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Nobel Prize-winning photo-op, traveled from one futile meeting with Arafat to another begging for a cease-fire. Arafat, leader of a tiny, corrupt mini-state, repeatedly — and with impunity — spurned the pleas of the leader of the supposedly hegemonic power in the Middle East.

The result? Clinton has recklessly devalued the power and prestige of his office. There was a time when the visit — and the word — of an American president meant something in the Arab world. Today it means nothing.

But while Clinton damaged only American prestige, Barak has irrevocably damaged Israel's security. And in return for what? Arafat's position is unchanged from where it was seven years ago when the Oslo accords were signed: 100 percent of the West Bank, all of East Jerusalem for his Capital and, fatally, the resettlement of 4 million to 5 million Palestinians in Israel, thus in a single stroke demographically destroying the Jewish state.

No matter.

The Clinton-Barak folie (grv)a deux grasps at "private statements" Arafat made at Camp David and in a White House meeting. This is madness. For whatever concessions Arafat may have whispered in private, he not only denies them in public, he has gotten the entire Arab League to support his unchanging, unyielding maximalist demands.

Barak's concessions did not change the Palestinian position. But they did change the American position. His legacy is to have single-handedly undermined three decades of American support for bedrock Israeli principles.

For three decades, the United States supported a united Jerusalem. The Clinton plan now divides Jerusalem.

For three decades, the United States held that Israel should withdraw to secure, defensible borders. The Clinton plan has Israel giving up its critical Jordan Valley buffer zone.

What is astonishing is that these concessions are entirely unreciprocated, and without any assent

from the Palestinians that they would bring peace. Indeed, the Palestinians are adamant that they will not.

Thus, the first order of business for the Bush administration should be to declare itself not bound by these desperate eleventh-hour measures and to fire the entire "peace team" — Dennis Ross, Aaron Miller and Martin Indyk — that has brought American standing in the Middle East so low.

Clinton has indeed left a legacy: the president who has done more to undermine both American credibility and Israeli security — albeit with the collusion of a delusional Israeli Prime Minister — than any in American history.

For peace, perhaps the price might have been worth it. But look at the region. The blood flows and the cannons are being readied."

But Joy Still Reigns Here

Elaine and I had a joy-filled honeymoon in Spain. We chose Spain because our travel agent told us we would have warm weather. Warm??? It was 30 degrees when we arrived in Madrid and raining. And our luggage was 36 hours late in arriving. We had to rush out to buy new things. Then a few days later, Elaine came down with food poisoning.

Despite these things, we had a ball; spent time in the magnificent Prado museum, enjoyed wonderful Spanish food, experienced exhilarating flamenco dancing and met some wonderful people.

Upon our return to the States, I moved into Elaine's house. And you know what moving is like!

Then it was time for Chanukah. This was Elaine's first experience with this wonderful Jewish holiday and I had a lot of explaining to do. As you may remember, Elaine is of Syrian descent. So I had to be very careful when I explained that Chanukah is a celebration recalling the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem after the defeat of the Syrian army by the Jewish people in the year 186 B.C.

When she understood, laughingly, Elaine said: "I don't know if I want to celebrate the defeat of the Syrian army!" But she did and we did.