

WEXNER ANALYSIS: ISRAELI COMMUNICATION PRIORITIES 2003

OVERVIEW

The world has changed. The words, themes and messages on behalf of Israel must include and embrace the new reality of a post-Saddam world.

In the past, we have urged a lower profile for Israel out of a fear that the American people would blame Israel for what was happening in the rest of the Middle East. Now is the time to link American success in dealing with terrorism and dictators from a position of strength to Israel's ongoing efforts to eradicate terrorism on and within its borders. In the current political environment, you have little to lose and a lot to gain by aligning with America. With all the anti-Americanism across the globe and all the protests and demonstrations, we are looking for allies that share our commitment to security and an end to terrorism and are prepared to say so. Israel is a just such an ally.

THE NEXT STEP

The fact that Israel has remained relatively silent for the three months preceding the war and for the three weeks of the war was absolutely the correct strategy – and according to all the polling done, it worked. But as the military conflict comes to a close, it is now time for Israel to lay out its own “road map” for the future which includes unqualified support for America and unqualified commitment to an ongoing war against terrorism.

Perceptions of Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are being almost entirely colored and often overshadowed by the continuing action in Iraq. Partisan differences still exist (the political Left remains your problem) and complaints about Israeli heavy-handedness still exist. Advocates of Israel have about two weeks to get their message in order before world attention turns to the so-called “road map” and how best to “solve” the Israel-Palestinian conflict. Developing that message is the purpose of this memo.

Author's note: *This is not a policy document. This document is strictly a communications manual. As with every memo we provide, we have used the same scientific methodology to isolate specific words, phrases, themes and messages that will resonate with at least 70% of the American audience. There will certainly be some people, particularly those on the political left, who will oppose whatever words you use, but the language that follows will help you secure support from a large majority of Americans. These recommendations are based on two “dial test” sessions in Chicago and Los Angeles conducted during the first ten days of the Iraqi war for the Wexner Foundation.*

ESSENTIAL CONCLUSIONS

This document is rather long because it is impossible to communicate all that is needed in simple one-sentence sound-bites. Yes, we have provided those on the pages that follow, but we have taken the space to explain why the language is so important and the context in which it needs to be used. If you only read two pages, these are the key conclusions:

1) **Iraq colors all. Saddam is your best defense, even if he is dead.** The worldview Americans is entirely dominated by developments in Iraq. This is a unique opportunity for Israelis to deliver a message of support and unity at a time of great international anxiety and opposition from some of our European “allies.” For a year – a SOLID YEAR – you should be invoking the name of Saddam Hussein and how Israel was always behind American efforts to rid the world of this ruthless dictator and liberate their people. Saddam will remain a powerful symbol of terror to Americans for a long time to come. A pro-Israeli expression of solidarity with the American people in their successful effort to remove Saddam will be appreciated.

2) **Stick to your message but don’t say it the same way twice.** We have seen this in the past but never so starkly as today. Americans are paying very close attention to international developments and are particularly sensitive to any kind of apparent dogma or canned presentations. If they hear you repeating the exact same words over and over again, they will come to distrust your message. If your speakers can’t find different ways to express similar principles, keep them off the air.

3) **It DOES NOT HELP when you compliment President Bush. When you want to identify with and align yourself with America, just say it. Don’t use George Bush as a synonym** for the United States. Even with the destruction of the Hussein regime and all the positive reactions from the Iraqi people, there still remains about 20% of America that opposes the Iraqi war, and they are overwhelmingly Democrat. That leaves about half the Democrats who support the war even if they don’t support George Bush. You antagonize the latter half unnecessarily every time you compliment the President. Don’t do it.

4) **Conveying sensitivity and a sense of values is a must.** Most of the best-performing sound bites mention children, families, and democratic values. Don’t just say that Israel is morally aligned with the U.S. Show it in your language. The children component is particularly important. It is essential that you talk about *“the day, not long from now, when Palestinian children and Israeli children will play side-by-side as their parents watch approvingly.”*

5) **“SECURITY” sells.** Security has become the key fundamental principle for all Americans. Security is the context by which you should explain Israeli need for loan guarantees and military aid, as well as why Israel can’t just give up land. The settlements are our Achilles heel, and the best response (which is still quite weak) is the need for security that this buffer creates.

6) **The language in this document will work, but it will work best when it is accompanied with passion and compassion.** Too many supporters of Israel speak out of anger or shout when faced with opposition. Listeners are more likely to accept your arguments if they like how you express them. They will bless these words but they will truly accept them if and only if they accept you.

7) **Find yourself a good female spokesperson.** In all our testing, women are found to be more credible than men. And if the woman has children, that’s even better.

8) **Link Iraqi liberation with the plight of the Palestinian people.** It is likely that the most effective argument(s) you have right now are those that link the right of the Iraqi people to live in freedom with the right of the Palestinian people to be governed by those who truly represent them. If you express your concern for the plight of the Palestinian people and how it is unfair, unjust and immoral that they should be forced to accept leaders who steal and kill in their name, you will be building credibility for your support of the average Palestinian while undermining the credibility of their leadership.

9) **A little humility goes a long way.** You saw this with your own eyes. You need to talk continually about your understanding of “*the plight of the Palestinians*” and a commitment to helping them. Yes, this IS a double standard (no one expects anything pro-Israeli from the Palestinians) but that’s just the way things are. Humility is a bitter pill to swallow, but it will inoculate you against critiques that you have not done enough for peace. Admit mistakes, but then show how Israel is the partner always working for peace.

10) **Of course rhetorical questions work, don’t they?** Ask a question to which there is only one answer is hard to lose. It is essential that your communication be laced with rhetorical questions, which is how Jews talk anyway.

11) **Mahmoud Abbas is still a question mark. Leave him that way.** You stand much more to lose by attacking him now. But similarly, he is not worthy of praise. Talk about your hopes for the future, but lay out the principles you expect him to uphold: an end to violence, a recognition of Israel, reform of his own government, etc.

THE TWO MOST IMPORTANT WORDS: SADDAM HUSSEIN (STILL)

This document is about language, so let me be blunt. **“Saddam Hussein” are the two words that tie Israel to America and are most likely to deliver support in Congress. They also just happen to be two of the most hated words in the English language right now.**

Without being repetitive, Americans fundamentally believe that a democracy has a right to protect its people and its borders. Unfortunately, as a democracy, we tend to dwell on our failures (Vietnam, Watergate, etc.) more than our successes. It is essential for the long-term support of a strong military and a commitment to national security that we remind people again and again...and again that there are times when it is necessary to take preventative action and that military intervention is better than appeasement.

A WARNING

There are some who would say that Saddam Hussein is already old news. They don't understand history. They don't understand communication. They don't understand how to integrate and leverage history and communication for the benefit of Israel. The day we allow Saddam to take his eventual place in the trash heap of history is the day we lose our strongest weapon in the linguistic defense of Israel.

References to the successful outcome of the war with Iraq benefit Israel. While Americans don't want to increase foreign aid in a time of significant budgetary deficits and painful spending cuts, there is one and only one argument that will work for continuing Israeli aid (in four easy steps):

THE ISRAELI AID MESSAGE TREE

- (1) As a democracy, Israel has the right and the responsibility to defend its borders and protect its people.**
- (2) Prevention works. Even with the collapse of Saddam's regime, terrorist threats remain throughout our region.**
- (3) Israel is America's one and only true ally in the region. In these particularly unstable and dangerous times, Israel should not be forced to go it alone.**
- (4) With America's financial assistance, Israel can defend its borders, protect its people, and provide invaluable assistance to the American effort in the war against terrorism.**

This is important. All the arguments about Israel being a democracy, letting Arabs vote and serve in government, protecting religious freedom, etc., won't deliver the public support you need to secure the loan guarantees and the military aid Israel needs. All the language we have written in past memos will not work when it comes to U.S. tax dollars. You need a **national security** angle – one that clearly links the interests of both Israel and America:

**WORDS THAT WORK:
SELLING ISRAEL AID (I)**

“It was Israel who risked their pilots and planes in taking out Saddam Hussein’s nuclear reactors and thus thwarted his quest for nuclear weapons of mass destruction.

It was Israel who provided much of the intelligence that helped America defeat Iraq back in 1991.

It was Israel alone among Middle Eastern nations that supported America’s successful effort to remove Saddam Hussein and liberate the people of Iraq.

We stood without you against the Saddam regime from beginning to end. Israel has been a key regional asset and military ally of the United States for more than 50 years. That relationship must continue, even and especially in the post-Saddam era. It is a partnership of democracies devoted to the war against terrorism and the fight for freedom.”

As we have seen, the news cycle during and immediately following a war is not a matter of idle curiosity, it is compulsory viewing. Even more than in Israel, where conflict has tragically been almost commonplace, war means a new and real threat to personal and familial security in America. And Saddam Hussein, dead or alive, still embodies that threat.

Americans have been thinking and talking about the war on terror for almost a year and a half now, and they have come to conclude that Saddam Hussein is a sponsor of world terror and is a particular threat to the democracies of the world. New and shocking revelations about the brutality of his regime are discovered daily, which only reinforces American support of military action. But the fact that Hussein was a *direct* threat to Israel is especially important. ***Israel opposed his cruel ambitions for decades – a decade longer than the U.S. Remind audiences that Israel and America have common values, but then stress that we also share common enemies.***

WORDS THAT WORK

“When facing a fanatical enemy, you have two options: deter or destroy. Saddam was not deterred by inspections. He was not deterred by threats. He was not even deterred by military action against him in 1991. And if had possessed nuclear weapons, nothing would have deterred him. For ten years the United Nations talked about deterrence, and for ten years Saddam defied the international community.

Just as America had no choice but to remove him from power, Israel has no choice but to protect its borders and its people from terrorists who mean us harm.”

But deterrence is only half the message. You really do need to emphasize your historic willingness to compromise and sacrifice on behalf of America. This may not play well among some Israeli politicians but it will certainly play extremely well in the States.

WORDS THAT WORK

“During the Gulf War, Iraq attacked Israel with Scud missiles 39 times. Israel stood by each time, not knowing if the next missile contained biological and chemical weapons. Israel chose restraint instead of war, because it was what the U.S. asked. It was Israel’s way to support our ally, America, and its troops during the Persian Gulf War. We put supporting American priorities higher than our own. But now, with our national security at stake, we need America’s financial help.”

RESPONDING TO PALESTINIAN PRESSURE

While the Chicago and Los Angeles sessions yielded significant new language and several new communication “*principles*,” most of our previous observations hold true. Too many in the Jewish community are too linguistically hostile at a time when the other 97% of America wants a resolution to the conflict. In particular, you cannot just issue recriminations, however justified, against the Palestinian Authority and expect American elites to be suddenly convinced of your righteousness. All the evidence and common sense can be on your side, but the hostility and negativity will be rejected as biased and one-sided.

Here’s a specific example:

WORDS THAT DON'T WORK

“There is no moral equivalency. On one side you have duly elected and appointed Israeli officials from a democracy that has been operating for more than half a century. On the other side you have corrupt Palestinian officials who have lied, cheated and stolen from their people. Israel will not negotiate until they have someone to negotiate with.”

While the statement above is perfectly accurate and justified, it will not work. Individually, the words are good, the facts are accurate and the message is correct. But this communication effort fails miserably because it is regarded as a complete rejection of negotiations and peace. Listeners see it as accusatory and contentious – exactly what they don't want to hear and will not accept. We have a better approach, one that says virtually the same thing but in a more effective way:

WORDS THAT DO WORK

“Whatever the root causes of the Palestinian-Israeli crisis, there are certain tragic cultural facts and differences that stand in the way of peace negotiations between the people of Israel and the Palestinians. No Israeli child has ever strapped a bomb to his back and gone off to kill civilian Palestinians, and yet the Palestinian leadership does too little to dispel the notion among its more extreme citizens that killing Israelis with a suicide bomb is the surest route to heaven. How can Israel deal with a population of parents that stand aside or even encourage their children to become martyrs?”

Yes, this is harsher and more explicit than the previous paragraph, but it works for several reasons:

- (1) **The human touch.** Mentioning parents and children humanizes and personalizes the terror that Israel has to face every day.
- (2) **The rhetorical question.** Even pro-Palestinians have a tough time answering that final question. It's time for Israeli spokespeople to ask a lot more unanswerable rhetorical questions as part of their communication effort.
- (3) **Acknowledging a cultural difference between Israelis and Palestinians is stating the obvious – and good for your case.** Even those Americans that have sympathies for the Palestinian struggle have an easier time relating to the Israelis because of the similarities between America and Israel in culture, tradition and values.

With this in mind, we have identified four specific spokesperson themes and emotions that appeal to American opinion influencers when discussing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and whatever negotiations may or will take place:

OPTIMISTIC

“I am hopeful that with the end of this war, the peoples of the Middle East will celebrate life and freedom. I am hopeful that the scenes of Iraqis throwing off the yoke of tyranny and fear will serve as a model for all peoples of the region. Yes, I do have hope that by reaching out to the stars, we can bring something good back to earth.”

RESPECTFUL

“What we are hoping for is that the Palestinian people recognize the leadership they have right now has unfortunately a very different agenda than the agenda of the real Palestinian people...We do not have the right to tell the Palestinians who to elect to represent them but we hope they will choose leaders that will listen and truly care about them.”

THE HUMAN ELEMENT

“It’s very difficult for us. We know that going into these Palestinian cities creates hardships and dilemmas for the Palestinians. But it is even more difficult to look our own children in the face knowing that that there are people in these cities planning to commit terrorist acts and not go in there and try to stop them before they kill.”

DEDICATED TO DEMOCRACY

“We all know the importance of bringing genuine democracy and human rights to all nations and to uproot the ideology of terrorism. That is what we have tried to do, and we will keep on trying.”

We have tested about 75-minutes of new language in Chicago and Los Angeles. Much of it was ineffective ... or worse. However, we did uncover some messages that do move opinion elites from neutral to positive. Of all the language that deals with the Palestinians directly, here’s what works the best:

PALESTINIAN SOUND-BITES THAT WORK

Advocates of Israel will do well if they adopt the language that follows:

“The Palestinians deserve better leadership and they deserve a better society—with functioning institutions, democracy, and the rule of law.”

“We are hoping to find a Palestinian leadership that really does reflect the best interest for the Palestinian people.”

“As a matter of principle, Israel will sit down, negotiate and compromise with those that wish all the peoples of the Middle East to live together in peaceful coexistence. Egypt made peace with Israel. Jordan made peace with Israel. And both agreements still live on today.”

“We know what it is to live our lives with the daily threat of terrorism. We know what it’s like to send our children off to school one day and bury them the next. For us, terrorism isn’t something we read about in the newspaper. It’s something we see with our own eyes far too often.”

“We don’t want to sign a meaningless agreement that isn’t worth the paper it is printed on. We want something real. If there is to be a just, fair and lasting peace, we need a partner who rejects violence and who values life more than death.”

“As a matter of principle, the world should not force Israel to concede to those who publicly deny our right to exist or call for our annihilation.”

“Right now, today, there are still terrorist groups like Hamas, Islamic Jihad and the Al Aqsa Martyrs that the Palestinian Authority has either been unable or unwilling to curb—and Israelis continue to die because of it.”

“Just as the American government pledges to secure for you life, liberty, and the chance to pursue happiness, so must Israel’s government guarantee that we will be secure and free.”

DEMOCRACY: CONNECTING IRAQ AND THE PALESTINIANS

“My earnest hope is that with regime change in Iraq, democracy may finally take firm root in the Middle East. If the Palestinian people and the people of other Middle Eastern nations are able to see the brilliant example of a successful Arabic democracy, I am confident the tide will turn.

Obviously it is wrong to assume that overwhelming American support for regime change in Iraq is fully transferable to changing the Palestinian leadership. Americans view them as separate issues – at least right now. That being said, your support for the American efforts to liberate the people of Iraq *can and should* be tied to our mutual interest in guaranteeing freedom for the Palestinian people.

Americans want democracy to flourish in the Middle East. There is genuine hope that the Iraqi people will establish a representative government with genuine freedoms. In that vein, remind people that the Iraqi people need not look any further than their Israeli neighbors for an example of such a government.

Democracy loves company. So far, one of Israel’s most effective messages has been that Israel is the *only* democracy in the Middle East. It’s time to take that message one step further. Emphatically state that while you are proud of Israel’s democracy, you would *much rather be the FIRST democracy in the Middle East than the ONLY democracy in the Middle East.* Consider the following communication ladder that draws the attention first to Iraq and only then to the Palestinians.

- (1) **Democracy matters.** Never in the history of the world has a democratic government engaged in war with another democracy.
- (2) **Democracy in Iraq matters.** Iraq’s transition to democracy is an essential first step towards a stable Middle East.
- (3) **Democracy can bring peace.** True regional peace will come only when governments truly represent the interests of their people and guarantee their freedom and security.
- (4) **It’s time for true democracy for the Palestinian people.** They deserve no less.

This may seem simplistic but the message works when delivered this way and in this order. Americans sincerely hope that Iraq – a former adversary – can become a partner in peace once a representative government is installed. Insofar as they yearn for freedom and deserve representative leadership, the Palestinian people are no different. This is exactly what Israel has asked of the Palestinian Authority for so long: to establish a legitimate government that will become a partner in peace.

TALKING ABOUT HOPE & THE FUTURE: FOUR KEY SENTENCES

- (1) We hope that we can once again achieve peace with an Arab neighbor.**
- (2) We hope that terror will no longer be the only thing that separates Palestinians from having their own state and Israelis from living in peace.**
- (3) We hope that the Palestinian people will no longer languish under a leadership that refuses to be a partner for peace.**
- (4) We hope that we can negotiate a fair agreement with a democratic government that is committed to the rule of law.**

As zealous as Americans are about their own democracy, they quite often have to be reminded why they defend it so fiercely. This reminder becomes your obligation when associating Israel's democratic values with those of America.

Using the word "democracy" without giving examples of what makes this system of government so essential is like saying you want "peace" without giving evidence that you've made honest strides toward achieving it. Americans want proof that you know what these nice-sounding words mean.

When linking our common bond of democracy, use specific examples of why we hope that more nations establish the freedoms democracy guarantees.

- ÿ Women are treated as equals
- ÿ The press operates freely
- ÿ All religions are respected
- ÿ The people chose who represents them in free elections
- ÿ Democracies do not make war on each other

Finally, make the argument that if these freedoms are so dear to Israelis and Americans, they are just as dearly missed by the Palestinian people. All people yearn to live free, and their current leadership denies them that right.

THE ROADMAP: A BALANCED APPROACH

[Author's note: We include this section because the President's speech did so well in both Chicago and Los Angeles and because this topic will be at the core of Jewish and Israeli communication efforts in the coming months. We warn readers that a great deal of additional research is needed to offer a guarantee that the words and messages included here are the best available.]

As the post-war dust settles over the Iraqi desert, the focus has already begun to shift to the Israel-Palestinian peace process and President Bush's so-called "roadmap" to peace. The good news is that the American people firmly believe that if the Palestinians want to demonstrate sincere commitment to peace, they must abide by the tenants of the President's soon-to-be-released roadmap. The not-as-good news is that they expect exactly same from Israel and they demand it immediately.

In both Chicago and Los Angeles, and among virtually all respondents regardless of political party, Americans responded quite favorably to the language from President Bush for two reasons: "*a balanced approach*" and "*shared responsibilities.*" Keep those terms in mind and use them whenever possible.

WORDS THAT WORK: A BALANCED APPROACH

"I see a day when two states, Israel and Palestine, will live side by side in peace and security. I call upon all parties in the Middle East to abandon old hatreds and to meet their responsibilities for peace

The Palestinian state must be a reformed and peaceful and democratic state that abandons forever the use of terror. The government of Israel, as the terror threat is removed and security improves, must take concrete steps to support the emergence of a viable and credible Palestinian state, and to work as quickly as possible toward a final status agreement...

We believe that all people in the Middle East -- Arab and Israeli alike -- deserve to live in dignity, under free and honest governments. We believe that people who live in freedom are more likely to reject bitterness, blind hatred and terror; and are far more likely to turn their energy toward reconciliation, reform and development."

– President George W. Bush

COMPLICATING THE ROADMAP: MAHMOUD ABBAS (ABU MAZEN)

To some extent, your job as proponents of Israel has been easy. Under the Arafat regime, it's not difficult to convince the American public of the corruption of the current Palestinian leadership. While many sympathize with the plight of the Palestinian people, there is no love lost for Yassir Arafat. Arafat is a terrorist; they know that. Better still, he looks the part.

The emergence of Mahmoud Abbas as the new Palestinian Prime Minister comes *exactly at the wrong time*. His ascent to power seems legitimate. He is a fresh face, and a clean-shaven one at that. He speaks well and dresses in Western garb. He may even genuinely want peace.

Just as President Bush had begun to make headway in drawing attention on the need for a reformed Palestinian leadership, the Palestinians throw us this curveball. What will the world make of Abbas? Is he the new leadership for which Israel has pleaded for years? Or is he an Arafat in sheep's clothing?

Given the haze surrounding this new figure, *it is imperative that you NOT immediately launch criticisms on Abbas*. This is critical for three reasons:

- (1) **Overt negativity.** If it turns out that Abbas legitimately wants peace and that he represents the true interests of the Palestinian people, then the attacks you launch today will turn the tide of public opinion against ISRAEL tomorrow. You will undermine *all* of your credibility as the willing partner for peace if you shoot down the first true peace partner the Palestinians have offered. (*We don't expect this scenario but it is possible.*)
- (2) **The unknown factor.** Abbas is a relative unknown in the international community. Look at his emergence as if it were part of a political campaign. He is not a candidate to sit at the negotiating table until he proves his worthiness. While uncertainty makes your communication strategies complicated, it should not necessarily change your priorities. The more you talk about him, the more he is going to be talked about, which leads to the next point...
- (3) **Patiently Await a Peace Partner.** Abbas may be a leader who wants peace, but it is incumbent upon him to prove that he is the willing and serious partner Israel needs to pursue peace together. Whether or not he has been elected or appointed to this position, he still needs to demonstrate tangibly that he wants peace. Your goal remains a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Once the Palestinians have shown their house is in order, you will be ready and willing to find an agreement. And if they don't, they, not Israel, will be blamed.

NOTE: This is not to say that Abbas should be given a free ride in the press. It is only to say that criticisms must be confined to what he does to thwart the peace process as a leader of the Palestinian people. Allow him the chance to succeed. A brief exercise in game theory may better illustrate this point. What happens if...

<p><u>You immediately attack Abbas, and he turns out to be a genuine and effective partner in peace?</u></p> <p>Israel loses credibility as the party that wants peace above all else. He gains popularity among an international community that already doubts your rhetoric and “heavy-handed” actions, and wins over those Americans who sympathize with the Palestinian people but support you because they distrusted previously corrupt Palestinian leadership. This is the worst result possible.</p>	<p><u>You immediately attack Abbas, and he turns out to be an Arafat in sheep’s clothing?</u></p> <p>What has Israel truly gained? You may have stripped his faux wool months before he would have done it himself, but you risked backlash. In the end, it would have been better off to publicly remain committed to peace while letting the Palestinian leadership implode on the public relations front – a strategy that has worked effectively thus far.</p>
<p><u>You wait on Abbas to define himself, and he turns out to be a genuine and effective partner in peace?</u></p> <p>The roadmap is instituted and there is a peaceful resolution to decades of conflict by this time next year. This is the best result possible.</p>	<p><u>You wait on Abbas to define himself, and he turns out to be an Arafat in sheep’s clothing?</u></p> <p>Let him keep the faux wool; you’ll reap the benefits of this communications gold mine. All your old messages of needing a genuine partner for peace will ring even truer, and the next time, the new leader cannot be justifiably appointed by Arafat.</p>

So when people ask for opinions or reactions to Abbas, put it in terms of a “scouting report” with the following two facts:

- (1) He was appointed to his current position by Arafat, which is suspect.
- (2) He has denied the Holocaust, which is confounding at best and offensive at worst.

If he is an Arafat in Western clothing, it will not take long to identify him as such. The American people will know it by the actions he takes and the demands he makes. That is an incrimination that, if true, he will do to himself.

Is it a concern that he is a Holocaust denier? Absolutely. Will that fact convince Americans that he cannot represent the Palestinian people in an honest bid for peace? Hardly. Americans don’t want to hear about the Holocaust anymore, and they particularly don’t want to hear it from the Jewish community.

Nevertheless, you need more substance on Abbas before you can tell the American people you question his devotion to peace.

Americans believe that peace has to start somewhere other than Arafat. If Abbas is presented as that alternative, they quickly identify him as a symbol of “hope.” His emergence as Prime Minister (a very Western, democratic-friendly title) is all Americans will need to believe that the peace process should be underway. They will expect you to follow suit and take a seat at the negotiating table. Finally, most believe that the United States can and should serve as an honest broker between these two parties. In their eyes, these are all the ingredients needed to begin the peace process.

It is essential that you use positive language when asked about Abbas. However, that does not mean you must compliment Abbas himself. While knocking him down now does little to help your long-term goals, building him up is also counterproductive. **Therefore you must remain positive about the peace process and indifferent about Abbas until he defines his role. Above all else, reaffirm your position that first terrorism stops, and then negotiations begin.**

WORDS THAT WORK

“Yes, we hope that this potential change in leadership signals a new opportunity for peace in our region. Israel has long sought a partner who wants peace as dearly as we do. But Israel reaffirms that before any peace talks can begin, terror must end. We cannot negotiate with any leadership that allows its people to murder our civilians.”

Mix this message in with one of compassion for the Palestinian people. Many Americans sympathize with their plight. So should you. Americans want to hear it. A statement that the Palestinian people deserve better should follow every recrimination of a Palestinian leader or terrorist.

WORDS THAT WORK

“We know the Palestinian people deserve better. We want for them what we have in Israel: freedom to say what they want, believe what they want, and live in equality. They also should have the right to choose who speaks on their behalf. The Palestinian people deserve and want leaders who will work for peace and not for terrorism. We know that terrorism causes hardships for everyone involved. That is why we are committed to working for peace as soon as we have a willing partner.”

THE VALUE OF RHETORICAL QUESTIONS

An effective communication technique to continue to apply pressure to the Palestinian leadership without looking like you are ignoring Israel's responsibilities is to pose rhetorical questions. These questions will lead to only one answer, of course: peace cannot be achieved until real reforms are in place, and that the terror must stop first.

RHETORICAL QUESTIONS TO ASK OPPONENTS OF ISRAEL

“How can the current Palestinian leadership honestly say it will pursue peace when the same leaders rejected an offer to create a Palestinian state two and a half years ago?”

“How can Yassir Arafat, whom Forbes Magazine says is worth more than three hundred million dollars, claim to be a leader who understands and represents an impoverished people when he has become rich at their expense?”

“Is it too much to ask that the Palestinian leadership not sponsor terrorists? Are we unreasonable to insist that they stop killing our innocent children before we jeopardize our security and make concessions for peace?”

“How can we make peace with a leader that does not believe in or allow free and honest elections?”

“Why do Palestinian schools have pictures of suicide bombers hanging up in the hallways of their schools or celebrate them as martyrs? Why do they name sports teams in the West Bank after suicide bombers? How can we make peace with the Palestinian people when their leaders instill a culture of terror against our people?”

“How can the Palestinian people end their impoverishment if their leaders continue to steal precious resources from them, which are then used to support terror?”

Why has Yassir Arafat been in power for so long, and yet made so little progress towards a peaceful resolution? If he were truly committed to peace, would he not have made a sincere effort to achieve it by now?

When will the Palestinian people themselves have a voice at the peace table?

The answer of every rhetorical question is the same: **peace will come when the current Palestinian leadership is truly reformed and the terror tactics have ceased.**

CONCLUSION: A LITTLE HUMILITY, PLEASE

Presenting a fair evaluation of your past allows you to present a hopeful – and believable – vision of your future.

You have your work cut out for you. As you emerge from one delicate public relations situation – war with Iraq – you enter an even dicier situation – cooperating on “*the road map*” with an unknown counterpart, Mahmoud Abbas. Fortunately the former may provide you some breathing room and cover for the latter.

The essential conclusion is to remain focused on your communication *priorities* from this point forward. Terror ends first. A willing peace partner emerges second. The roadmap is executed last. And throughout it all, you exhibit humility and reaffirm that the Palestinian people deserve better.

This memo has identified language that effectively articulates why – and how – the Palestinian leadership must change. Critiquing the other side is the always the easiest part of public communication, but it is only half of effective language.

Opinion elites in America will not find repeated criticisms of the Palestinian leadership credible unless they are coupled with a similar onus on the Israeli government to accommodate for peace and acknowledge past transgressions. Assertions that Israel enjoys a blameless history are *soundly* rejected. This will not be received well by everyone but it is essential for your spokespeople to acknowledge it Israel has made some mistakes. Not only does this build credibility but it also allows the spokesperson to then explain and assert Israel’s history of taking strides for peace.

Here is how this message is best developed:

ACKNOWLEDGING THE PAST, BOTH GOOD AND BAD

- (1) We know that the history of our conflict has been marked by frustration and mistrust by both Israelis and Palestinians, and Israel is willing to accept some of the blame for what has happened in the past**
- (2) However, throughout our history we have demonstrated that we value peace above all else. In our hope for peace we overcame differences and found agreement with our Arab neighbors Egypt and Jordan.**
- (3) We remain committed to peace. We offered the Palestinian people a state of their own that included over 97% of the West Bank. Their leadership rejected this proposal, showing once again that we do not have a partner for peace so long as the current Palestinian Authority remains the voice of the Palestinian people. It’s time for a change – not just for us but for our Palestinian cousins as well.**