

287. Yitzhak Rabin's Reasons for Signing the Oslo Accords (November 1995)

Yehuda Avner. *The Prime Ministers: an Intimate Narrative of Israeli Leadership*. London: Toby, 2010. 707. Print.

Rabin: “Number one: Israel is surrounded by two concentric circles. The inner circle is comprised of our immediate neighbors—Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon, and, by extension, Saudi Arabia. The outer circle comprises their neighbors—Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Sudan, Yemen and Libya. Virtually all of them are rogue states, and some are going nuclear.

Number two, Iranian-inspired Islamic fundamentalism constitutes a threat to the inner circle no less than it does to Israel. Islamic fundamentalism is striving to destabilize the Gulf Emirates, has already created havoc in Syria, leaving twenty thousand dead, in Algeria, leaving one hundred thousand dead, in Egypt, leaving twenty-two thousand dead, in Jordan, leaving eight thousand dead, in the Horn of Africa—the Sudan and Somalia—leaving fourteen thousand dead, and in Yemen, leaving twelve thousand dead. And now it is gaining influence in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Iran is the banker, pouring millions into the West Bank and Gaza in the form of social welfare and health and education programs, so that it can win the hearts of the population and feed religious fanaticism.

Thus, a confluence of interest has arisen between Israel and the inner circle, whose long-term strategic interest is the same as ours: to lessen the destabilizing consequences from the outer circle. At the end of the day, the inner circle recognizes they have less to fear from Israel than from their Muslim neighbors, not least from radicalized Islamic powers going nuclear.

Number three: the Arab-Israeli conflict was always considered to be a political one: a conflict between Arabs and Israelis. The fundamentalists are doing their level best to turn it into a religious conflict—Muslim against Jew, Islam against Judaism. And while a political conflict is possible to solve through negotiation and compromise, there are no solutions to a theological conflict. Then it is jihad—religious war: their God against our God. Were they to win, our conflict would go from war to war, and from stalemate to stalemate.

And that, essentially, is why I agreed to Oslo and shook hands, albeit reluctantly, with Yasser Arafat. He and his PLO represent the last vestige of secular Palestinian nationalism. We have nobody else to deal with. It is either the PLO or nothing. It is a long shot for a possible settlement, or the certainty of no settlement at all at a time when the radicals are going nuclear.”