

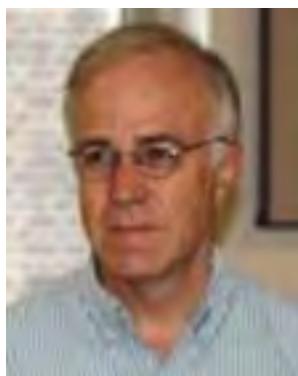
For Peace between Israel and Palestine, Headwing Politics

Andrew Wilson
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Secretary of State John Kerry (right) sits across from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (center), and, to his left, Justice Minister Tzipi Livni, in Jerusalem on June 29.

These days Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is a man caught in the middle. He seems to have come around to the understanding that peace with the Palestinians is a necessity to preserve Israel's future as a Jewish and democratic state. Yet he is beholden to members of his own Likud party, which includes rightists like Deputy Defense Minister Danny Danon. Danon recently stated on Israeli TV that there would never be a Palestinian state and the Palestinians would be governed by Jordan. Since Netanyahu apparently cannot find enough support for peace negotiations from his own base, if he truly wishes for peace, he has no choice but to reach across the aisle.



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Netanyahu governs in a coalition with centrists like Justice Minister Tzipi Livni, an advocate of negotiations, and Finance Minister Yair Lapid, whose party's surge in the polls early this year came at Likud's expense. Lapid sees peace with the Palestinians as a desideratum for Israel's economic future. Yet his coalition also includes Economics Minister Naftali Bennett, whose settler movement seeks permanent Israeli sovereignty over the entire West Bank. In June, he told a settlers group that the idea of a Palestinian state had reached a "dead end."

And then there is the feisty right wing of Likud led by Danon. At a party nominating convention in May 2012, he organized a group of pro-settler Likud stalwarts to challenge Netanyahu and nearly deprived him of leadership of his own party. Netanyahu was forced to scramble back, which led to his short-lived alliance with Kadima Party leader Shaul Mofaz. Early this month, hardliners gained control of the Likud party. Netanyahu now has to govern with this fragile coalition, making domestic politics an ever-present problem. It goes a long way to explaining his recalcitrance, despite U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry's five visits to the region since taking office to jumpstart peace talks.

Netanyahu needs to reach across the aisle, to politicians like Shelly Yacimovich, leader of the Labor Party which won 15 seats in January's election. She is a strong advocate of peace talks, and two months ago met Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in Ramallah and told him it is necessary to start peace talks immediately.

This is the nub of the argument I presented in a blog post last month on the website of the World Policy Institute. It is a strictly political argument; what, then, does it have to do with applied Unificationism?

Reaching across the aisle is the practical application of what Rev. Moon calls the "Headwing" approach. A Headwing approach to politics becomes the order of the day once Satan is subjugated and God's people no longer have to maintain an offensive posture against the other side, as was required in the era before Cheon Il Guk when God and Satan were in pitched battle. Headwing implies respect for people on both sides of the aisle as God's children, and respecting that everyone owns an aspect of truth.

In April 1990, Rev. Moon set the example of this when, after the fall of the Soviet empire in 1989, he met President Mikhail Gorbachev and pledged to work with him for the reconstruction of the Soviet Union. Before 1989, Rev. Moon had been one of the world's foremost anti-Communists. He considered the Soviet Union an intractable foe and the headquarters of Satan's ideology, and mobilized the Unification movement's resources to fight communism all over the world. But when meeting Gorbachev, he offered an open hand to help the people of the Soviet Union (later Russia) to move forward towards a God-centered world. Many UTS alumni served among the missionaries who worked in Russia in the years that followed.

Cheon Il Guk, the age when opposites unite, should be the age of Headwing politics. Implementing Headwing means inducing people who currently are enemies, such as the Israelis and Palestinians, to reconcile and settle their dispute. The same applies to domestic American politics, where the Headwing approach would urge Republicans and Democrats, conservatives and liberals, to reconcile their differences by intelligent compromise instead of viewing the other side as the enemy. Adversarial politics will not work in Cheon Il Guk; and as a result the U.S. government flounders in gridlock.

In the Middle East, we can also see the Principle unfolding in the connection between domestic politics and international relations. Headwing politics at the international level requires the foundation of Headwing politics on the national level. Netanyahu is doing just that. He has moved away from his former attachment to right-wing settler politics and is building a centrist coalition—Headwing in Israeli domestic politics. This will afford him the base to engage with the Palestinians to establish the greater Headwing victory of reconciling the descendants of Ishmael and Isaac.

Netanyahu knows that the main stumbling-block for the Palestinians is the settlements. But he also knows the political cost in facing down the settler wing of his own party and worries whether he can keep his coalition together if he were to offer a settlement freeze. So while he seeks to navigate the treacherous waters of domestic politics, he keeps a game face.

Thus, in public statements, such as his June 20 interview with the Washington Post, Netanyahu puts the onus on the Palestinians: "The real reason is the persistent refusal to recognize a sovereign Jewish state in any boundary." How much of this is a fig leaf for public consumption? Abbas has affirmed on numerous occasions that the Palestinian Authority recognizes Israel's right to exist, and the Arab Peace Plan put forward by that side declares the same.

However, two years ago Netanyahu made an affirmation of Israel's Jewish identity as a precondition for talks. That gave the Palestinians pause, not because they don't believe Israel will be a Jewish state, but because conceding it before negotiations would mean surrendering in advance their "right of return" to their ancestral homes in Israel. In the course of negotiations, when the Palestinians concede, as they must, that they will not have a right of return, they will expect to get something in exchange. That's only fair. Despite this posturing about recognition of Israel's Jewish identity, Netanyahu moved off his stance of two years ago; he no longer demands it as a precondition for talks.

Some doubt Netanyahu's sincerity, whether he actually wants a two-state solution. Indeed, the man holds his cards close to his vest. Yet, in the end, Netanyahu is committed above all to preserving Israel as a Jewish state. Like Prime Minister Ariel Sharon before him, he understands the impossible demographic conundrum facing Israel if it tries to incorporate millions of Palestinians into its democracy, as it must if it holds on to the West Bank and Gaza, and still retain its Jewish character. The bottom line is without a Palestinian state, Israel's future as a Jewish state will be in jeopardy.

America is playing its role as the Headwing mediator, fulfilling its role as the elder son nation. I tip my hat to Kerry for his optimism and persistence as he works to engage both sides. A mediator is by nature a parental role, and the parental heart is at the core of Headwing. Kerry demonstrates it by not forcing either side to comply with an American plan but rather cajoles them to work out their own positions and take ownership of peace for themselves.

At the same time, as a good parent, America does wield a stick. Netanyahu knows that if he refuses to work with Kerry, and Israel is seen as the recalcitrant party, there will be international repercussions that could harm Israel. Also like any good parent, America does not withdraw her love for her child over the dispute. In Israel's case, this means continued diplomatic and, if necessary, military support against Iran.

The greatest challenge remains domestic politics, where to establish a Headwing centrist regime Netanyahu has to battle with his right wing. America is helping there as well. Last month, several senior leaders of American Jewry, notably Abraham Foxman of the Anti-Defamation League, took the unprecedented step of warning Netanyahu against coddling the likes of Bennett and Danon even as they expressed confidence that Netanyahu would work for a two-state solution for the sake of Israel's Jewish future. Since the ADL almost never criticizes Israel, one wonders whether Netanyahu asked Foxman privately to add his weighty voice to the debate.

As Kerry continues his shuttle diplomacy in the region, Netanyahu must decide whether finally he will do whatever it takes to negotiate a peace agreement that provides for a two-state solution. He has the opportunity to rise to the occasion and do the right thing, the Headwing thing — reaching across the aisle.

Dr. Andrew Wilson is co-author of the Citizens Proposal for a Border between Israel and Palestine, an independent initiative to draw a map based on the principles of fairness, contiguity, access, minimizing dislocation of the population, and enhancing conditions for economic development. He edited *World Scripture: A Comparative Anthology of Sacred Texts* (1991).