LETTER TO THE EDITOR

I think highly of Uri Bar-Joseph's scholarship on Israeli national security, which is why I was so dismayed to read his harsh review of my book, *Defense and Diplomacy in Israel's National Security Experience*, and why I feel compelled to respond to his misplaced criticisms.

Bar-Joseph levels three general accusations: (1) the book offers neither a comprehensive nor an original analysis of Israeli national security; (2) the book does not focus on the contemporary problems of Israeli national security; and (3) the book is not critical of the "theory and practice" of Israeli national security. Bar-Joseph also offers a few specific criticisms, but let me begin with the general ones.

The first two criticisms misconstrue the purpose of the book. I did not intend for it to be either an exhaustive or innovative analysis of Israeli national security, and I never claim otherwise. Nor did I intend for it to focus heavily on Israel's contemporary security problems. Rather, my aim is to provide an accessible introduction to Israeli national security that traces its major components across the state's history. Certain components receive more attention than others, but all receive at least some exposure. Moreover, Bar-Joseph neglects to mention that I explicitly observe that the threat posed to Israel by conventional war has diminished in recent decades, while the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction and low-intensity conflict has grown apace (pp. 15–17, 121–122). The book, in sum, is aimed largely at individuals who want a basic overview of Israeli national security; it is not meant primarily for specialists in the field who seek the most avant-garde thinking on the subject.

The third criticism is the most disconcerting, as Bar-Joseph paints me as some sort of shill for Israel. Though my assumptions and beliefs about the Arab-Israeli conflict crop up occasionally, and though I include one chapter that is undeniably prescriptive in orientation, the book's substance and

Editor's note: The views expressed in this letter are solely those of its author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor, editorial board, or publisher.

tone are essentially descriptive/analytical and matter of fact, respectively. For the record, however, I will readily admit that it is my firm belief that compared to the historical behavior of most other nations existing under similar threatened circumstances—the only reasonable standard, to my mind, on which to base moral judgments—Israel comes off well, despite its past and present faults and misdeeds. Bar-Joseph may disagree with my view, but holding it does not make me an apologist for Israel.

Let me now briefly address a couple of Bar-Joseph's specific criticisms. He claims that my assessment of Israeli deterrence is too positive, allegedly because my understanding of it is simplistic. Yet I explicitly say that Israeli deterrence failed before the 1967, 1969–1970, 1973, 1982, and 1991 wars (p. 3); and I also explicitly say that Israel has not developed an adequate deterrent to low-intensity conflict (p. 4). Similarly, he suggests that I do not understand how a "patron-client" relationship operates. Yet I devote an entire chapter to the functioning of the American-Israeli patron-client relationship (pp. 61–83). One may, of course, contest my (rather non-traditional) view that a 'security-for-autonomy' bargain in which Israel has given up a measure of its freedom of action to the United States in return for American military, diplomatic, and economic support has been at the heart of the relationship since the 1960s; but it is unfair to imply that my view is simplistic without any explanation of why it is so.

There are a couple of other specific criticisms in the review, including one in which I allegedly label Palestinian "demonstrations" as a form of terrorism, that do not quite square with what is actually in the book. In the interest of keeping this response short, I will not address them here. In closing, I would only ask readers who might be interested in the book to consider for themselves whether it is really as intellectually superficial and ethically blemished as Bar-Joseph contends.

David Rodman
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