fractionated Knesset, which further clouds the outlook for stable governance. This is precisely what Benjamin Netanyahu is counting on. Although polls showed him leading both Barak and Sharon, he chose not to run this time around unless the Knesset dissolved itself and also stood for new elections. It was a statesmanlike position, praised by many, including some who do not normally count themselves among Netanyahu's most fervent admirers; it was also a position calculated to elevate his standing in the expectation that whoever is elected in February will not be able to lead for long before yet another round of voting, including parliamentary elections, is needed. At that time, Netanyahu, seeking to cast himself as the true centrist, would almost surely step into the political fray.

OVERRIDING POLITICAL AND STRATEGIC FACTORS

In the meantime, as Israeli politics seeks to sort itself against the backdrop of the deep and seemingly irreconcilable fissures in Israeli society, certain things seem clear and best not be forgotten.

First, many of the claims of the Israeli right, especially since the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, have proved accurate, though they were largely ignored by those on the left who reflexively dismissed anything said by spokesmen on the right. For example, incitement to hatred among Palestinians has continued unabated and with devastating consequences. Moreover, the accumulation of weapons and the build-up of the Palestinian police and militia, in direct contravention of the Oslo Accords, have created a deadly adversary for Israel. And the wink and nod to Palestinian extremists—many arrested with great fanfare only to be released as soon as no one was paying attention—has undermined the chances for a peaceful settlement with Israel.

Second, many of the claims of the Israeli left have also proved strikingly accurate, despite attempts by those on the right to dismiss them. Palestinians who not docilely remain under Israeli occupation forever. Neither could Israel expect occupation to continue without some corrosive effects on its democratic values, nor could it absorb the Palestinians in the territories without undoing the Jewish character of the state. And sooner or later, Jewish settlers in remote outposts in Gaza, for example, would become flashpoints for violence between Israelis and Palestinians.

Third, as a consequence, no one school of thought has a monopoly of wisdom on what is best for Israel. Ideologues, whether of the left or right, become prisoners of their own preset views, and, as a result, tend to adjust the facts to their doctrinal thinking rather than the other way around.

Fourth, regardless of what happens in the short run respecting Israeli-Palestinian issues, the sad reality is that Israel will continue to face severe challenges in the region, requiring a powerful military, eternal vigilance, and close coordination with the United States.

Iran and Iraq pose dangerous, and growing, threats, particularly in the nonconventional field. Islamic extremist groups operating in the region will not soon go away. Syria possesses missiles and chemical warheads. Disturbingly, Egypt has embarked on a broad modernization program of its conventional forces and is known to be engaged in research on some nonconventional weapons systems as well. An emerging Palestinian state will alter the political and security landscape for Jordan, with unknown consequences.

PRESSURES ON THE ARAB WORLD

And, of course, the larger problems of the need for a true reformation in the Arab world, of the glaring absence of democracy and the rule of law, of governmental lack of accountability to its citizens, of endemic corruption and nepotism, of high birth rates and insufficient jobs, of economic stagnation and fear of opening to the world, of the Islamists influence on society, all continue to plague this vast and important region of the world.

A few pertinent statistics illustrate the dimensions of the problems faced by the Arab world. Fouad Ajami of Johns Hopkins University has pointed out, for example, that Finland, with a population of 5 million, exports more manufactured goods than the entire Arab world combined, with its 22 countries and its population well over 200 million. Israel has a higher per capita GNP than its five contiguous neighbors—Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, the Palestinian Authority, and Egypt—combined, and more Internet users by far than all five put together. And impoverished Gaza has a higher birthrate by a multiple of nine than prosperous Bologna, Italy.

Fifth, we should be under little illusion about such notions as a ''demilitarized Palestinian state'' or ''an end to the conflict.'' A Palestinian state is coming, one way or another, and the debate about whether it is good or bad for Israel seems largely irrelevant. It will happen, and Israel no doubt will do its utmost to establish harmonious ties, but it must also recognize, as a recent CIA report looking ahead to the year 2015 predicted, that ''chilly'' relations are likely to prevail and surveillance and monitoring will be required.

That Palestinian state will not be demilitarized, I believe, regardless of agreements signed, which could pose a threat both to Israel and Jordan. And there will remain those Palestinians who will seek to continue the struggle with Israel, either because they see Israel proper as their real home, or because they see the Zionists as ''infidels'' and ''modern-day Crusaders'' who have no right to be there, or both.

Sixth, we need to take very seriously anti-Semitism emanating from the Arab world. Not only is it pernicious and contrary to the promotion of peaceful relations in the region, but it also fuels anti-Semitic attacks against Jews and Jewish targets throughout the world, as we have tragically seen in recent months.

And finally, we need to remind ourselves of the importance of our own role in making a difference on Israel's behalf. Both in our public education and advocacy efforts in the United States, in which we stress the mutual benefits of close U.S.-Israel ties as well as America's vital national interest in Israel's security in a stable Middle East, and in our diplomatic, exchange and public affairs programs around the world, the American Jewish Committee is making a unique contribution to Israel's well-being and its quest for peace and security. The political and security challenges that lie ahead for Israel will doubtless only heighten the importance of that work.

NOW IS THE TIME FOR CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

HON. STEPHEN HORN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 31, 2001

Mr. HORN. Mr. Speaker, they say the third time is the charm. This year the House will pass—for the third time—the Shays-Meehan or McCain-Feingold bill. By either name, this is genuine, necessary and effective reform that will return power to the people and curb the endless money chase in our political campaigns.

This legislation ends the raising and spending of ''soft'' money. The parties have become addicted to huge checks from corporations, unions, and wealthy individuals. This bill puts both parties into immediate rehab.

This legislation also ends the sham ''issue'' ads that savage candidates of both parties in every election. It forces into the sunlight big money interests behind these ads.

The House has made it clear. It wants this reform to become law. This year, all of us hope that the Senate and our new President will look at this issue very carefully, offer constructive suggestions, and then join us in passing real campaign finance reform.

U.S. MIDDLE EAST POLICY

HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 31, 2001

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I want to share with my colleagues an article written by Douglas Bloomfield for the Chicago Jewish Star. The article provides an accurate summary of President Clinton's efforts to facilitate peace and dialogue in the Middle East during his service to this country. I agree with Mr. Bloomfield that ''No other (U.S.) President has been so closely identified with Israel's search for peace.''

Mr. Bloomfield's article discusses the popularity of President Clinton in Israel and among the Jewish Community in the United States due, in large part, to the commitment he made to do everything within his means to bring peace to the Middle East. I share that appreciation for the priority President Clinton made of these important issues. I have often looked to Mr. Bloomfield's work for an accurate perspective on events and trends in the Middle East as well as a constructive evaluation of U.S. Middle East policy. Clearly the Bush Administration has a tough act to follow in ensuring that Americans and Israeli's feel comfortable in America's commitment to the security of Israel and her prosperity in the future. I urge all of my colleagues to take the time to read the following article.

[From the Chicago Jewish Star]

WASHINGTON WATCH—SHALOM, BILL

(By Douglas M. Bloomfield)

''If Bill Clinton is looking for a job, he can come over there and run for prime minister. He'd win easily,'' said a caller from Israel the other morning. ''He's still the most popular politician in the country.''

And he remains popular at home as well, particularly in the Jewish community, despite the controversies that plagued his administration. The peace proposal he revealed recently in a farewell speech to peace activists included proposes that made even left even some dovish followers uncomfortable, but no reasonable person could challenge the sincerity of his desire to help Israel find peace.

Nor can anything overcome the hysterical frenzy of the Clinton haters and those extremists who see any concessions to the Palestinians as selling out Israel.

No other president has been so closely identified with Israel's search for peace. He