Remembering Dore Gold as the diplomat who defended Israel's borders and history

written by David M. Weinberg | 11.03.2025

Not enough attention was given this week to the passing of Dr. Dore Gold, who served as a strategic adviser to Israeli prime ministers and as Israeli ambassador to the United Nations. Dore's contribution to Israel's diplomacy was outsized and his oeuvre is instructive. He uniquely knew to zero in on the most important issues of the day.

Earlier in his career as an American academic, he focused on radical Islam and the terrorism it spawned, which was then flowing freely out of Saudi Arabia. His doctoral dissertation on this formed the basis for his 2003 book, Hatred's Kingdom: How Saudi Arabia Supports the New Global Terrorism. (In more recent years, he acknowledged the deep and positive changes in Riyadh under the leadership of Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman.)

In the 1980s at Tel Aviv University (which is when I met him and learned to rely on him as a wise observer of emerging trends), he focused on US defense policy relating to the Middle East. Gold developed the discourse that eventually was broadly adopted by Jerusalem and its advocates abroad regarding Israel's strategic value to the United States and the importance of anchoring US-Israel relations in close security and intelligence coordination.

Twenty-five years ago, he became an early proponent of Israel's formal designation as an American non-NATO ally, and of the association of Israel to CENTCOM, the US military's Central Command structure covering the Middle East, something that finally happened in 2021.

After the Oslo Accords were signed, Gold was dragged unenthusiastically by Benjamin Netanyahu into talks with the Palestinians in the UK and Jordan (even before he became prime minister in 1996), meeting with Yasser Arafat and Mahmoud Abbas, as well as Jordanian and American leaders.

Dr. Gold was always skeptical of Palestinian intentions and the Palestinian

Authority's capacity to pursue true peace. Thus, he sought to ensure that security parameters for Judea and Samaria (and the Golan Heights) were adhered to, as set out by prime minister Yitzchak Rabin before his assassination.

When Dore assumed the presidency of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs in 2000, he parlayed this security focus into one of the most important and influential think tank ventures in Israel's history: the Defensible Borders for Israel project.

Leading a broad range of military generals and defense experts, he sketched out the rationale for Israeli security control of West Bank mountain ridges and the Jordan Valley plus a broad east-west Jerusalem corridor – with detailed maps – and he outlined the key elements of the necessary "demilitarization" of the Palestinian government.

This was a revival of Gen. Yigal Alon's defensible border paradigms from the 1970s (and which were the mainstay of Rabin's security worldview, even as he signed the iffy Oslo Accords).

For over a decade, Gold presented the study at every think tank and parliament around the world, with the study and its video versions translated into half a dozen languages. To a certain extent, this document is still the basis for Israel's security-based diplomacy, more salient than ever following the failure of the Oslo peace process and the annihilationist-toward-Israel turn of the Palestinian national movement.

In the late nineties (during Netanyahu's first term as prime minister), Gold served for two years as Israeli ambassador to the United Nations, and this exposed him to a different, troubling facet of the Arab-Israeli conflict: denialism of the Jewish People's historic and fundamental rights in Jerusalem and Israel altogether.

Gold was shocked by Arab (and European) denial of Israel's profound, centuries-old, national connections to the Land of Israel. He witnessed Palestinian rhetorical violence against Israeli/Jewish indigenousness in the Land of Israel, something meant to savage the core identity of Jews and Israelis.

He understood, long before the globally-woke assault on Israel post-October 7, that the Jewish state's enemies sought to strip justice and authenticity from Israel's very existence, and to upend Israel's alliance with the human-rights-

supporting, democratic world. He understood that “they want Jerusalem and want us out of Israel, period,” as he told colleagues back then.

Gold feared, alas correctly, that the denialism juggernaut could one day lead to violent antisemitic battering of Jews and Jewish institutions around the world – as we indeed have seen over the past 18 months.

Consequently, he became convinced that in addition to a security-based discourse, Israel must augment its diplomacy with a rights-based one. He decided that it was essential to reengage in the fight for Israel with historical truths and convictions rooted in faith, not only with security arguments.

‘The fight for Jerusalem’

In 2007, he wrote a book called The Fight for Jerusalem: Radical Islam, the West, and the Future of the Holy City, which took-up the fight against Arab denialism. He turned this into a series of graphic presentations about the Jewish people’s indigenous rights in Israel – videos and presentations that have been broadcast around the world.

Gold even hosted an event at the UN that showed Israel’s millennia of archaeological history with artifacts from the First and Second Temple periods, proving the Jewish people’s overwhelming connection to the Land of Israel since antiquity.

In his short stint as director-general of Israel’s Foreign Ministry (2015-2016), he sought to make pushback against Arab denialism a central focus of Israeli diplomacy. At the time, Mahmoud Abbas of the PA in particular had taken to denying the historical existence of the Temples in Jerusalem, driving a series of UN resolutions that declared Jerusalem an exclusively Muslim heritage city and criminalizing Israel’s custodianship of holy sites.

TWENTY YEARS ago, Gold also started an international effort to criminalize the genocidal-against-Israel threats of Iranian leaders, especially then-Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. He authored a best-selling book in 2009 entitled The Rise of Nuclear Iran: How Tehran Defies the West. Western leaders may again want to look this book up as Israel today readies to finally destroy Iran’s nuclear bomb and ballistic missile programs.

The Middle East strategist played a behind-the-scenes role in developing the Trump administration's Mideast peace plan in 2020: 'Peace to Prosperity,' dubbed by President Trump as the 'Deal of the Century'" Not surprisingly and very appropriately, this plan combined the security-based and rights-based principles that marked his career, thus ensuring Israeli military and civilian control of critical areas and its sovereign rights over unified Jerusalem.

All the while, Jews and friends of Israel around the world came to know and appreciate Ambassador Gold through his bold interviews on every global media platform no matter how unfriendly to Israel, as well as his fearless debates in public forums with Israel's foes. I recall with appreciation his decisive takedown at Brandeis University of Richard Goldstone (of the infamous eponymously named 2009 UN report on Israeli human rights "crimes" in Gaza).

In many ways, the American-born and American-accented author and Israel advocate paved the way for other American olim (immigrants) in Israeli diplomacy, including my late father, Prof. Henry (Zvi) Weinberg – an MK for the Israel Ba'Aliyah Party in the late 90s – and ambassadors Michael Oren and Ron Dermer.

(I hold a wonderful photo of my father in discussion at Blair House in Washington in 1998 with Gold, Netanyahu, ambassador of Israel Eliyahu Ben-Elissar, former Jerusalem Post editor-in-chief David Bar-Illan, who was then the prime minister's Director of Communications and Policy Planning, and others.)

Securing Israel's borders while battling delegitimization of Israel: This is Dore Gold's vital and admirable legacy. He deserves a collective memorial salute from Israel and the wider Jewish world.

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