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**Israel shouldn't have to negotiate with a terror group seeking its annihilation**

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WASHINGTON — Assume the following: A terrorist group gains control of Canada's Parliament and commits itself to America's destruction, crossing the border to launch a series of suicide bombings of shopping centers, pizza parlors and cafes that leave hundreds dead from Michigan to Montana.

The group, which refuses to acknowledge America's right to exist, receives its funding, arms, training and other support from Iran, which seeks to "wipe America off the map." The group also works with like-minded terrorists in Mexico that, when not trying to topple the government there, are crossing America's southern border to cause murder and mayhem.

The world community, worried about instability in North America, calls on Washington to negotiate with Canada's terrorists even while they refuse to accept America as a sovereign nation.

Absurd? Of course! America would never negotiate with such an adversary. Nor should it ask the same of Israel, which faces a real-life adversary of the kind described above in the group Hamas.

Presumably, the purpose of Middle East peace talks is, well, peace.

But Hamas has no interest in peace. As reflected in its charter and the pronouncements of its leaders, its very *raison d'etre* is to destroy Israel.

Even the social services that Hamas delivers to Palestinians in the occupied territories are designed to build grass-roots support for its military mission.

That mission lies at the heart of Hamas' increasingly violent dispute with Fatah — the party of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas who seeks to restart bilateral peace talks with Israel. Committed to destroying Israel, Hamas is now murdering Palestinians who may want to give peace a chance.

Thus, a seat for Hamas at the negotiating table would do nothing to advance the cause of peace. Rather, it would provide international legitimacy to a group that refuses to play by the most basic of global rules.

The modern political era began with the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648, ending the Thirty Years' War and elevating the nation-state as the basic organizing entity for the world's people. Ever since, national governments have been expected to rule their societies,

respect national borders, negotiate and trade with one another, and participate in multi-national organizations.

Put simply, Hamas is an international outlaw. It seeks the destruction of a sovereign nation, respecting neither the borders between states nor the international system that blessed Israel's creation.

No nation has a greater stake in that system than the United States, which former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright calls "the indispensable nation." Whether patrolling key waterways or spearheading trade pacts, the United States serves as the glue that holds the global system together.

The more peace and stability around the world, and the more that nations can focus on strengthening their economies, the more likely America will prosper. Consequently, America has a selfish interest not to undermine the international system, not to enhance the status of outlaw actors, not to jeopardize the rules of global collaboration.

America has an obligation to its allies as well — not just Israel, but others that face the threat of terrorism. As we pursue our war on terrorism, we seek the help of allies in Europe, Asia, Africa and elsewhere in destroying cells, uncovering plots and bringing our enemies to justice.

Terrorism, however, does not just threaten the United States and Israel. Quite the contrary, militant Islamism and the global terrorist network that subscribes to this radical ideology of intolerance threaten Western society as a whole — that is, the same allies whose help we seek.

These allies, in turn, seek U.S. support for their own efforts to maintain order on their home fronts. We do not negotiate with terrorists that seek our demise. We should not ask others to do so.