

Diplomatic war a high stakes game in Gulf

Dr. Hahn says plan needed to answer Middle East questions

by Mark Owens
The Collegian

After the war.
It's a phrase that many families and friends -- indeed nations -- use when talking about the eventual end to war in the Gulf when making plans for the future.

But many political analysts -- including nationally-recognized expert Dr. Peter Hahn, associate professor of history at Behrend, -- talk of a war after the war; a war of words and will.

"A U.S. occupation of Iraq would be a big mistake," said Hahn. "The presence of U.S. troops will stimulate resentment, terrorism and hatred towards America and other western countries. We'd be worse off than we started."

Hahn believes something similar to the Marshall Plan of the late 1940's is needed to address the problems of the Middle East.

"Political solutions and money are needed to resolve the heart of the conflict, not extra troops to create another Belfast."

He added that "it is essential for the U.S. and U.N. to propose a regional political settlement. The Israeli question needs to be addressed and resolved, as well as what to do with the Palestinian refugees and the civilian survivors of the war."

Many observers of the Middle

East believe the Israeli question -- radical Moslem's belief that Israel doesn't have the right to exist -- has been the source of conflict in the region. Hahn offered this explanation:

"The people of the Arab world have lived for centuries under imperial dominance, first under the rule of the Ottoman Empire, which dominated most of the

started to dismantle their empires in the late 1940's, continuing into the early 1960's. From the Arab perspective, they have lived under the thumb of Western imperialism for a long time and have only recently escaped that dominance. Thus they still hold a lot of bitterness toward the West. They look across the sea and they see wealthy, prosperous,

For the Israeli's though, their country was a long-awaited homecoming.

"Over 2,000 years ago, the Jews lived in Palestine -- an area that covered what is now Israel and Jordan. During an uprising against the Romans, Palestine was destroyed and the Jewish people scattered around the world. "It wasn't until after World

chance they get, Iraq and Syria being notable examples.

As one of Israel's chief allies though, Hahn said, the United States is often called "the Great Satan, the most evil of the West."

"In myth, if not reality, many Arabs believe that the United States created Israel and is its chief protector and provider. They have tried to destroy Israel and failed. They hate Israel for that and for the fact that every time it grows bigger and stronger -- all with the help of the U.S., which makes them hate us as much."

While Hahn believes the Israel question must be answered before a lasting "peace" can be achieved in the Gulf, he also said Iraq cannot be emasculated either.

"An Iraq laid to waste by war won't help the situation either. An utterly defeated Iraq may cause a power vacuum in the area, especially with Syria on one side and Iran on the other."

In fact, many experts claim it is Iraq that has kept Syria and Iran from dominating the area.

"Whatever the outcome of the war," Hahn said, "a plan is needed to take care of the larger battle afterwards."

"They look across the sea and they see wealthy, prosperous, industrially-developed countries that got rich and powerful by exploiting them -- and they resent it."

-Dr. Peter Hahn
Associate professor of History

Arab portions of the Middle East from the 16th century until World War One. When the Ottomans collapsed the British and French came in and added most of the Arab lands to their empires, officially as mandates of the League of Nations but unofficially as conquered provinces -- parts of their overseas empires.

"The British and French

industrially-developed countries that got rich and powerful by exploiting them -- and they resent it."

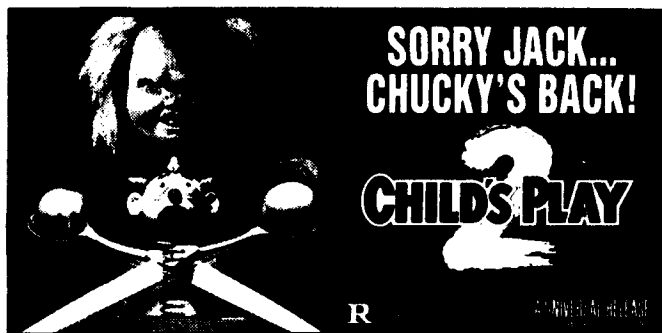
While that may account for the bitterness of many Arabs, the Israeli question still requires more explanation.

"As for Israel, many Arabs view Israel as the invention of the West -- something placed on their land against their will."

War II that they had their homeland returned to them, over the protest of many Arab states. Since then several states have tried both economic and military means to rid themselves of Israel, all of which have failed."

While more moderate Arab leaders have, it seems, decided to tolerate Israel's presence, there are still radical countries who have vowed to destroy Israel the first

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