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From Mr Daniel J. Aronoff.

Sir, Simon Schama points to Israeli opposition leader Tzipi Livni's familial and ideological descent from the Revisionist Zionism of Vladimir Jabotinsky ("[Time is not on our side](#)", Life & Arts, April 16). In an article entitled "The Iron Wall", written in 1923, Jabotinsky offered a diagnosis of the roots of the conflict between the native Arabs and immigrant Jews in Palestine, which has endured as the most prescient and compelling analysis ever expounded on the matter.

Jabotinsky predicted the Arabs of Palestine would not peacefully cede land to the Jews because they were as proud a people and as much a nation as any European state. The Zionist "credo ... is completely peaceful. But it is absolutely another matter if it will be possible to achieve our peaceful aims through peaceful means. This depends, not on our relationship with the Arabs but exclusively on the Arabs' relationship to Zionism." And therein lies the rub.

Jabotinsky courageously looked the matter straight in the face. The Zionist leadership at the time naively (and self-centredly) believed the inhabitants of Palestine would passively accept a socially and economically dynamic immigrant group into their sparsely populated land that would, after all, improve their living standards without causing overcrowding. Jabotinsky knew better. But he also foresaw the conditions that could lead to Arab acceptance of Jews; if the Jews treated Arabs justly and appeared powerful enough, then the Arabs might give up the dream of driving out the Jews. As he wrote: "As long as there is a spark of hope that they can get rid of us, they will not sell these hopes, not for any kind of sweet words or tasty morsels, because they are not a rabble but a nation, perhaps somewhat tattered, but still living. A living people makes such enormous concessions on such fateful questions only when there is no hope left. Only when not a single breach is visible in the iron wall, only then do extreme groups lose their sway, and influence transfers to moderate groups."

There is no better description of the delicate and complex interplay that lies at the interstitials of power and peace in the ongoing conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. To ignore it is to consign oneself to unending incomprehension about the nature of the conflict.

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