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Abstract. This article provides a commentary on a recently published approach to a US-led process for peace between Israel and the Palestinian National Authority.

Anthony Cordesman, senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, has recently written an article for The New York Times that recommends a United States (US)-led process for peace between Israel and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). There are a number of features concerning this article that are both common to many hypothesized routes to peace and problematic to the appearance of peace. These features can be termed examples of subjugating discourse. Here, subjugating discourse denotes language describing a reality that (1) may not conform to common requirements for reality mandated by empiricism and logic and (2) renders the problems of maintaining desirable political power not only more difficult but also more easily tolerable--thus adding and sometimes founding the basis of this difficulty.

First, Cordesman assumes that the US can, indeed, forge a peace between two contesting entities. Yet, there may not be only two such entities. A partial list of other entities with political, politico-military, and economic influence over and interests concerning the conflict and the possibility of peace includes the European Union, individual nation-states that are allies of the US, a huge concatenation called "The Arab Nation" that includes anything from governmental leaders of Arab nation-states to paramilitary groupings and the man and woman in the street, individual nation-states that are formally neutral or adversarial to the US and formally allied with or neutral to segments of "The Arab Nation," a huge concatenation called "The Islamic World," and various illicit trafficking networks of drugs, weapons, and people.

One might render the descriptive inadequacy of "two contesting entities" moot, if the US actually possessed assets necessary to appropriately influence all significant parties to the conflict. Yet such a status of political power is unarguably lacking for the US based on budgetary realities and on political psychological realities concerning contemporary waves of anti-US animi. Moreover, that the US could lead a successful process to peace with hotly involved contestants and protestants--in a world wherein psychology generating suicidal behavior mitigates objective advantages of economics and military forces--defies the facts on the ground.

Second, Cordesman engages in legal, ethical, and moral equivalency concerning the violence between Israel on the one hand and certain segments of "The Arab Nation" and "The Islamic World" on the other. He does this by explicitly employing the language of "Palestinian terrorism" and "Israeli counterterrorism." Here, "counterterrorism" seems to refer not to non-terrorist intervention for counterterrorist purposes, but engaging in terrorism as a counter to terrorism.

Cordesman's language necessarily validates a reality that both sides are engaging in terrorism. Again, this might be the case if one chose some definition of terrorism that would subsume violence perpetrated by Israel and segments of "The Arab Nation" and "The Islamic World." But given one common definition that terrorism involves intended and politically motivated violence against civilians

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who are non-participants in violence (by most stretches of the imagination--except that of terrorist logic wherein all people are inherently complicit with the Original Sin of living), terrorism is not the policy of the Israeli Government as it is with some of its adversaries.

That is not to say that the Israelis are right and its terrorist adversaries wrong in the ongoing conflict. Terrorism may well be a justified tool of political struggle and is certainly one that paramilitary entities of what became Israel and some succeeding Israeli military and paramilitary personnel have employed.

As an additional note on the terrorism question, IBPP notes that the language of "Palestinian terrorism" and "Israeli counterterrorism" ineluctably describes a violent world wherein the Palestinians go first and the Israelis follow. Depending on how one chooses to enter the stream of ongoing political behavior, the "counter" could be applied with equal or unequal opportunity to various employers of violence so that one would perceive "Israeli terrorism" and "Palestinian counterterrorism."

Third, Cordesman is a victim of one of the great victories of 20th and 21st century propaganda. This victory is the common acceptance--even by the Israelis--that "Palestinian" accurately applies only to the people claiming representation by the PNA, the Palestinian Liberation Organization, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, or other organizations embracing Arab (and usually Islamic) individuals who once lived or still live in (or whose ancestors once lived in) the various incarnations of the Land of Palestine. In actuality, anyone who has lived or is living in (or whose ancestors once lived in) the Land of Palestine are Palestinians. Perhaps only a suprahuman individual might wish to surmise on the effects on violence of a more inclusive employment of "Palestinian."

Fourth, and, perhaps most troubling, Cordesman consistently advocates a political, legal, ethical, and moral equivalency between Israel and its adversaries. That Cordesman may be correct must be accepted before analysis and might be accepted after it. However, his analysis--primarily the assertions that Israel and some of its adversaries both use terrorism, violence, have leaders who make mistakes--focuses on means instead of ends. Which sides most rightly deserve land and self-determination and political sovereignty and full membership in the United Nations? All? Some? None? There is certainly precedent that there are winners and losers, victors who had injustice on their side and losers who have gone down with justice, and so on. Cordesman does not make a case.

It may well be that the US should take nobody's side, one side, or some sides. To expend resources everywhere there is injustice, its threat, or its allegation is a prescription for a US mortal wounding based on resource overextension. So, is Cordesman only asking us to read between the lines of his article and to appreciate that the language of equality and equivalency must be used as a means to peace and not as an honest expression of perceived or constructed reality. The problems of such an approach are not only moral but logistical within a globalized world that (via telecommunications) resembles a fishbowl and sieve not an opaque container wherein secrecy is more likely.

In conclusion, Cordesman's prescription for peace seems destined to subjugate us to more tragedy and violence. The power of language seems powerful indeed. (See Barber, B.K. (2001). Political violence, social integration, and youth functioning: Palestinian youth from the Intifada. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 29, 259-280; Cordesman, A. (March 22, 2002). The Middle East's failed leaders. *The New York Times*, p. A27; Kogan, S.M. (1998). The politics of making meaning: Discourse analysis of a "postmodern" interview. *Journal of Family Therapy*, 20, 229-251; Mollov, B., & Lavie, C. (2001). Culture, dialogue, and perception change in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. *International Journal of Conflict Management*, 12, 69-87; Wood, G. G., & Roche, S. E. (2001). Situations and representations: Feminist

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practice with survivors of male violence. *Families in Society*, 82, 583-590.) (Keywords: Israel, Mideast, Palestinian, Terrorism.)