State Department?

"The US view suddenly became closer to the Palestinian view," says Gold curtly. "That was why so many people were surprised."

Be that as it may, most would agree that all negotiations up until now have been based on the assumption that any Palestinian state would approximate the pre-1967 lines, and even George W. Bush referred to the "1949 lines" (practically the same as talking of the 1967 lines).

"No, he said Israel will never return to the '49 armistice lines," Gold rejoins. "It's a huge

difference. The Bush letter, the 2004 letter which was approved by both houses of Congress, negated the '67 lines, it didn't affirm them. It negated the old lines rather than saying they were a basis, and the words 'land swap' didn't appear."

Israel's requirements for its physical security are at the heart of Gold's enterprise at the JCPA, and he has sought to develop long-term strategies for Israel's manifold challenges, a task he clearly relishes.

One pet project, related to the encumbered borders question that has received so much attention of late, has been the drive to put the issue of defensible borders front and center in any negotiations Israel conducts with the Palestinians.

"Up till now, most of the thinking on the peace process has started with some model of permanent-status arrangement conceived by foreign policy experts, as happened in the Oslo agreements, and to then go to the army and say, 'Given the arrangements we just worked out, you have to go figure out how to defend Israel.'"

Gold sees this as a dangerous approach that needs to be reversed; first identify the requirements for defending Israel, he says, and then send the diplomats out to obtain them.

He certainly does not subscribe to the point of view that the establishment of a Palestinian state would create a utopian Middle East in which Israel is universally accepted and its security concerns completely obviated. Such an analysis, he says, "is based on the supposition that Israel and the Palestinians are struggling over the Seychelle Islands."

By which he means that Israel has, since 1948, had to "provide for its security against coalitions of countries around it who have exploited the Palestinian issue and invaded Israel as a result," and therefore the broader regional situation needs to be taken into account – along with the proclivity of terrorist-supporting regimes to provide increasingly technologically advanced weaponry in increasing quantities to groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah.

Control of the Jordan Valley is therefore a crucial component of the JCPA's defensible-borders project, and one that also has a prominent place in the Netanyahu government's vision of any future peace deal, as he outlined in his speech to Congress last month.

"The Jordan Valley is the functional equivalent of the Philadelphia corridor [the strip of land between Gaza and Egypt]," Gold explains. "Were Israel to lose control of the Jordan Valley, it can be expected that the weaponry which would become available to armed groups in the West Bank would increase greatly in terms of quality and quantity. Even if just one shoulder-launched missile is fired at a commercial airliner from the West Bank towards Ben-Gurion [Airport], even if it misses, all commercial traffic to Israel would cease."

ASKED WHETHER Israel's security requirements therefore demand that a Palestinian state not share a border with Jordan, he defers to the position he says was held by former prime minister Yitzhak Rabin during his time in office (and originally proposed by the deputy prime minister in 1967, Yigal Allon): that, as Rabin stated, "the security border of the State of Israel will be located in the Jordan Valley, in the

broadest meaning of that term."

The JCPA under Gold's direction has sought to address not just the physical threats facing Israel, but the more intangible issues relating to the delegitimization campaign led by some of the country's most vociferous and ideologically driven detractors.

"We've broken the issue down into several prongs," he says. "There's the track which seeks to deny Israel the right to self-defense and another track which denies the historic rights of the Jewish people in their homeland. But you also have to identify who the delegitimizers are."

Gold points to what a recent JCPA study termed a "red-green alliance," a network of hard left and Trotskyite organizations that has allied with Muslim Brotherhood-associated groups "whose principle concern is not what Israel is doing in the West Bank or Gaza, but the existence of Israel itself." Of equal concern are those who enable or "mainstream" the messages of this radical alliance.

"So if *The Guardian* carries an op-ed by a member of Hamas, that becomes a problem. If the BBC gives them a voice, it becomes a problem. If some members of the Anglican clergy join in, that's a problem."

Asked if Israel has lost the West, he suggests that the West might have lost itself. Christian Zionism informed the thinking of people like Arthur Balfour and David Lloyd George, he says, and the shrinking role of religion in Europe is a factor in the continent's growing discord with the Jewish state.

Above all, Gold is keen to stress the proactive nature of the JCPA's efforts to disseminate the messages gleaned from the in-depth studies it commissions and conducts. In April of this year, he was invited, along with Maj.-Gen. (res.) Uzi Dayan and Brig.-Gen. (res.) Udi Dekel, to address the US House Foreign Affairs Committee regarding Israel's narrow borders and the country's security requirements.

Gold has also taken his work and its key messages to other august forums, such as the House of Commons in the UK and the German parliament. His 2007 book on Jerusalem, he says, has just been translated into Hungarian, and he has received an invitation to speak to the Hungarian prime minister and foreign minister. Offers to translate it into Chinese have also been received, and this is critical to maximizing the impact of the work he and his center are doing.

The institute is also increasingly active in the realm of new and social media.

"Our defensible borders YouTube video received hundreds of thousands of hits. If you can convert a long study to a four-minute clip, that's very important," Gold says, although he emphasizes the serious academic work that has to precede such an item's production.

Defending Israel is at the forefront of what Gold has sought to accomplish during his career in public service and during his time as a "private citizen" with the ears of influential political elites and decision-makers. Although his influence has, to some extent, fluctuated in parallel with the political fortunes of the Likud Party, the work done at the JCPA during his tenure as president has certainly provided insights into the multifarious challenges that confront the Jewish state today, and will provide an important platform for answering them in the future. ■

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