

A Speech delivered by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu
May 5, 2009

Friends, there is something significant that is happening today in the Middle East, and I can say that for the first time in my lifetime, I believe for the first time in a century, that Arabs and Jews see a common danger. This wasn't always the case. In the '30's and '40's, many in the Arab world supported another country believing that that was their hope. In the '60's, '70' and '80's, they supported another country that was at odds with the Jewish state. But this is no longer the case.

There is a great challenge afoot. But that challenge also presents great opportunities. The common danger is echoed by Arab leaders throughout the Middle East; it is echoed by Israel repeatedly; it is echoed by Europeans, by many responsible governments around the world. And if I had to sum it up in one sentence, it is this: Iran must not be allowed to develop nuclear weapons. If I had to sum up the opportunity in one word, it would be cooperation - cooperation between Israel and the Arab world and cooperation between Israel and the Palestinians.

Next week I'll be visiting Egypt with President Mubarak, and I plan to discuss both matters with him. We seek expanded relations with the Arab world. We want normalization of economic ties and diplomatic ties. We want peace with the Arab world. But we also want peace with the Palestinians. That peace has eluded us for more than 13 years. Six successive prime ministers of Israel and two American presidents have not succeeded in achieving this final peace settlement. I believe it is possible to achieve it, but I think it requires a fresh approach, and the fresh approach that I suggest is pursuing a triple track towards peace between Israel and the Palestinians - a political track, a security track, an economic track.

The political track means that we are prepared to resume peace negotiations without any delay and without any preconditions - the sooner the better. The security track means that we want to continue the cooperation with the program led by General Dayton, in cooperation with the Jordanians and with the Palestinian Authority to strengthen the security apparatus of the Palestinians. This is something we believe in and something that I think we can advance in a joint effort. The economic track means that we are prepared to work together to remove as many obstacles as we can to the advancement of the Palestinian economy. We want to work with the Palestinian Authority on this track, not as a substitute for political negotiations, but as a boost to them. I want to see Palestinian youngsters knowing that they have a future. I want them not to be hostage to a cult of death and despair and hate. I want them to have jobs. I want them to have career paths. I want them to know that they can provide for their families. This means that we can give them a future of hope, a future that means that there is prosperity for all. And this has proved to be successful in advancing a political peace in many parts of the world.

I believe that this triple track towards peace is the realistic path to peace, and I believe that with the cooperation of President Obama and President Abbas, we can defy the skeptics. We can surprise the world. But there are two provisos that I think have to be said at this point. First, peace will not come without security. If we abandon security, we'll have neither security nor peace. So I want to be very clear – we shall never compromise on Israel's security. Second, for a final peace settlement to be achieved, the Palestinians must recognize Israel as the Jewish state. They must recognize Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people.

A few hours ago, I spoke at the Knesset. We marked the birthday of Theodor Herzl, the founding father of Zionism. Herzl revolutionized the history of the Jewish people, a people that was scattered and defenseless throughout the nations. He revolutionized Jewish history when he published a slim pamphlet called "The Jewish State". This was our salvation and this is our foundation - the foundation of our future and the foundation of peace.

Good night from Jerusalem. God bless America. God bless Israel. Thank you all.