



Jane Sabes



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Sabes is a member of the International Political Science Association, the Association for Public Policy Analysis & Management, as well as the American Society for Public Administration. She is not only a student of governments but a former practitioner in government (bureaucracy) and just recently returned from consultative work for the government of Indonesia.

Shabbat Shalom: From the perspective of a political scientist, what lessons can we learn about what conditions make for war?

Sabes: This question warrants careful examination because how we reason about war largely determines the methods by which we pursue peace.

Various theories have been alleged over time that attempt to answer the question of “why wars.” Thomas Hobbes believed war to be an expected consequence of human nature, that the bent to conflict is inscribed, as it were, on the very genes of people. Another theory advanced by certain military historians and political scientists is that an unequal balance of power stimulates ambitions of economic and political conquest by the stronger nation. A third possible causation of war, known as the “scapegoat theory,” hypothesizes that rulers initiate external battles in order to divert attention from the nation’s internal troubles (such as a poor economy). Still other

theories claim that advances in technology and the art of warfare make nations more inclined to engage in conflicts. Yet analysis of international conflicts and civil wars does not support any of these positions.

Writing in *The Causes of War*, Geoffrey Blainey maintains that the outbreak of war and the outbreak of peace are essentially decisions to implement national aims by new means. In other words, the breakdown of diplomacy reflects the belief of each nation that it will gain more by fighting than by negotiating. Doubtless, we have all come to know that no one party can be blamed for causing the conflict just as one side cannot be mainly praised for ending the strife. Both sides contribute to the fight; it requires both sides to settle on peace. Lacking a uniform explanation as to why nations spurn negotiations, choosing rather violent acts, makes for the difficulty in devising a formula for constructing peace.

Shabbat Shalom: Is peace, the Shalom-Salaam, between Israel

and the Arabs possible?

Sabes: The outcome of this conflict rests within human hearts and only God can read the hearts of those involved. I would, therefore, be a huge fool to try and guess what only God knows. One element of this discord that has me rather pessimistic as to the outcome is how the war is framed in religious terms. This fosters a sense of scriptural legitimacy. “Righteous” behavior is claimed by both parties thereby making the backing down from one’s position and actions nearly impossible. Being a family-related matter is another fundamental obstacle in this battle which impedes easy resolution of this war.

Just to refresh our memories, the Arab-Israeli conflict maintains differing interpretations of Genesis 17:8 when God said to Abraham, “I will give unto you and your seed this land.” Was the land bequeathed to Ishmael, Abraham’s firstborn by Sarah’s Egyptian maid, Hagar (whom the Arabs claim as their lineage), or was the land reserved for the miracle baby, Isaac, firstborn of God’s promise (the Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob “fathers” of Israel)?

Both faiths and people trace their roots to Abraham but the familial relationship deteriorates from that point forward. Thomas Lippman in his book, *Understanding Islam*, details the account which gave rise to the formation of separate faiths. Around the year 622 A.D., Muhammad attempts to convert inhabitants of Mecca from their multiple gods to one God, Allah, and to a greater social consciousness. He held that prayer and belief by themselves were insufficient to make people one of the “called of God”—that it was necessary to be honest in trade, to care for orphans, to treat women equally, and to forego usury. These tenets were quite unlike those held by politicians at that time.

Muhammad thought these goals achievable through an alliance with the Jews, and in fact the first charter of governance issued by Muhammad was a guarantee of religious freedom to the Jews, and a forming of what he anticipated would become a “community of believers.” Muhammad naively assumed that the Jews would accept his religious messages as well as his political authority. But while the Jews lauded Muhammad’s efforts at social reform, they spurned his understanding of Jewish scriptures, to which he frequently referred. So great a tension developed between the Jews and Muhammad that the self-proclaimed prophet formalized a new faith, that of Islam, changing the direction of prayer from Jerusalem to Mecca, and replacing Saturday with Friday as the day for congregational prayer. A distinction came to be made in the mind of Muhammad, and that of contemporary Muslims, respecting the

is not resolving conflict but rather putting aggression on hold, a temporary peace, as it were.

Third, and, more importantly, is the lack of a proper understanding of what motivates these people to battle.

***Shabbat Shalom:* Do you think that a third party is necessary to achieve peace?**

Sabes: A third party can help tremendously in convening a meeting of the conflicting parties as well as assistance in clarifying the issues. Conversely, the party facilitating the peace effort must resist the inducement by either party to craft or forge an alliance. Agreement between the two parties must be built upon their individual commitments.

***Shabbat Shalom:* Do you think that the United States could, should play a role in the peace-making process? Why? How?**

Sabes: Only upon invitation by both parties should the United

Both nations lack experience with peace.

religious teachings of Judaism and Christianity while holding contempt for those, according to the Koran, “to whom the burden of the Torah was entrusted and yet refused to bear it” (Koran 62:5).

***Shabbat Shalom:* What are the main obstacles for peace?**

Sabes: I perceive several obstacles to peace in the Arab-Israeli conflict, not the least of which is that both nations lack experience with peace. This then gives Israel and Palestine only minimal understanding of the individual and political benefits to be derived from such a condition. They allege to seek after something with which they are totally unfamiliar.

Second, the peace accords to date have focused on achieving a coexistence. This, by definition,

States consider participating in the peace-seeking process. In general, I interpret Clinton/Albright’s foreign policy in this crisis to be in keeping with Machiavelli. He argued that political behavior ought to be based on the realities of political life and not on the moral precepts of Christian doctrine; that students of politics should understand how politicians actually behave rather than how they ought to behave as good Christians. (There is less evidence as to which route the current Bush administration will be taking.) Even so, the Arab-Israeli conflict is not solely between nation-states but rather involving family and faith. For example, the most contentious issue is the final status of Jerusalem. Both peoples claim the city as their

capital. Neither have reconciled to the idea that the other might occupy or control their holiest of shrines. This mind-set imposes restrictions far beyond that of dividing conquered turf. Thus I question if America is fully cognizant of the issues, feelings, potential problems, and possible options for resolving this conflict.

We must likewise acknowledge that power has become diffused beyond the two superpowers of the Cold War. I believe that a mediating role could be, and in fact is presently being attempted by political neighbors within the region, those who better understand the issues and can argue the economic, political, and social costs to the region if war continues unabated. A national tribunal might also prove instrumental in addressing this intractable discord. For example, NATO's role might be broadened or the United Nations involvement be expanded, as was the situation when, in 1947, the United Nations recommended that all of Jerusalem be internationalized.

Shabbat Shalom: Do Christians have anything to contribute to the peace process? How?

Sabes: The admonition to be "wise as serpents yet harmless as doves" seems like sound advice. By this I mean that we should be

Allah does not love the aggressors." (2:190) Also the prophet Muhammad is recorded to have said, "None of you truly believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself." And yet another reference from the Koran states, "He (God) has ordained for men the faith He has revealed to you and formerly enjoined on Noah and Abraham, on Moses and Jesus, saying, 'Observe this faith and be united in it'" (42:13).

The Old Testament is replete with references to the "stranger that is within thy gates." For example, in Exodus 22:21 and Exodus 23:9 God admonishes the Jewish people to "neither vex a stranger nor oppress him, for you know the heart of a stranger, seeing you were strangers in the land of Egypt." The prophet Amos (5:24), speaking on behalf of the Lord, challenged Israel to "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." The final reference I offer is a God-standard by which all of us must choose to live. Micah 6:8 reads, "He (God) has shown you what is good, and what He requires of you: to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God."

Accordingly, my soul has responded to what our Islamic brothers and sisters allege, that,

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less eager to align ourselves with one side or the other but instead align ourselves on the side of peace. Both the Scriptures and the Koran speak of wars and retribution; they equally speak of peace to those not of the house of believers. For example, the Koran reads, "Fight for the sake of Allah those that fight against you, but do not attack them first.

as Christians and Jews, we were given the scriptures and the Living Word but have corrupted and rejected it rather than making it an active work in our lives and a generous invitation to others. From this day forward, I choose to change my response to the Word.

As a Christian, I also subscribe to the power of prayer, that as

people of the Word we are called to pray for those in conflict, including our mid-East brothers and sisters, all of them.

Shabbat Shalom: What guidelines would you suggest (counsel) to the politicians to make peace possible?

Sabes: During his 1800s visit to America, the French aristocrat, Alexis de Tocqueville, observed that inhabitants of a nation do not naturally have a military spirit. It is only as they have been dragged onto the battlefield that they gain the taste for blood. Subscribing to that concept, author and journalist John Wallach, in 1993, founded the Seeds of Peace, a summer camp located in rural Maine, which brings Arab and Israeli teenagers together before fear, mistrust and prejudice blind them, nurturing friendships and a basis for understanding and respect. These youth then become the seeds of peace among their people. Such proactive steps are critical to preventing future conflicts.

Second, the media should take the time to quantify the high emotional and economic costs of each war on which they choose to report. This might well reduce the number of persons voluntarily exposing themselves to the miseries of war. This was evidenced in America during the Vietnam War when, each evening during the dinner hour, Walter Cronkite would report the body count from the day's military skirmishes. Americans refused to permanently surrender their loved ones to war. This sophisticated military age (nuclear, biological) in which we find ourselves seems to follow the same basic rule of earlier eras, that peace will prevail if nations believe they lose more than they gain by resolving their disagreements through fighting. War produces debt and death ruinous to future generations and the nation as a whole.

Third, never stop talking. One of former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's beliefs was that negotiations should be seen as a process in which speaking to one's adversary is as important as concrete results. This is a concept generally misrepresented by the press and misunderstood by modern society. We look for an outcome, a conclusion, a bottom line as it were, to each Arab-Israeli parley rather than lauding the fact that they are willing to continue the dialog.

Fourth, beyond politicians, military strategists, religious leaders, involve free-market capitalists. Business persons are less inclined to engage in war if a threat is posed to their financial holdings. These individuals should be invited to participate in discussions of how to end the war. (I suspect that much of the street fighters are people either unemployed and underemployed. If holding secure jobs paying living wages, there would be fewer to engage in street warfare.)

Finally, Israelis and Palestinians currently cooperate in a range of joint ventures in business, agriculture, and cultural affairs. At some level, the two peoples realize that their entwined ancestries, geographies and economies call for their work on issues of mutual interest. Re-

spect, comradery, and consensus on smaller, more pragmatic matters might develop over time to

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tackling grander issues that currently separate these peoples.

Shabbat Shalom: What is your diagnosis of the world in regard to the issue of peace?

Sabes: The spread of democracy is, in general, making societies more peaceful. Yet while peace is becoming more the norm, extremist factions will continue to exert their version of God's will on society.

Further complicating the political landscape is the ever-growing intrusiveness of the economy,

Never stop talking.

specifically free-market enterprising, bearing steadily and forcefully onto world events. Already,

nations' public policies, geographic borders, and cultural identities have given way to transnational corporations offering the allurements of high employment rates and economic growth. No longer do politicians seemingly set the national agenda; rather, it is the entrepreneurs and national pursuit of the almighty dollar. Evidence of this is seen in nations joining to form regional economic blocs—the Asian sector, the trading partners of the Americas, the European Union, and Muammar Qaddafi's efforts to achieve a coalition of African states. There will come to be a society of states whose members are bound by international law. Assumably this will include diplomatic behavior and the conduct of war. Yet while we see this leading to a political/economic confederation of nations for a common cause, concomitantly we can expect a rise in civil wars—between the haves and have-nots.

Most important, however, is becoming acquainted with the final guarantor of permanent peace, God Himself, a point upon which Jews, Muslims, and Christians agree. The throne and rule of the Prince of Peace will one day soon unseat temporal powers and establish His reign forever.

A Talmudic Prayer for Peace

Rabbi Meir was often assailed by wicked men on his way to the place of prayer. One day, tired of such treatment, he began to pray to God and asked Him to destroy the sinners that he might have peace. As he did so, his wife heard him and rebuked him: "Your prayer violates the holy teaching, which calls only for the destruction of sins and not of sinners; therefore you should be praying for the improvement of the sinners and not for their death." (b. Berakoth, 10a).