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Will the real Romney please stand up?

Thomas C. Fox | Oct. 9, 2012 NCR Today

Will the real Mitt Romney please stand up?

Yesterday, in a speech at Virginia Military Institute, he delivered what was heralded as a major foreign policy address. In it he advocated a ?two state? solution to the vexing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, echoing what has been official U.S. policy for decades.

?I will recommit America to the goal of a democratic, prosperous Palestinian state living side by side in peace and security with the Jewish state of Israel,? he said so very evenhandedly.

He sounded diplomatic and resolute. You might get the impression his balanced approach might help keep the Middle East from getting even further out of control.

But there?s a hitch. The GOP presidential candidate had a quite different message less than a month ago when he addressed a room full of high-dollar donors. At a private fundraiser Romney spoke out against the Palestinians, calling Middle East peace ?almost unthinkable,? and said he would simply ?kick the ball down the field.?

?I look at the Palestinians not wanting to see peace anyway, for political purposes, committed to the destruction and elimination of Israel, and these thorny issues, and I say there's just no way. And so what you do is you say you move things along the best way you can. You hope for some degree of stability, but you recognize that it's going to remain an unsolved problem.?

That unguarded and less scripted anti-Palestinian approach appears to be closer to Romney?s thinking and makes it far less likely any movements toward Middle East peace would be made during an Romney administration.

I think that's the case, based on his private comments. Others might disagree. But who knows? Uncertainty is bound to rise after a person speaks from two sides of his mouth, one contradicting the other.

So when is the real Romney expressing his thoughts truthfully? The answer to this question involves more than a political problem. It involves character and becomes a moral issue.

This leads me to wonder: If the real Romney were to stand up, how would we know it?

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