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STEAL OF THE CENTURY



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The Palestine-Israel *Journal* is an independent quarterly founded in 1994 by Victor Cygielman and Ziad AbuZayyad. It aims to shed light on, and analyze freely and critically, complex issues in the core of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The *Journal's* purpose is to promote rapprochement and better understanding between the Palestinian and Israeli peoples, and to discuss all issues related to the conflict without prejudice or taboos, and contribute to the efforts to end the Israeli occupation and achieve fair and just durable peace.

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Editorial

The Steal of the Century

This issue of the **Palestine-Israel Journal** has undergone a number of transformations. We originally planned to dedicate the issue to “Democracy, the Rule of Law and Good Governance,” given that there is a crisis in democracy in both the Palestinian and Israeli societies. However, on January 28, 2020, at a grandiose ceremony at the White House, U.S. President Donald J. Trump unveiled his long-promised “Deal of the Century,” which he called a “Peace to Prosperity” vision, in the presence of Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and a select audience of right-wing American Jews, fundamentalist evangelicals, and Republicans. A “deal” is supposed to be between two parties, yet the other party, the Palestinians, were conspicuously absent from the occasion. How can you have an agreement with only one of the parties to a conflict?

Given that the United States is still the major superpower in the world, despite the fact that it appears to be withdrawing into a more isolationist stance, and that this is the first time that a detailed American proposal has ever been placed on the table, we felt it was necessary to change the focus of the issue to a serious critique of the Trump vision and to explore alternatives for Israelis, Palestinians, and the international community.

Even though the unveiling of the Trump plan did not secure a majority for Netanyahu in the recent elections, which was one of the primary goals of the pre-election publication of the proposal, the COVID-19 crisis has given Netanyahu a new lease on political life and, as we go to press, it appears that it has handed him the key to forming a national unity government that he will initially head.

Although all attention is currently focused on coping with the crisis, it is clear that the repercussions of the Trump plan will return to center stage once normal life resumes and perhaps even earlier because the Israeli right wing, which is a major component of Netanyahu’s new government, sees it as an historic opportunity to proceed with annexation of Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), prevent the creation of a Palestinian state, and try to achieve the dream of a Greater Israel. That is why we continue to believe in the importance of this special issue of the PIJ, which will serve as a major resource for all who seek to confront the American plan and continue the quest for a just and fair resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for the sake of both peoples.

One of the greatest dangers is that Netanyahu will try to activate the item in the Trump plan that would enable Israel to annex large areas of the West Bank, including the Jordan Valley, creating a complete separation between the remaining Palestinian territory and Jordan, in total violation of the Oslo Accords signed between Israel and the PLO, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people; in violation of international law; and despite the Israeli security establishment's warnings that the annexation of the Jordan Valley is unnecessary from a security perspective and would endanger Israel's peace treaty with Jordan.

Within the context of a so-called land swap, the Trump-Netanyahu vision allows for the possible transfer of 300,000 Palestinian Israeli citizens in the Triangle area to the OPT. This would constitute a form of ethnic cleansing and would fulfill a long-time goal of the extreme right wing in Israel for the sake of ensuring Jewish advantage in the demographic balance. Israelis, Palestinians and particularly the responsible international community which believes in the rule of law and the post-World War II order must be vigilant in the face of this possibility and voice their opposition to it.

The Trump Vision has no vision. It's a shopping list prepared by patrons of the Israeli settlers, including the U.S. ambassador to Israel, and adopted by Trump, who seeks the support of evangelicals and right-wing American Jews for his re-election. This hoax will not pass and has no chance of surviving. Any plan to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict must be based on justice, respect for international legitimacy represented by United Nations resolutions and signed agreements. Such a plan should guarantee ending the Israeli occupation of the OPT, first and foremost, and enabling the Palestinian people to live in peace, dignity and security in their own state alongside the state of Israel on the June 4, 1967 lines with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The solution should be worked out with the participation of the two sides with international law and legitimacy as its terms of reference. Any imposed solution will fail and will only bring more violence and suffering to the region. This is what Trump and his associates fail to understand.

All efforts to secure peace and justice should be dedicated to preventing the implementation of "The Steal of the Century."

Hillel Schenker and Ziad AbuZayyad

Looking Beyond Trump: How to Reset U.S. Policy

Daniel Kurtzer

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From its inception, the Trump administration has had three objectives in relation to Israel and the Palestinians. The most important of these has been to “change the paradigm” of peacemaking. U.S. Ambassador to Israel David Friedman indicated this in a February 11, 2020 presentation at the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs,¹ and this has been a theme in many of the public pronouncements by Trump’s advisors. Their view, echoing that of the president, has been that all previous peace efforts have failed and that they know best how to make a good deal.

The second objective has been the marginalization of the Palestinians as an actor with a critical stake in the conflict. The administration has done almost everything possible to deny Palestinians agency and standing. The administration shuttered the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) office in Washington and the American Consulate General in Jerusalem, thereby closing the two most important formal channels of communication with Palestinian officials. Administration officials also denigrated Palestinians through an almost daily bombardment of criticisms — for example, the Twitter barrage by Jason Greenblatt, the former Trump envoy.

Perhaps the most far-reaching objective of the administration has been to change the situation on the ground and to remake the way American officials are supposed to talk about the conflict. Not only did Trump move the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem, but he also declared that Jerusalem was off the table: “We took it off the table. We don’t have to talk about it anymore.”² Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced the administration’s view that

¹ David Friedman, “The Trump Plan: The New American Approach,” speech at the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, February 11, 2020.

² Quoted in *Haaretz*, January 25, 2018. <https://www.haaretz.com/us-news/.premium-trump-netanyahu-meet-in-davos-1.5766434>

“[the] establishment of Israeli civilian settlements in the West Bank is not *per se* inconsistent with international law.”³ This statement — made without releasing the legal arguments employed to justify it — cast the United States as an outlier on this critical issue. The administration also reportedly advised against calling the Occupied Palestinian Territory “occupied,”⁴ thus adopting an Orwellian approach to the use of language to try to obfuscate reality.

For three years, the administration refused to articulate support for a two-state solution, and when it finally did in Trump’s “vision,” the Palestinian state is envisaged as comprising six cantons totally surrounded by Israel and stripped of almost every attribute of even a minimal definition of sovereignty. To add a certain mockery of reality to this already fraught mix, the administration also recognized Israel’s annexation of the Golan Heights, notwithstanding the statement attributed to then-Prime Minister Menachem Begin that he would not use the word “annexation” to describe Israel’s decision to extend law, administration and jurisdiction in Golan.

In other words, the administration never intended to advance a serious peace proposal or even to advance a new paradigm to replace what every administration before Trump had adhered to. Indeed, the idea of a plan appeared to be conceived as an illusion to provide cover for what the administration was actually doing on the ground.⁵ Diplomatic actions and the creation of facts on the ground; words that obscured the real situation on the ground; and blatant bias against one of the two parties in this protracted conflict — these have constituted the underlying strategy and objectives of Trump and his advisors. If nothing else, they have given lie to the pretense of the United States as an “honest broker” in the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and they have provided a pathway, complete with a promise of U.S. support, for Israel’s annexation of large areas of the West Bank.

Administration officials, including Jared Kushner, have urged Palestinians to engage on the “vision,” noting that the U.S. team might be amenable to accepting some Palestinian amendments, but that the plan would move ahead with or without their inputs. Last year Kushner ruled out the Arab Peace Initiative as a basis for making peace: “I think we all have to recognize that if there ever is a deal, it’s not going to be along the lines of the Arab peace initiative.”⁶ U.S. officials have also warned the

³ <https://www.state.gov/secretary-michael-r-pompeo-remarks-to-the-press/>

⁴ <https://www.jta.org/2018/04/23/politics/us-human-rights-report-drops-phrase-occupied-territories-in-section-on-israel>

⁵ <https://prospect.org/article/illusion-trumps-mideast-peace-plan>

⁶ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/06/kushner-israel-palestine-deal-won-follow-arab-peace-initiative-190624212457563.html>

Palestinians that, unless they engage on the terms of the U.S. vision, Israel will be allowed to start implementing the vision's elements as Israel sees fit.

The “Vision” and Its Reception

Against the backdrop of this strategy and these objectives, the release of the Trump “vision” was clearly something of an afterthought. The timing of release was dictated not by a substantive or strategic calculation but rather by the administration's hope that it would boost the political fortunes and election chances of Benjamin Netanyahu. Indeed, it is inconceivable — though perhaps true — that the officials working on this issue in the Trump administration could have believed that anyone would take the vision seriously. This issue of ***Palestine-Israel Journal*** and dozens of articulate evaluations by real experts and professional diplomats have provided all the evidence necessary to understand how foolish the “vision” is.

Thus, there are two important questions: What should the international community and the Palestinians do, and what impact will this vision have on future U.S. policy? Frankly, international opposition to the “vision” has been tepid, giving the administration reason to believe that some might actually see merit in it. The administration's team has pointed to private expressions of interest among some Arab leaders, and others and have argued that public statements of the Arab League⁷ and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation⁸ were pro forma and not to be taken seriously. Trump's advisors have similarly dismissed critical statements by the European Union and individual European leaders.

Clearly, conflict fatigue has set in, and the Palestinian issue is not as central to Arab state concerns as it has been over the years. Some Arab states are also caught in the messy and as yet unresolved challenges of the 2011 Arab revolutions, and most of their energies are concentrated at home. Some other Arab states are equally caught up in meddling in the affairs of others in the neighborhood, whether in Syria, Yemen or Libya. There is thus less political will for many Arab states to take up the banner of Palestinian rights, self-determination, and statehood.

Palestinian Policy

The Palestinians themselves are also beset by internal divisions and an almost complete absence of creative leadership. President Mahmoud

⁷ <https://www.axios.com/arab-league-foreign-ministers-reject-trump-peace-plan-612f8cde-c8cc-4955-8504-7b6e6142c103.html>

⁸ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-israel-palestinians-oic/organization-of-islamic-cooperation-rejects-trump-peace-plan-statement-idUSKBN1ZX1BH>

Abbas (Abu Mazen) lambasted Trump's vision at a February 20 emergency meeting of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and called for an international conference.⁹ However, the Palestinians have done no forward-looking diplomacy to advance their ideas. This was on full display during Abbas' previous appearance before the Security Council, when he delivered a speech and then exited the Council chamber without bothering to listen to any comment from other speakers. In the perception of most people, there is no Palestinian peace plan on the table, only a series of statements rejecting the ideas of others.

What is clearly needed, therefore, is a categorical rejection of the Trump "vision" by the international community and the articulation of a serious peace proposal by the PLO.¹⁰ A good place to start would be the publication of a map showing how Palestinians define their state in the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem; the map should also note acceptance of "swaps," that is, allowing Israel to keep a small number of settlements blocs adjoining the "Green Line" while receiving from Israel equivalent quantity and quality of land in return.

Second, the Palestinians could ascribe generally to the security formula published by the Center for New American Security (CNAS)¹¹ that responds to legitimate Israeli security concerns after Israel yields strategically important West Bank territory. The CNAS plan reportedly draws on a classified study conducted by retired U.S. General John Allen during the Obama administration and discussed with the Israeli army, whose top brass reportedly found Allen's plan acceptable.

Third, the PLO should find a way to revive the ideas that were under consideration during the 2008 negotiations involving former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Abbas, ideas that reportedly were far-reaching but to which the Palestinians did not respond at the time.¹² To be sure, the Palestinians argue that since Olmert was about to be indicted, it was not a propitious time to consider concessions, and they say that a planned visit to

⁹ <https://www.c-span.org/video/?441329-1/mahmoud-abbas-calls-us-embassy-move-jerusalem-unlawful>

¹⁰ See also Khalil Shikaki, "What comes after the Middle East peace process," Foreign Affairs, March 6, 2020. https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2020-03-06/what-comes-after-middle-east-peace-process?utm_medium=newsletters&utm_source=fatoday&utm_content=20200306&utm_campaign=FA%20Today%20030620%20Fight%20Pandemics%20Like%20Wildfires%2C%20After%20the%20Middle%20East%20Peace%20Process%2C%20The%20Rise%20of%20Women%27s%20Political%20Participation&utm_term=FA%20Today%20-%20112017

¹¹ <https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/advancing-the-dialogue-a-security-system-for-the-two-state-solution>

¹² <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/13/magazine/13Israel-t.html>

Washington to discuss the Olmert ideas was interrupted by the outbreak of war in Gaza. Thus, while it is challenging to recapture an historical moment that did not come to fruition, this is the time to try to do so.

Such public moves by the PLO, underpinned by active diplomacy and supported internationally and in the Arab and Muslim world, would represent a strong counterpoint to the “vision” put forward by the U.S. Administration. Because the U.S. under Trump would not support the PLO’s actions, it is unlikely that there would actually be movement toward resuming negotiations right away. However, the PLO would have challenged the Israeli public and the U.S. to consider a far more realistic and honest way to move forward.

U.S. Policy

As long as Trump is in office, the poorly conceived Trump “vision” will remain U.S. policy, notwithstanding its unrealistic and one-sided content. There is a need, however, to think beyond Trump, to a time when U.S. policy can be reset on a more reasonable course. There are two ingredients necessary to do this.

First, the next administration needs to reverse as many of Trump’s actions on the ground as possible. The next administration should pursue the



Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas at the UN Security Council on February 11, 2020 holding a map of what a Palestinian state would look like under President Trump’s plan. (Seth Wenig/AP)

legal and/or legislative ways to reopen the main channels of communication with the PLO — namely, the PLO office in Washington and the American consulate general. The Palestinians must hear not only that Jerusalem is back on the table but also that the U.S. will support the principle of East Jerusalem — whose border will be subject to agreement in negotiations — as the capital of the Palestinian state and will locate the U.S. embassy there.

The next administration will also need to find ways to resume aid to the Palestinian Authority (PA) and the UN agency that provides assistance to Palestinian refugees. This will require building support within Congress on legislation where required.

Second, the next administration will need to articulate a clear policy to restore sanity to American policy for resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. There are at least six critical requirements in this regard:¹³

- Don't overbid, that is, understand and work within the context of local, regional, and international realities. It will likely not be possible in 2021 to activate a full-blown peace process. Substantial groundwork will need to be undertaken, including the elements noted above with respect to U.S. policy. Rhetoric will need to be temperate and expectations kept in check. However, this should not relegate the peace process to the bottom of the U.S. agenda. Sustained diplomacy, including serious indications of presidential interest if not active involvement, will be critical.
- Do some homework. Reading some books and meeting some people are useful exercises only if the right lessons are learned. Perhaps the most critical of these lessons is that unidimensional approaches to peacemaking do not succeed, whether they are underpinned by promises of substantial financial payoff or promises of regional diplomatic openings. A serious approach to peacemaking must include "bottom up," that is, positive changes on the ground; "outside in," or the involvement of the region in supporting peace efforts; and "top down," namely, serious and creative ways to resolve the core issues that separate the parties.
- Demonstrate the kind of leadership the United States has shown in the past. Define the peace process as being a serious U.S. national interest, not a favor we do for the parties. Do not repeat the hackneyed mantra that "we can't want peace more than the parties." We can and should want peace because it is a U.S. interest and important for much else that we do in that region. U.S. leadership in trying to advance Palestinians-Israeli peace has paid dividends in the past regarding other U.S. priorities,

¹³ Daniel C. Kurtzer, "The Ingredients of Palestinian-Israeli Peacemaking," *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 3, Spring 2020, pp. 5-16.

for example, bringing key Arab countries to support American policy regarding Iran, counterterrorism, and the like. Our leaders also need to demonstrate that they have the backbone and the staying power to fend off the efforts of spoilers and peace process opponents to unravel our diplomacy.

- Help Israel and the Palestinians build the societal resilience and strength to pursue peace, despite the challenges. We need to redouble efforts to help Palestinians build their security capabilities, institutions, and economy. We need to ensure Israel has what it needs to feel safe making the territorial and political concessions that will be critical if we are to reach a two-state outcome.
- Work quietly and deliberately with the parties, the international Quartet (the UN, EU, U.S. and Russia) and the Arab Quartet (Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan and Egypt) on a process that includes the usual diplomatic trappings — a conference, bilateral negotiations, and the like — and also people-to-people activities, building entrepreneurship partnerships, and encouraging reconciliation and peacebuilding between religious communities.
- When the timing is appropriate, the United States, having worked quietly with the parties, needs to be willing to establish realistic terms of reference for negotiations. Serious models exist, drawn from past Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. The point is that the core issues that divide the parties need to be addressed and are resolvable.

What Needs to Be Done Now?

The Palestinian and U.S. agendas outlined above will be irrelevant unless several actions are undertaken immediately to stem the deterioration of the situation on the ground. At least two things must not happen in the period ahead. First, the international community and the supporters of peace in the United States must send a clear message to the Israeli government against annexation — whether the large-scale annexation envisaged in the Trump “vision” or annexationist steps that link settlements and outposts even more closely to the Israeli legal and administrative system.

Second, more specifically, Europe, Russia, China and Arab states must put up a large “stop” sign — with clear consequences for speeding through without stopping — regarding possible Israeli plans to build up the areas of E1, Givat Hamatos and Atarot. Any Israeli activity in these areas could foreclose the possibility of dealing with the Jerusalem issue in the future.

A Recipe for Permanent, Perpetual Conflict

Ziad AbuZayyad

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Regardless of public statements by some Palestinian leaders designed for local consumption, I want to emphasize that I have never heard a Palestinian leader who believes in the possibility of achieving a political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict without the United States. On the contrary, as a former negotiator and minister who worked closely with Palestinian Authority (PA) President Yasser Arafat and his associates at a crucial phase of the negotiations and efforts to seek a political solution to the conflict, I can confidently say that we all believed that nothing could move forward without the involvement of the U.S.

This is simply because it is the only country in the world that has influence over Israel, thanks to its special relations with the Jewish state. It is Israel's biggest supporter, providing billions of dollars annually in economic and military aid, including the most sophisticated weapons and advanced military technology. In the political-diplomatic realm, successive U.S. administrations have always been ready to veto any United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution not favored by Israel. The single exception was the U.S. abstention on UNSC Resolution 2334, but after taking office, President Donald Trump sought to overturn that as well.

Taking this into account, the Palestinian leadership tried its best to be on good terms with the U.S. Administration and establish direct contacts with it. This became possible in the late 1980s after the PLO adhered to the U.S. conditions by recognizing UNSC Resolutions 242 and 338, denouncing terror, and recognizing Israel's right to exist. Direct contacts between the two parties became possible in the late '80s and were strengthened after the Madrid Peace Conference in 1991 and the peace negotiations in Washington that began in December 1991 and ended in January 1994, four months after the signing of the Oslo Accords at the White House on September 13, 1993, under the auspices of President Bill Clinton.

Retreat from U.S. Policy against Settlements

Following the establishment of Israel in 1948, successive U.S. Administrations followed a two-track policy which was supportive of Israel and its security while, at the same time, tried to maintain a balanced relationship with the Arab countries in the region to counter Soviet influence at that time.

In an excerpt from President Lyndon B. Johnson's book *The Vantage Point: Perspectives of the Presidency, 1963-1969*, published in the *New York Times* on October 23, 1971, he wrote:

From the founding of Israel in 1948 we had supported the territorial integrity of all the states in that region. Our commitment was rooted in the tripartite declaration of 1950, in which the United States, Great Britain and France promised to oppose any effort to alter by force the national borders in the Middle East."

Later on, after the 1967 War, the U.S. continued to be committed to achieving a political settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict while opposed the settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT).

In an article published in *Foreign Affairs* on January 13, 2016, former U.S. Ambassador Daniel Kurtzer wrote: "For the past four decades, every U.S. Administration has opposed the construction of settlements in the territories that Israel has occupied since 1967. The Carter administration termed the settlements "illegal." President Ronald Reagan called for "the immediate adoption of a settlement freeze," noting that "further settlement activity is in no way necessary for the security of Israel and only diminishes the confidence of the Arabs that a final outcome can be freely and fairly negotiated."

Kurtzer added: "President George H.W. Bush withheld loan guarantees that Israel needed to absorb Soviet Jewish immigrants until Israel agreed not to settle the immigrants in the occupied territories. And during the Clinton administration, the U.S. Congress passed legislation to deduct the amount of money Israel spent on settlement-related activity from U.S. assistance to Israel (apart from security aid)."

Subsequently, the U.S. gradually retreated from this strong position that settlements are illegal to milder language that called settlement activities an obstacle to peace and then to a rather vacuous position that cautioned Israel against taking "unilateral steps." While engaged in this retreat, the U.S. continued to monopolize efforts to achieve a political solution and blocked the road to European or any other international intervention except

by the Quartet, which is dominated by the U.S., while neutralizing the role of the UN.

This policy continued until very recently, when the Trump administration did a 180-degree turn and abandoned the traditional American position against Jewish settlement in the OPT and in favor of a two-state solution to the conflict. The official American position today, as expressed by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Ambassador to Israel Daniel M. Freidman, is that settlements are legal.

Steps to Sideline the Palestinians

In his first meeting with PA President Mahmoud Abbas in the Oval Office on May 3, 2017, Trump said that the U.S. could not impose an agreement on Israel and Palestine and emphasized that “the Palestinians and Israelis must work together to reach an agreement that allows both peoples to live, worship and thrive and prosper in peace.”

A few weeks later, speaking alongside Abbas after their meeting in Bethlehem on May 28 on the second day of Trump’s trip to Israel and Palestine, Trump said: “I am committed to trying to achieve a peace agreement between the Israelis and the Palestinians, and I intend to do everything I can to help them achieve that goal,” adding that “President Abbas assured me he is ready to work toward that goal in good faith, and Prime Minister Netanyahu has promised the same. I look forward to working with these leaders toward a lasting peace.”

This attitude was welcomed by the Palestinian leadership and raised hopes that Trump would contribute to the achievement of a fair settlement. Yet, the U.S. Administration had already started sending signals that this was not the case. The appointment of Friedman, a strong supporter of Jewish settlements in the OPT, as U.S. ambassador to Israel was the first indication that the peace plan that Trump and his son-in-law, Jared Kushner, had in mind would be bad news. This act was followed by several moves that worsened relations with the Palestinians and dashed any hope they had. Among them was the closing of the PLO Mission in Washington, D.C.; cuts in aid to the PA, including funds allocated to East Jerusalem hospitals that care for Palestinians, recognition of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital and the transfer of the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem; cuts in aid to UNRWA in an attempt to eliminate the Palestinian refugee issue, the change to the status of the American consulate in Jerusalem, making it subservient to the embassy and ending its role as the address for the Palestinians; and, finally, the announcement of the so-called “Deal of the Century.”

The measures taken against the Palestinians came as a shock and put the

Palestinian leadership on alert, expecting the worst. As different Palestinian forums and circles discussed the new situation, some Palestinian security officials visited Washington to meet with CIA personnel and others, but all these efforts failed to reverse the new trend taking root in Washington. It became clear that the U.S. Administration is fully under the influence of the Evangelical messianic right-wing Christians in the United States led by Vice President Mike Pence and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and its pro-settlement Ambassador to Israel Daniel Friedman, and the right-wing Israeli government, in addition to adopting Netanyahu's argument that normalizing relations with the Arab world should come before resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. This argument was strengthened by the escalation in tensions between Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states on the one hand and Iran on the other. This escalation created the impression that Israel and the Arab world shared a common enemy against whom they can cooperate, while setting the Palestinian issue aside. The establishing of relations between some Gulf States and Israel, both publicly and secretly contributed to strengthening this impression. As such, changing regional dynamics and nods of approval from Arab states that they are willing to partner with Israel, for their own interests at the expense of the Palestinians, probably played a role in emboldening Israel and the U.S.



President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu take part in an announcement of Trump's Middle East peace plan in the East Room of the White House, January 28, 2020. (JTA/Mandel Ngan/AFP via Getty Images)

Since the early days of the Israeli occupation in 1967, Israel's policy has been to ignore the Palestinian partner and seek a functional solution with Jordan. In the 1970s, this developed into a process of undermining any possibility of a withdrawal from the OPT or the creation of a Palestinian state by enhancing settlement activity to fragment the OPT, disconnecting cities and villages from each other by surrounding them with Jewish settlements and expanding the Israeli infrastructure of roads, highways, water, electricity, communications, legal constituency, administration, and other means of integrating the settlements into Israel.

The Trump Deal Demonstrates Ignorance and Defies International Law

Looking at the Trump deal or vision — call it whatever you want — one finds that it lacks a minimal understanding of the complexity of the Palestinian issue in all its aspects from 1948 to today. It demonstrates total ignorance of international politics and defies the fundamental principles of international conventions and laws, including international customary law that has developed and become part of the international legal system and behavior since World War II.

On the eve of Trump's announcement of his deal, some argued that the Palestinian leadership should not dismiss the plan out of hand but rather wait for its release and make a positive response by accepting its positive components and engaging in negotiations to change its negative components. They said the Palestinians shouldn't and affirm former Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban's statement that the Palestinians never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity.

I myself, two days before the announcement of the plan, wrote the following in my weekly column in *al-Quds* Arabic-language daily newspaper: "I call upon the Palestinian leadership not to give this gift to the Israelis who count on the Palestinian rejection of the plan, and for the response of the Palestinians to be that we ... welcome the positive elements contained in President Trump's plan and call on the United Nations and major countries, including America, to hold a peace conference to develop the Trump plan and address the negatives it includes through serious negotiations and on the basis of international legitimacy resolutions." (<http://www.alquds.com/articles/1580020547691430600/>)

Looking back on what I wrote then, I regret to say that I was overly optimistic or even naïve in expecting something positive to come from a process dominated by Friedman, Kushner, and Jason Greenblatt, all of whom were known to be supporters of the settlers and of the right-wing policies

of the Netanyahu Government. This was one of few things I have written and come to regret, because Trump's deal is a nonstarter and a vision that has no vision. It is a document written by settlement supporters with input from fanatic Jewish settlers themselves, and it is riddled with the ideological expressions and terminology used by the Israeli right wing.

The Trump-Kushner team dealt with the Palestinians with superiority and arrogance. They underestimated their national aspirations, self-respect and dignity of the Palestinian people and thought it possible to use their material needs to squeeze them and blackmail them. They took the Palestinians for granted as a defeated people willing to surrender. Trump's "deal," which is not a deal, is based on the assumption that the Palestinians have lost and the winner has the right to dictate the terms of the settlement rather than negotiate it.

A Demand to Accept the Current Reality

The Trump team led by Kushner had no background in diplomacy or international relations. They came from the world of business and real estate. Kushner declared that we are in 2020, not in 1967, and that the solution to the conflict should be based on the reality on the ground today and not what was then! In other words, he said that the Palestinians should abandon all previously agreed, negotiated peace agreements, all relevant UN Resolutions, and international law and just accept today's reality.

The reality that Kushner is suggesting that we accept is Israel's fragmentation of the Palestinian space by building settlements, putting restrictions on movement, and integrating the settlements into Israel. This is what he proposes as a solution, instead of calling it a problem that needs to be dealt with and resolved. Thus, the essence of the Trump plan is about making permanent what was supposed to be temporary, instead of recognizing and addressing a problem that should be resolved via negotiations based on internationally agreed parameters, international law and the principles of UNSC resolutions. Calling this plan a political solution makes it worse than the current reality, because it means that there is no more occupation and that the Palestinians should be happy to give up their land and national rights and live under ongoing occupation which is nothing less than an apartheid regime.

Even if not fully implemented, the Trump plan has given Israel the green light to turn the temporary occupation into permanent annexation, thereby achieving its true goal of changing the paradigm of the two-state solution. It's intended to leave us with an apartheid state in which some people have rights and others do not. If this becomes the baseline, it will

not be a recipe for peace but for permanent, perpetual conflict. The idea that the Palestinians will agree to live forever without rights isn't going to work.

If annexation takes place, that's a tectonic shift. The cornerstone of the international rules-based order is the non-acquisition of territory by force. This principle is embodied in UNSC Resolution 242, which was considered as a reference point for the peace process that started with the Madrid Conference and all the negotiations that followed.

According to the Trump plan, Israel will annex about 30 % of the West Bank, which is fragmented and clustered by settlements. The so-called Palestinian state will then be a cluster of pieces of land that are disconnected and completely encircled by Israel. These pieces of land will be connected by bridges and tunnels that are under Israeli control, and Israeli occupation soldiers will decide who moves around the so-called Palestinian state. A single military vehicle at any of these tunnels, bridges or roads can halt any contact or movement between the Palestinian areas that constitute the so-called state, and all exits from the Palestinian territories to and from the outside world will be under Israeli military control. Thus, the Israeli army will continue to have full control over the daily lives and freedom of movement of the Palestinians within their so-called state-to-be.

Although the plan speaks of the establishment of a Palestinian state in this fragmented area after four years, it gives immediate recognition to Israeli sovereignty over the settlements on the one hand while it presents a long list of conditions that the Palestinians must meet before the establishment of their so-called state. Furthermore, it gives Israel the right to decide if the Palestinians have met these conditions. The answer is known in advance. Israel will never admit that the Palestinians are ready for statehood, and there will never ever be a Palestinian state on the basis of this vision of annexation and normalization of the occupation. As for Jerusalem, it is needless to say that Jerusalem lies at the core of the conflict. Despite Trump's declaration that he took Jerusalem "off the table" and his deluded belief that he could do so and still propose an acceptable peace plan, no Palestinian leader will accept a solution without having Arab Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine and having full control and sovereignty over al-Haram al-Sharif.

The Palestinian Struggle for Peace and Justice Will Continue

This plan is a total surrender to the Israeli policy of eternal occupation and the creation of Greater Israel on all of historical Palestine while completely denying the Palestinians' existence and rights.

The dangers posed by the Trump plan go beyond annexation, perpetual occupation, and the eradication of the two-state solution. The plan is a recipe

for an apartheid regime and will lead to continuous conflict accompanied by violence and bloodshed on both sides. Its release alone has emboldened the fanatic Israeli settlers to escalate their attacks on the Palestinians and their property. What is urgently needed is to renewal negotiations process under international legitimacy, represented by international law and relevant UN resolutions as its terms of reference.

In his speech before the UN Security Council on February 11, 2020, President Abbas rightly described the Trump plan as “an Israeli-American preemptive plan in order to put an end to the question of Palestine. The plan rewards the occupation instead of holding it accountable for all the crimes it has perpetrated against our people and our land. This plan will not bring peace or stability to the region and therefore we will not accept this plan. We will confront its application on the ground.”

With these words, Abbas expressed what every Palestinian feels and thinks. We have survived all attempts to liquidate our cause over more than a century, and we will continue our struggle for peace and justice with dignity while recognizing the universal human values of justice and human rights of every human on earth, including our neighbors, the Israelis.

Rejecting Trump plan is rejecting the denial of the Palestinian narrative, the denial of the Palestinian peoples’ right of self-determination, and the denial of the Palestinians right to live in peace, security and dignity on their own land.

Trump Plan Sets the Conflict Back 100 Years

Shaul Arieli

Dr. Shaul Arieli was a colonel in the IDF, headed the Peace Administration in the Ehud Barak government and is the author of A Border Between Us and You (2013) and All of Israel's Borders (2018). He has dedicated himself to advancing an Israeli-Palestinian permanent-status agreement and was among the leading negotiators in the process that brought about the Geneva Initiative in December 2003.



It took 71 years for the Palestinian national movement to join the international community by recognizing the latter's decisions. It took Israel 15 years to accept the United Nations' decisions as a basis for a resolution of the conflict with the Palestinians. Yet it took only four years for the Israeli government, headed by Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and with the backing of U.S. President Donald J. Trump, to backtrack from this. The "Deal of the Century" sets the conflict back 100 years.

The Balfour Declaration of 1917 and the British Mandate in 1922 — which called for the establishment of a Jewish homeland — produced the Palestinian policy of seeking to correct the historical injustice done to them by the fact that "the principle of self-determination was not applied to Palestine at the time that the Mandate was created in 1922 because of the aspiration to enable the establishment of a Jewish homeland," as was written in the report of the UN Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) in 1947. For 71 years, the Palestinians rejected all UN decisions which recognized Israel and prevented them from establishing one Palestine from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea, beginning with the Peel Commission in 1937, via the White Paper of 1939, UN General Assembly Resolution 181 (the Partition Plan) and UNGA Resolution 194 on the issue of refugees. This policy, which was accompanied by military and terrorist attacks against Israel, proved disastrous for them, leading to the *Nakba* (catastrophe), the lack of a state, and the continued wandering of the Palestinian leadership from Israel to Egypt, to Jordan, to Lebanon, and to Tunis.

The Historic Change in the Palestinian Position

A number of factors — the peace between Israel and Egypt, the

collapse of the Soviet Union, the First Intifada, the growth of an alternative internal leadership, the emergence of Hamas as an opposition party, and more — brought about a change, and in 1988, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) for the first-time recognized Resolution 181, which meant recognition of the division of the land and a state for the Jewish people, and United Nations Security Council Resolution 242, which meant that the state of Palestine “... does not include more than 22 percent of historic Palestine.” In other words, the Palestinian state would include the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and its capital would be in East Jerusalem, and there would be an agreed solution to the refugee problem in the spirit of the commitment Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyad), Yasser Arafat’s political deputy, made to the Americans in his 1988 “15 Points” letter that “the right of return cannot be realized through hurting Israel’s interest” and should not “become an obstacle which cannot be bridged over.”

The Evolving Israeli Position

Israel entered into the Oslo Process in 1993 with a different approach. In a speech to the Knesset on October 4, 1995, Yitzhak Rabin presented his view that “...we see the permanent solution in the framework of the area of the state of Israel, which will include most of the area of the land of Israel ... and alongside it a Palestinian entity which will include most of the Palestinian residents who are living in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. We want this to be an entity which is less than a state ... the borders of the state of Israel, at the time of the permanent solution, will be beyond the existing the lines before the Six Day War.”

Ehud Barak, the first to begin negotiations on a permanent arrangement, saw it in a similar fashion. He thought the goal of the negotiations was “a just division of the area of Judea and Samaria” as quoted in Danny Yatom’s 2009 book “*Shutaf Sod*” (Access to Secrets). At the Camp David Summit in 2000, he proposed that “an area of no less than 11 percent, where 80 percent of settlers live, will be annexed to Israel, and in addition we will not transfer sovereign Israeli territory (land swap) ... and for a number of years, Israel will rule over one quarter of the Jordan Valley, in order to guarantee control over the crossings between Jordan and Palestine.” Concerning Jerusalem, he proposed that “the external Muslim neighborhoods will be transferred to Palestinian sovereignty (the 22 villages that Israel annexed in 1967), and the internal Muslim areas will remain within Israeli sovereignty (the original East Jerusalem).” He also insisted that “the Temple Mount will be under Israeli sovereignty ... with some form of Palestinian guardianship and permits for Jews to pray on the Mount.” After the publication of the

Clinton Parameters in 2000, Barak took another step forward in 2001, but he still insisted on annexation of 6-8% of the West Bank without anything in exchange.

Olmert and Abbas — Maximum Degree of Agreement

The first to arrive at a maximum degree of agreement in the framework of negotiations was Ehud Olmert during the Annapolis Process in 2008, 15 years after mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO. Similar to the PLO's decision to recognize UNSCR 242, this was not the product of an honest recognition of the Palestinian right but rather a sober view of the possible within the existing reality. In an interview with *Ma'ariv* in 2012, he explained: "Of course, if I could live in the entire area of the land of Israel, and also live in peace with our neighbors, and also preserve the Jewish character of Israel, and also preserve it as a democratic state, and also be able to gain the backing of the international community — I would do so. But this is impossible, and when something is impossible, responsible leadership is required to recognize this, to reconcile with it, and to draw the necessary conclusions, to give up on cheap populist policy and to act with responsibility and seriousness rather than to seek quick and easy popularity."

With the mediation of U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, the sides agreed on the following parameters:



Israeli soldiers clash with Palestinian protestors at Qalandiya checkpoint near Jerusalem (Ahmad Gharabli/AFP/Getty Images)

Borders: the 1967 lines as a basis (with land swaps based on a 1:1 ratio).

Security: demilitarization of the Palestinian state and widespread security measures;

Jerusalem: a division of Jerusalem into two capitals without changing the status quo of the holy sites;

Refugees: a solution to the refugee problem in its entirety via return to the Palestinian state, compensation, and the return of up to 100,000 refugees to Israel.

Based upon the aforementioned parameters, the Palestinian proposal, which today is not mentioned at all in Israeli discourse, was a land swap of 1.9%, which would enable 63 percent of the Israelis living on the other side of the Green Line to remain (an additional proposal without a map would have enabled 75% of the Israelis to remain), as well as annexation of the Jewish neighborhoods, except for Har Homa, and also the Western Wall, the Jewish Quarter, half of the Armenian Quarter and what remains of Mount Zion. The Israeli proposal was a 6.5% land swap, with 85% of the Israeli settlers remaining; demilitarization of the Palestinian state; annexation of all Jewish neighborhoods in Jerusalem, in addition to Arab Beit Safafa; a special regime in the Historic Basin; and a return of 5,000 refugees and compensation.

Regarding the gaps between the two, Olmert said in 2012: “I was within reach of a peace agreement. The Palestinians never rejected the proposals, and even if for the thousandth time there will be those who will try to claim they rejected the proposal, the reality was otherwise. They did not accept them, and there is a difference. They didn’t accept because the negotiations had not concluded; they were on the verge of concluding. If I had remained prime minister for another four months to half a year, I believe it would have been possible to reach a peace agreement. The gaps were very small. We had already reached the last lap.”

No Netanyahu Map

Netanyahu began his second term with the famous Bar-Ilan speech in 2009 — a speech which only a few, beginning with his father Benzion Netanyahu, really understood. Speaking on Channel 2 TV in July 2008, the latter said: “Benjamin doesn’t support a Palestinian state, only with conditions that the Arabs will never accept. I heard that from him.” Netanyahu chose to ignore the entire process and all the changes described

above and stuck to his position from his 1993 book, *A Place Among the Nations*, which stated that “the conflict is not about particular territories of the land, but rather about the entire land. The conflict is not territorial but existential. The subject at hand isn’t where will the border pass, will it be this or that route, but rather the Israeli national existence. They do not want a Palestinian state alongside Israel, but rather a state in place of Israel.” It is not surprising that Netanyahu never presented a map or plan to U.S. President Barack Obama and his advisors. His position was worlds apart from the parameters that were presented at Annapolis. Trump, Jared Kushner and David M. Friedman were the petri dish for his approach, which was crystallized together with the messianic nationalist right headed by Naftali Bennett and Ayelet Shaked. The American team went with this and published the proposal.

The Trump Plan — A Mortal Blow

Despite the choice of the headline “two-state solution,” the Trump proposal first and foremost deals a mortal blow to everything achieved to date. It sets back the Israeli policy discourse by 15 years, reviving the illusion of an agreement without any concession on the West Bank, and it may set back the Palestinian discourse by a hundred years to the notion of one state with an Arab majority (even before the return of refugees.)

Second, the details of the proposal, which are so fundamentally different from the Annapolis paradigm, make cynical use of concepts that have characterized the peace discourse since Netanyahu’s rise to power in 2009 — two states, land swaps, demilitarization, Palestinian capital and more — and attest to professional ignorance in the areas of security, geography and law. The Palestinian state which is being proposed is a series of enclaves with no territorial continuity and no external borders, turning it into one big enclave with a border stretching to almost 1,500 kilometers, more than one and a half times the length of the current borders of Israel. Within this enclave will be 15 Israeli enclaves (settlements), and within Israel there will be 54 Palestinian enclaves (villages).

International experience teaches us that except for the Netherlands and Belgium, enclaves are not a realistic solution between sides that have a history of violence between them. The IDF would become an army of defense of the enclaves. The winding border would make it impossible to maintain a separate economic system and to enable the Palestinians to be detached from the system that limits them today. Half of the lands that would be annexed to Israel are private Palestinian property which would require broad functional arrangements beyond the capacity of Israel. The

proposed Palestinian capital in the neighborhoods on the other side of the Separation Wall in Jerusalem is not in any way suitable for such a purpose. The construction in those neighborhoods has gone on without a formal planning process. It lacks infrastructure and public institutions and is not located on central economic and transportation arteries.

Withdraw the “Deal of the Century”

The “Deal of the Century” must be shelved and must disappear. It does not and will not have a Palestinian partner. The reactions from the international community indicate that it does not contain the possibility of justification of any Israeli annexation. Its great damage to Israel is not from the possibility of its realization but rather its implications. The plan proposes to legitimize the existing situation in which two different legal systems exist in the same area on the basis of ethnic criteria and to add to it annexation, which will be defined as apartheid. It deals a mortal blow to the PLO, which has tried since 1988 to lead a political discourse based upon a resolution of the conflict instead of an “armed struggle.” It will push the Palestinian Authority toward ending its security cooperation with Israel. It is a blow to the value of citizenship, given the proposal to transfer Arab citizens of the state to Palestine. It is a blow to the rule of law and the right to property by legalizing the illegal outposts which were built on stolen Palestinian land. It will encourage the movement of Palestinians from the neighborhoods outside of the Separation Wall into the city of Jerusalem itself. And it will hasten the exit of Jews and will change the demographic balance which has existed for the past 52 years.

And in the end, whoever seeks to see the Trump proposal as a legitimization of annexation will discover that such a unilateral act by Israel will lead eventually to annexation of the entire West Bank, to an ongoing military and political confrontation, to a totally torn and divided Israeli society, and to a harsh blow to its economy. A wake-up call is necessary and inevitable.

A Hebrew version of this article appeared in Haaretz under the title “15 Years After” in the print edition and “The Trump Plan sets the Israeli-Palestinian conflict back by dozens of years” in the online edition.

Deal of the Century: Challenges, Implications and Future Prospects

Yousef Younis

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Challenges Posed by the “Deal of the Century”

The current international scene is witnessing changes, the most important of which is the United States’ retreat from its international obligations and adopting a policy of “backseat driving,” accompanied by gradual withdrawal from the Middle East, thereby jeopardizing its relations with Europe, Russia and China. Furthermore, Washington has not been able to mobilize international consensus on Trump’s plan, which could prompt the United States to implement it unilaterally, putting into question its ability to successfully resolve the issue.

Among the Arab regimes, the so-called Iranian threat pushed them to reassess their regional interests and priorities regarding the Palestinian issue. They found common interests with Israel to confront common threats, in contradiction of their official position. Despite this, the Palestinian issue remains popular among the peoples of these regimes, making it difficult for the Arab leaders to pay the political price of any rapprochement with Israel without a resolution of the Palestinian issue (Al-Zaanoon, 2020).

The Trump administration’s negotiating approach is based on two pillars: 1) managing negotiations with Arab countries and normalizing their relations with Israel in order to confront Iran; and 2) forcing the Palestinians to accept a *fait accompli*. This approach shows that the U.S. is incapable of leading a successful political process. The deal represents the Israeli right-wing’s vision, which makes it a U.S. formulation of an Israeli project that opposes the establishment of an independent Palestinian state for the sake of Israel’s “security” and its strategic interests (Rantawi, 2019).

The U.S. Administration used a *fait accompli* policy to impose its view, transforming the deal from “conflict resolution initiative” to a “surrender document” (Abrash, 2019). This only confirms that the current U.S. Administration lacks the ability to make strategic transformations due to its inability to persuade, its ignorance of the complexities of Middle East

politics, and its lack of tools necessary to impose the deal.

While the Israeli government has not yet submitted any official response to Trump's plan, Netanyahu is facing intense pressure from the right-wing ministers and settlers to unilaterally annex the Jordan Valley, the area north of the Dead Sea, and the settlements — a step the U.S. Administration has opposed (Eichner, 2020). Moreover, the Israeli security forces have expressed concern and warned against unilateral steps, as they will affect Israeli-Jordanian relations, which are already tense. Therefore, the annexation steps were postponed until after the Israeli general elections (Harel, 2020).

One can't approach the Trump plan outside the context of the region, which is undergoing major changes that are affecting current geopolitical landscape. The Palestinian issue is no longer a priority for the Arab regimes in light of the Arab Spring revolutions, the exacerbation of the Iranian-Gulf conflict, chronic regional conflicts and international shifts in the balance of power. Normalization with Israel has become legitimate at a time when the Gulf states are dealing with the Iranian nightmare, and most of the Arab countries are engaged in a period of political transformation with their internal crises taking precedence over other issues.

Israeli Implementation Already Underway

Israel had already started implementing the main provisions of the American plan before its release. The Trump plan is determined to strip the Palestinians of their rights by siding with Israel, granting it complete sovereignty over Jerusalem and a green light to annex large areas of the West Bank and all the settlements, not only making the possibility of achieving true peace unlikely but actually prolonging the conflict and sacrificing hopes for stability and peace.

Imposing Israeli sovereignty over all of Jerusalem denies the Palestinian national collective rights in the city. What remains are only individual human rights that can be revoked through displacement or the withdrawal of residential identity cards. It is worth noting that the plan to give the Palestinians the densely populated areas of Shu'fat refugee camp and Kafr Aqab outside Jerusalem's municipal boundaries aims to reduce the percentage of Arabs among the city's population, shifting the demographic balance in favor of the Jewish population (Salem, 2020).

By focusing on the religious nature of the conflict and Israel's claim to maintain control of the holy places, the Trump plan creates an explosive situation in Al-Aqsa Mosque — by encouraging the activities of fanatic religious groups such as the Temple Mount Faithful, who aim to pray at

the site and divide it into separate areas with prayer schedules for Jews and Muslims. This is creating tension in relations with Jordan, which is custodian of the religious sites, and challenges Palestinians' right of access to the holy sites (Salem, 2020).

Implementation of the deal would strengthen Israel's control of the West Bank and Jerusalem, creating a complex reality with, at its core, the problem of Israel's inability to separate from the Palestinians. This situation is leading to a one-state solution as the only option, but with two possibilities: The first is a state with equal rights for Jews and Palestinians, which would eliminate the idea of a Jewish state. The second is a state without equal rights, which would mark the end of democracy and morality in Israel and turn it into an apartheid regime. This is the more likely outcome, because Israel's worst-case scenario is one state with an Arab majority, which would mark its end as a Jewish state.

Implementing the "Deal of the Century" without resolving the Palestinian issue would enable certain regional powers to violate the legitimacy of Arab states by accusing them of abandoning the Palestinians and the Islamic holy sites, thereby inciting Arab public opinion and mobilizing opposition and extremist organizations (Al-Zaanoon, 2020).

The "economic solution" offered by the deal, which can be summed up as the transformation of Palestinian cities into ghettos in order to secure labor for Israeli markets, replicates the experience of the "Bantustans" established by the South African government during its apartheid regime (Itani, 2020).

The approach of ignoring the fact that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a political conflict which requires a political solution and dealing with it as a security problem over the last 25 years under different slogans such as regional security or new Middle East has failed. This misguided approach leads only to creating security chaos and to the emergence of more extremist and radical movements, some using religion to advance political agenda.

The Trump plan was developed without taking into account the international community and the relevant United Nations principles and resolutions. It can be characterized as a new stage titled "the Rebellion of the Major Powers against International Conventions" and constitutes an environment conducive to chaos and extremism.

Trump's Deal and International Law

The American plan includes many violations of UN resolutions and provisions of international law, as follows:

- *Two States*: Bypassing the UN resolutions related to the two-state solution beginning with UN General Assembly Resolution 181 of 1947; UNGA Resolution 194 of 1948; UN Security Council Resolution 242 of 1967, which demanded that Israel withdraw from the territories it occupied during the 1967 war; and UNGA Resolution 2851 of 1971, which demanded Israel desist from annexation of any of the occupied territories.
- *Jerusalem*: UNGA Resolution 2253 of 1967 called on Israel to halt its changes in Jerusalem. UNSC Resolution 252 of 1968 considered Israel's actions in Jerusalem illegal and a violation of the Geneva Convention. UNGA Resolution 35/169 of 1980 demanded that Israel comply with all UN resolutions relevant to the historic character of the city. UNGA Resolution 35/207 of 1980 denounced the annexation of Jerusalem and Israel's changes to its character (Al-Sahli, 2020).
- *Settlements*: Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Civil Convention of 1949 states that "the occupying power shall not ... transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies." UNSC Resolution 446 of 1979 confirmed that settlement and the transfer of settlers to the Palestinian territory are illegal, and UNSC Resolution 452 of 1979 demanded a halt of settlement activity, and UNSC Resolution 465 of 1980 called for dismantling the settlements. Moreover, the decision



The tunnel and checkpoints system that is supposed to connect the Palestinian populated areas in the Occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip, according to the Trump's administration plan for a future Palestinian state.

of the International Court of Justice in July 2004 determined that the separation wall is illegal, and Article 8.b.viii of the 1988 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court among its definitions of “war crimes,” includes the transfer by “the Occupying Power of parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies.” (Al-Shanti, 2020).

- *Refugees*: The United Nations has issued more than 50 decisions, primarily UNGA Resolution 194; calling for the return of refugees to their homes with compensation for the damage caused them by forced evictions and the destruction of their villages (Al-Shanti, 2020).

Future Scenarios

Scenario One

The first scenario calls for rejecting the plan and resisting it with every available means. We would witness no dramatic changes, such as a new intifada or a real boycott of Israel, but rather limited attempts to change the function of the Palestinian Authority (PA), a calculated upsurge of popular movements, the continuation of the PA’s internationalization strategy and appeals to the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice.

This scenario is based on the fact that the plan may not be implemented immediately, that it aims to topple or change the PA. This first scenario may drag Palestinians into violence, an option which will lead only to further chaos and lack of stability without contributing positively to the interests of the Palestinian people. Furthermore, the Israeli and U.S. elections may produce fundamental changes that will put an end to the “Deal of the Century.”

The weakness of this scenario is its failure to recognize that the Trump plan aims to entrench the facts established by the Israeli occupation, especially with regard to the core issues, thereby affecting the policies of any future Israeli government or U.S Administration. Nonetheless, this is the most likely scenario (al-Masri, 2020).

Scenario Two

The second scenario calls for rejecting Trump’s deal and changing the PA policy regarding relations with Israel such as revoking recognition of Israel, halting security coordination, resolving the economic dependency, dissolving the PA, and activating the PLO including the factions that are still outside of it. This, in conjunction with Palestinian popular and political steps, would lead to one of two possibilities:

1. *Dismantling the PA and ending the “free-ride” phase of the occupation by holding Israel and the international community accountable for their legal and political responsibilities toward the Palestinian people.* This option has serious consequences, most important of which is the end of the PA as an internationally recognized legal and political framework. This option conflicts with the interests of some influential groups within Palestinian society that have an interest in the continuation of the PA, and they will oppose it.
2. *Changing the function of the PA, declaring the Palestinian state as a state under occupation, and engaging in a confrontation with Israel.* This possibility requires revising the signed agreements, recruiting external support, activating the PLO and rebuilding it as a national liberation movement, holding urgent elections, activating popular resistance, boycotting Israeli products, unifying political references and ending internal divisions (Abrash, 2020). This scenario faces the following obstacles:
 - a) Israel’s response may lead to the collapse of the PA and its replacement by local entities.
 - b) The Palestinian leadership and political forces are weak, lack practical alternatives and are not ready yet for this option.
 - c) Key regional and international players are pressuring the Palestinians not to apply this scenario.

Scenario Three

In the third scenario, some oppositionist groups or individuals start engaging on the basis of Trump’s plan, possibly going as far as staging a coup against the PA president in which they would overthrow or bypass him in order to force him to negotiate on the plan without signing it.

The likelihood of this scenario increases if Arab countries step forward to support the plan and if Netanyahu heads the next Israeli government and Trump wins the 2020 elections. The weakness of this scenario lies in granting legitimacy to liquidating the Palestinian cause in exchange for individual interests (al-Masri, 2020). Its failure would negatively affect stability and security in the West Bank.

Scenario Four

In this scenario, the plan would be assessed and amended in line with the Palestinian vision, with the condition that international parties would participate alongside the U.S. and international guarantees would

compel Israel to negotiate according to a specific timetable that holds Israel accountable before the world.

Supporters of this scenario believe that a Palestinian rejection would serve the implementation of the deal. It is no coincidence that the U.S. Administration gave the Palestinians a time limit of four years, during which Israel will intensify its measures to change the demographic balance by, for example, accelerating settlement activities in the Jordan Valley and Jerusalem to the point that it becomes impossible to change this reality in the future. That is why Israel is the main beneficiary of a delay in negotiations (Kanafani, 2020).

Supporters of this scenario suggest the following amendments (Swailem, 2020):

- a) A complete halt of all settlements' activities, including in Jerusalem.
- b) No Israeli action that would change the situation on the ground, especially the annexation of settlements in the OPT or the Jordan Valley until all border issues, including land swaps, are completed.
- c) Ensuring the right of every Palestinian to return to the territory of the Palestinian state, without restrictions or conditions.
- d) Demanding the presence of international forces on the borders for a transitional period with full powers.

Strategic Vision

The deal lacks a comprehensive perspective on the various dimensions of the conflict; therefore it will be no more than a passing event that will fall short of making history. Furthermore, this U.S. Administration cannot succeed in leading a successful political process to establish peace (Al-Zaanoon, 2020).

The "Deal of the Century" does not present just solutions and, therefore, is not a plan to resolve the conflict but rather a plan to perpetuate it. It is part of a long-term plan to reshape the region and reformulate its demographic and historical concepts. It aims to promote Arab normalization with Israel in order to create a new regional economic system as well as a regional alliance through which to confront Iran.

The deal is based on biblical concepts and language. Therefore, we are facing a religious ideological settlement to the conflict and not a political settlement. This will establish firm foundations for a future religious war (Thabet, 2020).

Imposing "normalization" between Israel and the Arab countries in the region will have serious repercussions for regional security and stability,

especially as the American approach is one of wearing down the regional countries until they accept the deal, creating a fragile regional balance that can be easily destroyed by geostrategic interventions (Rashid, 2019).

Despite the terminology, the plan does not offer a Palestinian state but rather “extended autonomy” in accordance with the Israeli right wing’s plans. This would deprive the Palestinians of their national rights and any hope of an independent state, increasing the chances that they will resort to violence and, consequently, turn the region into one that suffers from constant conflict. This would be a nightmare for Israel, which would be forced to recruit more military forces and spend more money to protect itself. Israel, after all, despite its military, economic and technological superiority and its occupation and control of the OPT has failed to produce a sense of security (Ben-Meir, 2020).

Recommendations

Israel and the U.S. adopted a *fait accompli* policy to separate from the Palestinians with their main objective being the annexation of more Palestinian lands while reducing the number of Palestinians on them in order to maintain a “Jewish state.” This policy proves that Israel does not seek peace and still considers the Palestinian state a threat to its destiny. In view of this and the current regional and international climate, the Palestinian side must reconsider the two-state solution and return to the one-state option, which is the scenario that Israel fears. This matter requires extensive and in-depth studies in order to reach a decision that suits the higher interests of the Palestinian people. Total rejection is not a solution.

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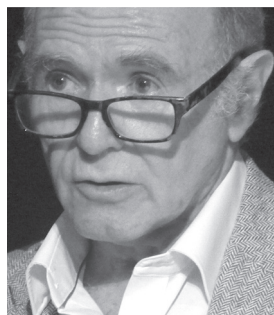
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Should Trump's "Vision" for Israeli-Palestinian Peace Be Taken Seriously?

Tony Klug

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Yes, of course it should. Donald Trump is the most powerful political actor in the most powerful state on earth, and even if every other country lines up against him, he can impact the future course of events like no other contemporary figure. His puerile tweets and reckless directives may be risible — even derisible — but he has a matchless capacity to bully and bribe and is not averse to using it.

No, of course it shouldn't. Behind its silky sentiments and pretensions of balance, fairness and erudition, the over-long document is an exercise in sophistry, concocted by dyed-in-the-wool ideologues who have no real knowledge or understanding of the area or of the people who inhabit it and who view the issues through a warped, one-dimensional lens. It will fool only the easily duped.

Trump's so-called "Deal of the Century" is a huge gift to the belligerent settlement movement and Israel's ultranationalists. But the munificence will not serve the interests of most Israelis or their state, whose acceptance in the region and whose whole future rests primarily on the decades-old occupation coming to a swift and complete end.

Stripped of its camouflage, the plan is about entrenching Israeli rule over the Palestinians indefinitely. It will obliterate all Palestinian hope and breed endless strife. Israel will be cast as a pariah state, and its citizens will bear the consequences. Anti-Jewish sentiment will spread within and beyond the region. It is a lose-lose-lose scenario.

Trump's construal of it as portending "win-win opportunities for both sides" is self-serving baloney. So is the deceitful claim by its leading authors that the plan reflects fresh thinking, when they know full well that

it is a re-hash of age-old demands of the Israeli extreme right with which they have long been intimately associated.

For the Palestinians, the plan is an ultimatum to accept their lot as a vanquished people. Behind the rhetoric that it will “usher in a new era of prosperity for the Palestinian people” lurk the terms of their surrender. If they play ball, they will — or may, depending on their future behavior — be thrown some crumbs. But if they hold firm and continue to reject the plan, it will underline the truth of the calumny that they have a “perfect track record of blowing every opportunity they’ve had in the past,” a tired charge dug up by Middle East greenhorn Jared Kushner, Donald Trump’s son-in-law and a principal architect of the plan. This old/new specious claim attests to the unsuitability of the United States to play the role of honest broker between Israelis and Palestinians. Never has this been truer than now. Other parties must get involved, for this is a matter with global repercussions.

Trump's View of the Plan

To be fair, Trump and his aides have a completely different take on all this. While both sides, according to him, would gain immensely from his “vision,” Trump considered the greater beneficiaries of the plan itself to be the Palestinians. At its videoed launch ceremony on January 28, 2020, he explained: “As everyone knows, I have done a lot for Israel ... therefore it is only reasonable that I have to do a lot for the Palestinians or it just wouldn’t be fair ... I want this deal to be a great deal for the Palestinians.”

But before getting to his “great deal” for the Palestinians, he hastened to remind the audience of what he had previously done for the Israelis: “moving the United States embassy to Jerusalem; recognizing the Golan Heights and, frankly, perhaps most importantly, getting out of the terrible Iran nuclear deal.”

He was being uncharacteristically modest. He could have added the cutting of millions of dollars in aid to diverse Palestinian causes; closing the Palestinian diplomatic mission in Washington, DC; opposing the decision of the International Criminal Court to investigate alleged Israeli war crimes; and the pledge that the U.S. would — unilaterally — no longer view Israeli settlements in the West Bank as inconsistent with international law.

To balance these immense concessions to Israel (or rather to the hard-line Israeli government), one could be forgiven for expecting the package he was about to offer the Palestinians, in the light of his explicit pledge, to be equally exceptional. But it turned out that he hadn’t yet finished with his gifts to the Israelis. His “vision” included the Jordan River becoming Israel’s official border and around 30% of the West Bank becoming Israel’s

sovereign territory, incorporating the fertile Jordan Valley and nearly all Israeli settlements. “Jerusalem,” he declared, including the particularly sensitive matter of the holy sites of three world religions, “will remain Israel’s *undivided* capital” (theatrically emphasized and repeated). As is the way with emperors surveying the landscape, he clearly felt no inhibition about awarding to others priceless possessions that did not belong to him.

At one point, he referred to the “Holy Land of Israel” (the “Holy Land” is usually understood to be the entire area between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, including parts of Jordan, southern Lebanon and southwestern Syria). If it wasn’t a Trump off-script improvisation, it may have been a nod to his fiercely pro-Zionist but ultimately deeply anti-Semitic evangelical Christian fundamentalist constituency to which Vice President Mike Pence is very close.

Referencing the “Al-Aqsa” Mosque in the same speech was presumably a slip of the tongue, but it’s not a slip that anyone clued in would make. Perhaps he momentarily confused a sacred Muslim place of worship — the third holiest site in Islam — with a water feature. Trump’s string of faux pas or deceptions (more of which below) attests to his “vision” being more of a stunt than a realistic peace plan that people should study carefully (unlike Trump himself) and take seriously.



U.S. President Donald Trump holds up a signed memorandum to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel at the White House on December 6, 2017, as U.S. Vice President Mike Pence looks on. (Saul Loeb/AFP)

Even more imperial gifts were to come: Israel would retain security control over the whole area west of the Jordan River, including airspace and territorial waters, and over who can enter and leave the fragmented Palestinian entity. Palestinian refugees would be denied any right of return to Israel, and the Israeli government would have an ultimate veto over the exercise of this right to the putative Palestinian state.

Finally, he got to the “great deal” he promised the Palestinians. To even things up, they would be permitted to retain internal responsibility for the main Palestinian population centers (which happens to strongly suit Israel’s interests and wishes), plus they would receive additional disconnected plots of land near Gaza, mostly carved out of Israel’s desert area bordering Egypt. The wholesale, and possibly enforced, transfer of selected Arab towns within Israel, which would require an adjustment to the border and to citizenship, may also be part of the land-swap arrangement. Gaza and the West Bank would potentially be linked by a high-speed rail tunnel or bridge. Other roads, bridges, and tunnels would connect the noncontiguous Palestinian enclaves.

If all goes according to plan, and with Israel’s consent, a Palestinian capital city could be located beyond Israel’s Separation Wall, in areas to the east and north of Jerusalem — what Trump erroneously called “Eastern Jerusalem ... where America will proudly open an embassy.”

A further instance of casual misspeak was his assertion that “this map will more than double the Palestinian territory.” That would be news to the authors of his eponymous plan, who had written: “This vision ... contemplates a Palestinian state that encompasses territory reasonably comparable in size to the territory of the West Bank and Gaza pre-1967.” This discrepancy, if a genuine (although inexcusable) mistake, might explain why Trump thought the plan was territorially a lot more generous to the Palestinians than it was.

The Palestinians would be free to call the assorted, demilitarized parcels of land, surrounded by Israel, a state if they wished to. Trump magnanimously blazed a path: “Today’s agreement is a historic opportunity for Palestinians to finally achieve an independent state of their very own,” within a vision of a “realistic two-state solution.” Here it is more difficult to give him the benefit of any doubt. By employing the two-state terminology, he was plainly trying to pass off the brutal annihilation of the international consensus for a Palestinian state alongside Israel as the very opposite: its optimal fruition.

Having given his political soulmate, the Israeli premier, everything he could possibly have wanted and a lot more besides, Trump praised, with

no hint of irony, the “territorial compromises [Israel] is willing to make for the cause of peace in the Middle East,” audaciously adding “they’ve gone a long way.” He was effusive about his “vision” having been bravely accepted by the person who was principally behind it: “Yesterday, Prime Minister Netanyahu informed me he is willing to endorse the vision as a basis for direct negotiations.” What a massive surprise that must have been! Perversely, he declared: “Today Israel has taken a giant step for peace.” Finally, he turned to a beaming Netanyahu and exclaimed: “Mr. Prime Minister, thank you for having the courage to take this bold step forward” (cue prolonged applause from the handpicked audience).

Two Innovations That Differ From Previous U.S. Plans

This was all unadulterated nonsense, of course. While some viewers of the ceremony doubtless found the proceedings exhilarating, others for sure found them nauseating. However, there are two creditable innovations in the Trump plan that distinguish it from previously proposed U.S. plans. The first is that it projects its ultimate vision at the outset rather than seeking to move forward incrementally through step-by-step bargaining without a clear notion of the destination, an approach which doomed previous processes from their inception. In this sense, the Trump plan has more in common with the approaches of earlier Arab initiatives — the Sadat initiative of 1977, the Palestine Liberation Organization’s (PLO) “historical compromise” of 1988, and the Arab Peace Initiative (API) of 2002. Commencing with a vision of the endgame was always the more promising approach in principle, provided it took fully on board the key interests and aspirations of all parties or incorporated a mechanism for doing so.¹ On this score, the Trump plan fails abysmally.

The other laudable innovation is the attempt to spell out in detail the economic and other material benefits that could flow from the end of conflict. It is this aspect that Trump presumably had in mind when he spoke of “a great deal for the Palestinians.” Through a \$50 billion commercial investment over 10 years, these putative benefits would include a projected doubling of Palestinian gross domestic product (GDP), the creation of more than a million new jobs, a reduction in unemployment to less than 10%, and a cut in the poverty rate by 50%. “Many countries want to partake” in this investment, declared Trump, without naming them.

¹ See the author’s *Visions of the Endgame: a strategy to bring the Israeli-Palestinian conflict swiftly to an end*, published by the Fabian Society in association with the Oxford Research Group, May 2009. <https://fabians.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2009/05/VisionsOfTheEndgame.pdf>

But there was no solid basis to these figures. They could just as easily have been doubled or halved. Indeed, in his speech, Trump whimsically amended the plan's projected "doubling" of Palestinian GDP to "doubling or *trebling*." Besides, the whole "Economic Framework," which occupies nearly a third of the 181 pages document, depends on the Palestinians accepting the basics of the Trump plan and fulfilling all their obligations under it. There is no chance of them doing this because it doesn't come close to serving their fundamental interests, aspirations, or needs and, moreover, it is deeply humiliating. The prime minister of the Palestinian Authority (PA), Mohammad Shtayyeh, anticipated that it would be "buried very soon." If Trump was serious, he would open his mind to what the Palestinians have to say rather than take his briefings solely from a narrow circle of like-minded Israeli chums.

One example, among many, of its insulting or impossible content is its stipulation that the Palestinian state shall "refrain from any attempt to join any international organization without the consent of the state of Israel." Another is the requirement that Hamas be disarmed and dismantled — by a demilitarized state no less! — aims that the redoubtable Israeli army has been unable to achieve in 13 years. The Economic Framework, with its detailed maps and charts, is a transparently fraudulent wish list, designed to make the document look studious and serious.

As a strategy to firm up right-wing domestic support in an election year, both in the U.S. and in Israel, the Trump plan might make a lot of sense. As a strategy to bring peace between Israelis and Palestinians, it makes no sense at all. There is every reason to suppose that this plan will go the same way as all its American predecessors. It will happen quickly if Trump is turned out later this year by the U.S. electorate or more slowly and painfully if he is re-elected.

Need for a More Realistic and Achievable Plan

But it is not enough to oppose Trump's sorry plan. It needs to be replaced by a more "realistic and achievable plan" (to borrow a phrase from the plan itself). Probably the most fitting existing model on which an end to conflict may be based is the dormant API — endorsed by the PLO and all Arab states — which, in essence, envisages comprehensive peace and full diplomatic relations between Israel and the whole Arab world based on the establishment of an authentic Palestinian state alongside Israel, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and what it has called a "just and agreed settlement" of the Palestinian refugee problem.

Far from being a diktat, as has disingenuously been suggested in the past, the API is a set of principles which once would have had Israelis dancing in the street. They are a framework for, not an alternative to, negotiations between the parties. More than a hundred retired Israeli generals have endorsed the API as a basis for talks, but so far Israeli governments have been quite dismissive of it. In the light of the steady, although tenuous, evolution of the political mood in the region toward accepting Israel, now would be a good time to revive and embrace it and build on it as necessary. It cannot be assumed that its provisions will stay on the table forever while Israel bit-by-bit continues to consume the whole cake, with or without the cover of the Trump plan.

The immediate danger is that the Israeli government will take Trump's plan as licence to selectively pocket its proposals and proceed to implement them unilaterally, whatever the plan's ultimate fate. A bullish Netanyahu campaigned in the recent Israeli election on a policy to annex the Jordan Valley and all Israeli settlements imminently, pulling his main rival for the top spot, Benny Gantz, a large part of the way with him. Prompt and decisive international pressure will be key to preventing this from happening.

If United Nations General Assembly Resolution 181 of 1947 was the progenitor of the two-state solution, a fatuous 181 pages document in 2020 may definitively seal its fate and be the progenitor of entrenched repression and endless conflict, the toxins of which are likely to have global overspill. To guard against this, there is an urgent need for a practical alternative plan, such as a rejuvenated API, around which most of the world could unite and campaign.

A useful start would be for other governments to affirm, openly and without delay, that they will not recognize any annexations and that there will be material consequences if an Israeli government proceeds with this intention. The official recognition by these governments of a Palestinian state alongside Israel with its capital in East Jerusalem could also be timely and impactful. For its part, civil society needs to consider what constructive role it could actively play in any common resistance. It may be an old cliché but, in all seriousness, there is no time to lose.

The Great Challenge: The Palestinian Minority in Israel and the “Deal of the Century”

Raif Hussein

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Since the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, fundamental developments have taken place in the social and economic policy of the state as well as in its policies toward the Arab world, the Palestinian people and their cause, and primarily the Palestinian minority within its boundaries. In the latter case, we have witnessed a profound change in the government's view of the nature of the relationship of the state to its “Arab citizens,” i.e., the Palestinian minority.

In order to facilitate a better understanding of the state of Israel and its policies and to trace the developments in Israel over the past seven decades, I have divided the developments into three eras:

First Israel 1948-1977

Stage one: Creation of the “New Jew” 1948-1966

Stage two: Occupation and challenging the Palestinian identity 1967-1977

Second Israel 1978-2005

Stage one: War against the PLO and the unity of the Palestinian people 1977 - 1991

Stage two: Preserving the privileges or the end of the stage of the “New Jew” 1992 - 2000

Third Israel 2006 to the present

Stage one: Military change of course 2006-2008

Stage two: Planning for the major transformation and laying the foundations for the new Zionism 2009-2012

Stage three: Netanyahuism (New Zionism) 2012–present

In each of these eras, qualitative social changes, prominent economic transformations and changes to central political strategies took place, leaving clear fingerprints on the social and political structure and on Israel's engagement with its Palestinian minority.

These immense and central transformations are seldom taken into consideration in political interaction or scientific research engagement with Israel and are usually not given the space, status and attention they deserve in order to be tackled objectively and realistically.

Taking an objective approach means recognizing that Israel has undergone radical changes and no longer resembles what it once was — neither its political elite, nor its strategies, nor the composition of its society, nor its self-perception. This approach would open new horizons for politicians to develop realistic strategies and sophisticated tactics to deal with these changes that have swept Israel, its political system and its social order.¹

The New Zionist ideology, which I call “Netanyahuism,” was founded by Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu. It is based on a new vision of Israel's position in the Middle East, its self-image, the Palestinian issue, and the future of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. It rests on new constants that modify Zionist ideology to conform to the changes that have swept Israel, the Middle East, and the world order.

The most important of these constants are:

- Replacement of the land-for-peace equation with the economy-for-peace equation based on normalization.
- No Palestinian sovereignty over the territories occupied in 1967 or in East Jerusalem.
- International law and international resolutions, including support for the two-state solution, impede resolution of the conflict and Israel's integration into the Middle East.
- The issue of the Jewish refugees from Arab countries is on a par with the issue of the Palestinian refugees.
- The demographic dimension and national allegiance of the Palestinian minority in Israel pose a threat to the Jewishness of the state and, therefore, their political rights must be linked to loyalty to the state.
- Recognition of the Jewishness of Israel is an essential condition for its relationships with its neighbors as well as its international relations.
- Leveraging official and public campaigns against anti-Semitism around the world in support of New Zionism by equating any opposition to the

New Zionism with anti-Semitism. And, since Netanyahuism denies the national rights of the Palestinian people, any claim to these rights becomes a form of anti-Semitism.

Netanyahuism requires the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the political elite of the Palestinian minority in Israel to adopt a new strategy that takes into account the ideological and political developments in Israel, the major upheavals in the region, and the end of unipolarity in the global political order.

Israeli Policies Toward the Palestinian Minority

The Zionist Movement's strategy toward the country's indigenous people and the systematic ethnic cleansing in historical Palestine were clearly defined before the establishment of Israel. Israel Zangwill, one of the major ideologists in the Zionist Movement, said: "Either we have to expel the human beings and clans on the ground by force of the sword, as our ancestors did in the past, or there will be a continuous confrontation coupled with a complicated problem through the presence of strange and large ethnic groups here and among us."²

The idea of transfer of the indigenous people was also put forward in Theodor Herzl's memoirs, along with plans for its implementation.³ David Ben-Gurion held this view as well, as seen in his remarks following the announcement of the 1947 Partition Plan: "In the event of a military confrontation with the other party, we will consider the remaining Arabs, whom we see as illegal aliens within our borders, as agents that can be deported outside the borders of the Jewish state..."⁴

The First Israel did not have a clear strategy for dealing with the indigenous people who remained on their land and, therefore, put them under military rule until 1966 and robbed them of their basic human rights. Fearing a global backlash that would impede recognition of the new state, the First Israel later granted them the right to vote in Knesset elections. From the very beginning, Israel viewed the indigenous people as religious and ethnic minorities and defined them in official records as Muslims, Christians, Druze, Bedouins and Circassians. From the First Israel to the present, the Israeli political establishment has used the term "Arabs" as a collective nickname, refusing to recognize the Palestinian national identity of the indigenous people of the country. Former Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir is not the only one who denied the existence of the Palestinian people.⁵ On his visit to Austria in 1997, Netanyahu reiterated what Meir said, adding that the majority of the "Arabs have come from the neighboring countries to look for jobs in the workplaces created by the Jews here."⁶

The notion of redrawing the borders to exclude the Triangle communities presented in the “Deal of the Century” must be understood in the context of Netanyahuism’s goal of revoking the citizenship of the indigenous people and reducing their status to that of residents. Palestinians in Israel have had the right to vote in Knesset elections since 1949, but voter turnout has varied. The right to vote in itself does not necessarily mean that they have much influence on Israeli domestic and foreign policy. The Rabin government had to rely on the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality and the Arab Democratic Party to obtain a parliamentary majority for the Oslo Accords, but the support of the Palestinian minority did not yield any tangible gains in return.

Since the founding of the state of Israel and the *Nakba* (catastrophe), the struggle of the Palestinian minority has centered on the demand for social equality in the face of the state’s attempts to obliterate the Palestinian national identity and place a wedge between the Palestinians inside and outside the country in order to fracture its demographic majority. This policy can be seen in the First Israel’s settlement of the Negev Bedouins, in Ariel Sharon’s 1998 “Seven Stars” plan for the Triangle, and the campaign to “Judaize” the Galilee. The policy ultimately failed for several reasons, the most important of which are:



An Arab woman walks by an election campaign poster on March 5, 2020 showing Israeli MK Ahmad Tibi of the Joint List in Tira. The Arabic text on the sign translates to “Staying here; going nowhere.” (Ariel Schalit/AP)

- The presence of a Palestinian national elite within their political parties and civil society institutions. This influential and balanced minority clung to its patriotic and national identity and resisted dissolution and integration strategies.
- The creation of awareness that distinguishing between the dominant Jewish majority and the Palestinian minority by limiting the latter's development and growth and systematically excluding them from jobs and positions in state institutions constitutes outright discrimination. Violent confrontations between Palestinians and the Israeli security authorities, such as the Land Day events in 1976, and clashes with Jewish racists that have escalated since the second intifada in 2000.
- The emergence and expansion of the Islamic movement, which has strengthened the Palestinian minority.

Since the beginning of the second stage of the Second Israel, there have been fundamental demographic and ideological changes within Israel that have pushed the Palestinian minority to increase its internal cohesion, adhere to its national identity, and take the offensive in its demands for social equality and civil rights.

This stage witnessed the signing of the Oslo Accords and letters of mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO, which split Israeli society into a weak group that supported a settlement with the Palestinians and a strong group that opposed it. The climax of this schism within the Jewish community was the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, the beginning of the slow disintegration of the Labor party, and the veritable extinction of the peace camp and the Palestinian minority's loss of its strategic Jewish ally, which it believed was necessary to achieve its social demands within the state of Israel.

Among the most important changes in the Israeli political and social reality at this juncture were:

- The arrival of more than a million Russians immigrants and their social positioning and competition with the Palestinians in many areas of life, followed by their establishment of political frameworks with a racist view of the Palestinian minority.
- A marked increase in the number of Palestinian academics and in public displays of pride in the Palestinian national identity after the Israeli security establishment lifted the ban on using Palestinian national symbols, such as the flag, after signing the Oslo Accords.
- The establishment of the Balad party and its proposal for a new citizenship relationship according to which "Israel is the state of its citizens" instead of the Zionist equation that "Israel is a Jewish state."

- Rabin's assassination at the hands of a Jewish extremist and the role of various Jewish personalities and political and religious movements, including the Likud, in creating the atmosphere that led to it.

The violent response of the Israeli security services to the demonstrations of the Palestinian minority in solidarity with the Palestinians in the occupied territories following the failure of the Camp David Summit, in which the security services killed 13 Palestinian citizens of Israel.

Increased awareness of the Palestinian national identity, especially among the youth, in response to the rise in racism within the Jewish political establishment and the public, as seen through the enactment of racist laws and attacks on Palestinian citizens and their property,⁷ was not met by a marked change in the policy of the Palestinian parties regarding their strategic orientation toward the state and its institutions and the relationship of the Palestinian minority to the Jewish community. The Palestinian political elite remained fragmented and content with some minor privileges they secured for their public from the ruling Zionist establishment. Palestinian institutions such as the High Follow-Up Committee remained hostage to the abominable clan system and did nothing to democratize or develop a new strategy to confront the changes that had taken place and those to come in the transition to the Third Israel.

Creation of the Joint List

When the electoral threshold was raised to 3.25% prior to the 2015 elections, the Palestinian parties were forced to run as an alliance and established the Joint List. This alliance was not the result of the development of a unitary consciousness to confront rising Jewish racism; it was a “marriage of convenience” designed to help the parties cross the electoral threshold.

The Joint List has not yet developed a strategy to meet the latest challenges, most important of which is the Nation-State Law, and has stuck to its old strategy of demanding social equality. Its political program has remained hostage to the Israeli Communist Party, the largest and most powerful party among its components. The fact that it considers itself the only party that can cross the electoral threshold alone gives it the clout to pressure the others not to deviate from the strategy it devised in the 1950s and to block the circulation of new ideas that do not conform with Leninist ideology.

Public pressure on the Joint List to change this strategy has increased since the enactment of the Nation-State Law, which enshrines Jewish hegemony at the expense of the country's indigenous people; the exploitation of the rise in anti-Semitism in the West to squelch criticism of Israel's policies; the increase in racism within Israeli society; and with the

delegitimization of the Palestinian parties and Palestinian national symbols. The demand for social equality now looks like a utopian dream. The “Deal of the Century’s” plans for the Palestinians in the Triangle area helped the Joint List realize that the Palestinians’ social and political status in the Third Israel is tenuous at best. The Palestinians are seen as temporary guests, subject to the colonial rule of “divide and conquer.”

The First and Second Israels were largely able to conceal racial discrimination through diplomacy and political acumen, although the enactment of the *Nakba* Law, which prohibits public commemoration of the Nakba, was a sign of things to come. Discrimination has since become a political and social reality that is anchored in legislation and enjoys a large political and social consensus. The Knesset elections in October 2019 produced 94 right and extreme right parliamentarians who supported various laws that discriminate against non-Jews; underscore the superiority of the Jewish majority; and limit the political, social and economic development of the Palestinian minority, restrict their freedom of expression and seek to purge modern Palestinian history from their educational curricula.

The “Deal of the Century,” especially its plan for the Triangle area, was for the greater part expected, not only because of successive racist statements about the “demographic time bomb” but also because of previous Israeli attempts to change the identity of the region. Now, following the release of the plan which embodies the spirit of Netanyahuism, the Palestinian political elites must draw up a new strategy to confront the New Zionism. The demand for social equality is no longer enough in the face of the racist onslaught and a governmental system that is gradually transforming into a system of apartheid, as seen by former Israeli Ambassador to South Africa Alon Liel.⁸

A Strategy of Resilience should be based on two main principles

The strategy of resilience in the face of the “Deal of the Century” and of challenging moves to marginalize the indigenous people should be based on two main principles:

1. Democratization of the main representation institutions of the Palestinians inside Israel, above all the High Follow-Up Committee. The full strategy for this was developed in May 2019 and was published by Arab news sites and newspapers inside Israel.⁹
2. Internationalization of the issue of the Palestinian minority in Israel by referencing internationally recognized laws and norms, most important of which is the European Law for the Protection of Minorities¹⁰ and Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.¹¹

This strategy for the Palestinian minority in Israel will be an interim plan that must be coordinated with the future strategy of the PLO for the Palestinian people in the territories occupied in 1967 and for Palestinians abroad. It should be implemented in phases as follows:

- Internationalize the issue of the Palestinian minority in Israel through international institutions by demanding their recognition as a national ethnic minority. This step will prove their organic affiliation with the Palestinian people without detracting from their Arab identity and pan-nationalist affiliation.
- Demand expanded cultural and administrative autonomy in which the elected High Follow-Up Committee and Palestinian Knesset members (MK) will serve as a mini-parliament.
- Demand full proportional representation in state institutions and proportional representation in the Knesset through separate direct elections of Palestinian MKs by Palestinian voters.
- Demand Israel to recognize its responsibility of the *Nakba*, and insist that Palestinians inside the state receive compensation and be allowed to return to their villages. Most of the villages stand on undeveloped public land, and the return of their inhabitants would not change Israel's demography.¹²
- Demand that the Palestinian minority receive equal budgets in all fields as they fulfill their full financial obligations to the state. Democratize the major Palestinian representative institutions, led by the High Follow-Up Committee, through elections based on full proportional representation.
- Demand the release of the Islamic Waqf funds and properties and church funds and put them under a special committee affiliated with the Follow-Up Committee.

This program will build a new relationship between Israel and the indigenous Palestinian minority. It is an attempt to redress what happened to them as a result of the Zionist project and to build bridges between the Palestinian and Jewish societies based on respect and recognition instead of hegemony and domination. This new relationship would also block the spread of racism and halt the transition to an apartheid Fourth Israel.

The Palestinian minority's struggle over the last seven decades to obtain some social privileges through parliament without putting forward a realistic vision of its relationship with the state and with Palestinians outside has led to a dead end. The Israeli political elite is united ideologically in its vision of the relationship of the state to the Palestinian minority and the future of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This vision was presented in the

“Deal of the Century.” The Palestinian minority in Israel and its political elite must work with the Palestinian leadership, headed by the PLO, to draft a new vision for ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict now that it has become almost impossible to realize the two-state solution based on United Nations resolutions and international norms. Linking the fate of the Palestinians in Israel to those outside will help accomplish this.

I believe the vision should be a single federal democratic state, similar to the Federal Republic of Germany, on the lands of historical Palestine, guaranteeing the life and freedom of the Jewish and Palestinian communities. This state would be made up of eight to 10 provinces that are governed by provincial parliaments. In addition, there would be a federal parliament alongside a senate that represents the provincial delegates equally. An economic parity agreement would ensure economic cooperation and solidarity between the provinces. An international fund would be established to compensate and resettle Palestinian refugees if they want to return to the new state, and Jews and Palestinians would be free to live anywhere within its borders. This vision would also solve the issue of Jerusalem, borders, natural resources and the right of self-determination.

Endnotes

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Beyond the Trump Plan: How Can the International Community Advance Israeli-Palestinian Peacemaking?

Nimrod Goren

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Trump's vision for Israeli-Palestinian peace was supposed to be the ultimate gift to Binyamin Netanyahu's electoral campaign rather than the ultimate deal for Israeli-Palestinian conflict resolution. The timing of its publication — a month before the March 2020 Israeli election — seemed highly motivated by political considerations. The content of the plan — reportedly closely coordinated with — and maybe even shaped by — top Netanyahu aides — was supposed to give a green light to Netanyahu's aspirations to annex territory in the West Bank ahead of the elections. And the anticipated Palestinian rejection of the plan was hoped to pave the way for a bilateral breakthrough between Israel and a major Arab country — again, before the elections.

In the immediate weeks following the presentation of the plan, however, these things did not happen. The U.S. Administration stopped Netanyahu's efforts for rapid annexation and, by doing so, created tensions within Israel's right-wing bloc. Israeli voters' intentions remained largely unchanged following the publication of the plan, according to multiple public opinion polls. Netanyahu's rival, Benny Gantz, whom the prime minister tried to entrap by dragging him along to Washington for the presentation of the plan, managed to handle the situation and gain some political benefits from it. And Arab leaders kept refusing to meet with Netanyahu publicly, as they did prior to the two Israeli elections in 2019 and despite American pressure.

The Israeli mainstream, however, greeted the Trump plan with cheers. It was termed by many as the most pro-Israeli plan ever and was warmly embraced by Gantz's Blue and White party, the main contender to Netanyahu's Likud, although the latter emphasized its opposition to

unilateral annexation. Voices against the plan came almost exclusively from the Israeli left, whose power is diminishing. But even among the left there were some who cautioned against aggressive opposition to the U.S. president and even congratulated him for the efforts his administration undertook to devise the plan.

International responses were also mild in nature. They reflected the general lack of involvement by the international community in the Israeli-Palestinian issue since Trump took office and a reluctance to challenge the U.S. president. Countries in Europe and the Arab world initially issued statements welcoming the American efforts and promising to study the content of the plan. Such statements were the ones that the U.S. Administration was pushing for. The American goal was to prevent a clear and immediate rejection of the plan, and this has been largely achieved, although there were exceptions such as Ireland's quick response against the plan.

In the weeks that followed, multinational organizations (the Arab League, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the African Union) issued joint non-binding statements opposing the plan. Within the European Union, internal divisions continued to prevent joint declarations by all 27 member states, as has been the case since 2016. Therefore, Josep Borrell, the EU high representative for foreign affairs and security policy, issued a statement reflecting his own views, while the European members of the United Nations Security Council merely reaffirmed their traditional position on the Israeli-Palestinian issue in support of a two-state solution.

Advancing Israeli-Palestinian Peace Should Be a High Priority

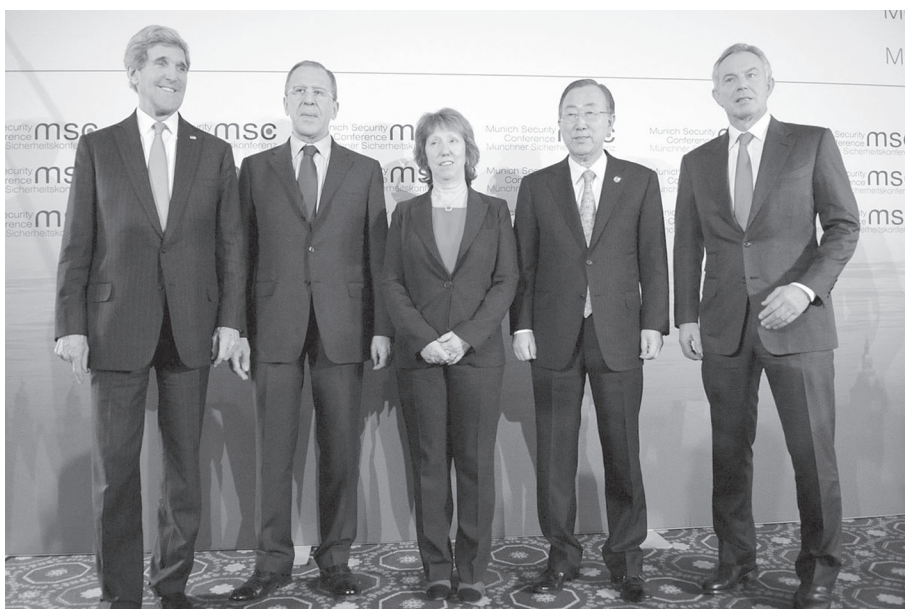
The overall nature of these responses reinforced Netanyahu's narrative that the international community does not care much about the Palestinian issue. His claim is that Arab countries are willing to improve ties with Israel even without progress in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and that Europe is no longer a relevant actor now that some member states are willing to regularly block initiatives in Brussels on Israel's behalf. Due to the weak international opposition to the plan, those in Israel who criticize Trump's vision are often accused of being anachronistic and of not accepting the changes taking place. A common view among Israelis is: If the world does not care that much anymore about the Palestinians, why should we?

A further consolidation of this mindset might become a dangerous consequence of the Trump plan. Advancing Israeli-Palestinian peace and a two-state solution should be a high-level priority for the next Israeli government. It is crucial for Israel's ability to maintain both its Jewish and

democratic character; to live in peace, security and prosperity; and to truly belong and integrate in its Middle Eastern, European and Mediterranean neighborhood. It is also the right thing to do in terms of fulfilling Palestinian national aspirations.

Doing so however will not become any easier. The Israeli public is largely indifferent to the issue; the Palestinian public is losing faith in the prospect of a real Palestinian state; settlement expansion in the West Bank is making the two-state solution more difficult to obtain and implement; and the ongoing split between the West Bank and Gaza casts a shadow over prospects for future progress toward peace.

These are major challenges that pro-peace Israeli, Palestinian and international leaders should tackle. Prospects for political change in Israel — even if not representing a clear ideological shift — might provide an opportunity to begin doing so. Should a different U.S. Administration take office in January 2021, even more opportunities will emerge. Pro-peace actors should already be planning for such scenarios and beginning to take action. For the past three years, their primary focus was on the release



Members of the Quartet on the Middle East, from left to right, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, EU High Representative Catherine Ashton, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, and Special Envoy Tony Blair pose for photographers before a meeting on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference in Munich, Germany, on February 1, 2014. [State Department photo / Public Domain]

of the Trump plan, what it will include and how to react. Now, after its publication, it is time to move on, brush the plan aside and advance steps that can bring peace.

Steps International Actors Could Take

There is a variety of steps that international actors can take: Their primary goal should be to prevent Israeli annexation of territories in the West Bank by voicing clear opposition. Borrell, for example, has already warned that Israel's annexation of territories would not go "unchallenged," sparking a furious reaction from Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz. Several countries, most of them European, are engaged in policy planning regarding their possible reaction to any sort of formal Israeli annexation. Chances for such an Israeli move mostly depend on domestic politics, but it will be beneficial for the Israeli leadership and public to know in advance what the consequences can be.

International actors should keep the Israeli-Palestinian issue high on their agenda — especially when engaging with Israeli officials — even when they have more pressing priorities and when they do not envision immediate progress. Over the last few years, Israeli government officials repeatedly cited the fact that the issue rarely comes up in diplomatic meetings they hold with international leaders. They use this to make the case to the Israeli public that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has become much less important or pressing. By constantly raising the issue in meetings with Israeli counterparts, international actors will be conveying a different message.

A counter-document to the Trump plan, including alternative principles for a final-status peace agreement, should be published so that the Trump plan does not remain "the only game in town." The international community has made efforts in the past — especially during the final years of the Obama administration — to spell out agreed-upon parameters for Israeli-Palestinian peace. These efforts should now be resumed. Even if such parameters cannot reflect an international consensus, especially as long as Trump is in power, they will serve as a platform for cooperation among international actors and can help counter future claims that the Trump plan should be the major reference point when peace talks resume. Such parameters will also address the need to update the key documents related to the two-state solution — such as the Clinton Parameters, the Quartet Road Map and the Arab Peace Initiative — which are nearly two decades old and do not reflect current realities in the region.

In the EU, Borrell is showing willingness to put the Israeli-Palestinian issue back on the Foreign Affairs Council's agenda and to seek

conclusions supported by all 27 member states. Susanna Terstal, EU special representative to the Middle East peace process, is also working to find consensus among all EU members. This remains a difficult task, however, as political leaders of some countries —especially Hungary — regularly block European initiatives and statements that are critical of Israeli policies. While continuing to seek meaningful consensus, which goes beyond the recycling of previous EU messages, European countries should also work to bypass the paralysis caused by divisions among member states. The way forward can be through increased cooperation in smaller coalitions of like-minded states, including collective policy planning meetings, coordinated statements and actions in response to developments on the ground, and joint meetings with Israeli officials. Several European countries have already expressed support for such a course of action, and Borrell should be supportive of it as well.

Incentives and Support for Civil Society

Moreover, a new international mechanism to support Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking should be set up — whether officially or unofficially — to enable different international actors (not only European) to coordinate efforts, with the participation of pro-peace Israelis and Palestinians. The Quartet (which includes the EU, U.S., UN and Russia) has been neutralized under Trump and, in any case, has an outdated composition. Arab representation in such a mechanism is necessary, as well as the participation of key EU member states. The newly established Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum can be regarded as somewhat of a model, although its focus is on other issues. It includes both European and Arab states, as well as Israeli and Palestinian representation.

Such a mechanism could introduce to Israelis and Palestinians a coordinated international package of political and economic incentives for peace. Incentives are an important tool in peace processes and have the potential to contribute to the advancement of Israeli-Palestinian conflict resolution. International actors have already offered various types of incentives for Israeli-Palestinian peace, the most notable of which are the Arab Peace Initiative, the EU's Special Privileged Partnership offer, and the U.S. security plan for the two-state solution. These incentives were offered at different times along the conflict timelines and in an uncoordinated manner. Their impact was lower than the expectations of those making the offers.

In 2016-2017, multiple actors in the international community agreed on the need to offer Israelis and Palestinians a global set of political and economic incentives for peace; however, since 2017 there was no

international effort to develop this set of incentives or to engage with Israelis and Palestinians on its potential content. Reasons for this include the lack of an international mechanism to facilitate this process, a reluctance among the international community to plan for a final-status agreement when no Israeli-Palestinian negotiations are taking place, and the divide among the international community since Trump came to power. Now would be a good time for the international community to change course, learn from Israelis and Palestinians about their needs and expectations and develop an incentive package accordingly.

Finally, increased international support and recognition should be given to pro-peace civil society groups so they can more effectively build positive interactions between Israelis and Palestinians, as spelled out in the 2016 *Quartet Report*. Peace NGOs are facing mounting hurdles to carry on their activities, including physical barriers, opposition within the two societies (especially the Palestinian anti-normalization movement) and limited funding. Fewer and fewer Israelis and Palestinians have the chance to meet one another, and this deepens the disconnect, fosters a lack of knowledge and awareness and limits channels for dialogue and policy planning. Dialogue and cooperation are still possible, however, when done in the correct manner and when focused on concrete needs and real policy issues.

The international community should emphasize the importance it sees in joint Israeli-Palestinian initiatives and make an effort to increase their scope and help them succeed. It can also work to connect between the growing number of initiatives seeking to advance Israel's relations with Arab countries and initiatives focusing on Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking. This will emphasize that broader regional cooperation should not be used to bypass the Palestinian issue but rather to help resolve it.

These steps can generate hope, set up new dialogue channels, and craft innovative policy proposals — all of which are much-needed components on the path to peace. They will demonstrate how local and international actors can chart a real vision of peace and can take action together to advance its implementation. This would be the most suitable response to the Trump plan.

A shorter version of this article appeared in International Politics and Society.

In Their Own Right: Evangelical Rejection of Palestinian Human Rights and Dignity

Mae Elise Cannon

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The largely uncritical support of a large percentage of white evangelicals of U.S. President Donald J. Trump’s policies toward Israel is deeply distressing. These evangelicals have affirmed the Trump administration’s move of the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, the identification of the city of Jerusalem as the “undivided capital” of the Jewish people, the annexation of the Golan Heights from Syria, the cutting off of hundreds of millions of dollars of U.S. government funds meant for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and Palestinian humanitarian assistance, and the recent “Peace to Prosperity” plan that was announced in January. Each of these policies further perpetuates the elevation of the aspirations of one people over another. It is possible to laud and esteem Jewish human rights and self-determination and to also uphold the same rights for Palestinian citizens of Israel and Palestinians living in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) of Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza. Even the American and global Jewish communities have divergent views about the efficacy of certain U.S. policy positions *vis-à-vis* Israel. Numerous Jewish groups have strongly opposed Trump’s policies toward Israel, including J Street, Jewish Voices for Peace (JVP), If Not Now and Americans for Peace Now. Why is the same diversity of thought and perspective not upheld within most evangelical circles in the United States?

It is important to understand the core tenets of evangelicalism before seeking to understand how evangelical theological traditions are being abused in the support of Trump’s policies toward the Middle East. Evangelical Christians believe in a theology of Good News. Centered in the person of Jesus Christ, evangelicals believe God desires to bless and respond to the needs of His

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creation (Matthew 6:25-34). Evangelicals uphold the teachings of Scripture, both the *New Testament* and the *Old Testament* (also known as the Hebrew Scriptures) (2 Timothy 3:16-17). We seek to live a life that is “born again” in acknowledging the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives as we seek to be transformed more into the image and likeness of Christ (John 3:3-8). Conservative Christians of the evangelical tradition believe humankind has sinned and “fallen short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23) and thus the need for faith in Christ’s death on the cross (John 3:16). And finally, evangelicals believe in the “mission” of sharing Good News in the world (Acts 1:8) by responding to the needs of the poor (Proverbs 19:17) and loving one’s neighbor (and enemy) (Matthew 5:43).

A Minority of Evangelicals Continues to Believe in Holistic Perspectives of Peace and Justice

I am an evangelical pastor ordained in the Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC). I believe in the theological presuppositions above. However, I am a minority when it comes to white evangelical perspectives on Trump’s policies toward the Middle East. Nonetheless, there are many white and evangelicals of color who believe that any pursuit of peace must acknowledge anti-Semitism and Jewish perspectives and aspirations while also addressing Palestinian needs and autonomy. For example, former President Jimmy Carter made history in 2006 when he published his telling book *Peace, Not Apartheid* and claimed that the continual building of settlements and Israeli control of Palestinian territory was detrimental to peace. Several evangelicals wrote about their opinions regarding the history, geopolitics and theological viewpoints in a book I edited called *A Land Full of God: Christian Perspectives toward the Holy Land*. Pastors, historians and Christian leaders like Andrea Smith, Bob Roberts, Carolyn Custis James, Dale Hanson Bourke, Jim Wallis, Joel Hunter, Rich Nathan, Shane Claiborne, David Anderson and Tony Campolo write about perspectives that challenge the evangelical status quo in their experiences, relationships and perspectives toward Israelis and Palestinians. While these leaders are often the exception, they represent a strong and often overlooked minority of evangelicals who maintain more holistic perspectives about peace and justice between Jews, Muslims, and Christians and Israelis and Palestinians.

Despite these alternative voices, the strong support of predominantly white evangelicals for the Trump administration’s policies toward Israel remains problematic. One might ask in light of the above religious beliefs how so many white evangelicals could support the actions of a president whose policies *vis-à-vis* Israel are not only detrimental to the Palestinian

people but ultimately to the majority of Jewish citizens of Israel as well? A just consideration of the proposed Trump plan must also take into consideration the roughly 20% of Palestinian citizens of Israel and how according to the “Peace to Prosperity” plan they might be under threat of disenfranchisement. Any effective plan for peace must be one that acknowledges and protects the human rights and rights of self-determination for all people, including both Jews and Palestinians in Israel and the OPT.

Any effective plan for peace must be one that acknowledges and protects the human rights and rights of self-determination for all people.

One of the primary theological problems with evangelical support of the “Peace to Prosperity” plan is the false equivocation of Jewish people of Israel in the Hebrew Scriptures and the modern nation-state of Israel that was established in 1948. The book of Genesis tells how Jacob, the son of Isaac, wrestled with God and was renamed “Israel” because he struggled with God and humans and overcame (32:28). Later, Israel came to be the name used to identify geographic political territories under Kings Saul (1 Samuel 13:1), David (1 Samuel 16:1), and Solomon (1 Kings 1:30) or the northern Kingdom of Israel under Jeroboam I (1 Kings 15:9) and other kings. The political establishment of the nation-state of Israel in 1948 maintains a very different history than the “Israel” identified in the Scriptures. One must truly question whether the promises of God to the Israelites of the Old Testament should be applied to the modern geopolitical nation-state of Israel today.

Mainline Protestant Christians Were the First Supporters of the State of Israel

When looking at the history of U.S. Christian support for Israel, it is important to acknowledge that it was not conservative evangelicals and fundamentalists who lauded the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948; rather, it was the support of a group of predominantly Mainline Protestant Christians who were the loudest voices in behalf of the founding of the state. The American Christian Palestine Committee (ACPC) was led by influential Christians who were progressive theologically but believed the Jewish people should be restored to their historical homeland. Christian Zionists’ aspirations were further fueled when revelations of the Jewish Holocaust (*Shoah*) came to light and millions of Jewish survivors became refugees in need of a safe and secure place to live. Christian anti-Semitism was also prevalent in the U.S. in the early 20th century and was one of the factors that led to the abhorrently small number of Jewish refugees allowed into the country during WWII and after the defeat of the Nazi regime.

After the 1948 Israeli-Arab war, many American Mainline Protestants turned their attention to the resulting Palestinian refugee crisis when three-quarters of a million Arab refugees who were displaced. This marked the beginning of the shift for increased progressive Christian support toward the Arab community. The 1967 war was also a significant turning point for many American Christians because restorationists and Christian Zionists viewed Israeli's territorial triumph over the Sinai Peninsula, East Jerusalem and the West Bank and the Golan Heights as evidence of prophetic fulfillment and a sign that the second coming of Christ was imminent. Conservative Christian and evangelical support of the state of Israel increased significantly during this time. This eschatological fervor of evangelicals became further perpetuated by authors like Hal Lindsey, whose book *This Late Great Planet Earth* explained the signs of the times in prophetic language foretelling of the End Times. Thus, the mid-20th century marked a significant turning point toward the ongoing allegiance of American Christian Zionists to the state of Israel.

Troubling Unilateral Evangelical Support in the 21st Century

Christian Zionists in the 21st century, many of whom are evangelicals, believe the scriptural teachings *vis-à-vis* Israel must be translated into unilateral support of the modern state of Israel today. Consider the mantra of the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem: "Support Israel: Stand with the Jewish People." In other words, for these Christian Zionists, support of the Jewish people and support of the political actions of the state of Israel

For these Christian Zionists, support of the Jewish people and support of the political actions of the state of Israel are one and the same.

are one and the same. The ICEJ website states: "For over 30 years the ICEJ has stood by Israel, showing our support in a variety of ways, both in the land and around the world. We administer several aid projects, engage in advocacy for Israel, and assist in Aliyah to the Jewish homeland."¹ This belief system of unilateral support of any geopolitical entity, and the enmeshment of religious convictions and such ardent political expressions, is deeply troubling.

Christians, and all people, should stand with the Jewish people. Thousands of years of anti-Semitism and the growing threat of increased incidents of hatred toward Jews today represent some of the greatest perils to the common good of all humanity. Christians must do all we can to

¹ Support Israel: Stand with the Jewish People. "International Christian Embassy." Accessed March 6, 2020. <https://int.icej.org/support-israel>.

acknowledge the horrific anti-Semitism of our past and to root out anti-Semitism when we encounter it today. We must also distinguish between anti-Semitism and the legitimate criticism of Israeli policies. ICEJ's position equating support of the state of Israel with support for the Jewish people ignores the vast diversity and perspectives from within the Jewish community, which is anything but monolithic.

Peace Cannot Be Achieved with Only One Side in the Room

One of the most problematic aspects of the Trump administration's plan is the elevation of the needs and aspirations of one people over another. The very snapshot of the people in the room and those making the January announcement, which did not include one representative of the Palestinian people, is just a glimpse of how significantly the Palestinian government and civil society were left out of the peace process. When Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas sought support from the UN Security Council in deeming the Trump plan illegal according to international law, the Trump administration "thwarted" the UN resolution and threatened to cut further economic support as a means of applying "diplomatic pressure."² How can peace be achieved between two peoples when one of them is not even in the room?

During the presentation of the proposed Trump plan at the White House, Judeo and Christian religious and spiritual imagery were used frequently to justify political aims and the plan's agenda. During the January 28, 2020 announcement by President Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, the use of religious symbolism in the presentation of the plan was rampant. Referring to the modern geopolitical state of Israel as "a light unto the world" and glorifying "places inscribed in the pages of the Bible," without seriously addressing the injustices suffered by those who have lived under decades of occupation, flies in the face of the teachings of Jesus. The Trump administration's appropriation of religious ideals diminishes the true spiritual significance of the land we call the Holy Land and is a betrayal of the Christian faith.³

² Lynch, Colum, and Robbie Gramer. "Trump Pressures Palestinians and Allies Over Peace Plan." *Foreign Policy*, February 11, 2020. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/02/11/trump-pressures-palestinians-over-middle-east-peace-plan-israel-netanyahu-abbas-olmert-united-nations-diplomacy/>.

³ Cannon, Mae Elise. "Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP)." *CMEP's Executive Director Responds to the Trump "Peace" Plan*. Accessed March 6, 2020. https://cmep.org/2020/01/29/response_trump_plan/.

An additional problematic policy of the Trump administration has been to largely eradicate the use of the word “occupation” from U.S. government documents and its human rights report. The title of the 2018 human rights report referred to “Israel, Golan Heights, West Bank, and Gaza”⁴ whereas previous reports including 2016 identified the report as “Israel and the Occupied Territories.”⁵ The occupation of the Palestinian people and the continual building of settlements are illegal by international

The occupation of the Palestinian people and the continual building of settlements are illegal by international law.

law. Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention states: “The Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies.” The Fourth Geneva Convention also prohibits the “individual or mass forcible transfers, as well as deportations of protected persons from occupied territory.”

The Trump plan’s lack of acknowledgment of the occupation and the problematic nature of continued Israeli settlement presence and expansion in East Jerusalem and the West Bank stands in violation of international law.

Another effect of the proposed Trump plan would be the further entrenchment of the Israeli security establishment, which would ensure that generations of Israeli young men and women would continue to serve in a military tasked with continual control over the Palestinian people. How is this in the best interest of Israelis, let alone Palestinians? The inevitable result of the implementation of this plan would be more human rights abuses, trauma and violence.

Finally, the Trump plan completely lacks an acknowledgment of the detrimental effects of the occupation on the Palestinian people. For evangelical Christians, who choose to follow the “Prince of Peace,” care for those who are living in poverty and oppression is a spiritual mandate. Jesus taught in the Gospel of Matthew: “Whatever you do unto the least of these brothers and sisters of mine you do unto me” (Matthew 25:40-45). Evangelicals would do well to support and respond to the needs of both Jewish and Palestinian suffering and not ignore the day-to-day effects of the occupation of the Palestinian people that has been in effect since 1967.

⁴ ISRAEL 2018 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT. <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/page/file/1181641/download>. Accessed March 6, 2020.

⁵ Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016. <https://il.usembassy.gov/country-reports-human-rights-practices-2016/>. Accessed March 6, 2020.

True Peace Rests on a Just Solution for Both Peoples

On January 29, 2020, I wrote these words to the CMEP constituents: “As Christians, we must not stand by and let our faith be perverted. It is clear that Christian values are being weaponized in an attempt to give a veneer of moral legitimacy to a plan that is, in fact, meant to facilitate further Israeli control over Palestinian lives, land, and resources.”⁶ If implemented, the Trump plan would clearly be detrimental to the aspirations and future autonomy of the Palestinian people. This will, of course, have devastating effects on Palestinians, but ultimately it is not in the best interest of Israelis — or Americans — either. In order for there to ever be true peace, a just solution must be presented that addresses the self-determination, liberties and human rights of all Israelis and Palestinians living in the land.

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If we truly want to pursue a just solution that allows for freedom and equality for both Israelis and Palestinians, we must have an approach that seeks to address the needs and aspirations of both peoples. Even the Israeli security establishment agrees that the occupation of the Palestinian people is not in the long-term best interests of the state of Israel. At the same time, I hope that we can respond to the current realities affecting the Palestinian community for their own sake — seeing Palestinians, including our Christian brothers and sisters in Palestine, as deserving of human dignity and equality in their own right.⁷ The current allegiance of American evangelicals toward the Trump administration’s Israeli-Palestinian policies does not ultimately serve the best interest of the Jewish people or their Palestinian neighbors. Only when American evangelicals become courageous in standing up against all forms of hatred and bigotry, including anti-Semitism and anti-Palestinian U.S. policies, will human dignity and equality for all of the people of the Holy Land be fully realized.

⁶ Cannon, Mae Elise. “Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP).” *CMEP’s Executive Director Responds to the Trump “Peace” Plan*. Accessed March 6, 2020. https://cmep.org/2020/01/29/response_trump_plan/.

⁷ Cannon, Mae Elise. “Returning to the Heart of the Gospel: A Practical Evangelical Theology of Liberation and Call to Action for Christians Engaged in Peacebuilding in Israel and Palestine.” presented at the North Park Theological Seminary Symposium on the Theological Interpretation of Scripture. *The Holy Land: Biblical Perspectives and Contemporary Conflicts*, Chicago, IL, September 26, 2019.

The Jewish Fundamentalist Roots of Trump's "Peace Deal"

Fahima Kattani-Ghanayem

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Fundamentalism is a form of radicalism that can be found in any society, and the term can be applied to both individuals and groups. It is a set of beliefs that drive people toward intolerance, hatred, and rejection of and contempt for "the other." Jewish fundamentalism began to emerge in Israel following the 1967 war, which religious nationalists considered to be a God-given miraculous victory, and particularly after the founding of Gush Emunim (the Bloc of the Faithful) in 1974. Since then, this trend has had immense implications for the Middle East, the Arab and Islamic worlds and, primarily, the Palestinian people. Against this background, Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and his peace deal didn't come out of the blue.

During its 70 years of existence, Israel has fought six wars that have reshaped the political and geographical map of the region. This reinforced Jewish fundamentalism, as the state was perceived as the fulfillment of the prophecy of "God's chosen people" and their reclaim of the "Promised Land" by both religious nationalists and Christian evangelical fundamentalists.

Elements of Jewish fundamentalism can be found in Western societies as well as in the Jewish community in Israel. Needless to say, the Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) are the sector that suffers the most from Jewish messianic settler fundamentalism. This trend directs its aggression against everything that is Palestinian through biblical settler-colonialist considerations, such as the belief that God promised the entire land to the Jewish people and that the Jews are entitled to it as compensation for centuries of suffering in the Diaspora and particularly because of the Holocaust. Thus, the fundamentalist Jews justify their version of Zionism as beyond question and its actions are beyond accountability.

Hidden Roots of Fundamentalism in Israeli Politics

The Egyptian scholar, author and thinker Abd AlwahhabAl-Messiri¹ defines the sociology of knowledge as a science that examines the relationship between ideas and society: How these ideas evolve, how some are adopted collectively by certain groups and social sectors, and how they are harmonized to form a collective, shared model that embodies the group interests and vision of the universe or its political and economic behavior.

In his book *The Jewish State*,² Theodor Herzl addressed the sufferings of the Jews at the hands of the Catholic Church in Europe and the Catholics' discrimination against Jews, which led to their expulsion from England, France and Germany and, in centuries before that, from Spain. Only after the appearance of Martin Luther did the Catholic Church in Europe become less dominant. Eventually Europe was divided between two camps. One followed Martin Luther's belief that the reference should be only to the Holy Book, while the Protestant Church started reading the Old Testament about the prophets of Israel, their heroes, which included some practices of killing of non-Jews according to the instructions of God.³

Yitzhak Shapira is an Israeli rabbi who lived in the West Bank Israeli settlement Yitzhar and is head of the Od Yosef Chai Yeshiva. In 2009, he published a book, *The King's Torah*, in which he writes that it is permissible for Jews to kill non-Jews (including children) who threaten the lives of Jews.⁴

According to Jewish fundamentalist interpretation of Zionism, which runs counter to that of the secular founders of modern Zionism, the creation of Israel was based upon the prophecies of the Torah that they are "God's chosen people" and therefore he granted them the "Promised Land" — to realize the legend of survival of those whom God had chosen to rule humankind and spread their principles and values around the world.⁵

Thus, the Western commitment led by the United States to support the creation of a Jewish Homeland and, after 1967, its military superiority in the Middle East is seen by Christian evangelical fundamentalists as an aspiration to achieve the Prophecy of Mount Megiddo. It is therefore possible to view how the Zionist project evolved in Palestine towards achieving what Ilan Pappé⁶ describes as restructuring Judaism as "national identity" — in spite of the colonial character that accompanied and still accompanies the Zionist enterprise in Palestine, which paved the way for Israel to seek various methods of ethnic cleansing in the Palestine.

Political sociologists in Israel agree on the great role of the military victories that Israel achieved over the Arab states in 1967 and what resulted from it of the occupation of the West Bank, Jerusalem, Golan Heights,

Gaza Strip and the Sinai desert, which Jewish fundamentalists consider a miracle of God, created an environment suitable for the growth of Jewish fundamentalism growth. The followers of Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Cook, son of the former chief rabbi of Israel at the Merkaz Harav seminary, saw it as fulfilling the prophecies of the Torah towards achieving salvation and led to the rise of the “Messiah.” Rabbi Moshe Levinger, the godfather of settlements activities in Hebron, said that “all that is happening [is] only ‘God’s will’ to liberate big portions of our lands.”

The Zionist ideology, in its essence, according to right-wing leader Menachem Begin’s close associate Chaim Landau, revolves around one fixed idea, and “all of the other values are mere tools in the hands of this absolute,” and he defines this absolute as “the nation.” Early secular Zionist writer Moshe Leib Lilienblum,⁷ an atheist, agreed with Landau and said that “the whole nation is dearer to us than all the rigid divisions related to Orthodox or liberal matters in religion. There are neither believers nor infidels, but all are children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ... because we are all holy whether we are infidels or Orthodox.”⁸ This “holiness” is related to two contrasting concepts in its depth: first, “Judaism as a heavenly religion,” and second, “Zionism as an earthly political ideology,” with the first becoming a servant of the second. Most prominent Zionist thinkers such as Theodor Herzl, Leon Pinsker, Simon Maximillian Nordau, Nachman Syrkin and Dov Ber Borochoy were a product of their contemporary European era,



Jewish fundamentalists trying to break into the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount complex to conduct religious rituals.

an era marked with secularism and atheism, interested in what is materialistic and quantitative, and they paid little attention to Judaism as a religion and even showed clear hostility to it.

What can be concluded from the contradiction between orthodoxy and liberalism is that Judaism is a source of latent energy, through religious preambles, urging the Jews to come to Israel *aliyah* in advent for the creation of the Zionist national Jewish state. To fulfill the Zionist ideology through a comprehensive solution that combines “holiness” and “nationalism.” In order to achieve its goals, Zionist theorists believed in employing violence against enemies of the Zionist project when considered necessary.

This radical approach is exacerbated when a religious political ideology is applied to it by its theorists to grant it ‘divine’ legitimacy; and it even gets more dangerously among its simple-minded followers.

This confirms that fundamentalism is not an exclusive domain of Arab and Islamic societies, but that all societies suffered or still suffer from various forms of political and religious fundamentalism, whether it is in thought, belief, practice or behavior. The Arab thinker Mohammad Abed Aljabiri was indeed truthful when he said that “in every ideology there is always a slant for fundamentalism and extremism.”

Therefore, fundamentalism appears in the 20th century to the 21st century to be very expressive of religious developments that were the product of accumulative outputs of a fundamentalist radical thought, leading to what to social scientists call battling with modern society. This is what we see before us today in the Israeli political establishment’s practices, after the failure of the secularism that the pioneer Zionists hoped to achieve when they came to Palestine. It is the same practices that the Israeli government used recently to give legitimacy to annexing settlements in the West Bank to Israel, in the context of Trump’s peace plan possible exchange for lands, in the triangle area. According to Professor Yousif Jabarin, an urban planner, after careful examination of the borders proposed in Trump’s “peace deal” — parallel to the Jezreel Valley⁹ (Marj Ibn Amer) along the Triangle borders — is nothing but a “transfer plan” to move people, without their lands, which will be taken over and is estimated at approximately 200,000 dunums, as part of an Israeli scheme to transform all targeted cities and towns along the Green Line into a new form of ghetto, to deprive the people of their citizenship and land. While bending to Jewish fundamentalist pressure to expand settlement activities in geographical areas thought to have biblical history to gain as much as possible during Trump’s mandate as U.S. president — whom right-wing Israelis view as God’s gift to achieve their geographic, political and economic greed.¹⁰

Although some sociologists described the Israeli society as a pluralistic society, this pluralism in Israel in particular and for several reasons has constituted a fertile environment for tension and clashes between ethnic and racial groups, something that urged social scientists such as (Horowitz and Lissak, 1989)¹¹ to identify five major rifts in the Israeli society: national (Arabs-Jews), religious (religious-secular), sectarian (Sefardi-Ashkenazi), social class (poor-rich) and ideological (right-left). Social scientists believe that the most dangerous among them is the national rift, but the reality of the situation on the ground and what the fundamental practices have produced over the last two decades indicate that the religious rift is the most dangerous, based on the premise that the gap between religious doctrine and secular ideological thought is so wide that it is impossible to bridge between them. This shows the gradual shifts in Israel towards the extreme right in those decades that reached its peak during the peace process that led to the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin — a rise in incitements against a negotiated settlement with the Palestinians and against those who supported it, which widened the religious rift and resulted in violence on several occasions. It is worthwhile to distinguish here between the “national messianic sentiment” that believes in the salvation of the Jewish people and work to attain it, which is mainly represented by the fundamentalist Gush Emunim movement, and the groups of the ultra-Orthodox (religious or religiously observant) — “Haredi groups” whose main concern is fulfilling religious duties and prayers and somehow isolated from the main social and political stream.

David Hirst¹² claims that “the roots of violence in the Middle East belong to “Jewish fundamentalism,” and criticizes the western negligence of its dangers as applying double-standards, especially that the West always fought Islamic fundamentalism and considered it as the enemy that took the place of communism.”

Jewish fundamentalism casts the shadow of its power over domestic and foreign policy of Israel, where it meets with the U.S. “messianic fundamentalism” and has a weight that greatly influences the formulation of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East and its relation to Arab countries, and Palestinians in particular. This power has become embodied in the Jewish-Israeli culture, and the concepts of the joint identity became leaning towards ethnicism, in contrast to the prevailing impression that the groups of the ultra-Orthodox — “Haredi” Jews — are not concerned who controls the government as much as their materialistic interests and concerns. However, according to a “religious rulings” by some national-religious fundamentalist rabbis, those who are considered as ‘left-wing’ to be treated under the concept of “law of the pursuer” — *Din Rodef*,¹³ which

allows killing of Jews without trial. Such rulings led to the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, but this extreme shift towards fundamentalist fascist right, and change in the rules of the game in the context of the on-going debate about definitions, such as whether the “state” should adopt the definition of identity or adhere to its administrative functions that was established to fulfill. The decision was in favor of the former at the expense of the latter, and the outcome was approving the racist nation-state law, which necessarily leads to justification of “ethnic transfer” attempts. Only in that way is it possible to read and understand the dimensions of fundamentalism and the implications of Trump’s peace plan.

Conclusions

If the point of view of some American diplomats that Trump’s personality has brought about a flagrant change in the U.S. foreign policy in regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the reference here to the U.S. declared policy in the context of what is called international relations, then all of the above confirms that Trump didn’t make any significant changes. But he expressed the messianic fundamentalism that supported him to become president of the strongest country in the world. And what his Christian fundamentalist vice president, Michael Pence, declared recently reaffirms that: “we support Israel because of the historical divine promise and those who support Israel will receive the blessings of God.”

The fact that the president handed the Middle East conflict file to a team of fundamentalist Orthodox American Jews such as his son-in-law, Jared Kushner, U.S. Ambassador to Israel David Friedman and special envoy Jason Greenblatt shows the strong bond between the messianic fundamentalist groups in Tel Aviv and Washington, DC. Thus, it is possible to see the fundamentalism roots of the “Deal of the Century” peace plan. Unfortunately, however, the plan disrespects the international legitimacy resolutions related to the conflict and completely undermines the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

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Trump's "Deal of the Century" Is Modeled on South African Apartheid

Alon Liel

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The "Deal of the Century," which was publicly released in January 2020, changes the reality of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict even if the plan itself is never implemented. The likelihood that a future Israeli leader will be able to offer the Israeli public less than the 30% of the West Bank so generously granted to Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu by President Donald J. Trump appears unrealistic. Similarly, the prospect that any Palestinian leader will accept the plan seems out of the question. As a result, the plan is not likely to lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state despite its use of the term. Moreover, the "Deal of the Century" could prove to be the diplomatic death blow to the two-state solution. Even if it were to be partially implemented, it will be coming 40 years after the South African model.

As someone who served as Israel's ambassador to South Africa in the 1990s and who participated in many working visits there both before and after my tenure, I am personally familiar with the term *Bantustan* (a state for the natives). The apartheid regime in South Africa had planned to set up 11 such puppet states on its territory. A similar number of *Bantustans* had been intended for the territory which eventually became Namibia. Only four such states were actually established: Bophuthatswana, Venda, Ciskei and Transkei. Almost no one remembers the names of the others, all of which were gone with the wind. South Africa was the only country in the world that officially recognized the *Bantustans*. The important decisions about what went on in them were made solely in Pretoria.

The plan is not likely to lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state despite its use of the term.

The reason for the establishment of *Bantustans* was very simple: In the early 1980s, the West began to understand the magnitude of the cruelty of apartheid and quickly came to comprehend the most basic issue: Non-whites did not have the right to vote. The slogan of the anti-apartheid fighters

“One Man One Vote” was warmly embraced around the world — today it would be called “One Person One Vote.” For its part, the apartheid regime was unable to allow itself a non-white vote because demographics would have automatically translated this into a loss of political power.

Racist Ingenuity

The racist ingenuity of the apartheid regime therefore led to the invention of many non-contiguous enclaves within the territory of South Africa which gained fictitious independence and whose residents were

Thanks to the international community’s determination demonstrated at the time, at least one important historical lesson was deeply imprinted.

able to vote in the elections for the puppet enclave-state “governments” but not in the South African general elections. For a while, this idea enabled South Africa to push back against the West’s accusation of a lack of voting rights and, lo and behold, it wasn’t long before pictures were circulated across the world of black residents in the *Bantustans* voting for “their leadership.” It took a few more years for the West to understand this cynical ploy and to begin its struggle against the *Bantustans*.

Thanks to the international community’s determination demonstrated at the time, at least one important historical lesson was deeply imprinted: The attempt to whitewash an oppressive and discriminatory regime through the creation of fictitious “autonomous” territories where masses of subjects lacking real political rights were concentrated didn’t succeed in South Africa — and it seemed that it would not work anywhere else on the planet.

Israel’s Shameful Role

During the years I was responsible for the South African desk at the Foreign Ministry and the years I served as ambassador to South Africa, I learned, to my shame, that no country in the world (except South Africa) contributed more to the economy of the *Bantustans* than Israel. Israelis built factories, residential neighborhoods, a hospital and even a football stadium and a crocodile farm in these South African puppet states. Israel allowed the largest of the *Bantustans*, Bophuthatswana, to establish a diplomatic mission in Tel Aviv, and its leader, Lucas Mangope, who was ostracized by the entire world, was a frequent guest here.

Thus, while the rest of the world was boycotting the false pretenses of the *Bantustans*, Israelis leapt to the apartheid regime’s aid and worked to promote them. Security cooperation with apartheid was of course the incentive for Israel’s support for these puppet states.

Currently, with the active support of the world's leading superpower and its "Deal of the Century," Israel is aiming to develop and cultivate a 21st century model of this same illegitimate practice.

The "Deal of the Century" Proposes a New Bantustan Map

The essence of the "Deal of the Century" horror-show that took place in the White House in January was the new *Bantustan* map. Trump handed yet another gift to his good pal Netanyahu and presented, ahead of the Israeli elections, and in the presence of one side only, the plan his emissaries had devised in recent years. Its details, as well as the rhetoric used in the two leaders' speeches, made clear that this was no "deal" but rather the realization of Netanyahu's longstanding plan to deepen Israeli control over the West Bank, without its inhabitants enjoying any real freedom or basic political rights.

Trump, however, aspires not only to hand over almost a third of the territory of the West Bank to his friend but also — and perhaps most importantly — to grant him the mantle of international consensus. Thus, as in the U.S. recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights and the transfer of the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem, Trump is signaling his ability and intention to erase the longstanding policy of the international community and replace it as the authority that grants validity to changes in the political status of territories where conflicts are taking place.

The essence of the "Deal of the Century" horror show that took place in the White House in January was the new Bantustan map.

This is bad news not only for Palestinians and Israelis. For years the United Nations has declared, in its various frameworks, that partitioning the land into two independent states is the only just and viable solution. This solution is premised on the concept that all 14 million people living between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea today have the right to independence, equality and dignity, and that the path to assure "a voice for every person" entails ending more than half a century of Israeli occupation and partitioning the country on the basis of the 1967 borders. Important and prominent institutions such as the European Union and the Arab League have repeatedly expressed their support for and commitment to this model, as have previous U.S. Administrations — Republican and Democrat alike. The international community's rhetorical commitment to the two-state solution, however, has not led it to take any real action. Thus, Netanyahu and Trump have apparently come to the conclusion that the path is clear to advancing their vision of annexation and apartheid.

Accordingly, the map attached to the “Deal of the Century” requires a double reading: On the Israeli-Palestinian level, it is an imitation of the

The international community’s rhetorical commitment to the two-state solution, however, has not led it to take any real action.

Bantustan model, in which the various Palestinian areas are surrounded by Israeli-ruled territories and the tunnels and bridges intended to allow movement between the different segments of the “state of Palestine” are also controlled by Israel. On the political level, the plan is a declaration that the U.S. president is co-opting the authority of the international community and is signaling

that it is within his sole power and authority to legitimize the creation of a new model of apartheid.

It is, however, both possible and necessary to give a resounding response to this arrogant display of power.

An additional idea included in the “Deal of the Century” proposes the relocation of a quarter of a million Israeli Arab citizens to the area of the Palestinian enclaves. This, too, is reminiscent of the cruel policy of transfer that moved tens of thousands of black South Africans from their original homes to the *Bantustans* scattered throughout the country.

The Voice of the International Community Must Be Heard

Just a little over three years ago, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) overwhelmingly approved Resolution 2334, which states that the settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory are illegal and that no border changes to the 1967 ceasefire line will be recognized, except those agreed upon by the parties themselves. Today, in response to the unilateral steps advanced by Trump and Netanyahu, and in light of the latter’s announcement of his intention to implement annexation of parts of the West Bank in the coming months, it is incumbent upon the international community to make its voice heard loud and clear. It must not give its approval, even by its silence, to the new apartheid plan and to the perverse idea of *Bantustans* that constitutes an integral part of it. This would be a betrayal not only of millions of people living here, but also of the legacy of the international resistance to South African apartheid, and of the precedent it set.

Rejecting the “Deal of the Century” – A Reflection of Millennial Attitudes

Noa Balf

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The relationship between the state of Israel and Jewish Americans is changing. These shifts are particularly apparent among Jewish-American millennials who are relatively informed about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and also critical of Israeli policy. I define “millennial” as an individual born between the early 1980s and late 1990s, based on existing research on millennial politics (Rouse and Ross, 2018). Despite the ink that has been shed and the incessant hand-wringing about the decline of the American Jewish community, particularly among younger Jews, there is little evidence that such dire predictions have come to pass. Rather than the historically persistent straw man of “assimilation,” it appears that younger Jews are endeavoring to reimagine and reinvigorate Jewish community and identity in ways that better suit their needs and circumstances. The vision of Jewish community espoused by younger Jews focuses on inclusivity and social justice, and many younger Jews hold leftist, progressive political views. Their political inclinations and perception of Jewish identity and community inform their critical attitudes towards U.S. policy on Israel.

This is a fascinating development, considering that American Jews growing up in the 1990s and 2000s were exposed to a Jewish education and Jewish programming focused on tying the American Jewish community to Israel. This is best exemplified by the privately funded Birthright-*Taglit* program, which brings young Jews to Israel for a 10-day educational trip free of charge. This presents a key puzzle: Why are millennial Jews rejecting unconditional support for Israel despite receiving the most intense and significant ‘Israel-centered’ education relative to previous generations of Jews?

The Great Divergence and Growing Tensions

How do millennial Jewish Americans differ from millennial Jewish Israelis? A key difference is in the political and ideological outlook of the two populations. While millennial Israelis have shifted politically to the right, Jewish Americans have shifted politically to the left. Jewish Americans are overwhelmingly middle-class and college-educated, tend to be ethnically homogenous, and experience their Jewish identity through the lens of being a religious minority. Furthermore, their political consciousness and awakening was influenced by distinctly American events like the failure of the Iraq war, the 2008 recession, the election of Barack Obama, and various social movements like Occupy Wall Street, Black Lives Matter, and #MeToo. In contrast, millennial Jewish Israelis experienced the violent and disappointing end of the Oslo peace process and the eruption of the second intifada during their most formative years. The right-wing political parties have been in power throughout the entirety of millennial Jewish Israelis' adult lives. Although Israel has had versions of the aforementioned social movements — the 2011 tent protests, Ethiopian protests opposing anti-black police racism, and activism against gender-based violence — the social movements in Israel did not produce sustainable changes to political discourse or policy.

The backdrop of the inability to gain momentum surrounding progressive causes in Israel has been the increasing influence of religious institutions on the public sphere, the main example being a trend toward gender segregation in state institutions, private institutions and even public spaces. Although there has been a right-wing trend in the United States and in Israel, most U.S. Jews vote for left-leaning politicians and the Democratic Party (Gallup, 2019). When Jewish Americans apply their progressive analysis to the very conservative domestic politics in Israel, they conclude that they have little in common with Jewish Israelis. Interestingly, Jewish Israelis maintain the historical position that they have a monopoly over what perceptions of Israel are permitted. Therefore, they are antagonistic to any Jewish-American effort to engage in a critical debate about Israel.

Race and Ethnic Politics among Jews in Israel and the U.S.

American millennials are the most diverse generation the U.S. has ever seen. They espouse different social attitudes from those of previous generations. Similarly, millennial Jewish Americans are engaging with questions of race and ethnicity differently than previous Jewish American generations — and this is because their racial positioning differs from those of other generations. There is a long history of anti-Semitism and

discrimination in the U.S.; however, while millennial Jews may encounter anti-Semitic tropes or statements, they are far less likely to face the type of structural and systemic discrimination previous generations of Jews experienced. Jews remain a religious minority in the U.S. and may experience discrimination due to their religious affiliation, such as private agencies refusing to foster Jewish families, yet these events are not as racialized or racially tinged (in *New York Times* parlance) as before. Consequently, many millennial Jewish Americans, the vast majority of whom are Ashkenazi (of European descent), experience certain degrees of white privilege. They experience privilege compared with other racial minorities like blacks, Latinx (people of Latin American background), and Asian Americans. This positionality of Jewish privilege in the U.S. emerged in particular in post 9/11 America with the rise of anti-Muslim bias and policies, Black Lives Matter, and demographic anxiety surrounding the growth of the Latinx community. Jewish Americans are no longer the representative “other” whose place in society is broadly policed by the hegemony. Demographic shifts have caused Jewish American millennials to believe that in the 21st century, their race and ethnic politics in the U.S. have changed relative to those of their parents and grandparents.

American millennials are the most diverse generation the U.S. has ever seen.

Race and ethnic politics in Israel is similarly contentious, and yet it differs in significant ways. First and foremost, Jewish Israelis are the hegemonic mainstream institutional and cultural force. The contours of who is a Jew in a political and civic sense in Israel has changed over time, but a fixed foundational element to who or what a Jew is in Israel is that they are not Palestinians. The “othering” of Palestinian citizens of Israel has enabled Jews from historically marginalized communities to feel integral to a state that continues to discriminate against them. Consequently, millennial Jewish Israelis have responded differently to demographic changes within Israel. Unlike Jewish Americans, Jewish Israelis come from a wide variety of regional backgrounds; North Africa and the Middle East, former Soviet Union, Latin and Central America, Ethiopia, central and Western Europe, the Balkans, India, a variety of English-speaking countries and more. The relative ethnic diversity of the Jewish community in Israel, however, has not produced inclusive racial attitudes. Even more surprising is that despite many Jewish millennial Israelis having multi-ethnic Jewish backgrounds, there is no evidence that they are uniquely critical of the legacy of discrimination against Jews of non-European descent. The discourse in Israel appears to imply that structural ethnic and racial discrimination in Israel are concerns

of the past, and any remaining negative effects are coincidental rather than systemic. Further disconcerting is the acceptance of punitive measures and legislation toward Palestinian citizens of Israel.

The comparative class and ethnic homogeneity in the U.S. has enabled relatively more support for progressive racial policies among Jewish-American millennials, while the class and ethnic diversity among Jewish millennials in Israel has had the opposite effect. Jewish Israelis prioritize the marginalization of Palestinians over a reckoning regarding the legacy of racism and colorism within the Jewish community. This does not mean that Jewish Americans have come to terms with racism and colorism within the Jewish community or that they do not express any racial bias, only that they are more likely to support affirmative action, and policies addressing racial bias in the U.S. writ large.

Questioning Institutions and Policy

Another important difference between Jewish Israelis and Jewish Americans is their attitudes toward state institutions and leadership. Although both groups share distrust and dissatisfaction with their respective state functionality and political systems (Rouse and Ross, 2018; IDI, 2020), there are particular state institutions that Jewish-Israeli millennials trust. According to the Israeli Democracy Institute annual Democracy Index survey of public opinion, 90% of all Jewish Israelis (not just millennials) trust the Israeli Defense Forces (IDI, 2020).

Jewish-American millennials exhibit attitudes that are reflective of their generation — namely, that they are more distrustful of traditional institutions, particularly political institutions (Harvard Public Opinion Project, 2014). They have witnessed the political mismanagement of 9/11, the Iraq war, the great recession of 2008 and Hurricane Katrina. Additionally, the ongoing polarization in and ineffectiveness of Congress have produced a complete policy standstill. In contrast, Jewish Israeli millennials witnessed their government successfully avoid a major economic downfall in 2008 and pursue security and military strategies ending terrorist violence within Israel proper. Much of the criticism Jewish Israelis have toward their government focuses on domestic policies, like the provision of welfare services and the educational system. This is a crucial point: Jewish Israelis and Jewish Americans diverge in the degree of criticism and distrust of Israeli military policy. The difference between Jewish-American millennials and Jewish-Israeli millennials is particularly acute in their analysis of the continued military occupation of the Palestinian territory. Jewish-American millennials do not trust the Israeli Defense Forces anywhere near as much

as Jewish Israelis do; combined with their overall distrust of American government foreign policy, they are far more willing to publicly criticize Israel. Additionally, Jewish-American millennials are challenging not only state institutions but also “traditional” Jewish community institutions like the American Jewish Committee, Jewish Federations, American-Israel Political Affairs Committee (AIPAC) and others. The generational tension in the Jewish American community surrounding support for Israel produces more extreme positions.

Those born after 1980 have experienced an unprecedented degree of connection to a broader global community through rapid technological advancement. Research on U.S. millennials shows that they view themselves as “citizens of the world,” espousing an identity of cosmopolitanism (Zogby and Kuhl, 2013; Telhami, 2015). Additionally, American millennials are more likely to prefer diplomacy and international cooperation over the use of military force due to fatigue over the Iraq and Afghanistan wars or “Iraq Aversion” (Thrall and Goepner, 2015). Therefore, Jewish-American millennials have become increasingly averse to military action and are applying these policy preferences to Israel. Meanwhile, the opposite trend has occurred in Israel. There is widespread skepticism over the effectiveness and potential success of diplomacy. As discussed, Jewish Israelis view military force/control of Palestinians as a means of preventing harm to Israelis.

Jewish-American millennials and Jewish-Israeli millennials differ in their policy approach to addressing conflict with Palestinians. In Israel, the concept of “peace” has largely been achieved through the end of violence and separation from the Palestinians without a diplomatic process. With a mentality that views the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as intractable and, therefore, believes that policy should focus on managing rather than resolving it (Balf, 2019), Jewish-Israeli millennials have chosen to engage more in domestic policy issues like educational policy, transportation and health. Polling data from J Street shows that since 2012, there has been a steady decline of Jewish American voters who state that Israel is one of their top two voting issues, shifting from 12% to 4% in the most recent midterm elections (J Street, 2018). Thus, despite disagreeing on how to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, neither Jewish Americans nor Jewish Israelis prioritize conflict resolution.

A Trump-Israel Courtship = Jewish-American Divorce

The Kushner-authored peace plan in no way addresses the main criticism of Israeli military policy among left-leaning millennial Jews in the U.S. they view it as a racist and unjust plan that erases and ignores

Palestinians. Many consider it an effort to placate right-wing, conservative Israelis and American evangelicals. The Jewish-American community overwhelmingly and consistently votes for the Democratic Party.

The Trump “Deal of the Century” is antithetical to Jewish-American millennial political attitudes in a variety of ways. First, support for the proposal has been presented as support for Trump’s policy agenda. That was always likely to “strike out” with Jewish Americans. According to recent polling, any Democratic presidential candidate is likely to receive at least two-thirds of Jewish Americans’ votes. Jewish Americans report that policy towards Israel does not determine their vote choice, and they focus on voting for the party they feel aligned with in terms of values and domestic political preferences (Jewish Insider, 2020). Most American millennials vote for the Democratic Party, and this phenomenon increases exponentially within the Jewish-American community. According to the Pew Research Center (PRC), four out of 10 Jews (42%) say that Trump favors Israel too much. In fact, Jews are more likely than Christians to hold the position that the Trump administration skews too far in favor of Israel (PRC, 2019).

Second, by refusing to engage with Palestinians, the Trump administration triggered Jewish-American millennials’ race and ethnic politics sensibilities. For American millennials, racial “diversity has been a formative life experience” (Rouse and Ross, 2018: 8), and they understand the ways in which the plan disenfranchises Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and within Israel proper. Their opposition to race-based discrimination informs their antagonism to a plan that includes a possible transfer of citizens from Israel to a Palestinian entity without full sovereignty.

Finally, Jewish-American millennials apply the lessons from Iraq and Afghanistan to the Israel-Palestine conflict: American policy cannot dictate on the ground circumstances in foreign locales, and American policy preferences may be detrimental to local populations. The Israeli government’s insistence that Jewish Americans support Israel unconditionally is increasingly at odds with political preferences of the Jewish-American community, and nowhere is that more clear than among Jewish American millennials. In a report for the Ruderman Foundation, Prof. Gil Troy says that Jewish Americans are “more pro-choice than pro-Israel” (Troy, 2017: 53). This is further supported by the previously mentioned J Street polling data showing that Israel does not determine vote choice among Jewish Americans (J Street, 2018). The long-term implications of the differing trends between Israelis and Americans cannot be overstated, and Israel’s reliance on Jewish Americans maintaining absolute commitment to Israel should be deconstructed and evaluated.

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The Trump Plan: Personal Views from Palestine and Israel

A View From Palestine

Hind Khoury

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There is no doubt that the polarization in the region encouraged and pushed by Israel and the United States, along with their cooption of the Gulf states and now even Sudan, are the main driving force behind the Trump plan, the so-called “Deal of the Century.” This evolved within the context of geopolitical interests far beyond the region and has included promises of investment and development plans designed to lure the Gulf countries into forging an alliance against Iran.

The “Deal of the Century” amounts to the ultimate realization of the Balfour Declaration of November 2, 1917 a century later by recognizing a Jewish state from the Mediterranean to the Jordan River while denying the Palestinians any right of self-determination. This vision lay at the heart of the Balfour Declaration, which was adopted into international law by the League of Nations. Despite their general defiance of international law, this is one piece of legislation that Trump and Netanyahu hold dear.

The Trump deal is a colonial project in both dictate and language and belongs to the 19th century. Its approach is riddled with inhumanity and affirms the concept that “might is right,” ignoring the progress made in respect to human rights and international law over the last century and especially after the two World Wars.

I would add that while the “Deal of the Century” appears to have cornered the Palestinians into submission and capitulation, this is not the case. The Palestinians are not without options, and there is light at the end of the tunnel:

- Israel and Netanyahu in particular may be feeling very triumphant, but while they may have won a short-term victory, the long-term picture is not so rosy.

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A View From Israel

Susie Becher

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There is little that I can say about the failings of the Trump “peace plan” that has not already been adequately covered in this edition of the **Palestine-Israel Journal**. The misnomer in the title is the word “peace,” but it is indeed a plan — not a plan to achieve peace but a plan to finally realize the Israeli right wing’s goal of annexing the West Bank and extinguishing any hope of creating a viable, sovereign Palestinian state.

Despite some wishy-washy statements by world leaders urging the Palestinians not to reject the plan out of hand and to consider it a basis for negotiations, no one who truly wants to see a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict believes that this scheme to eternalize Israeli domination of the Palestinian people can possibly get us there. Nowhere has Trump’s disdain for the State Department been more obvious than in his placing this complex issue in the hands of a bunch of inexperienced cronies whose arrogance is exceeded only by their ignorance. In fact, the plan Jared Kushner’s team came up with would be laughable were it merely a U.S. proposal put forward to the two sides for consideration. Were that the case, Israel would have welcomed it, the Palestinians would have rejected it, and it would have ended up on the trash heap of history.

The problem is that it is not a U.S. plan; it is a joint Israeli-U.S. production inspired by the messianic vision of restoring the biblical Land of Israel and drafted with no small amount of input from the Israeli settlement movement and its American supporters, primarily U.S. Ambassador to Israel David Friedman. And therein lies the rub.

As far as Trump is concerned, he delivered on his promise to present a peace plan and, after his photo op at the White House with Netanyahu at his side, his attention is now focused exclusively on November 2020. His handling (or mishandling) of the coronavirus crisis is further evidence of this, as he appears to be more interested in saving the U.S. economy — his key to reelection — than in saving American lives. Friedman, however, is still on the ground and is working closely with the Israelis to make sure that Israeli sovereignty is extended to the settlements before his term is up.

With the Israeli political opposition having been decimated through Netanyahu's wizardry following the recent elections, the only chance of stopping this juggernaut rests with the international community. Although the release of the plan was met with rather lukewarm opposition and U.S. pressure succeeded in blocking a UN condemnation of the plan, that should not be seen as an indication of how the international community will react if annexation goes forward. The world will not accept the legitimization of Israel's theft of Palestinian lands, not because of a moral imperative to defend the rights of the Palestinian people but because of its vested interest in the preservation of international law. It would be best if European Union Minister for Foreign Affairs Josep Borrell spelled out exactly what he meant when he said that "steps towards annexation . . . would not go "unchallenged" before Israel dares to implement it. If threats do not prove sufficient to thwart Israel's plans, however, it will be time to pull out the big guns and apply sanctions. Anything short of this will mean the end of the rule of law.

Continued - A View From Palestine

- Demographics are not working in Israel's favor. The Israeli Government will not be able to maintain its vision of "Greater Israel" without another expulsion of Palestinians, and the entire world should join the Palestinians in preventing this. The question remains whether the inflamed political situation in the Middle East could be exploited for such a purpose.
- The Palestinians living in Israel are actively participating in what remains of Israeli democracy to secure equal rights and transform Israel into a democratic state for all its citizens. It is noteworthy that the Arab Joint List won 15 seats in the last elections, with approximately 20,000 Israeli Jews voting for it.
- Israel is weakened by serious divisions among its Jewish majority, with growing internal rifts between secular and religious, between Ashkenazim and Sephardim, and among other Jewish ethnic groups.

Needless to say, Israeli democracy is crumbling. Three elections have failed to produce a government, and Netanyahu has managed to manipulate the democratic structure to gain control of the judiciary and the media. This does not augur well for Israel's future.

The Trump plan is a big failure, and it will not survive as long as the Palestinians have the will to say "NO" and as long as there is the possibility of a joint struggle uniting the Palestinians and the progressive and democratic forces in Israel against fascism and racism. Universal human values will prevail.

No Missed Opportunity in Rejection of Trump Plan

Walid Salem

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Several peace plans have been initiated throughout the years of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and all have been pigeonholed with a veiled warning to the Palestinians “not to miss the proposed historic opportunity” and run the risk of losing even more if they don’t accept the Israeli conditions. What might seem like a logical call becomes questionable when one considers that every time it comes with a warning of catastrophic consequences for the Palestinian people. So, what makes the Trump peace plan different from the earlier peace plans?

Jerusalem and Trump’s Plan

Long before the Trump administration’s decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, the direction in which we were heading was clear. The U.S. Administration published its “Peace to Prosperity” plan — also known as the “Deal of the Century” — in January 2020. The issue of Jerusalem,¹ in the 181 pages plan, is addressed from a messianic religious perspective. It acknowledges that the city is sacred to three religions and to a substantial portion of humanity but gives priority to Judaism. Second place is given to Christianity, and Islam is accorded third place. The document praises Israel for protecting all the holy sites and accuses previous rulers of destroying the holy places of other religions. The plan stresses the importance of keeping Jerusalem undivided under Israeli rule and notes that this is the position held by all previous U.S. Administrations.²

Emptying Jerusalem of Its Palestinian Inhabitants

Although the plan mentions Jerusalem³ as the Palestinian capital, the reference is actually to Abu Dis, which is supposed to remain under the highest level of Israeli security control. At the same time, the plan affirms that all areas transferred to the Palestinian Authority (PA) will remain

under Israeli control. In other words, the plan abolishes the terms of the Oslo Accords by eliminating what was defined as Area A, over which the PA holds civil and security authority, and gives Israel security control over the entire West Bank and Gaza Strip, including those areas to be handed over to the Palestinians. So, if the United States were to open an embassy in the Palestinian territory, it would effectively be under Israeli control.

The plan adopts the Israeli vision of “Greater Jerusalem” by accepting its annexation of four settlement blocs: to the south, the settlements of Gush Etzion, which surround Bethlehem and extend to the borders of Hebron; in the center, the settlement of Ma’aleh Adumim and the adjacent Mishor Adumim and E1, which Israel plans to expand to the Dead Sea area, as well as Pisgat Ze’ev, which surrounds the villages of north Jerusalem; and to the north, the settlement bloc of Adam, Kochav Ya’acov and Psagot near Ramallah, which would prevent any future geographical growth of Ramallah.

The plan legitimizes isolating the Palestinian neighborhoods in East Jerusalem beyond the Separation Wall while keeping the city completely under Israeli control. To explain: The plan calls for handing over two densely populated areas that were previously annexed after the 1967 war — the first

The plan legitimizes isolating the Palestinian neighborhoods in East Jerusalem beyond the Separation Wall while keeping the city completely under Israeli control.

comprising Kufr Aqab, Samiramees, the Qalandia Refugee Camp and the nearby Qalandia village on the peripheries of Ramallah city; and the second comprising the Shufat Refugee Camp, the Al-Salam neighborhood, Ras Khamees, parts of Anata, nearby Azzariya and Abu-Dis. It is worth mentioning that both Azzariya and

Abu Dis are still considered Area B⁴ according to the Oslo II Accord of 1995. There are about 120,000-140,000 Palestinian inhabitants in these areas to be relinquished, while the Palestinian population that lives under complete Israeli control is estimated⁵ at 284,926 people. Thus, only 144,000-164,000 Palestinians will remain in the area under Israeli control, while some 225,335 Israeli settlers will be included in the area, turning the Palestinians into a minority in Jerusalem.

These remaining Palestinians are given three options: 1) take a Palestinian passport and relinquish their residency in the city; 2) retain Jerusalem residency with an Israeli ID card; or 3) obtain Israeli citizenship. A majority of Palestinian Jerusalemites reject the last option for national reasons. It is also worth noting that those who apply for Israeli citizenship face complicated and humiliating procedures and requirements such as security clearance, Hebrew proficiency and an oath of loyalty to the state

of Israel. The option of living in the city exposes the Palestinians to Israeli harassment, while those who live outside the Israeli borders of the city — often as a result of a lack of housing for Palestinians within municipal borders — are threatened with losing their residency status. Thus, the plan proposes three options that are simply a façade. Israel has often maintained that its objective is to achieve dominance and control over the city by gradually forcing the Palestinians out of the city. In the plan, the option of Palestinians maintaining their residency status is worded dangerously:

Many of the Arab residents of these areas may want to maintain a political identity that is separate from either Israel or Palestine, and which allows them to take pride in their unique identity and history. That option should remain available to them.⁶

The language makes it sound as though the Palestinians would like to maintain their rights in Jerusalem by separating themselves from their Palestinian identity.

The Judaization of Jerusalem

With regard to Jerusalem religious sites of Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Western Wall, the plan acknowledges the status quo of 1948, whereby the Western Wall was a prayer site for Muslims and Jews (not exclusively for Jews, as it is nowadays); in contrast, it demands that people of all religions have the right to pray in Al-Aqsa Mosque. It calls to respect the prayer times, holidays and other elements of the different religions⁷ and encourages arranging flights from the Arab and Islamic countries to visit the religious places in Jerusalem. In other words, the plan divides Al-Aqsa Mosque between Muslims and Jews according to time schedule, giving legitimacy to Jewish groups that are seeking control of Al-Aqsa Mosque.⁸

The plan lists 31 religious sites in Jerusalem — 17 Christian, 13 Jewish and one Islamic — using the term “religious sites” for Muslims without any specification, merely mentioning “Islamic religious sites.”⁹ When referring to Al-Aqsa Mosque, however, it considers it a sacred place for both Jews and Muslims. From a Palestinian, Arab and Islamic perspective, considering Al-Aqsa Mosque a shared place for Muslims and Jews is to be totally rejected. According to an unpublished study by Dr. Hanna Issa, there are more than 40 mosques in the city and more than 70 Christian sites, not to mention the many religious sites inside Al-Aqsa Mosque and around it.

From a Palestinian, Arab and Islamic perspective, considering Al-Aqsa Mosque a shared place for Muslims and Jews is to be totally rejected.

The plan includes another problem addressed in the Emek Shaveh organization report,¹⁰ which is that not all 13 of the Jewish religious places listed are sacred, such as French Hill, the Pilgrims Path that was built by Elad,¹¹ the Gihon Spring, the City of David National Park in Silwan, the Samboski cemetery and the Hurva Synagogue. Archeological excavations to find the tombs of the prophets Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi on the Mount of Olives continue, undermining Christian and Islamic religious sites, even though there is no scientific evidence to prove the existence of such places there. The plan considers the Mount of Olives cemetery as a sacred place for the Jews and ignores its importance to Christianity. In other words, the plan forges history and invents new Jewish sacred sites to justify Jewish dominance and control over the city.

Aside from these problems, the plan proposes opening religious sites in Jerusalem for tourism and prayer for people of faith from all over the world and gives Israel jurisdiction over the arrangements, while engaging Jordan through organizing regional tourism to Jerusalem and its sacred places.¹² To conclude, it divides the Palestinian territory and gives priority to Israeli security, portraying Jerusalem as an open city for the entire world except the Palestinians due to security reasons.

The Trump Plan Rips Jerusalem and Palestine Apart

First, the plan uses Israeli control over Jerusalem as a tool to rip the Palestinian territory apart and to prevent the establishment of a viable, sovereign and contiguous Palestinian state. The Israeli “Greater Jerusalem” plan extends to the east of the Dead Sea, the southern borders of Hebron, north of Ramallah, and to the Shilo settlement along the road to Nablus, paving the way for future Israeli expansion and diminishing any stable borders for a Palestinian state, even without Jerusalem. Israeli plans to change the Arab and Islamic nature of the Old City through different projects, such as building an aerial tramway, a biblical park and Hebrew tourist facilities, in addition to connecting the settlements to the city in order to strangle the Palestinian neighborhoods and force them outside the city.

Second, the plan doesn’t acknowledge Palestinian properties rights in West Jerusalem, as it proposes to resolve the issues of the Palestinian refugees of 1948 and 1967 by settling them in the countries where they are refugees.

Third, by imposing Israeli control over Jerusalem, the plan revokes the collective national rights of Palestinians in Jerusalem and addresses only their individual civil and humanitarian status, rights that can be easily revoked through deportation and transfer. It insults Palestinian Jerusalemites by calling them proud Jerusalemites who do not want to be affiliated with the

PA. Consequently, all of these steps would lead to closing United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) offices in the city.

Fourth, the plan fuels the conflict by giving it a religious nature. It encourages Jewish fanatic groups to seize control over Al-Aqsa Mosque, violating the Israel-Jordan peace treaty of 1994 and the Jordanian custodianship over the mosque.

Fifth, Israel continuously attempts to exterminate any Palestinian presence in Jerusalem —political, educational, health, etc. — by arresting Palestinian Jerusalemite leaders, placing restrictions on movement and preventing any form of cultural or social activity in the city — in addition to banning Jerusalemite political prisoners and their families from receiving any money from the PA.

Are the Palestinians Missing Yet Another Historical Opportunity?

With every political attempt to resolve the conflict, the Palestinians are reminded of their lost historical lands, their refusal to accept the Partition Plan of 1947 and of how Israel was established afterward on 78% of that land. They are reminded that they rejected Ehud Barak's plan of 2000 to withdraw from 80% of the occupied Palestinian territory of 1967 and then rejected Ehud Olmert's plan of Israeli withdrawal from 94% of the West Bank in 2008. Recently, they were reminded that the outcome of all of these rejections is that the Trump plan proposes an Israeli withdrawal from 70% of the West Bank and that if they reject it, the next step will be Israeli annexation of all of the Palestinian territory, and the Palestinians will end up with nothing.

With every political attempt to resolve the conflict, the Palestinians are reminded of their lost historical lands.

This approach toward the Palestinian people ignores basic facts — such as how the Palestinian people have already made critical concessions after they seized what seemed to be a historical opportunity in the Madrid Peace Conference of 1991 and then agreed to continue negotiations without the condition of freezing illegal Jewish settlement activities and to postpone crucial issues such as Jerusalem, refugees, borders and security until the final-status negotiations which, according to the 1993 Oslo Accords, were supposed to start after three years. The collapse of the peace process following the Camp David summit in 2000 is known, and settlement activities have continued at such a rate that the number of settlers increased from 90,000 in 1991 to over 671,000 in 2018.¹³

The Palestinian people are still struggling with a settler colonialist plan that was started in the 19th century by the Zionist movement and its

allies. Since then, the Zionist movement has never stopped its actions to gradually uproot a nation from its native land and seize control over it. In this context, any proposed peace plan is nothing but a “time out” that

The Palestinian people are still struggling with a settler colonialist plan that was started in the 19th century by the Zionist movement and its allies.

enables the colonialist entities to expand their dominance over the entire land. These so-called “historic opportunities” given to the natives are merely a cover for the actual opportunities given to the settler colonialists, and they are designed to enable the latter to expand their dominance without resistance by lending Palestinian legitimacy to it.

All these so-called opportunities are a scam, as they are used as a tool to strengthen settler colonialists’ gains not only in Palestine but throughout the region.

Options and Alternatives from a Palestinian Perspective

To simplify, the plan is an attempt by a superpower, i.e., the United States, to wipe out the accomplishments of the Palestinian people by bringing the conflict back to point zero. This is obvious in Jerusalem.

The state of Palestine has been recognized by 141 countries and maintains its commitment to international legitimacy. By contrast, the objective of the Zionist-American coalition is to destroy Palestine on the ground in order to render this recognition and the related international resolutions irrelevant.

Consequently, the battle for Jerusalem is not separate from the battle to reclaim Palestine on the ground. This requires the participation of all Palestinians; each and every Palestinian has duties and responsibilities, including those in the diaspora, in the U.S. and Europe and the rest of the world, to influence change and enable the refugees to rise up again to reclaim their dignity through a collective struggle for the right of return. This is what the Palestinians have been doing on a daily basis through creative methods such as rebuilding the demolished village of Al-Araqueeb dozens of times and establishing the villages of Bab Alshams and Karamah in the West Bank, and through the ongoing development efforts of the local communities which strengthen the Palestinian steadfastness and work toward a sustainable future. All these efforts must be coordinated with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and its continuous diplomatic efforts *vis-à-vis* international organizations and the world. However, it is important to achieve full harmony between the “people’s resistance and developmental” dimension and the “official, legal, diplomatic” dimension

of resistance. If coordinated well, we could overcome this crisis and regain Palestine within a few years.

Endnotes

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³ TheWhiteHouse, 2020. *Peace To Prosperity*, p17. [Online]

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⁴ According to this division, the area is still under Israeli military control, while the Palestinian Authority holds civil responsibilities.

⁵ PCPS, 2019. *Localities in Jerusalem Governorate by Type of Locality and Population Estimates, 2017-2021*, s.l.: The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. [Online]

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⁶ TheWhiteHouse, 2020. *Peace To Prosperity*, p17. [Online]

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⁷ TheWhiteHouse, 2020. *Peace To Prosperity*, pp.16-17. [Online]

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⁸ Mohareb, M., 2016. Israeli Policies towards Al-Aqsa. SIYASAT ARABIYA, 19 March, VOL II (19), pp. 5-22. [Online] Available at: <https://www.dohainstitute.org/ar/ResearchAndStudies/Pages/art696.aspx>

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¹⁰ EmekShaveh, 2020. The sanctification of antiquity sites in the Jerusalem section of the 'Peace to Prosperity' plan, Jerusalem: Emek Shaveh. [Online] Available at: <https://alt-arch.org/en/the-sanctification-of-antiquity-sites-in-the-peace-to-prospersity-plan/>

¹¹ Ir David Foundation, commonly known as Elad [El'ad]

¹² TheWhiteHouse, 2020. *Peace To Prosperity*, p19. [Online]

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¹³ PCBS, 2018. *Number of Settlers in the Israeli Settlements in the West Bank by Governorate and Type of Settlement*, Ramallah: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics.[Online] Available at: http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_Rainbow/Documents/SETT8E-2018.html. Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Israeli Settlements and Land Grab Database 2019. Ramallah- Palestine. Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, Statistical Abstract of Israel. Jerusalem, Various Years, (2003 - 2018). The Jerusalem Institute for Israeli Studies 2019, Statistical Yearbook of Jerusalem 2019 (No 33). Jerusalem.

Trump Plan Ignores the Past and Offers a Bleak Future

Galia Golan

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In proposing a plan for a resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, U.S. President Donald J. Trump's team announced that they wanted to think outside the box, come up with something new. In itself that was not a bad idea: Given that everything in the past has failed, why not look for something new? Unfortunately, however, ignoring all past negotiations also apparently meant ignoring all the issues and possible solutions as well. It would appear that the authors of the new plan knew very little of the demands each side has made in the past, the progress made (when there was progress) to date, the ground already covered, and proposals worth examining. That is putting it kindly. The likelihood is that they were not interested in past negotiations or proposals because, it would seem, they simply sat down with Israeli representatives and worked out a plan that suited them. While that was not entirely new-- at the first Camp David Summit between Israel and Egypt, the U.S. President Jimmy Carter did indeed test various ideas with the Israelis before putting them to Anwar Sadat; Clinton did the same at Camp David II. In these cases, the American mediators sought a possible common denominator that might be acceptable to both sides before putting an American proposal to the Arabs.

An American-Israeli plan

That was not the case with the Trump plan. There was no mediation. The Americans did not include the Palestinians in the process, as far as can be determined. They did not mediate a negotiation; there was no negotiation. The American plan unveiled on January 28, 2020 was actually an American-Israeli plan.

Thus, problems of process that afflicted previous negotiations, such as Israel's ignoring the asymmetry between the Israelis and the Palestinians

and demanding one-to-one compromises over the West Bank, were absent. Israel's assumption of exclusive right to the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) — part of which it might be “generous” enough to negotiate — did not present an obstacle to the Trump plan, since there was no negotiating process. The only negotiations, if there were any, were between the American and the Israeli representatives.

On substance, all past negotiations used the Green Line (pre-1967 lines) as a reference point, bargaining over what percentage of the OPT Israel would keep in order to avoid evacuating large numbers of settlers. Thus, then-Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak spoke of annexing 8-12% of the West Bank, with land swaps of 1:19 in favor of Israel. Ehud Olmert went furthest, speaking of annexing 6.3 or 6.5%, with 5.8 percent in land swaps. Moreover, Olmert offered good land for the swaps, rather than the desert area south of Gaza offered by both Barak and Trump. Still, in the past there was discussion of a border near, if not exactly on, the 1967 line.

With the Trump plan, by contrast, it is difficult to find a border since the border is not to be determined by the number of settlers to be moved or by any idea of contiguity for the Palestinian state (as assumed in previous negotiations). Rather, the settlers will stay where they are — but under Israeli sovereignty. As a result, any discernible border would weave in and out of the settlements, and the Palestinian state would be a number of enclaves surrounded this way and that by Israel. Surprisingly, perhaps, the Trump plan honored, in a way, an agreement reached in the pre-Camp David II talks: The border will ensure that the Palestinian state will consist of 100% of the land occupied in 1967, even if not exactly along the 1967 lines. This number can be reached — at least in theory — by counting the areas of the enclaves envisaged by the Trump plan, including the land to be given Palestine just south of Gaza, but the idea of contiguity has been totally forgotten, abandoned.

Security Taken Off the Table

This sort of weaving, amorphous border means that the matter of security — always a consideration when discussing borders — would be eliminated as an issue. Israel would simply be in charge of security for the whole area. Period. No need to discuss third-party guarantees, early warning stations, troop access, or other security matters. Such issues had in fact complicated past negotiations. Even the Clinton Parameters did not garner agreement on the “non-militarized” arrangements for the Palestinian state. But Olmert and Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) did, finally, succeed in working out mutually agreed security arrangements, including early warning stations in

Palestine and even one in Safed in northern Israel. And most importantly, they agreed to the deployment of a NATO force under the Americans' aegis on the border between Palestine and Jordan.

Even the Clinton Parameters did not garner agreement on the “non-militarized” arrangements for the Palestinian state. Trump's team did not go into any of these troublesome matters. It determined instead that Israel would be in charge of everything related to security, including control of the airspace and the whole area

west of the Jordan River, and that Palestine would be demilitarized, with the exception of requirements for a domestic police force.

While the border issue determined security matters in the past, the settlement issue was also a determining factor regarding the border. That, too, was easily resolved by Trump's team; no need to discuss how much land Israel would keep to accommodate at least 80% of the settlers, as Barak had done so assiduously. All the settlers would simply stay in place, so the settler-related territorial issue was off the nonexistent table. Instead, Israel would just take what it wanted: 30% of the West Bank. And the location of this large percentage was no longer an issue. Unrelated to settler numbers or locations, Israel would simply take a chunk of land that would enable it to completely surround the so-called state of Palestine. Israeli annexation of the Jordan Rift Valley would complete the land control of Palestine.

Indeed, the Jordan Rift Valley had always been of interest to Israel, first as a potential point of entry for an army, presumably that of Iraq, via Jordan, thereby posing a threat to Israel 60 kilometers to the west (the Green Line). Later, in the age of missile warfare, the threat appeared to Israel to be more one of terrorist intrusions than a land attack by a third-party army. Therefore, Rabin and later Barak spoke of an Israeli presence in the Valley for a limited period of time (apparently 30 years according to Rabin; 10 years or even less according to Barak), and Barak considered a possible international guarantor. The Clinton Parameters allowed for Israel to cross Palestine to that border with Jordan in case of emergencies that were to be clearly defined in advance. Olmert and Abbas, as noted above, envisaged a NATO presence on the border with Jordan, (on the Jordanian side, with Jordan's agreement) because, as Olmert explained, the changes in warfare no longer necessitated a continued Israeli physical presence.

Return of Refugees Not an Option

With borders and security issues, as well as the settlements, off the table, the issue of the refugees was also easily handled by Trump's (and Netanyahu's) planners. This issue, too, was removed from the nonexistent

table. No refugee is to be allowed into Israel, and those seeking to enter the state of Palestine will be subject to Israeli approval based on so-called security considerations. No problem.

There had been several proposals in the past regarding the refugee issue. In pre-Camp David II talks, the negotiators were led to understand that the refugee issue might be resolved by Israel acknowledging its role in the creation of the problem and then negotiating over the number of refugees to be allowed to return. In fact, the issue was not discussed much at Camp David in 2000 because of this understanding. When it began to look as if Israel was abandoning agreed positions on the borders at Camp David, however, the Palestinians brought up the right of return.

Some progress was reportedly made later at the Taba talks, but it was the Clinton Parameters that laid out a formula, later adopted by the track-two Israeli-Palestinian Geneva Initiative. It provided four options: Refugees would remain where they were, immigrate to third countries, move to the new Palestinian state or return to Israel. Numbers would be determined by the perspective hosts, but this solution was meant to settle the issue and be considered fulfillment of United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution 194 on the refugees.

The Arab Peace Initiative of 2002 mentioned Resolution 194 but did not specify a solution. Instead, it added a new element to the Arab formula on the issue, specifying that there should be an “agreed solution.” The implication was that nothing could be forced on Israel, as explained by and then-Jordanian foreign minister and former ambassador to Israel Marwan Muasher, the author of the clause. When Olmert and Abbas negotiated, they did in fact discuss numbers. Olmert proposed accepting 15,000 refugees over a five-year period; Abbas is said to have spoken of 40,000, but Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat later wrote that the Palestinian demand was for 150,000 refugees to return. This issue was not finalized at that time, but the principle seemed to remain a matter of agreeing on numbers. The subsequent Israeli position under Prime Minister Binaymin Netanyahu has been that refugees may return only to the Palestinian state, if there were one. This is the position adopted by U.S. President George W. Bush in 2004 and now by Trump.

Israel Gets Jerusalem; the Palestinians Get the Suburbs

The remaining issue, Jerusalem, had already been taken off the table, according to Trump, when he moved the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem. Nonetheless, the plan still has something to say about Jerusalem in relation to the Palestinians. Trump was not indifferent to the Palestinian demand, echoed by the Arab Peace Initiative, regarding a capital for Palestine. This

capital simply would not be in East Jerusalem, since that area, according to Trump, now belongs to Israel. For Trump, and in contravention of international law and UN resolutions, there is no East and West Jerusalem; the city is one, and it is the capital of Israel. In fact, until Trump, even the United States had not recognized West Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. American presidents had continued the custom of most countries, abiding

Due to the importance of the city to the three major religions, all of Jerusalem had been declared a separate entity (corpus separatum).

by the UN Partition Plan of 1947 that had excluded the city from either the Jewish or the Arab state that was to be created in Palestine at the time. Due to the importance of the city to the three major religions, all of Jerusalem had been declared a separate entity (*corpus separatum*) in the Partition Plan (UNGA Resolution 181). Thus, Ben-Gurion's 1949 transfer of government buildings to West Jerusalem (held by Israel as a result of the 1948 war) and his declaration of that part of the city as Israel's capital were ignored by the United States prior to the current administration. Similarly, Israel's annexation in late June 1967 of East Jerusalem, conquered in 1948 by Jordan and annexed by it after the 1948 war, was not accepted by Washington. The embassy remained in Tel Aviv, and in official U.S. documents the city was simply Jerusalem — not belonging to any state. After 1967, East Jerusalem was considered occupied, in keeping with UN positions. When the UN condemned Israel's 1980 Jerusalem Law declaring the city Israel's eternal, united capital, the U.S. actually abstained.

Barak sought a compromise of sorts on the Jerusalem issue at Camp David II. He proposed relinquishing some of the neighborhoods in East Jerusalem to Palestinian sovereignty. In fact, there were several proposals regarding Jerusalem, including some compromises in connection with the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif. Although Arafat underestimated and even ridiculed Israel's claims to the Temple Mount, in the end it was the Jerusalem issue that finally stalemated the talks. Also, worth noting is the fact that Jordan's special role in connection with the holy sites in East Jerusalem was ignored. The Clinton Parameters a few months later sought to resolve the Jerusalem issue by calling for the Arab neighborhoods in East Jerusalem to be placed under Palestinian sovereignty and the Jewish neighborhoods (actually settlements built by Israel after the 1967 occupation and expansion of the municipal borders of the city into surrounding areas of the West Bank) to be placed under Israeli sovereignty.

The 2002 Arab Peace Initiative merely spoke of a Palestinian capital in East Jerusalem, but Olmert and Abbas appeared to have agreed to a proposal

similar to the Clinton Parameters regarding the division of the East Jerusalem neighborhoods into Palestinian and Israeli sovereignty. They could not agree on Har Homa, a settlement built by Israel in East Jerusalem in the 1990s, but it

appears that Abbas was willing to concede all the other Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem. The holy sites were to remain under an international trusteeship of Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the United States.

Trump provided a different status for the holy sites: They would continue to be governed by Israeli regulations and current procedures since, according to the plan, Israel has done such a good job of protecting them, but there would be freedom of worship. In keeping with the present situation, the city would remain undivided, under Israel. The Palestinians could have a capital, to be called Al-Quds, in one of the suburbs of the city beyond the current Separation Wall — which would remain.

The Trump Plan Perpetuates the Conflict

This is how the Trump plan relates to previous negotiations and proposals: a deviation, and quite different, from anything proposed before. The principle of contiguity for the Palestinian state, as well as the idea of sovereignty, are both gone. Israel's needs are the only ones considered and respected. The 1967 lines, which were an implicit and sometimes explicit guideline in previous talks and plans, disappear in the Trump plan. Even a heavily populated Arab area of Israel, known as the Triangle, is mentioned as an area that could be severed from Israel and placed under the new state of Palestine. This notion of a "transfer" was promoted by the Israeli right wing, particularly Avigdor Lieberman, head of the extreme right secular Israel Is Our Home' party, and was designed to change the demographics inside Israel, perhaps also in order to ensure a kind of ethnic purity. Indeed, the Trump plan satisfies the Israeli right wing's interest in maintaining a Jewish majority from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. Furthermore, while previous negotiations and plans, including the Clinton Parameters and the Arab Peace Initiative, sought agreement between the two sides on dividing the area into two sovereign states, the Trump plan views the whole area, from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea, as one entity under Israeli control. It envisages Israeli settlements and Palestinian enclaves — that is, two populations intermingled — with the Jewish enclaves under Israeli law and the others under Palestinian, but both under Israeli control. If the previous efforts were meant to end the conflict, the Trump plan appears to set the stage for still more friction and perpetuation of the conflict.

The 2002 Arab Peace Initiative merely spoke of a Palestinian capital in East Jerusalem.

Pro-Israel and Anti-Semitic: Understanding Evangelical Support for Israel

Randall Balmer

Randall Balmer is the John Phillips Professor in Religion at Dartmouth College. One of his recent books is Redeemer: The Life of Jimmy Carter.



You've got to award the Trump administration style points for timing. The dedication of the new American embassy in Jerusalem took place on the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the state of Israel on May 14, 1948. The move of the embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem delighted Binyamin Netanyahu and his hard-right supporters in Israel as well as many evangelicals in the United States, but as the violence attending the opening suggests, the move hardly augurs well for peace in the Middle East.

The dedication featured Robert Jeffress, a Trump supporter and pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas. Jeffress, who previously had declared that Jews who refuse to convert to Christianity would never be admitted into heaven, opened the ceremonies in prayer, thanking the Almighty for a president who "boldly stands on the right side of history, but more importantly, stands on the right side of you, oh God, when it comes to Israel." John Hagee, an evangelical Zionist from San Antonio, delivered the benediction. Ralph Reed, head of the Faith and Freedom Coalition, wore a lapel pin depicting intertwined U.S. and Israeli flags.

The Evangelical Shift to Premillennialism

Why are evangelicals so interested in Israel, and why did Donald Trump accrue such political capital with the religious right by relocating the embassy? It has to do with a peculiar and arcane mode of biblical interpretation called dispensational premillennialism that many American evangelicals began to adopt in the late 19th century. Whereas previous evangelicals believed they were building the kingdom of God — the millennium — on earth by reforming society according to the norms of godliness — eradicating slavery, championing public education as a way to advance the interests of those less fortunate, women's rights — many

evangelicals came to believe that Jesus would return *before* the millennial kingdom.

This recondite shift in biblical interpretation had enormous consequences, many beyond the scope of this discussion. Most important, because evangelicals believed that Jesus would return at any moment, they all but abandoned their agenda of social reform. If this world is about to be destroyed in apocalyptic judgment, why bother? The noble evangelical heritage of care for those Jesus called “the least of these” was cast aside in the embrace of premillennialism.

With regard to Israel, these premillennialist evangelicals believe that God, the God of Israel in the Hebrew Bible, retains special affection for the Jews. But then it gets complicated. Evangelicals look for the return of Jews to Palestine — the formation of the state of Israel in 1948 was cause for great celebration — but they also expect that Jews will finally acknowledge Jesus as their messiah. In effect, they must convert to Christianity.

American evangelicals, therefore, are simultaneously pro-Israel and anti-Semitic (from a Jewish perspective, in that evangelicals seek their conversion).



Thousands of Evangelicals come from abroad to carry out a “Jerusalem March” every year during the Sukkot holiday, to promote their Messianic vision for the future of Israel.

Israel Can Do No Wrong

There are several flaws in this premillennial logic, of course, the most fundamental being a conflation of ancient Israel with the current state of Israel. Many evangelicals, therefore, believe that Israel can do no wrong, and Trump's decision to move the embassy legitimizes their view of Jerusalem as God's appointed capital of Israel.

But Jerusalem, along with other territory that Israel claims as its own, is contested space. Ostensibly at least, these matters are up for negotiation, awaiting resolution as the region moves toward separate Palestinian and Israeli states. Pending that resolution, most of the world — including, until recently, the U.S. — has insisted that Tel Aviv rather than Jerusalem is the capital of Israel. Moving the American embassy to disputed territory, therefore, complicates the prospects for a two-state future, to say the least.

That, we must assume, is why Trump ordered the move, and that is why so many evangelicals support it.

Netanyahu has done nothing to discourage this evangelical conflation of ancient Israel with the state of Israel. He has avidly courted the support of American evangelicals, and leaders of the religious right showed up in force for the embassy dedication. Premillennialist evangelicals rarely criticize Israel, even as Netanyahu persists in building Jewish settlements in the West Bank, thereby rendering the possibilities for peace with the Palestinians more and more remote. The fact that the consensus in the international community is opposed to Netanyahu's scheme matters not at all to premillennialist evangelicals.

Jimmy Carter, a Progressive Evangelical

It should be noted that not all evangelicals share this view, to the extent that the term *evangelical* retains any moral substance whatsoever after the evangelical embrace of Trump in the 2016 presidential election. But that's another story. Jimmy Carter, a progressive evangelical in the tradition of 19th century evangelicalism, devoted special energies to bringing peace to the Middle East, a place he understood as the Holy Land. On his first day in office, he informed his vice president, Walter Mondale, that he intended to make this a priority.

And he did, convinced that peace, justice and equity were the surest way to secure a future for all parties. Carter brought Anwar al-Sadat of Egypt and Menachem Begin of Israel to Camp David to hammer out a framework for peace in September 1978. After 13 days of grueling negotiations, Carter finally brokered an agreement between the leaders of these two ancient

enemies. He remains persuaded that a two-state solution, a state for both Israel and the Palestinians, is the pathway to peace.

Donald Trump and the Evangelicals

Netanyahu and his evangelical allies are having none of it. Their mantra appears to be: Israel, right or wrong. And anyone who thought that moving the embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem would ease tensions and brighten the prospects for peace in the Middle East has only to consider the confrontations between Israeli soldiers and Palestinian protesters outside the dedication gala. Hamas organized protests near the Gaza-Israel border. Some threw rocks; others deployed burning kites across the border fence. Israeli soldiers responded with tear gas and shooting. More than 60 Palestinians were killed.

Trump's sycophants on the religious right predictably registered their approval when the president, standing next to Netanyahu, released his "Peace to Prosperity" plan for the Middle East on January 28, 2020. Jeffress, who was also present in Washington at the unveiling, declared it "courageous and compassionate." The plan does not provide a separate state for Palestinians, although it designates a Palestinian neighborhood in East Jerusalem as a "capital." Hagee, chairman of Christians United for Israel, proclaimed the proposal "the best peace proposal any American administration has ever put forth."

I suspect that a former president in Plains, Georgia — an evangelical himself — might beg to differ.

The dedication of the United States embassy in Jerusalem provided great theater, and it very likely cemented the religious right's support for Donald Trump. That moment, together with the Trump Mideast plan, also immeasurably widened the distance to peace.

The “Deal of the Century” from a Palestinian Perspective

Dalal Iriqat

Dr. Dalal Iriqat is vice president of the International Relations Department at the Arab American University in Palestine (AAUP) and has been assistant professor of conflict resolution, diplomacy and strategic planning since 2015. She has been a weekly columnist for Al-Quds newspaper since 2016 and served as senior advisor of Strategic Communications at the Prime Minister's Office from 2017 to 2018. Iriqat has a PhD in public administration from Paris I Sorbonne (2011), a master's degree in diplomatic studies from Westminster University in London (2004) and a bachelor of political science degree from the University of Jordan (2003).



On the evening of January 28, 2020, thousands of Palestinians and people around the world following the Palestinian/Israeli conflict sat in front of their TV screens to watch the president of the United States release his “Peace to Prosperity” plan, which had been in the works for the past three years and moved into high gear after U.S. President Donald Trump’s announcement of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel on December 6, 2017, violating all United Nations General Assembly and Security Council resolutions on the conflict.

It didn’t take the Palestinian leadership long to respond publicly and officially by rejecting the proposal. According to the most recent polls conducted by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, 94% of the Palestinian public rejects the plan. Many governments, including those of powerful Arab and Western countries, the European Union and the Arab League, issued statements that started by welcoming the efforts of the Trump administration and ended by softly rejecting the plan and reminding the American team of the importance of the international references based on UN resolutions that have enjoyed consensus for decades. That consensus led to the historic compromise of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) when it shifted its strategy from armed resistance aimed at liberating the occupied land of 1948 to one of peace negotiations, recognizing Israel and accepting Palestinian political sovereignty on only 22% of Mandatory Palestine.

Immediately after the release of the plan, I published a five-page summary in English and Arabic because as a Palestinian, I strongly believe

that the people of Palestine should not only reject this so-called peace plan but also understand its contents. Furthermore, since what was offered is not acceptable, one might think it would be ideal for the Palestinians to come up with a detailed counterplan. As enthusiastic as I am about a counter-offer, there doesn't seem to be much point as no one is interested. U.S. Ambassador to Israel David M. Friedman made it clear that the plan is a done deal when, after its release, he said that Israel could unilaterally annex territories once a bilateral U.S.-Israel committee finished its work on demarcating Israel's borders!

Déjà Vu of the Marshall Plan

Trump's proposal is a déjà vu of the Marshall Plan. The "Deal of the Century" calls itself a vision to improve the lives of the Palestinian and Israeli people. It is a 181 pages document divided into two parts: political and economic.

The Political Framework

The first fifty-odd pages of the plan are dedicated to the Political Framework, which covers important political issues that were already identified as the final-status issues by the Oslo framework. They include: Jerusalem, Refugees, Prisoners, Borders, Security, International Relations, Sovereignty and State.

The Trump vision does not cite UN resolutions, saying that they have not and will not solve the conflict and that they have enabled political leaders to avoid addressing the complexities of the conflict rather than enabling a realistic path to peace!

Studying the plan from a Palestinian and United Nations perspective, one can conclude that the political framework is racist and that the answers to all the sensitive final-status issues are designed to serve Israel's best interests: No Jerusalem for the Palestinians, no right of return based on UNGA Resolution 194, no sovereignty or borders on 22% of historic Palestine. Israel will simply continue to occupy Palestinian lives in every aspect. The so-called "Deal of the Century" basically is aimed at entrenchment of the occupation.

The Economic Framework

Then comes the creative Economic Framework, which takes up the remaining 130 pages, with the potential to facilitate more than \$50 billion in new investments over 10 years. It is important to note that this money is not proposed as American aid money but rather as grants and loans, mostly from the Arab regimes.

The Trump administration claims that “Peace to Prosperity” represents the most ambitious and comprehensive international effort for the Palestinians to date. Studying the 181 pages, one might indeed view it as an ambitious vision for prosperity through an economic investment plan for Palestine, the region and the Middle East. The plan focuses heavily on normalization of relations between Israel and the Arab world, relying, of course, on the political framework which is nothing but an American attempt to realize the Zionist vision at the expense of Palestinian society. It is designed by opportunistic Israeli leaders who don’t care about the strategic future of the state of Israel. One must ask: How can this plan guarantee the security of the citizens of Israel if it deprives the Palestinian people of their basic political and civil rights?

Reviewing the economic vision, one witnesses a lot of creative thinking, innovation, technology, pragmatism, modernity and a lot of dreams which were produced professionally to deny Palestinian rights. The Economic Framework will look attractive and seductive to many. Nevertheless, any Deal/Vision for Peace based on international references and UN resolutions on the 1967 borders could have achieved much more economic returns than those presented in the Trump vision. Granting statehood to the people of Palestine on the 1967 borders is an overdue international promise. Needless to reiterate is the international consensus that negotiating the final-status



Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas speaking to Palestinian officials in Ramallah on January 28, 2020. (Credit: Wafa)

issues is the responsibility of the two parties to the conflict and that they alone should decide without unilateral actions. It is worth noting here that while the international community never refrains from advocating for the two-state solution, we don't see those governments recognizing the state of Palestine, nor do we see them identifying the borders of the state of Israel since 1948!

The setting of the release of the "Deal of the Century" was a very provocative scene that neglected the legitimate existence of the Palestinian people's rights, that undermined international law and, above all, that crushed the United Nations and the global political consensus on the question of Palestine.

On the ground, we are witnessing *de facto* implementation of this Israeli/American vision of annexation. Trump's team wished to make it *de jure* by getting Arab and European governments to endorse the deal. Using the motto of the two-state solution, Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu are not waiting for Palestinian approval of this deal. Its announcement gives short notice to the Palestinian people that the situation is shifting into a "one Jewish state" reality, where the Palestinian people will be treated as second-class citizens as already declared by the Knesset in its Nation-State Law. But one thing I am confident about is that the Palestinians will stay here and that no Palestinian will accept being a party to this annexation deal.

A Wake-Up Call for the Palestinians and the International Community

This is a wake-up call for the Palestinian people — and for the sleeping international community, if it continues to issue statements and pass resolutions instead of taking action.

It should come as no surprise that American and Israeli officials will say that the Palestinians are wasting a chance for peace. It is worth highlighting that in drafting the plan, the Trump team used the term "Facilitator" instead of "Mediator," as they were perfectly aware that the role of the mediator is to try to bring the sides to the conflict to common ground, and they have abandoned that role. This is a blunt confession from the Trump team that this is a business deal rather than a win-win peace deal, as they claim.

After the release of the "Deal of the Century," one can only imagine the tremendous pressure exerted on the Palestinians to force them to comply. The insinuation that future deals will continue to be less advantageous is an attempt to sugarcoat this annexation plan, which is aimed at exploiting the Palestinians economically and dominating us politically through various

forms of humiliation and segregation. One can't find a better term than apartheid to describe our reality.

What is more important than this deal today is the need to change the Palestinian strategy, which continues to be reactive, seemingly spontaneous rather than considered, and largely nonexistent or dependent on the UN and the international community.

The seeds of opportunity are always cloaked in misfortune. It is our duty to find those seeds. The question is not what the "Deal of the Century" will do for us. Instead, we should ask when, where and who among us should act and what we should do to make our dreams and aspirations a reality. It is about time for the UN to act on its resolutions that safeguard the rights of the Palestinians; it must consider an international consortium to mediate this protracted conflict.

The Palestinians Have the Capability

The last lines of the plan say: "While the vision is ambitious, it is achievable. The future of the Palestinians is one of huge promise and potential."

The Trump team is 100% right in saying that the Palestinian people deserve a better reality. Yes, the people of Palestine long for prosperity, peace and freedom. We are a nation full of visionary people, dreamers and hard workers who are capable of changing this miserable and racist reality that is imposed on us. In fact, we are passionate about bringing peace, prosperity and strategic stability to the region. We teach our kids to respect Hanukkah like we do Easter and Adha. Palestinian kids are not taught that one race or religion is superior to another. With this political framework, Trump is destroying the open-mindedness, tolerance and humanistic upbringing that we have worked so hard to give our kids.

I will conclude that empathy is indeed a universal value that needs to be reconsidered by the president of the most powerful country in the world in order to bring the change that serves both nations, rather than changing realities to serve the interests of one side at the expense of the other.

The “Deal of the Century” Dies in Jerusalem

Gershon Baskin

Dr. Gershon Baskin is a political and social entrepreneur who has dedicated his life to the state of Israel and to peace between Israel and its neighbors. A member of the Prime Minister's Jerusalem Expert Committee for the Taba Negotiations, he is Founder and Co-Director of IPCRI (Israel Palestine Center for Research and Information) 1988-2011, a member of the PIJ Editorial Board and a columnist for the Jerusalem Post. His latest book In Pursuit of Peace in Israel and Palestine was published by Vanderbilt University Press and is now available in Israel and Palestine.



The Trump “Deal of the Century,” officially titled “Prosperity to Peace, a Vision to Improve the Lives of the Palestinian and Israeli People,” is not all bad. In fact, there are many positive elements within the proposal. There is a clear recognition of Palestinian national rights and support for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. There is also a lot of emphasis on the means for ensuring the economic viability of a Palestinian state. There are also important reminders of the need to create and develop a regional mechanism that would strengthen the peace efforts necessary for ensuring success. This is the case even though the Palestinians were not consulted by the Trump administration and most of the plan is right out of the playbook of Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu himself.

The flaws in the plan, however, far outweigh the pluses, leaving the plan dead in the water. Perhaps the most dramatic and substantive flaw, which makes the whole plan a nonstarter and predetermines that it can never serve as a basis for any real negotiations between Israel and Palestine, is how it relates to Jerusalem.

I am not sure if there is still a possibility of reviving the ‘two states for two peoples’ solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It seems that a majority of Israelis and Palestinians have already abandoned this old formula. Israel’s increasing settlement policy, the constant deepening entrenchment of the occupation, and the Trump plan’s Pandora’s box of possible annexations may have rendered it dead. But if there is a chance to revive the two-state solution, it will have to be based on agreement first and foremost on the issue of Jerusalem. There is no possibility at all for a viable

two-state solution without Jerusalem serving as the capitals of both states.

The issue of Jerusalem, and especially the issue of the Al-Aqsa Mosque which, according to the Trump plan, will remain under Israeli sovereignty, is also the Holy Grail for the entire Arab and Muslim world

Arab street will never normalize relations with Israel unless Arab Jerusalem is under Arab control and sovereignty.

and will be the crack in the cornerstone of the Trump-Netanyahu plan to make peace with the Arab world without including self-determination for the Palestinians. It seems evident to me that without Al-Aqsa being under Muslim and/or Palestinian

control, the Arab Gulf states that Netanyahu has been courting will not be able to make overt and real peace with Israel. The Gulf state regimes may improve their relations with the Israeli military and intelligence, but the Arab street will never normalize relations with Israel unless Arab Jerusalem is under Arab control and sovereignty.

Clinton Parameters Should Be the Guiding Light

The basis for any two-state solution regarding Jerusalem must be based on the formula devised by then U.S. President Bill Clinton. The Clinton principle for Jerusalem was the guiding light and was the point of agreement between Israelis and Palestinians in Taba in January 2001 and between Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert when negotiations ended abruptly with Olmert's resignation and indictment in 2009. That principle stated that the political delineation of sovereignty in Jerusalem outside of the Old City walls would largely be based on demography: Jewish neighborhoods would be under Israeli sovereignty, and Palestinian neighborhoods would be under Palestinian sovereignty. The Old City, less than 1 km² in size, would be either under a special regime of shared sovereignty by both sides, internationalized, or divided on the basis of demography with the Armenian quarter divided between the two.

The only viability for this kind of solution would have to leave Jerusalem as one physically open city without walls and fences separating the two sovereignties in the city. Otherwise, Jerusalem, and the whole peace process would die. This would, of course, require very special and robust planning and implementation of security measures that would ensure peace and security for all in Jerusalem. There would be no way to accomplish that level of security without it being conducted jointly to the mutual benefit and in the interests of both peoples. In fact, one of the lessons that must be learned from the failure of the Oslo process is the need to strengthen

cooperation, particularly in security affairs, and not the construction of more walls, fences and bypass roads.

Falsehoods in the Trump Plan

Let's examine some of the falsehoods within the Trump document. The following bullet points are direct quotes from the Trump plan. All of them are completely or partially false and, therefore, cannot even serve as a basis for understanding any genuine solutions for Jerusalem. My comments follow each bullet point:

- *The state of Israel has been a good custodian of Jerusalem. During Israel's stewardship, it has kept Jerusalem open and secure.* During the past 52 years, millions of Palestinians and other Muslims have not been able to enter Jerusalem under Israel's control to pray in Al-Aqsa.
- *Jerusalem should be a city that unites people and should always remain open to worshippers of all religions.* This is a true statement, but it has never been true in practice — not under Israeli rule and not under Jordanian rule prior to 1967. Only when there is Israeli-Palestinian agreement on Jerusalem will there be a chance that this statement can be realized.
- *Jerusalem must remain a city that brings people of all faiths together to visit, to worship, to respect each other and to appreciate the majesty of history and the glory of God's creation.* This statement is true but does not reflect the reality of Jerusalem.

Much of Jerusalem's history and heritage is erased or covered over or ignored, particularly in places like Silwan (City of David), where ultranationalist settler

Much of Jerusalem's history and heritage is erased or covered over or ignored.

organizations like Elad are given control over sensitive archaeological sites. They systematically destroy and erase many aspects of non-Jewish history in one of the most sensitive sites in Jerusalem. Elad is not a private organization; it is supported directly by the Israeli government, it runs the national park in the so-called City of David, and it is a direct arm of Israeli government policy.

- *We believe that returning to a divided Jerusalem, and in particular having two separate security forces in one of the most sensitive areas on earth, would be a grave mistake.* It would be a grave mistake to physically divide Jerusalem; therefore, great efforts by both sides must be invested to find a solution that allows for divided and shared sovereignty which empowers both nations but leaves Jerusalem physically united and undivided. The security forces of both sides must be empowered and mandated to keep

the peace and security of Jerusalem for all who live and visit there. This is probably the only way to eventually ensure real peace and genuine security.

- *This physical barrier should remain in place and should serve as a border between the capitals of the two parties.* A vision of peace is based on a separation paradigm (which is what became of Oslo), with walls and fences separating people, will be doomed to fail. A genuine vision for peace must be based on building bridges of cooperation and the eventual free movement of people and goods between both sides. Trump's vision builds higher walls and fences and further removes the chances of real peace. The vision of continued separation is not a vision for peace at all and only reinforces the unlikelihood of peace emerging from these kinds of plans.

- *Jerusalem will remain the sovereign capital of the state of Israel, and it should remain an undivided city. The sovereign capital of the state of Palestine should be in the section of East Jerusalem located in all areas east and north of the existing security barrier, including Kafr Aqab, the eastern part of Shuafat and Abu Dis, and could be named Al Quds or another name as determined by the state of Palestine.* Yes, Jewish Jerusalem should remain the capital of the state of Israel, and Palestinian Jerusalem must be recognized as the capital of the state of Palestine. The capitals of both sides must be largely recognized on the basis of

There is no feasibility for peace if we do not recognize the centrality of Jerusalem to Palestine and to the Palestinian people, as well as to Israel and the Jewish people.

demography and this is possible because, next to Nicosia, Jerusalem is probably the most segregated city in the world. There are no real common areas in Jerusalem, and it is relatively easy to delineate lines of sovereignty on this basis. There is no feasibility for peace if we do not recognize the

centrality of Jerusalem to Palestine and to the Palestinian people, as well as to Israel and the Jewish people. Determining that the areas east and north of Jerusalem would be the capital of Palestine is like determining that West Virginia would be the capital of the United States. Trump has no right and no role in determining what is Jerusalem — not for Israel and not for Palestine.

- *The embassy of the United States to the state of Israel will remain in Jerusalem. Following the signing of the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Agreement, the embassy of the United States to the state of Palestine will be in Al Quds at a location to be chosen by the United States, in agreement*

with the state of Palestine. The United States will recognize the state of Israel and the state of Palestine in their respective capitals and encourage other nations to relocate their embassies to Jerusalem and Al Quds, as applicable. If Trump really wanted to be constructive, he would announce that the U.S. embassy to the state of Israel will remain in West Jerusalem (Jewish Jerusalem) and that the U.S. is prepared to establish its embassy to the state of Palestine in East Jerusalem (Palestinian Jerusalem) and is in the process of locating the exact location at this time. That would be a constructive approach in moving the Jerusalem discourse in Israel and Palestine toward a discourse of sharing Jerusalem and understanding that its uniqueness and its importance and place in the world can only be achieved by recognizing that it can never belong to only one side, one country, one religion or one people.

Jerusalem Should Be the First Issue on the Agenda

The imperative to resolve the issue of Jerusalem as one of the core issues in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict should propel the parties to bring Jerusalem forward. Jerusalem should be the first issue on the agenda of future negotiations rather than the last. If the parties could find an agreeable solution to the Jerusalem question, all of the other issues would be much easier to deal with. Furthermore, by proposing a solution for Jerusalem which is based on a model of sharing, of openness, of physical unity from the outset, it will be necessary to develop mechanisms for security, policing, history, archaeology, tourism, economic development, environmental issues, border management and more. By developing models for sharing Jerusalem, we also launch a new direction for public education and public diplomacy through mutual recognition of connections to this holy land. The existing mindset of “this belongs to me and not to you” has taken us backward over the past decade and has wiped out achievements toward mutual recognition that took decades to develop. Without mutual recognition and mutual acceptance, we place ourselves in an existential conflict that can only have bad results for both peoples.

If the parties could find an agreeable solution to the Jerusalem question, all of the other issues would be much easier to deal with.

Jerusalem is the center of this conflict, and the recognition of its centrality to both peoples should motivate us to demand from ourselves and from the world to recognize the need for Jerusalem to become the center of peace — open and shared.

The Trump Plan: A Realization of the Original Zionist Colonial Scheme Which Disregards the Palestinians

Adnan Abdelrazek

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Historically, the Zionist movement was established from within the European colonial movement. Theodor Herzl, the founder of the movement, wrote in *Der Judenstaat* that “for Europe, we shall be part of the wall against Asia, an outpost of civilization against barbarism.” Zionism then gradually transformed itself into a European colonial settler movement after Britain officially recognized the Jewish national movement in the 1917 Balfour Declaration.

Herzl had been willing to accept British Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain’s offer of Kenya as the site for the Jewish homeland, but he was overruled by the leadership of the movement he brought into being. Herzl had been only too willing to serve as an instrument of Britain’s vast colonization effort at the end of the 19th century.

Herzl started his career as a political assimilationist who believed that if he remade himself in the image of the gentile, the curse of anti-Semitism would wither and die. Later, he shifted to accept the Zionist approach that the solution to anti-Semitism was a state based on the revival of Zion in Palestine. An early statement by author Israel Zangwill, who wrote in 1901 in the *New Liberal Review* that “Palestine is a country without a people; the Jews are a people without a country,” almost summarizes the colonial nature of the Zionist movement, although it wasn’t made by a movement official. Stripping the Palestinian people of their right to their land of Palestine and sending them into exile was at the core of the Zionist colonial strategy.

The shift to the claim to Palestine gave birth to the most segregationist of movements and led to the convening the 1897 Basel Congress, with its ensuing call for “a publicly recognized and legally secured Jewish home in Palestine.” At the time, Herzl had only the most meager knowledge of what Palestine was actually like: its geography and, particularly, its demographic

composition. Nonetheless, Herzl and other leaders of the Zionist movement spared no effort in integrating with the British colonial drive. They continued to remind the Germans and the Turks of the advantages of a pro-Zionist regime in Palestine and of the need for a counterweight to the Arab demand for autonomy. The Zionist argument ran as follows: “We wish to establish on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean a modern culture and commercial center which will be both directly and indirectly a prop of Germanism.”¹

Disregarding the Aspirations of the Native Palestinians

Once the Zionist movement closed on Palestine as its target for colonial sentiment in the late 19th century, it shifted to an ethnic-cleansing policy and practice pursued by the pre-state Jewish settlement movement in Palestine and, since 1948, by the settler-state of Israel. In all the debates within the Zionist movement in Europe, the presence of Arabs in Palestine was almost never raised. After all, the Zangwill slogan worked well with the Zionist drive to take over Palestine — with no people.

For Herzl, who had a colonial mindset and lived in the era of imperialism, the issue of native rights was not on the table, and he did not consider the acquisition of a homeland outside Europe to be a goal requiring justification.²

Only a minority within the Zionist movement, the mainly German-Jewish intellectuals in the Brit Shalom and Ichud movements led by philosopher Martin Buber and others, and the socialist-Zionist Hashomer Hatzair movement recognized the existence of the Palestinian people in the land and aimed at a binational solution within Mandatory Palestine.

This perception of Herzl and the other leaders of the Zionist movement was reflected in the practices of the early Zionist settlers in Palestine and later by Israel. Their territorial restructuring of the land had centered on a combined *Judaization* and *de-Arabization* scheme. This scheme was clearly stated by Yosef Weitz, the director of the Jewish National Fund’s Lands Department at the time. He wrote in his diary on December 20, 1940: “It must be clear that there is no room in the country for both people ... the only solution is a Land of Israel, at least a western Land of Israel should be without Arabs. There is no room here for compromise. There is no way but to transfer the Arabs from here to the neighboring countries. Not one village must be left, not one tribe.”³

Israel, as a settler society, has since 1948 and after 1967 made every effort for the territorial restructuring of the land of Palestine centering on the aforementioned scheme of combined and expansionist *Judaization* and *de-Arabization*. It began with the expulsion and flight of approximately

750,000 Palestinians in the 1948 war and continued through the 1960s and, more intensely, after the 1967 war and the occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) and the Golan Heights.

The *Judaization* program was premised on a hegemonic myth cultivated since the rise of Zionism — namely, that “the land belongs to the Jewish people (as promised by God), and only to the Jewish people. An exclusive form of settling ethno-nationalism developed in order to quickly indigenize immigrant Jews, and conceal, or marginalize the Palestinian past.”⁴

This myth of a Promised Land, a land that belongs exclusively to the Jews, was echoed by Jewish settlers in the West Bank in their response to the introduction of the Trump-Netanyahu “peace plan.” Following are some typical reactions by Jewish settlers to this plan.”

“President Trump’s recently published plan for Middle East peace comes with a blessing and a curse. For many, it fulfills a lifelong dream: American recognition of the biblical promise and legitimacy of the settlements in the occupied West Bank, allowing Israel to annex them” wrote a reporter for the *New York Times*. “The whole narrative has changed. A president of the United States came along and said the people of Israel have the right to be here,” said Matanya Gavrieli, a member of the Yitzhar settlement leadership council (*NYT* March 3, 2020).

“The best thing was Trump declaring that basically, he recognizes the history of the rights of the Jewish people over the land of Israel,” said Tatz Cahn, a resident of the settlement of Efrat (*Los Angeles Times*, February 4, 2020).

Although the Yesha Council, an umbrella group representing Jewish settlers living in the West Bank, was upbeat about Trump’s proposals initially, council head David Elhayani said “We can’t agree to a plan that includes forming a Palestinian state, which will constitute a threat to Israel and a great danger to the future.” (i24NEWS – AFP, January 28, 2020).

A year before the Trump plan was released, Michael Netzer, one of the first settlers who moved to the settlement of Ofra in 1985, said: “It’s ridiculous to say that Jews can’t live here. The Bible is a part of it. I would ask anybody: Is it so easy to lose your connection to your ancestors and your land? Of course it isn’t. For the Jewish people, that history is what made us what we are.” (*Times of Israel*, 29 January 2020)

The Unseen People

Although the Palestinian fate and struggle have always been at the heart of the Middle East and the Arab-Israeli conflict, their existence was

ignored by the Zionist founders and later by the Israeli leadership for many reasons. In their desire for exclusive possession of what they referred to as their “ancestral home” and their belief that they alone had a right to, Zionist leaders ignored the very existence of the Palestinian people, the natives of Palestine.

At the First Zionist Congress, there was a total absence of any reference to the Arabs and to the Palestinians in particular. Later, some Israelis went so far as to justify this dismissal of the Palestinian existence on moral grounds. In 1970, Professor Eliezer Schweid from the Hebrew University wrote in the Zionist publication *Dispersion and Unity* that “the general policy of Zionism should be based itself upon the certainty and primacy of the right of the Jewish people to its homeland. From this point of view, the opposition of the Arabs was a stumbling block that must be overcome and not a moral problem that must be dealt with.”⁵

In March 1969, then-Prime Minister Golda Meir is reported to have said: “How can we return the occupied territories? There is nobody to return them to.” And on June 15 that same year, she was quoted as saying: “There was no such thing as Palestinians ... It was not as though there was a Palestinian people in Palestine considering itself as a Palestinian people, and we came and threw them out and took their country away from them. They did not exist.”



21st Zionist Congress in 1939 / Photo from Wikipedia

For decades the Zionist leaders moved in a strange twilight zone, seeing the Arabs and at the same time not seeing them. Their attitude was a combination of blind spots and naiveté, of wishful thinking and ignorance. In a 1974 article in *New Outlook*, Dr. Nahum Goldman, then president of the World Jewish Congress, wrote about the total unawareness of the Arabs on the part of most early Zionist settlers and their importance in establishing any Zionist state. His colleagues laughed at him and asked how he could ever compare the Arab Bedouins with the British Empire. Very few of them were aware of the Arabs of Palestine, and those who were did not attach the necessary significance to them.⁶

Palestinians as the Hated “Others”

Today more than ever before, it is clear that Israel’s anti-Palestinian drive remains the primary force behind the Israel-Zionist nation-building project. According to Ilan Pappé, beginning in the 19th century and increasingly following the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, Jewish nationalism came to construe Arab identity as the “hated others” of Israeli national identity. Terrorism is a term Israeli Orientalists apply exclusively to actions carried out by Palestinian resistance movements. Only the “other side” commits acts of terrorism and thus can never form part of any analysis of Israel’s own acts.

Acknowledging the other’s victimhood or recognizing one’s self as the victimizer of the other is perhaps the most terrifying ghost train one can decide to embark upon. Most Israeli Jews are unable or simply refuse to contemplate the possibility.

For Israelis, recognition of the Palestinians as the victims of Israeli actions is deeply distressing in at least two ways. This acknowledgment means facing up to the historical injustice committed by Israel from its ethnic cleansing of the country’s indigenous people in 1948 to the lie of “a land without a people for a people without a land.” And it raises a host of ethical questions that have inescapable implications for the future of the state. What Palestinians are demanding is to be recognized as the victims of an ongoing evil consciously perpetrated by Israel against them. For Israeli Jews to accept this would naturally mean losing their own status of victimhood.⁷

No Palestinian Partner for Peace

This slogan has been one of the Zionist founders’ excuses for denying the native Palestinians the right to their land of Palestine and their national aspirations. This slogan was strengthened after the 1967 war

when various Israeli governments searched for non-Palestinian partners (mostly Jordanians) to share the “administration of the Occupied Palestinian Territory.” The slogan was relatively hidden during the Oslo negotiations between Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin in 1993, but soon reappeared at a higher volume after the collapse of the Camp David negotiations between Arafat and Ehud Barak under the auspices of U.S. President Bill Clinton in 2000. After his return from Washington, Barak launched a well-organized campaign with active assistance from U.S. Middle East envoy Dennis Ross to discredit Arafat, saying that he was “no partner for peace.” Barak formulized his conclusion as follows:

Citizen of Israel ... Since Madrid and Oslo, throughout a decade, three or four consecutive governments in Israel have strived to achieve a peace agreement with our Palestinian neighbors, on the premise that we have a partner for peace. Today, the picture that is emerging is that there is apparently no partner for peace. This truth is a painful one, but it is the truth, and we must confront it with open eyes and draw the necessary conclusions. (Statement by Prime Minister Ehud Barak, Jerusalem, October 7, 2000)

After Arafat’s death and Mahmoud Abbas’s assumption of the presidency of the Palestinian Authority (PA), the Likud governments of Ariel Sharon and Binyamin Netanyahu, who initially considered Abbas to be their preferred partner, tried to squeeze from him major concessions that fell short of the terms of the Oslo Accords. However, they were disappointed to find out that Abbas refused to accept the humiliating Israeli terms, particularly during the 2015-16 negotiations led by U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry on behalf of President Barack Obama. The negotiations between Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Abbas in 2007-8 were an exception to this general policy.

Since then, this “no Palestinian partner for peace” paradigm has been used by the Israeli government to mount intense attacks on the Palestinian leadership and people, claiming that Israel had its hand outstretched in peace but the Palestinian side was unwilling to uncompromised and did not seek peace. According to this narrative, it was the Palestinians who were responsible for the ongoing bloodshed. The conclusion that Jewish Israelis drew from this paradigm was that Israel should spend more time and effort fighting the Palestinians with brute-force military tactics rather than seeking peace. After all, they claimed, the Palestinians brought this on themselves and have proven that they do not deserve a state of their own.

For the Netanyahu government, senior members of his political party and settler leaders, this slogan of “no Palestinian partner for peace” has been transformed into policy and actions for furthering settlement expansion,

applying Israeli law to settlements and settlers, furthering control over Palestinian residential construction, *de facto* annexation in parts of Area C and the Jordan Valley, building separate roads for settlers, and more.⁸

I suggest that it was within this context and the backing of President Donald Trump and his Middle East team for Israeli violations of international law that the Trump-Netanyahu “peace plan” was drawn up. It is clear that the stipulations of this plan were formed precisely to legitimize the annexation of most of Area C, legitimize all the Jewish settlements, annex the Jordan Valley, and recognize “Greater” Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. It would be an understatement to say that this plan was forged in total disregard of the Palestinians’ aspirations as well. The plan is consistent with the original Zionist colonial scheme aimed at transforming the Arab country of Palestine into the Jewish land of Israel through the dispossession and mass transfer of the native indigenous Palestinian people and the establishment of a Jewish colony and a sovereign Jewish state.⁹

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American Reaction to Trump's "Deal of the Century": Can U.S. Policy Change?

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As I write this in mid-March of 2020, events, priorities and attitudes are changing at a dizzying speed. Everything is eclipsed by fear and apprehension regarding the coronavirus. Even before the virus took front and center, the rapid reversal in the political fortunes of Bernie Sanders and Joe Biden as a result of the South Carolina primary on February 29 and Super Tuesday on March 3 meant that most Democrats (though by no means all) accepted that they would almost certainly be relying on Joe Biden to defeat Donald Trump in November, which is their overwhelming priority.

Under these circumstances, the "Deal of the Century" seems farther than ancient history; rather, it feels like it took place in another universe. The fact that another (apparently inconclusive) Israeli election was held on March 2 was barely a blip for most of those outside the comparatively small circle of dedicated and passionate Israel-watchers. Benny Gantz's appointment to try to form a new Israeli government received only a brief mention in the news after the extensive coverage of the coronavirus crisis.

Democratic Differences

Obviously, the main determinant of a policy shift will be which party wins the election in November. Assuming for the moment that the world will have "normalized" by the time a new Democratic president is inaugurated on January 20, 2021, American politics will shift significantly with regard to Israel. However, though Biden appears to be the presumptive nominee, if he is elected, he will face a variety of attitudes inside his party that were previously largely marginalized. While Sanders has never taken the lead on issues regarding Israel, he has nevertheless been articulating what a substantial number of rank-and-file Democrats are feeling. These attitudes

have already begun seeping into Congress, as witnessed in the “Squad,” composed of four freshman Democratic representatives. Some openly support BDS (Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions), and there is increasing discussion even among J Street supporters of possibly using threats to cut military aid as leverage to change Israeli settlement policy.

However, given the rapidly diminishing possibility of Sanders attaining the Democratic nomination, these currents are unlikely to seriously affect American policy in the near future. As discussed below, U.S. foreign policy is almost completely under the control of the president. Moreover, though the Sanders wing will presumably retain some influence in drafting the party’s platform, Sanders’ own interests primarily pertain to issues of economic inequality, and he is most likely to concentrate what firepower he retains in that area. In any case, platforms rarely constrain a president who has different ideas.

Changes on the Left

Until recently, there has been a continuum of opposition to Netanyahu’s policies and Trump’s embrace of them. It has stretched from mild (often private) opposition in Congress and the Democratic establishment, through the vocal “pro-Israel and pro-peace” J Street-oriented camp to the more radical IfNotNow, and then Jewish Voice for Peace — ending up with a fairly small (though growing) number of frankly anti-Zionist and pro-Palestinian Jews. The point of rupture is likely to be between the “Zionist left” (a name some are uncomfortable with) and those whose feelings about Israel as a Jewish state are, at best, ambivalent. In the last two years, 11 separate groups on the Zionist left have loosely affiliated in the new Progressive Israel Network, which includes J Street, Americans for Peace Now, the New Israel Fund, Partners for Progressive Israel, and seven more. Many within these organizations are sympathetic to Sanders’ calls for change and are toying with previously unacceptable strategies such as withholding some aid, but they wonder, on this issue and others, whether Sanders might go too far or might be unelectable — or both.

As of this moment, the momentum has switched abruptly from Sanders to Biden, largely on the issue of electability. Eighty percent of American Jews are anti-Trump and like many, probably most, Democrats, ousting Trump is their primary objective. Thus, Biden’s supportive attitudes toward Israel, in keeping with American policy since at least Jimmy Carter, might be less activist than they might prefer, but retiring Trump is the overriding priority for most of them.

This is in stark contrast to more radical and activist groups like IfNotNow, Jewish Voice for Peace and Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). The latter two support the BDS movement, while IfNotNow does not “take a unified stance on BDS, Zionism, or the question of statehood.” BDS has become the inflection point between the “radical” and “liberal” Jewish organizations. Sanders has repeatedly emphasized that he opposes BDS, but many of his supporters favor it.

Of course, opposition to Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu’s and Trump’s policies goes far beyond Jewish groups. Arab-American and Muslim groups have become more visible, evidenced by the election in 2018 of the first two female Muslim women to Congress. In addition, in the last few years, a genuine American radical left, disparate in specifics but identifying with the priorities of the international left, has become visible within the large “progressive” wing of the Democratic Party, which still supports Sanders’ candidacy and supported, though to a lesser degree, that of Elizabeth Warren. Among Sanders’ supporters and the “Bernie Bros,” there is a vocal minority that is openly supportive of Palestinians and opposed to Israel, not just the occupation. This movement, small as it is, is a new phenomenon in American electoral politics and is still largely confined to only a (growing) portion of grassroots Democratic activists.



Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, left and U.S. Vice President Joe Biden meeting in Davos, Switzerland, on January 21, 2015. (Haim Zach/GPO)

Biden and AIPAC

Differences over Israel came to a head over the recent annual conference of the American-Israel Political Affairs Committee (AIPAC), held this year on March 1-3. Sanders, as well as Elizabeth Warren and Pete Buttigieg (still running at that point), chose not to appear at what has been an expected ritual of support, not only for presidential candidates in an election year, but also annually for senators and representatives. Biden, appearing via video, spent most of his speech praising Israel and the Obama-Biden record, not something likely to win points with most AIPAC supporters. He also strongly (if briefly) criticized both annexation and the recently announced plan to build 3,500 units in the E1 area, which would thwart any contiguous Palestinian state. His speech drew praise from Jeremy Ben-Ami, president of J Street. Biden, in common with all Democratic presidential candidates, has criticized Trump's "Deal of the Century" and made clear he would not support it if elected.

Biden pleaded with AIPAC not to allow Israel to become a partisan issue between Democrats and Republicans, but that train has already left the station. Republican members of Congress either volubly support the "Deal of the Century" or keep silent about their criticism. Democrats seemingly universally oppose annexation and the "Deal of the Century" and actively support a two-state solution, though not the one outlined by Trump.

Activism in the Center

This campaign has also seen the emergence of a centrist group of establishment Democrats whose stated purpose is to maintain grassroots support for Israel in the Biden-Obama mold. The Democratic Majority for Israel was founded and is led by Mark Mellman, a veteran Democratic pollster, with the support of Israel's traditional allies in Congress, including strong Israel supporters such as Representatives Elliott Engel, Nita Lowy, Steny Hoyer and many others. They vociferously support Biden over Sanders, who is their principal *bête noir*. If Biden wins, then their principles would likely guide his policy.

In practice, that might mean Obama-Kerry style attempts to encourage peace talks between the Israeli government and the PLO, a strategy now almost unanimously considered unworkable by most Israelis and most foreign analysts as well. Such a strategy might come into immediate conflict with the pro-annexation sentiment among Israeli Jews, most of whom welcomed Trump's "permission" to annex settlements. A President Biden would undoubtedly revoke the "Deal of the Century" and withdraw

support for annexation — meaning it would almost certainly be dead as U.S. policy — and probably forestall any Israeli attempts at it. This would mesh well with the nebulous centrism of Blue and White, which is pro-two state in theory but not so much in practice. It would also fit with Gantz’s enigmatic comment that he would pursue annexation in concert with the international community, which means no annexation, as the international community, apart from the U.S., is unanimously opposed.

A Future of Differences?

It is among the Democrats that support for Israel has become a genuinely contentious issue on a grassroots level, as mentioned above, and this has the potential to cause serious splits in the Democratic Party at some point, though probably not in this election cycle. Pro-Palestinian sentiment is active in a number of universities and within the growing progressive wing of the party. As noted, attitudes range from J Street’s “pro-Israel pro-peace” mantra to strong and open support for BDS. Arab Americans have been vocally pro-Sanders in this campaign and, though their weight is nowhere near the volume of pro-Israel sentiment, they will certainly be an increasing element within the Democratic coalition. And if the Democrats increase their numbers in the House of Representatives in 2020, it is highly likely that the “Squad” will be augmented by new radical colleagues.

The Democratic establishment and most of its funders are solidly united against the upstarts, their own views ranging generally from liberal AIPAC attitudes to strongly held J Street-type opinions. Most Democratic presidential contenders appeared by video or in person at the last J Street Conference in October 2019. At this moment, however, Israel-Palestine is only dimly in the background, swamped as the current scene is by more immediate crises, especially coronavirus. This could change, especially if the Republican Party crumbles in the wake of a Trump defeat in November. New Democratic legislators who would pick up the pieces are much less likely to share Biden’s gradualist views and, as they advance in seniority, they could conceivably become the face of the Democratic Party within a decade or two.

Republican Rumbblings

American foreign policy is made by the executive branch, and congressional input is in practice limited to control over spending. When it comes to a policy like the “Deal of the Century,” which involves little or no U.S. government outlays, there is almost nothing that even a House and Senate united against a president’s policy could do to stop it. Given

that legislation can be vetoed by the president and requires a two-thirds majority of both Houses to override — as happened in February when he vetoed legislation limiting his power to order offensive strikes against Iran — that would be extremely unlikely to occur. Thus, were Trump to be re-elected and were he to continue to maintain the “Deal of the Century,” there is little that anyone could do to stop him.

It should be noted that many Republican legislators and funders have close ties with pro-settler groups, greatly strengthened since Trump’s appointment of David M. Friedman, his personal real estate (and bankruptcy) attorney, as ambassador to Israel in 2017. Friedman has been extremely active in support of settlements both before and during his ambassadorship. It is often unnoticed on the left that most settlers, though generally very enthusiastic about Trump and his policies, are dead set against the “Deal of the Century” because its end goal is, putatively, a Palestinian state, diminutive and shrunken as it would be. Thus, there might be opposition to the “Deal of the Century” on the American religious right, a strong force in the Republican Party, were any sort of Palestinian state to appear to be forthcoming. But the emergence of a Palestinian state under the “deal” is so hedged with conditions and restrictions, and has generated such universal opposition among Palestinians, that there is very little likelihood it would reach that stage. Republicans compete with each other to give the strongest support they can for Israel, but there is little policy discussion.

Conclusions

The “Deal of the Century,” though not completely stillborn, is unlikely to survive, let alone ripen into anything envisioned by its progenitors. This is beyond question if the Democrats win the presidency, though there is an absence of ideas for dealing with the issue, matching the absence of viable policy options on the Israeli left. Should Trump be re-elected, a prospect that seems less likely given the emerging understanding of his complete mishandling of the coronavirus crisis, and if the right retains power in Israel, still an open question at this writing, Israeli and U.S. leaders might craft a solution acceptable only to them and rejected by the rest of the world. Given the decline of American power and influence and, conceivably, the eventual re-emergence of a strong peace camp in Israel, the “Deal of the Century” is likely to be sunk with little trace that it ever existed.

The Trump Plan Threatens the Status Quo at the Temple Mount/al-Haram al-Sharif

Ofer Zalzburg

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Apart from its many other faults and its overall one-sidedness, and despite its authors' claims to the contrary, the U.S. plan for Israel-Palestine, unveiled at the end of January, proposes perilous changes to the historical status quo at Jerusalem's Holy Esplanade.

The 14-hectare (35-acre) compound, known to Jews as the Temple Mount and to Muslims as al-Haram al-Sharif, is Judaism's holiest site and Islam's third most sacred after Mecca and Medina. For Palestinians, it is the most valued and holiest site in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT). Together with the rest of the Old City and East Jerusalem, it is the most potent symbol of Palestinian nationalism which has been occupied by Israel since June 1967. Contemporary Zionism, unlike the overtly atheist early Zionism, similarly accords it great importance. The site, which is home to both Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock, is currently supervised by Jordan's Islamic Waqf in line with the Peace Treaty signed between Jordan and Israel on October 26, 1994, and a 2013 agreement between Jordan and the Palestinian Authority (PA) on Jerusalem's holy sites.

According to an unwritten Ottoman-era arrangement from 1852, known as status quo, and per that arrangement, Muslims pray at the site, while non-Muslims are only allowed entry as tourists. In its plan, titled "Peace to Prosperity," the Trump administration pays lip service to this arrangement, saying "the status quo at the Temple Mount/al-Haram al-Sharif should continue uninterrupted." Despite this, it calls for three major changes that would, in practice, undo the centuries-old arrangement completely: transferring the site to Israeli sovereignty, rescinding Jordan's custodianship over it and ending the ban on non-Muslim prayer.

The plan aims to end the possibility of Palestinian or Muslim control

over the site, merely promising to guarantee Muslim worshippers' free access to it. It also seemingly attempts to do away with Jordan's custodianship of the compound, making no mention of it, a move that flies in the face of Israel's commitment in the 1994 Israel-Jordan peace treaty to "give high priority to the Jordanian historic role in these shrines." The plan instead describes Israel as a custodian of Jerusalem's holy sites.

The plan calls for freedom of worship at the Holy Esplanade, saying: "People of every faith should be permitted to pray on the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif, in a manner that is fully respectful to their religion, taking into account the times of each religion's prayers and holidays, as well as other religious factors." This seemingly benign notion - that there ought to be freedom of worship at the site — masks an attempt to make a major alteration to the historical status quo.

Regardless of what freedom of worship means in practice — separate times for Jewish and Muslim devotions, separate spaces within the site for Jewish and Muslim prayer, or side-by-side prayer — the mere possibility of separate prayer times triggers visceral Palestinian fears that Al-Aqsa Mosque will one day undergo a forced partitioning akin to the one imposed on Hebron's Ibrahimi Mosque by Israeli authorities in 1994. The Trump plan's call for Israel to have sovereignty over the site and allow Israeli Jews to pray at it ignores the nationalist importance of the site for Palestinians: No Palestinian leader has ever expressed willingness to give Israel sovereignty over the most important Palestinian national symbol.

Trump Plan Lays the Ground for New Governance Parameters

The Trump plan is unlikely to ever serve as the basis for negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, let alone for a comprehensive peace deal. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Hamas refused to engage with it long before its announcement. Some Arab states made somewhat supportive statements about it right after its publication, but these were soon overtaken by a chorus of disapproval from around the world. The Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation also rejected the plan in early February.

The plan can still cause considerable damage, however. Israelis could invoke it as setting forth new default parameters for how the site will be governed in the absence of an Israeli-Palestinian deal. Following the Muslim world's rejection of the plan's attempt to alter the status quo at the Holy Esplanade, U.S. Ambassador to Israel David M. Friedman sought to clarify Washington's stance on the issue. "The status quo, in the manner that it is observed today, will continue absent an agreement to the contrary," he

said at a media briefing. “So there’s nothing in the [...] plan that would impose any alteration of the status quo that’s not subject to agreement of all the parties.”

In theory, Friedman’s remarks provide some clarification, suggesting Washington will insist that any change allowing for non-Muslim prayer should occur only as part of an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement. In practice, however, his comments leave room for ambiguity, as “the status quo, in the manner that it is observed today” — in both Jordanian and Palestinian eyes — is already an eroded version of the historical arrangement.

Over the years, Israel has increasingly allowed Jewish prayer and imposed greater limitations on the Waqf’s independence. Under escort of Israeli police and border police, growing numbers of religious Jews have visited the site, many of them part of Temple Mount movements — activist groups seeking to promote Jewish worship at and Israeli control over the holy site with the ultimate aim of erecting a Third Temple. They make up a small minority of Israeli Jews, but the Israeli police has given them significant leeway, tolerating low-profile prayer as well as discreet study of religious texts and conduct of rites of passage, while blocking open and loud prayer.



Jewish worshippers draped in prayer shawls performing the annual Priestly Blessing during Sukkot at the Western Wall in the Old City of Jerusalem, Israel, September 30, 2015. (Gil Cohen/AFP/Getty Images)

With Waqf support, Palestinians have regained control over three sections of the compound, turning them into prayer halls. This happened most recently at a building near Bab al-Rahma which was shut down by the Israeli authorities in 2003. Palestinians and Jordanians nevertheless deem the overall changes a net negative, claiming the present reality at the site deviates from the status quo.

In light of all this, it is clear that there are major differences between committing to a purported current status quo and the historical arrangement. Tellingly, Public Security Minister Gilad Erdan, who is responsible for police policies at the holy site, has seemed to publicly encourage ongoing Jewish prayer at the site, in contravention of the prayer ban.

Increased Chances of Violence in Jerusalem

Temple activists are already invoking the plan's language to argue for doing away with the non-Muslim prayer ban. For example, within two days of the plan's release, Students for the Temple Mount launched a media campaign titled "The Time Has Come: Sovereignty and Freedom of Worship at the Temple Mount for Jews Now!", quoting the Trump plan's statement in support of Jewish prayer.

There are many reasons to reject the plan, including its departure from international norms, its blatant bias, and its treatment of Palestinians in Israel as second-class citizens. But the positions it espouses on Jerusalem's Holy Esplanade, the most sensitive site in the OPT, present a particular danger.

By calling into question the status quo and legitimizing exclusivist Israeli positions, the plan risks making any future resolution even more elusive. It empowers forces working to shatter the ban on non-Muslim worship on the site and increases the possibility of another episode of nationally or religiously motivated violence in Jerusalem.

The United States had been assertively seeking backing for its plan, including from Arab states. Should President Donald J. Trump be re-elected in November, his administration may well embark on a more sustained effort to gain such support. Those hoping for a peaceful and sustainable resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict should not merely withhold their support for it as a basis for negotiations but actively oppose it.

Meaningful Negotiations Prerequisite for Changes to Status Quo

Meanwhile, there is wide and growing support among Israelis — right and left, religious and secular — for the notion that Israel should have sovereignty over the site and that Jews should be able to pray at it as part of a final-status agreement. Israel's ultra-Orthodox, the exception which

underlines the rule, importantly remain steadfast in their opposition because Jewish law, as they interpret it, forbids entry to the site.

But some of the most prominent voices on this issue among Israel's secular and religious liberals seem to have concluded that they cannot defend continuation of the status quo, which bans non-Muslim prayer at what Jews consider their holiest site, as part of a rights-based, end-of-claims, final-status peace agreement. Using that argument, even Zehava Galon, the dovish former Meretz chairperson, has publicly supported lifting the ban in the context of a peace agreement.

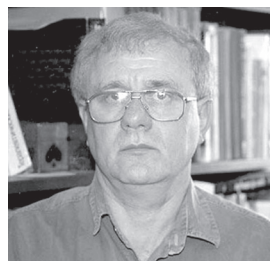
Palestinians, virtually unanimously, remain adamantly opposed. Though several Palestinian Muslim leaders indicated to the International Crisis Group in 2015 that once the site was no longer illegally occupied and Muslims managed it, the Muslim Waqf could allow Jews to pray there as part of a two-state agreement or in one constitutional state, broad-based Palestinian opposition to non-Muslim prayer at the site is steadfast. Indeed, Israel's unilateral, heavy-handed policies at the esplanade during the last two decades have given the Palestinians ample reason to deepen their objection to such ideas. Israel's unilateral promotion of Jewish prayer at the site now further diminishes the prospect of Palestinian acceptance of it.

The time for discussing any alterations to the status quo, including the ban on non-Muslim prayer, will come when meaningful Israeli-Palestinian negotiations resume. The parties could then draw on knowledgeable religious authorities from both sides. The 1994 treaty calls on the parties to act *together* to promote freedom of religious worship at places of historical and religious significance. Unilaterally imposing any change at this national and holy site, whose continued occupation by Israel is a source of deep Palestinian grievance, would dramatically exacerbate hostility between the parties, further deepening the intractability of the issue itself as well as that of the broader conflict.

Israeli Democracy Will Not Survive the Occupation

Daniel Bar-Tal

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The Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the occupation continue, with no solution in sight. Furthermore, tremendous forces are working to strengthen the occupation, and there are even those who profit from it.

One of the characteristics of those working to strengthen the occupation is their disregard for democracy. The two go together; therefore, the shrinking democratic space is a by-product of the continuation of the occupation. As early as 1967, Professor Yeshayahu Leibowitz saw that this process was inevitable, and in 2019, Professor Binyamin Neuburger, an expert on Israeli democracy, concurred: “At this time, the greatest danger to the integrity of Israeli democracy is the continuation of the control over the West Bank.”

In contrast to other regimes, citizens in a democracy must know its values, understand its essence, be involved in its processes, and defend it against attempts to limit it. A democratic regime is based on two components: The formal-structural component includes impartial, free elections; the principle of majority decision; the separation of the executive, legislative, and judicial authorities; an independent and honest legal system; the preservation of law; transparency; government responsibility for its citizens; and a very low level of state corruption. The value-cultural component includes freedom of expression and organization, the free flow of information, equality before the law, respect for human and minority rights, and pluralism. The Israeli Declaration of Independence is an iconic document which promised:

The state of Israel ... will foster the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; it will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of

religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture; it will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions; and it will be faithful to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations....

Even if the reality of the first decades of the state greatly deviated from this promise, it still provided a direction and a compass for the development of Israeli society.

However, Israel's control over more than 2.5 million Palestinians in the West Bank, almost 2 million in the Gaza Strip and more than 300,000 in Jerusalem challenges its democratic character. The native Palestinian population in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) has been living without human rights and freedom for decades, and this undemocratic reality in the OPT inevitably spills over into Israel.

“Occupartheid”

The most appropriate concept to describe the current reality between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea after more than 50 years of occupation is “occupartheid” — a combination of occupation and apartheid. A hierarchy of five categories of people live within this framework: At the top are the settlers, who receive privileges that the majority of Israelis are not entitled to. Most of the settlements are considered national priority areas, and settlers receive housing, mortgage, and tax benefits, among others. Throughout the years, with some variations at different times, they have received favorable treatment by most of the governments in various aspects of life in comparison with other Israeli citizens.

In the second category are Jewish citizens of the state of Israel who live within the Green Line. They are treated according to Israeli law.

In the third category are Palestinian citizens of Israel, who constitute 20 percent of the population. They suffer from a lack of equality, including institutional and even legal discrimination. This inequality has existed since the first days of the state, when they were under a military regime which was canceled only in 1966, and much of their land was expropriated. Although their economic situation has improved significantly over time and the process of their integration has grown, they are still institutionally discriminated against in everything related to budgeting and development, have fewer opportunities, and are subject to cultural discrimination. In addition, in recent years a significant amount of discriminatory laws were passed against this minority — for example, the Nakba Law, the Admission Committees Law, the Citizenship Law, and the Nation-State Law. The right and its supporters consider them disloyal citizens. Their delegitimization has

been so successful that the majority of Israeli political parties do not consider the Arab parties legitimate coalition partners. The incitement against them by the right-wing leadership, including Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, has become a regular and consistent norm.

In the fourth category are the Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem who, after the annexation in 1967, received the status of permanent residents, which formally gives them the same rights as Israeli citizens — except for the right to vote in Knesset elections — but they suffer from institutional discrimination and neglect which can be easily observed in their neighborhoods in every aspect of life.

At the bottom are the Palestinian residents of the OPT outside of Jerusalem, who are accorded no civil or human rights by the Israeli government. Thus, the West Bank is populated by two groups that live side by side under two separate legal systems based solely on their national origin. The Palestinian population is under military law, and all aspects of their lives are subject to military orders, including work permits, detention, arrest, the unification and separation of families, curfew, the courts, entry into the state of Israel, house demolitions, land expropriation, etc. Jewish settlers, on the other hand, are treated like masters with privileged rights.

In sum, since equality is one of the fundamental principles of democracy, this inequality signals a very serious flaw that may even call into question the very existence of democracy.

Damage Caused by the Courts

One of the central areas in which Israeli democracy has been damaged is the judicial system, which is one of the three pillars of a democratic state. Israeli judges are frequently asked to judge cases concerning the behavior of the state, organizations in the third sector, and even individuals in the

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OPT, including the construction of settlements on private Palestinian land, house demolitions, and cases of torture or wounding and killing. For many years, the High Court of Justice (HJC) has been viewed as a left-wing authority which advances universal values at the expense of the security of Jewish citizens. A review of HJC decisions over the course of the occupation, however, shows that this image is light years away from the reality. For example, the HJC has abstained from passing judgment on the legality the settlements in accordance with Article 44/49 (6) of the Geneva Convention. It also chooses not to defend the human rights of the Palestinian residents of the OPT in accordance with international law.

The result is the legalization of the occupation. The HJC has repeatedly ruled in favor of the state and has almost always backed the actions of the government and the army, even when they violated international law. The HJC almost always accepts the security arguments of the government, which are frequently political arguments in disguise, and has avoided any serious examination of the reality on the other side of the Green Line.

Damage to Pluralism and Freedom of Expression

One of the harshest blows to the essence of democracy is the attempt to impose totalitarian thinking which contradicts its central principles: pluralism and freedom of expression. This process is inevitable, because if the government aims to continue the conflict and the occupation, it must continue its systematic and regular institutional efforts to inculcate in all members of Jewish society the narrative that supports the occupation and block the flow of information that contradicts this narrative. To do so, the leaders of the right and even the center try to block the legitimate freedom of expression by people on the left by delegitimizing them. This process began at the end of the 1990s and grew in the 2000s until regulations that prevent freedom of expression and the free flow of information have entered not only the political systems but also the culture and educational system. In addition, the right exploits its power to try to block information circulated by human rights organizations that document the evil deeds being carried out by the security forces, the government, the settlers, and various right-wing organizations, including the unnecessary killing of Palestinians, illegal arrests, collective punishment, and more.

In this reality, regular citizens as well as those who hold government positions are afraid to express opinions that contradict the hegemonic narrative, lest they be punished socially and economically. Not many are ready to pay the heavy personal price extorted for expressing independent opinions, while the majority chose conformity and even self-censorship.

Disobeying the Law

The rule of law is another basic principle of a democratic regime. Disobeying the law and not applying it equally constitutes a deadly blow to democracy. Disregard for the law, particularly by state institutions, leads to anarchy. The executive branch of the state is violating the basic principle of democracy and is violating state laws. The desire to hold onto and settle in the OPT has created a reality where the state of Israel is selective in applying state laws and is in violation of international law. The takeover of Palestinian lands is a paradigm example of the state violating the law and engaging in deceit.

Taking Over Palestinian Lands

Immediately after 1967, settlements in the OPT were allowed only for military needs. Over time, however, Israel has exploited security as an excuse to approve many civilian communities. Between 1967 and 2014, 1,150 military orders were signed, resulting in a land grab of over 100,000 dunams, most of it land privately owned by West Bank Palestinians. Of this land, 47% directly serves the needs of the settler population and not those of the army. Furthermore, 45% of the land not used by the settlers is also not used by the army. In other words, only about one-quarter of the areas defined as being for military purposes is actually used in that way.

These legal tricks are carried out in contravention of international law defining the rights and obligations of a state that controls an occupied territory, which determines that control of such land is by definition

These legal tricks are carried out in contravention of international law defining the rights and obligations of a state that controls an occupied territory.

temporary and only for urgent military purposes and is ultimately to be returned to its owners. Israel, however, has created its own legal reality and has invented a number of illegal practices to justify it. One is the process whereby military officers brought witnesses before the HJC to say that areas were needed for military reasons when in

fact they were used for civilian settlements. The HJC generally accepted the arguments, except in the case of Elon Moreh, where a settler admitted to the court that his group had settled in the area because of “God’s law” and not for security reasons. This case in 1979 reduced dramatically this practice.

Prof. David Kretschmer and investigative journalist Gershom Gorenberg examined the subject in 2015. Their research found that the authorities tended to blur the political background that motivated their activities, hid relevant facts from the courts, and invented false legal arguments in order to manipulate the court to get the desired results. The authorities consistently lied to the court, and only in isolated incidences did the HJC uncover the truth and not base its ruling on the legal claims made before it.

Civil Administration statistics show that in August 2017, there were 3,455 homes and public buildings on private Palestinian land. The courts and the government backed this Jewish construction using a questionable method which relied on Ottoman law to claim that the land in question was state-owned, although they usually knew that they were breaking the law. In the case of Amona, where homes were built on private Palestinian land with the aid of the Ministry of Housing, the HJC ruled in 2014 that

the outpost had to be evacuated within two years. The government did everything possible not to carry out the ruling, and after many delays the families were removed in February 2017, with compensation of 130 million shekels for their relocation.

In several cases, the Jewish Agency's Settlement Division took over lands that it has no authority over and advanced the establishment of settlements on them. An investigation carried out by *Haaretz* in October 2018 revealed that the division had granted dozens of loans to build and develop illegal outposts, agricultural farms, and other venues throughout the West Bank. It also granted loans to settlers from public funds based upon mortgages for fictitious plots. Illegal actions were also carried out by Regional Councils in the OPT. For example, from 2013 to 2015, Mateh Binyamin gave out more than 55 million shekels to local political associations instead of transferring them to welfare, education, and sports.

In 2017, the Knesset passed the Regulation Law, which enables the expropriation of private Palestinian land for settlement construction.

In 2017, the Knesset passed the Regulation Law, which enables the expropriation of private Palestinian land for settlement construction. Thus, the Knesset, which is the legislative branch of the state of Israel, passed a law regarding a territory over which it has no sovereignty, in clear violation of international law.

To the list of violations of the law we can add the building of dozens of illegal outposts without official permits from the Israeli authorities but with their help in providing infrastructure, while the army provided for security needs. These acts were documented in the 2006 Sasson Report, which detailed how state authorities broke the law in response to political pressure from the settlers. In conclusion, the settlement enterprise was carried out by forging documents, misleading the authorities, and channeling state funds to the settlements without the public's knowledge.

Torture

Another example of violation of the law is connected to the legal, security, and medical systems. For many years, Palestinians claimed that they were arrested by the security authorities based on confessions that were extracted using torture. Sometimes, there was a quick trial in which investigators from the General Security Services (GSS), military personnel, and doctors testified — and the verdict was that the Palestinian claim of torture was a lie. There were very few such trials because the GSS investigators avoided testifying and the prosecution preferred to reach a

settlement with the accused. Yet in 1987, a government commission of inquiry headed by Moshe Landau, chief justice of the Supreme Court at the time, found that a culture of lying had developed within the GSS whereby investigators tortured and lied about it, with the backing of the authorities and doctors representing the GSS, resulting in verdicts against the claimants. It can be assumed that hundreds of people witnessed torture and lied before the courts. Despite the appointment of a GSS Complaints Ombudsman, the phenomenon of torture and the willingness to hide it continue today. In 2016, hundreds of Palestinians filed complaints about being tortured during their interrogation, yet no investigator has been put on trial.

Netanyahu Leading Israel to the Abyss

The years 2019-20 will be remembered as the turning point in Israeli democracy. Following his indictment on charges of bribery, fraud, and breach of trust, Netanyahu and his rightist coalition began the systematic destruction of the system in order to save the prime minister's skin. Netanyahu appointed his cronies as state comptroller, civil service commissioner, and justice minister; promoted delegitimization of the legal advisors, state prosecutors, and the police; maligned the legal system and incited against any opposing legal forces by calling them "leftists;" delegitimized the Arab minority's participation in the political process; and viciously attacked the mass media. Following the COVID-19 outbreak, his sycophant justice minister conveniently shut down the judicial system two days before the beginning of his trial, and the speaker of the Knesset, Likud member Yuli Edelstein, exploited the pandemic to dismiss the Knesset before it could begin to appoint committees in which the anti-Netanyahu bloc would have a majority. Furthermore, Netanyahu authorized the GSS to use electronic surveillance of private Israeli citizens to track the spread of the virus, and the police were dispatched to disperse a public protest against this measure although the protestors were following the social-distancing instructions. These are the most salient examples of how Netanyahu is leading democracy toward the abyss.

Conclusion

Israeli democracy is at a dangerous low. With its military government that discriminated against the Palestinian minority, its policy of stealing their lands, and its secret monitoring and suppression of opposition to government policy, Israel was not exactly a model of democracy from the outset, but when Levi Eshkol came to power in 1966, it began to move toward democratization and liberalization and made major advances in this

direction. With the beginning of the occupation in 1967, however, it changed direction toward the authoritarian regime we live under today, because the influence of the occupation is felt not only in the OPT but in Israeli society as well. Albert Memmi, in his 1990 book, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, noted that colonial occupiers are influenced by the colonial system. In our 2013 book, *The Influence of the Occupation on Israeli Society* (Hebrew), Izhak Schnell and I applied this concept to the Israeli occupation, showing how the behavioral norms the conquering society applies in its interaction with the occupied society inevitably seep into the occupying society. That is what is happening to Israeli society!

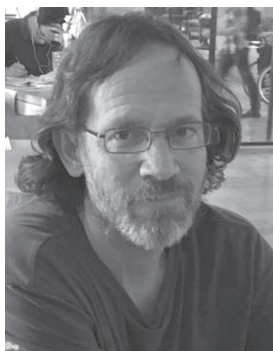
The prophecy of Professor Yeshayahu Leibowitz is taking shape before our very eyes. In 1968, he wrote:

It is not the territory which is the problem but the population of 1.5 million Arabs who live in it and upon which we have to apply our authority. Their addition (alongside the 300,000 Arabs who are citizens of the state) under our rule means – the end of the state of Israel as the state of the Jewish people, the destruction of the entire Jewish people, the collapse of the social structure that we established in the state and the dehumanization of both the Jews and the Arabs.... The state which will govern over a hostile population of 1.4-2 million farmers will by necessity become a state of the General Security Services, with all this implies for the spirit of the education, freedom of speech and thought, and for the democratic regime. The corruption which is characteristic of any colonial system will stick to the state of Israel.... There is also a concern that the IDF — which until now has been a people's army — will degenerate and become an army of occupation – whose commanders will become military governors as have their colleagues in other countries.”

Our leaders can create a narrative about the greatness of Israeli democracy, and the Israeli public, who cares most about their own prosperity and happiness, may buy it, but reality tells a different story. According to the democracy indicators published by the Israel Democracy Institute, Israel is ranked at the bottom of the OECD countries. That is not an honorable place for a country that purports to be “a light unto the nations.”

The desire to expand the territory of the state of Israel and the desire to rule over the Palestinians and to settle Jewish citizens in the OPT is inevitably leading to a collapse of Israeli democracy, because these goals supersede the values and principles upon which democracies rest. Without liberation from the burden of occupation, the Jewish population of Israel will be condemned to moral and democratic deterioration — and will never be, as the national anthem says, a free people in its land.

“The Deal Within the Deal”



Aviv Tatarsky



Yudit Oppenheimer

Aviv Tatarsky is a field researcher at Ir Amim (“City of Peoples”).

Yudit Oppenheimer is the executive director of Ir Amim

Some two weeks after U.S. President Donald Trump’s peace plan was formally released, U.S. Ambassador to Israel David M. Friedman conducted a briefing and press conference at a right-wing research institute in Jerusalem. Toward the end of his remarks, during which he both explained and applauded Trump’s plan, Friedman stated:

There is the deal and then there is the deal within the deal. The deal itself, which is the long document that you’ve read ... is the terms upon which Israel and the Palestinians will exist. Two separate states, side-by-side: A nation-state of the Jewish people and a nation-state of the Palestinian people ... Now, we think it’s a basis for negotiation ...

In terms of the deal within the deal, that is the agreement that we’ve reached with Israel that if Israel... creates a four-year settlement freeze with regard to the 50% of Area C that is allocated to the Palestinians ... and agree to use this plan as a basis for negotiation ... then upon Israel applying its laws to the territory that is earmarked for Israel within Judea and Samaria that is laid out in the map ... then the U.S. will recognize Israel’s application of its laws ... I don’t know if the right word is compensation, but as an inducement for Israel to keep the other territory open for future agreement.

A Practical Plan for Annexation

It is possible to be — and, in fact, one should be — opposed to Trump’s plan, but those who simply mock the document are missing the heart of the matter. As a proposal for negotiations between two parties, it is certainly not a serious plan, since there is no chance the Palestinians would agree to even the opening lines. The plan is so one-sided that Arab states that want to curry favor with Trump were compelled to condemn it. But beyond serving as a theoretical proposal for a peace plan, it is rather far more of a practical work plan for annexation of the settlements and the subsequent foiling of any possibility of a viable future Palestinian state.

This is indeed the “deal within the deal” that Friedman is referring to. Its ultimate goal is apparent to anyone who has been following the development of the “Deal of the Century,” yet its essence could not have been more precisely or cynically described than by Friedman’s own words.

The various unilateral moves carried out by the current U.S. Administration in close coordination with the Israeli government prior to publication of the “deal” — from transferring the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem, through cutting aid to the Palestinian Authority to U.S. recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights — underscore the notion that an acute and advanced understanding has been reached between the Israeli right wing and the Trump administration concerning sweeping unilateral and irreversible measures.



U.S. Ambassador to Israel David Friedman, an active supporter of settlements activities in the OPT, and one of the primary supporters and formulators of the “deal within the deal”.

These moves were likewise reinforced by statements from Friedman and former U.S. Special Envoy Jason Greenblatt regarding Israel's right to annex parts of the West Bank and by U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's declaration on the legality of Israeli settlements.

A Joint Israeli-American Effort

At the heart of these measures was a joint Israeli-American effort to reorient the terms of the political debate and omit its key issues — sovereignty, borders, Jerusalem and refugees — from the broadly agreed binding principles of a two-state framework and international law, while moving from a creeping annexation paradigm to a sweeping formal annexation with U.S. approval.

Hence, the proposed “deal” is not being negotiated between two national collectives with mutual historical and political rights — a fundamental condition for any political process — but rather between a sovereign state (Israel) and its subjects (Palestinians) dependent on its benevolence and that of other foreign governments. Even if the “deal” pays lip service to the concept of a Palestinian state, the stipulated conditions render it utterly meaningless. In other words, the “deal within the deal” ultimately nullifies the “deal” itself.

In announcing his decision to move the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem in December 2017, Trump stated that the move was simply a “recognition of reality” and would affect neither the peace process nor Jerusalem's future borders. However, it became apparent that the move of the U.S. embassy and the closure of the U.S. consulate in Jerusalem were simply a precursor for Trump's declaration of U.S. recognition of Israeli sovereignty over all of Jerusalem, with the Separation Wall in the city serving as the new border. This will effectively leave a third of Jerusalem's Palestinian residents, in the neighborhoods that were left beyond the barrier, formally removed from the city. Thus, Israel will move closer to achieving its longstanding goal of controlling East Jerusalem without its Palestinian residents.

It is obvious that the “recognition of reality” is actually the unilateral imposition of a devised “reality” that is advantageous to one side. It reframes the larger discourse surrounding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and thereby condemns both Israelis and Palestinians to a permanently escalating situation of rulers and ruled.

Therefore, ultimately, the only deal is the “deal within a deal.” This must serve as the basis of any debate on the plan.

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Roundtable

Looking at Trump's "Peace to Prosperity" Plan

*On March 12, 2020, the **Palestine-Israel Journal (PIJ)** convened a roundtable discussion at the **PIJ** offices in Jerusalem on the topic of Trump's "Peace to Prosperity" plan. The Palestinian participants were **Bishop Dr. Munib Younan**, bishop Emeritus of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land and former president of the Lutheran World Federation; **Dr. Iyad Dajani**, research project coordinator for the Middle East and North Africa at Jena Center for Reconciliation Studies and a peace activist and scholar on reconciliation in the middle of conflicts at Friedrich-Schiller-Universität, Germany; and **Ambassador Hind Khoury**, former PLO ambassador to France and PA minister of women's affairs. The Israeli participants were **Ambassador Ilan Baruch**, chair of the Policy Working Group (PWG) and former ambassador to South Africa; **Lior Amihai**, executive director of Yesh Din; and **PIJ** Managing Editor **Susie Becher**. The roundtable was moderated by **PIJ** Co-Editors **Hillel Schenker** and **Ziad AbuZayyad**.*

Ziad AbuZayyad: Our original idea was to have an issue of the **Palestine-Israel Journal (PIJ)** focusing on the rule of law, good governance, democracy and human rights. Following the release of the Trump vision, however, all the attention was diverted to the latter. We thought that if we ignored it and went on with the original idea, it would be a professional mistake; therefore, we shifted the focus to the issue of the Trump vision. We want to discuss this issue from all its aspects, political and legal. It is not a solution but rather, as some people have stated, this is the only time that the proposed solution to a problem is worse than the problem itself. So, I would love for one of you to dive in and start inspiring us and propelling the discussion forward.

Hillel Schenker: Lior, you are in touch with what's happening on the ground — that's what Yesh Din does — so maybe you can say what you feel from an activist's perspective?

Lior Amihai: I would say that you may have changed the topic of the issue, but the subject remains the same. Perhaps the worst thing about the Trump plan is the very fact that it was put forward. In my view, we must all discredit it as anything that could be considered legitimate. One of the dangers is that in this current world of global politics that is changing right before our eyes, this plan could be accredited enough legitimacy to be the

basis for negotiations in the future. I believe I represent many in the human rights world who want to end the occupation and believe that the Trump plan does not constitute a starter in any way.



Lior Amihai

From the Yesh Din perspective, from the field, I think there are several things to say. First, there is nothing new about this plan; it's a copy of the settler ideology and the government's policy over the past years and since the beginning of the occupation. It accepts them and provides them with legitimacy. So, while it reflects settler policy and the government's policy over the years, it also very much reflects the Trump policy of the past three years if we look at how he dealt with issues such as Jerusalem, refugees, annexation and settlements. The plan is dangerous because it maintains and accepts the idea that the Palestinian people will remain under occupation forever. It assumes that they will not achieve statehood or freedom, which means eternal occupation. This then legitimizes a regime of apartheid, where there are people who don't have the same rights as others and an ideology and policy that seek to maintain and enhance these differences in treatment.

On the ground, there are some dangers that we fear. First, it's a gift to policies of past years regarding settler violence and land takeover, which Yesh Din deals with a lot. Settler violence and land takeover have succeeded. The Trump plan formalizes these policies, accepting that the borders are what these policies of violence and land thievery have enabled. Another danger is that of forcible removal of Palestinian communities, particularly in Area C, communities that are unrecognized by the Israeli government. If annexation takes place, they will be the first communities to be at risk of being removed, evacuated. The government of Israel could declare that they are illegal and evacuate them. Another risk we can identify from a political perspective is increasing the challenge of evacuating any Israeli settlement in the future. If you look at the Gaza disengagement as an example, eventually the settlements were evacuated because they were under military law and not within the jurisdiction of the state of Israel. If these settlements become part of the state of Israel officially, it will become much more difficult to evacuate them, even from a political and legal perspective. And there are many other dangers that we can come up with if we brainstorm.

There is another danger I want to mention, however, and that is the Trump plan not only accepts annexation and apartheid but also goes against various principles of international law, disregarding them completely. Thus,

it poses a danger to the global regime of human rights and international law. Furthermore, it should be noted that the Trump plan is already being implemented in a way, not only through the *de facto* policy on the ground. In recent years, since Trump has been in power, we have seen a process of *de jure* annexation, with new legislation enacted by the Israeli parliament over the West Bank. We are also witnessing existing laws and military orders being reinterpreted in ways to allow for the takeover of private Palestinian land.

So, in summary, there are various other mechanisms in place that constitute the structure of the Trump plan. The plan merely formalizes the acceptance of these policies and establishes them as the vision for the future. Thus, the Trump plan is nothing new; it's the acceptance of settler policies that we have seen on the ground. There are real and serious dangers to people's lives, especially Palestinian communities in the Jordan Valley or communities that are not recognized by Israel. It will also make future political negotiations difficult, especially because of the complications regarding evacuating settlements. On the other hand, we must note that there are both *de jure* and *de facto* elements of the plan that are already in place, so even if the Trump plan vanishes, things are already taking place. But there is one major difference that we at Yesh Din are focusing on in regard to annexation. This current occupation is ruled by the Israeli military, which, of course, gets its orders from the prime minister and the minister of defense, and it implements Israeli policy. If the military will not be the sovereign, however, if official annexation happens; it will mean that Israeli ministries, which get their power and constituency directly from the Israeli public, will be the bodies that are responsible for the territories. They then will have no obligation of any kind to international law, no pressure from the outside. That would be, as we see it, another deterioration in the treatment of the Palestinians.

AbuZayyad: When annexation takes place and the territories become part of Israel and come under the control of the Israeli ministries, under the jurisdiction of the Israeli government, what are the consequences, impact and dangers in terms of the Absentee Property Law?

Amihai: First of all, we don't know the extent to which the law will be implemented. Theoretically, one could find ways to not apply certain elements or laws. But if we look at what happened after 1948, we see that legislation and laws were certainly part of the system that enabled taking over lands. International law looks at these territories as Palestinian land — either public lands belonging to the Palestinian people or private Palestinian

lands. If annexation happens, there is a good chance that Palestinians will lose a lot of land and their property rights. As an example, look at the Regularization Law which has already been put forward and passed by the Israeli parliament.



Bishop Munib Younan

Bishop Munib Younan: Dennis Ross wrote an article in which he says that this plan was written in such a way that would make Palestinians refuse it. Jason Greenblatt and Bishara A. Bahbah wrote an article for the *Jerusalem Post*, immediately after the plan was announced, urging the Palestinians to take the good parts of the deal and reject the rest. I read the main points, but I would agree with you, Lior, that it is creating international chaos. If we don't respect international legitimacy and international law, if we think only about exerting our power to implement what we think is right without respecting the UN resolutions on Palestine, on Israel, I think this is a problem that not only Israel and Palestine will have to face, but the whole world.

Second, I think the principle of "land for peace" you had in Oslo has changed and is being framed as "prosperity for peace," reflecting the intention to attempt to get Palestinians to settle for money. If economic growth does not have political backing, however, it won't succeed, as we know from the case of Gaza and the Israeli checkpoints. If the checkpoints are closed for any materials, such as flowers that used to be shipped to Holland but were then kept at the checkpoints for days and eventually wilted, this affects the prosperity of the trade. When you read the plan, you feel that there are few concessions on Israel's part and harsh demands imposed on the Palestinians. This plan promotes "Greater Israel," which Oslo and other attempts have tried to avoid because a Greater Israel is not good for either Israel or the Palestinians.

One of the harsh demands imposed on the Palestinians by the deal includes the demilitarization of Hamas. Although I believe in nonviolent struggle, I feel that this demand is utopian. We know that Israel is the fourth strongest military power in the world, yet it has not succeeded in demilitarizing Hamas. How do we expect Abu Mazen and the PLO to collect all the arms from Hamas? This will be nothing but a prescription for a Palestinian civil war.

Second is the annexation of the Jordan Valley, parts of the West Bank, and the Triangle. I find this annexation problematic because it does not follow the 1967 borders. Another important point is the lack of clarity of

the deal. U.S. Secretary of State Pompeo said today that Jerusalemites that have been living there since 1967 will be Arab residents of the state but did not clarify which state. And if he means the Arabs in East Jerusalem, then he is wrong. We are the people of Jerusalem, not just residents. The authorities say that the Arabs in Jerusalem number 350,000 but we claim we are 400,000 Palestinians who have permanent residence in Israel since 1967. What will happen with us? Will we be dismissed? Will we be asked to choose whether we want to be in Palestine or in Israel or will we stay stateless? We don't know.

Jerusalem was postponed in the bilateral negotiations as a final-status issue, but neither the Organization of Islamic Cooperation nor the Arab countries will agree to give up on Jerusalem. They don't want to be called traitors for conceding Jerusalem because of Al-Aqsa Mosque. It is also unclear what will be done about refugees. What does "compensation" mean? What does 5,000 [refugees a year for ten years] mean? Also, unclear is what will be done about Al-Aqsa Mosque. We know Al-Aqsa is only for the Muslims, yet there are settlers and members of the Christian right who want to create religious chaos. According to the Israel-Jordan peace agreement of 1994, the king of Jordan is the custodian, and the Palestinian Authority endorsed that in a bilateral agreement with Jordan in 2013. When the deal states that everybody can worship in al-Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount, it is another instance of creating religious chaos, a religious problem that religious leaders have been trying to avoid because we cannot afford it but which the fundamentalists have been waiting for. There is too much lack of clarity. From the political point of view, it's problematic, and from the religious point of view it's also problematic. What will be done with the status quo of Jerusalem and all its churches as well? This cannot be ignored, and here it is ignored completely. The selling of land at the Jaffa Gate and the building of two hotels ignored the Christian presence in the land. But despite being only two percent of the population, the Christian community cannot be overlooked. What I would like to say is that you can impose things, but that is part of the imposing colonial power and the Palestinians will not accept it. They would once again be seen as problem makers because they would be accused of never accepting anything.

Lastly, I would like to ask: Do you think this is good for Israel? For Israel it would be a new apartheid system which neither Israel nor the Jewish conscience can stand. I think if it becomes apartheid, Palestinians will win in a way, because despite the fact we are already living under a completely unconstitutional state of apartheid, with this plan it will be made public, which will hurt Israel.

Susie Becher: I think that there's too much time being spent analyzing this plan as if it was really a "plan" that was meant to lead to negotiations between Israel and Palestine. I don't think anybody really intended for this plan to lead to negotiations and a peace agreement. Trump's objective was just to release the plan. He promised a plan, so he had to deliver a plan. Don't forget that Trump has a very short attention span. As far as he's concerned, he held a big ceremony at the White House, and with that he's done his bit. It's not on his mind anymore. He's focused on November, and Kushner has moved on to other things.



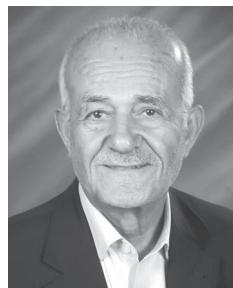
Susie Becher

The international community is not going to accept this plan as a new basis for negotiation. I know they haven't unequivocally rejected the plan, but I don't think it's going to supersede international law, UN resolutions, the Clinton Parameters, the Annapolis talks, etc. I believe if peace negotiations ever resume, they will be based on the things I just listed and not on the Trump plan.

I think this plan is actually an annexation plan, and the one thing that's going to be implemented from this plan is annexation — not through any overt, major step as Bibi thought that he could do, but just as Israel has been annexing slowly *de facto*, it will start annexing slowly *de jure*. One of the reasons this will happen is that although Trump is now focused on seeking re-election in 2020 and Kushner is gone, David Freidman is still invested in it. This was his dream. He is on the committee that is discussing annexation plans — a committee on which only Israeli and American representatives sit — and the committee has started working. I think this committee is going to approve annexation step by step, and Israel will go ahead and implement it step by step. The big danger here, from the political point of view, is that it's really going to put an end to the two-state solution. Yes (nods in the direction of Bishop Younan), we may well end up with an apartheid state. By the time we get back to the negotiations table, as a consequence of this plan the map will have changed, the demographics will have changed, and talk of two states will no longer be relevant. Our work will be about ending apartheid, and by then the only way to fix it will be through a one-state solution, where there is equality: one man (or woman), one vote. In other words, this would mean the end of the state of Israel as the realization of the nationalist inspirations of the Jewish people and, as someone here said, we will be shooting ourselves in the foot. Israel is actually killing that dream.

AbuZayyad: Another point we raised while we were having our internal discussion about whether to publish an issue about the Trump

vision or just ignore it and not give it any publicity was whether discussing it will give it legitimacy. Those who have adopted Trump's plan have said that all other previous instruments that were tried to come to an agreement have failed. They said, "Forget UN resolutions, Security Council resolutions and everything else, and let us start from here." This is what I think Lior meant when he said that Trump's plan is trying to replace international legitimacy. Kushner said it clearly. So, we have to consider this a very dangerous approach. It is a severe violation of the international system of the United Nations' existence. When we speak about the issue, and Susie referred to this as a "plan", I'm sure you don't mean that this actually is a plan.



Ziad AbuZayyad

Becher: I think it's an annexation plan.

AbuZayyad: Even those who put this thing forward called it a "vision." They did not call it a "peace" plan or a solution. And they said it is open for negotiations. This is why they wanted us to walk on this downhill slope and have us start discussing the "plan." I think the most dangerous outcome from this is if we accept any negotiations based upon this "vision". The pressure the Americans are putting on the Palestinian leadership, on the PLO, on Mahmoud Abbas is for them to join negotiations. But I'm pretty sure that all this pressure will not make our leadership give in.

Becher: So, the Americans are saying this or that. So what? The international community, the United Nations, the European Union, and the Western world are not going to accept this.

AbuZayyad: We know that the United States is trying to marginalize the international community as well as all forms of international legitimacy. They want to put a new paradigm on the table, which is why we have to fight against it. We have to delegitimize this and not give it any chance to become the basis for negotiations. This is not a plan for a solution, nor is it a deal. A deal needs two parties. Here, there is no second party. This is exactly, as you said, a document created by Freidman and the fanatic right-wing settlers. Even the terminology is extreme right-wing terminology. We have been dealing with the Americans and American diplomacy for years, and this is not what the language of the U.S State Department used to be. This is new language written by Freidman and his team of fanatic settlers and given to Trump to read and endorse as the plan of the Americans and Israelis.

My question from here is: Do you think enough effort has been put in place to discredit and delegitimize this “vision,” or do we still need to make more efforts in order to throw it in the garbage and not have anyone think about it? And secondly, is the international community doing enough to confront this plan, or have we not yet seen the real action the international community will take against this plan?

Becher: What you’re saying isn’t that different from what I was trying to say in terms of the importance given to this plan. Fighting it as if it’s a negotiations plan would be a waste of time. I don’t think anyone thinks that negotiations on issues like borders, Jerusalem, the return of refugees, etc. will ever be held based on this plan. But I do think this plan is about annexation, and that will go ahead in some way. Even if Gantz were to come to power, annexation won’t necessarily be off the table. Our focus has to be on making sure the international community stands up and takes action, preferably to prevent it and definitely to punish Israel if annexation happens. I personally would put all our effort into fighting annexation and making sure annexation is not legitimized. And if annexation goes ahead, the international community can’t just settle for condemnations; it must apply some sort of sanctions and hold Israel accountable.

Hind Khoury: Thanks for the valuable interventions so far, and I agree with all the analysis presented. In my view, the Trump plan calls for the total capitulation of the Palestinian people on all their rights, especially the right to self-determination. It seeks to bring the Balfour Declaration full circle by aiming to create a Jewish state on historical Palestine from the Mediterranean to the Jordan River, totally delegitimizing the Palestinian people again as one of the “non-Jewish minorities.” This is why Palestinians are no party to the plan, which is again an agreement between the Zionist movement — now Israel, and the colonial/imperialist power of the day, now the U.S.



Hind Khoury

It is perhaps no accident that the Trump vision was actually laid bare already in December 2017, a century after 1917 and where the Oslo process with the idea of partition of the land, the land for peace formula and the recognition of two peoples on the land was put to rest. The Trump vision was made clear from the start. It condoned Israeli settler ideology by providing Israel an eternal capital in a united Jerusalem, sought the liquidation of UNRWA and the rights of Palestinian refugees, withdrew any diplomatic recognition of the PLO, legitimized annexation and colonial settlement

activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and rendered the Palestinian leadership irrelevant. However, the actual declaration this past January was very shocking to the Palestinians. It was not only a total humiliation to any Palestinian but a dictate for our total capitulation, as we now stand stripped of our legitimacy on the land of our forefathers, stripped of any sense of security for us and for future Palestinian generations, stripped of our identity, history and narrative as people of this land.

What is more shocking is the clarity of purpose and language which obliterates the world order of the United Nations and the rule of law and confirms the principles of “might is right” and the law of the jungle. The text of the Trump vision is doubly shocking in its use of blatant insulting language reminiscent of the worst colonial eras.

Perhaps at this juncture, what is needed is a consolidation of efforts among good and decent people who, I believe, represent the majority in the world and who still believe in the value of human life and dignity, in human rights and compromise and reconciliation based on international law and our moral values that evolved over millennia. While a lot has been achieved in terms of recognizing Palestinian rights, we need to have a focused approach that is clear to such a wide public and players and that is focused on action and results. For, as Bishop Younan and others rightly explained, at the end of the day, only violence and fanaticism will win from the Trump vision and ongoing Israeli policies toward the Palestinians. Palestinians will not gain much, but neither will Israel and the vision of a Jewish state.

I think it important to add a footnote here and respond to the question of how come Trump and Netanyahu are so comfortable imposing visions that destroy democratic institutions and decision making, that can make decisions that destroy human life and livelihoods without any moral deterrent. I think we need to be careful and act on the fact that governments who command information technology and artificial intelligence have developed a perfect control of popular and public opinion and feel free to implement policies that threaten the very basis of democratic principles. I am inspired here by the writings of the respected Israeli historian, Yuval Noah Harari, who has warned us that we are at a crossroads where we shall have to choose between the growing irrelevance of people and the preservation of democracy.

We certainly have a mad world ahead of us unless we, as people of faith in humanity, intervene effectively. I think the Christian Zionists are helping to implement these policies with a dangerous end-of-time theology that is a dangerous abuse of religion for political reasons. We have reached a point of total moral and political chaos. The question now is: Where do we go from here? Why have we failed so far? What role should we play at

the political, economic or religious levels? Where do responsibilities lie? In the meantime, the stakes are high, and the policies of imposing new realities on the ground will win the day unless we act.

Ilan Baruch: Everything that was said here has value. I'm going to borrow a phrase from Hind. I think it isn't anymore only about demography; neither is it about territory. The Israeli policy is designed to defeat the Palestinian narrative. The government, with the assistance of a wide cluster of civil society proxies like NGO Monitor, is aiming to educate global civil society, primarily in Europe and North America, in light of a parallel narrative. It is geared to destroying the legitimacy of the Palestinians' rightful claim to self-determination in this land.

Two mega-projects attest to this: first, the equation of the BDS movement with anti-Semitism. BDS carries in it a grain encapsulated in the Palestinian right of return. Israel for a long time has been demanding Palestinian recognition of Israel as a Jewish state. In his Bar-Ilan speech in June 2009, Netanyahu claimed that this is exclusively our land from time immemorial, the bedrock of Jewish civilization, and the Palestinians are a large community in residence on Jewish land. They are entitled to self-rule, not because of their rightful claim to sovereignty over the land but as an Israeli interest not to impose our rule over a large community of Palestinians. In his view, the Palestinians are the descendants of nomadic Arab tribes wandering in the Ottoman Middle East in pursuit of sustenance. They do not belong here and have no right of return. When driving the European political discourse, primarily in Germany, into the simplistic equation of BDS with anti-Semitism, it actually welded the Palestinian narrative with the European guilt. It has successfully blended the two in the European political psyche, to the point where this equation was adopted in the Bundestag on May 17, 2019 and, thereafter, in other national parliaments as well as the European Parliament. Europe was prepared to compromise its commitment to free expression for a "ceasefire" with Israel and the U.S. on this front.



Ilan Baruch

The second project is the defeat of UNRWA. It's not the claim that UNRWA is corrupt or inefficient and requires extensive reform that mattered. UNRWA was created to temporarily provide for a large population of refugees who were forced by circumstances of war to flee the country, until they could accomplish a full post-war return to their homes, fields and businesses. But they were barred by Israel from returning across the

ceasefire lines to their residences. This was critical for Israel. UNRWA, in fact, served Israeli interests in allowing it to consolidate its control over the territory which came under its sovereignty. At present, however, there is a complete denial of UNRWA's origins. Israel, with the help of the U.S. Administration, has been successfully selling the idea that UNRWA is simply a corrupt mechanism and superfluous, because there are other UN bodies dealing with refugees. In addition, it condemns the fact that second, third and fourth generations of refugees are entitled to compensation, which is projected as the principal issue. But we all know that compensation isn't the issue. The Palestinian narrative of the traumatic 1948 events creating the Palestinian refugee crisis, the *Nakba* and the right of return is the prime target of Israeli foreign policy. Israel is aiming to erase the Palestinian narrative, delegitimize the right of return and deny any claims of Palestinian self-determination in the land.

Dr Iyad Dajani: Ilan, thank you for your enriching comments. I've worked in reconciliation for seven years and, to be honest, I've seen situations that are even worse than the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, such as those in Rwanda or other parts of southern Africa. From my point of view, from a reconciliation perspective, I believe the Trump plan isn't really a plan for the Palestinians. And I think what's missing here is not negotiation but reconciliation. I think reconciliation is a way out. Each form of reconciliation is different depending on which conflict we speak about, so in this region it would mean undertaking steps such as giving East Jerusalem residents civil rights and declaring Jerusalem the capital of Palestine. These steps can enable both parties to reconcile.



Dr Iyad Dajani

I think one area where Israel has failed in terms of policy is accepting the existence of radicalism only in Gaza and being content with it not spreading elsewhere. The problem with this approach is letting radicalism exist. This could lead to the overthrow of the Palestinian Authority and could take over Palestinian politics. A new movement could arise which could be extremely radical. We are talking here about Palestinian youths and their future. In terms of this plan, it has no aspirations, neither for Israel nor for the state of Palestine. Who wins with this plan? Some radicals are evolving, such as the radical movements in Palestinian and Israeli political parties. These radicals will affect two communities — both Palestinians and Israelis. They don't want to come to the table, they refuse a two-state solution, and they don't accept East Jerusalem as Palestine's capital. With

these conditions and the spread of radicalism, the Palestinian Authority will fall. I feel we are headed in that direction. On the Israeli side, we do have people who want to discuss and debate a two-state solution but, as you said, such Israelis are outcasts in society. Even the Palestinians who want peace with Israel are outcasts in their society.

Younan: How can we have reconciliation if there's no justice, even from a religious or political perspective?

Dajani: There will be a basis; it's not wishy-washy.

Younan: But there's something deeper at play here when we speak about possible reconciliation. If justice is not in the picture, reconciliation will not happen.

Khoury: Especially in an environment where the law of the jungle prevails. So, there isn't a starting point for reconciliation.

Dajani: When I say reconciliation, let me emphasize what I mean. Reconciliation is a part of justice and coexistence. So, one cannot be calling for peace with Israel and teaching one's children to hate Israel, and the same goes for the Israelis who teach hatred toward Palestinians in their curriculum. Reconciliation is a process. Thus, the process for peace between both parties has never existed, because of what they teach their upcoming generations. Israel still teaches in schools that there are no Palestinians; they are Bedouins who settled here and are still primitive. The Palestinians are also teaching in schools the ideology of hate. Reconciliation is a process, not to change reality but to develop the reality of the future. Today, I still see Palestinians saying that there is no Israel.

AbuZayyad: You are talking about reconciliation. You're obsessed with the theory, but not with the reality. In reality, there is no reconciliation between an oppressor and the oppressed. What we should think about is how we can end the occupation and then start reconciliation between these two peoples based upon equality and justice. We are talking about a plan that is oppressive; it's a plan of denial that kills any chance for reconciliation.

Dajani: I'll tell you where this perspective comes from. In Germany, they worked a lot against being hated by the outside world. All of Europe after World War II hated Germany. How did they work on changing this? They reconciled with France and with different parties in the world.

AbuZayyad: Reconciliation between Germany and France happened only after both of them became independent countries. We are in the middle

of a situation where one side is totally denying the other side's right to exist. Thus, there is no room for reconciliation.

Dajani: This is the idea. The way the Germans did it.

Younan: I think I would completely agree with you, Ilan, when we speak of the narratives. We as Palestinians sometimes don't represent our narratives as strongly as we should. We don't want to compare our suffering with the Holocaust, because we cannot compare the two issues. However, the Jewish narrative during the Third Reich was also crushed. The only narrative that existed at the time regarding the Jews came from the Germans. If I may be allowed to make a comparison, we as Palestinians are also not in control of our own narrative.

AbuZayyad: We have our narrative, but what Ilan said is also very true and very important. The Israelis want to defeat the Palestinian narrative and put us in the category of extremists, terrorists and radicals and highlight the Israelis as victims, which is why every action they take against us, in their view, is legitimate.

Schenker: At the moment, we are in a tremendous period of uncertainty which also creates room for opportunity. When Trump organized that event at the White House and released the plan, the dream, the vision, on January 28, the purpose was to help Netanyahu win the elections. In that he may have failed. We do not see yet that Netanyahu will be able to form another government. We may even be heading toward a fourth election, although the coronavirus crisis may change the equation. Netanyahu definitely did not win the overwhelming mandate that Trump hoped he would get by releasing the plan. That's the first thing. There is a committee that is meeting to discuss annexation, but meanwhile there is no government at this point in Israel to carry out any final recommendations of such a committee.



Hillel Schenker

So, we have an opportunity because there are two big unknowns. The first unknown is "What is going to happen in Israel?" And I think it does make a difference if there were to be a right-wing Netanyahu government or an alternative Gantz-Labor-Meretz government backed by the Joint List. I think it makes a difference. If Gantz were prime minister, he would not go ahead with just taking this plan and applying it. We can't be sure, but we heard Gantz say that he would not do it without international consent, which already means he is placing an obstacle in the way of the idea of carrying it out.

The second big unknown is “What will happen in America with the elections?” The American elections are coming up in November, and there is at least a 50/50 chance that Trump will be removed and be replaced. In that case, we would have a new reality. Even Biden, who looks like he will be the Democratic candidate, has said that the Trump plan is just a stunt and is not worth anything. So, the moment of the plan being released has passed and, as Susie said, he did what he did and he moved on to something else. Now is where we Israelis, Palestinians and the international community have to develop our strategies to fight this possibility of annexation. What are the alternative strategies and proposals to revive a process to end the occupation, to move toward a two-state solution — which I still think is possible?

AbuZayyad: You know, the dangerous thing at this stage is that, at the moment, you have a government in which the minister of defense in control of the army was a settler — and not only a settler but an extreme right-wing ideologue. The dangerous decision that he has already taken is to start the E1 Project which extends the settlement of Ma’ale Adumim further to the north and isolates Jerusalem and disconnects it totally from the rest of the Palestinian territories. From our experience, anything that an Israeli government does will not be reversed by the following government. They are exploiting every single minute; they are applying the Trump plan and legitimizing it, because actually the Trump plan is legitimizing all settlements that exist. The Israeli right is trying to grab this opportunity to implement as much of the plan as possible, so that the government that will come after will not reverse it.

Schenker: This is the moment that the international community has to react.

AbuZayyad: On the part of the international community, as you said, we do not want only condemnation; it’s time for action. The question is, as Hind said, how can we come up with a strategy?

Younan: I think we should continue the discussion in other sessions, because we have to delve deeper and perhaps work out a strategy among ourselves.

Khoury: While talking about the international community perhaps we need to acknowledge there is practically no such thing. There are actors that influence developments in the region, and these are mainly the U.S., Europe and the Arab world. Let us look at where Europe stands and which have for too long been “a payer and not a player,” i.e., while it supported the

continued existence of the Palestinian Authority and policies in support of the two-state solution, it paid lip service to the relevance of international law on the matter and did not pursue its implementation. Look at the conditions now being forced onto the Palestinian NGOs, who will have to accept the criminalization of Palestinian resistance. I think Europe has been too submissive to the U.S., especially regarding the Middle East. The fact that the EU signed a trade pact between the U.S. and Europe where they accept the new definition of anti-Semitism and were forced to pass legislation in their parliaments to that regard rendering illegal any criticism of ongoing Israeli policies of continued expulsion, dispossession and oppression well recognized by the EU and a lot of independent and serious research. They are not able to take a stand on the Trump plan due to disagreements among its members, and only EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell was able to make a statement in his name on the matter with a first sentence committing “the European ... to the Transatlantic partnership” Sadly, a main contributing factor to this dramatic development brought forward by the Trump plan is the weakness and polarization among the Arab countries who do not own their decisions and provide only lip service in support of Palestinian rights.

As for suggestions that we wait for Israeli elections results, I have to say that we have spent our lives waiting for either the results of Israeli or American elections for our rights to be recognized and acted upon, but clearly to no avail. Things will not change now. Having said that, I think what is happening in Israel now, with the recent multiple elections, is very interesting in terms of the discussions among the Gantz group about whether to accept the indirect support of the Arab Joint List to form a new government. I think it is also very sad, that it shows the extent of racism in the Israeli society.

Anyhow, I hope we can conclude this discussion by focusing on what we can do, as others have said, especially Ilan. I strongly believe that if we can't sit and identify why we have failed so far, and where the responsibilities lie, on the Palestinian side as well as on the Israeli side, we cannot move forward. As Palestinians we have been reacting, but we have not been sufficiently strategic. Here allow me to summarize the real problem, which was so rightly and eloquently expressed by Gideon Levy, the journalist from *Haaretz*. At a Kairos Palestine conference in Bethlehem in December 2016, summarizing how the occupation and denial of Palestinian rights could last so long, he said that there are three main justifications used by Israel successfully and persistently: Firstly, Jews as “The Chosen People” have exclusive rights to the land based on biblical claims, and hence the irrelevance of any other kind of legitimacy or narrative including

international law or other moral references; secondly, Jews are the only and primary victim due to the anti-Jewish and anti-Semitic history in Europe and this gives them exclusive rights to do what they see fit to protect themselves; and thirdly, by conceiving and planning the dehumanization of Palestinians and especially denying their right to resist Israeli policies and linking them directly to world terrorism. Levy is in a way giving clues to help us move forward, as Ilan in other words has suggested. That is a big job, but one that has to be done. The battle against the new and unjustified definition of anti-Semitism and the imposition of the Israeli narrative is an uphill struggle, especially with all the supporting legislation being passed in America and Europe.

It is important that Palestinians be awarded the right to resist in the context of international law. This will include a lot of homework on the Palestinian side as well that is more focused and more strategic. We urgently need to consolidate the great efforts done already in the realm of creative resistance in line with international law. I very much like the logic promoted in the Kairos Palestine document, the call of Palestinian Christians for peace and reconciliation, which recommends the support of resistance “in the logic of love.” Such an approach is underrated, unfortunately, because peace activists refuse the very idea of mixing religion with politics and hence would not even explore the power of religion as a conduit of decent human values badly needed in our world today and eventually of the implementation of international law.

Becher: What is that in action?

Khoury: That needs to be worked out but is based on implementing the theory of love which is the greatest motivating force in human life. It is perhaps the reconciliation that Iyad spoke about. Palestinians and their supporters, including some Israelis, achieved a lot to let their cause be known through working in the context of international law and human rights and resistance through cultural and popular means. I am very fond of achievements of Palestinians in the field of human rights but also in the arts, music, culture and literature, and looking deeper, the fact that the three monotheistic religions share a common heritage that has changed the world, and is mainly obvious in historic Palestine. There are areas in which we excel but we haven’t managed to put them together into a strategy. The same is true on the Israeli side. What is left of the Israeli left or peace camp is scattered and there are separate groups that can’t even agree on what is an illegitimate settlement.

In brief, there is a lot we can do, but we need to agree first that in

spite of important achievements the bottom line is that we failed so far. In conceiving and planning a new strategy, we need to emphasize what we can do and control, rather than what others do, including Trump.

Baruch: What can we do as civil society activists? The problem is that many of us are not focused on action. I think we need to train ourselves to see how all the debate and analysis we conduct indoors serves us as guidelines for action. In our Policy Working Group, we are trying to gain attention and work together with various civil society organizations overseas, mainly in Europe, to push back on the “BDS=anti-Semitism” equation and on the diplomatic and media campaign to bring UNRWA to a halt.

Khoury: There have been solidarity movements.

Baruch: Not enough.

Khoury: They have lost their focus.

Baruch: As the PWG, Susie and I traveled to Switzerland (Zurich, Bern, Geneva), during 2019 to work on this. Members of our group have been to the U.S. (Washington), the UN (New York), the UK (Glasgow, Edinburgh, London), the EU (Brussels), Germany (Berlin and other cities) and China (Beijing) to advocate for civil society pushback on those two issues. We aim to generate a bottom-up discourse making politicians, parliamentarians, media leaders, academic leaders, church leaders, trade union leaders, etc. aware and engaged.

Becher: Back to Trump. It’s possible that we may see the end of Trump in the next 10 months, but it makes a huge difference for our issue here if Sanders takes the presidency or Biden takes it, because I believe very strongly, as I said before, about the need for accountability. Sanders and Warren were the candidates who talked about leveraging U.S. military aid to get Israel to comply with international law, and that would have been huge. It’s starting to look like Biden will win, and Biden worries me, although not as much as Trump, of course. The Obama years that everyone sees as having been wonderful for us were not fabulous in my opinion. Obama was not great on our issue. He was scared to death. This “great thing” that he did at the end with Resolution 2334 by not vetoing it, just abstaining, was ridiculous. I find it very worrisome and wishy-washy when the United States had a policy that settlements are illegal and then couldn’t even vote in favor of a resolution that says as much, and that’s where I think we will be back to if Biden wins. I think our focus — all of us who want to see this conflict resolved — is to push for accountability, because I believe that is

the only thing that will move things forward. We can talk narratives, we can talk reconciliation, we can talk people to people, and it's all very nice, but the Israeli people don't care. Life in Israel is great. Israelis don't have to think about the Palestinian problem — not because it's not part of the discourse but because it doesn't affect them.

AbuZayyad: To conclude, let's give Lior the opportunity to finish since he began our discussion.

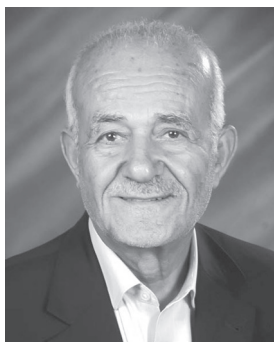
Amihai: I think that this conversation reflects the frustration all of us have, in the sense that whichever avenue we try to explore, we only find discontent. Whether it is trying to show the Israeli public that an occupation exists, whether the discussion is about regrouping the Palestinian people against the occupation or even trying to understand what the international community is doing about this, we can only be frustrated at the end of these discussions. If we look at the Trump plan, I couldn't agree more with Ilan about finding partners in Europe, because they have been the people and countries that stood on the principles of international law, which are now being discarded completely. Even if they put all their power and leverage in order to keep the Trump plan from gaining legitimacy, they have to be challenged in terms of understanding what they have or haven't done to prevent the *de facto* annexation and occupation that is continuing to this day. None of their policies have worked so far to prevent *de facto* annexation. So, it's not just about preventing the Trump plan, but it's about ending the occupation altogether. And on this, to date, the international community has failed miserably, irrespective of the Trump plan.

I think there are many challenges ahead, but they also present us with opportunities. Maybe looking at the conflict as if it were in apartheid South Africa of the 1950s will give us an opportunity to understand how we can fight this occupation. I don't think there's anyone on this planet who has a strategy to end the occupation, but I do know that there are many groups and people, including my organization and the individuals in this room, that make an impact and do valuable work. We know we have to continue working as long as there is value to our work, and we must persist in challenging ourselves to always be more effective and support the various groups and people who are in the struggle to end the occupation and secure human rights for all.

AbuZayyad: Thank you, everyone, for your participation in this important and timely discussion.

Interview

25th Anniversary of the **Palestine-Israel Journal**



Ziad AbuZayyad



Hillel Schenker

*The following is an edited transcript of an interview with Co-Editors Hillel Schenker and Ziad AbuZayyad conducted by Phillip Fischer on February 12, 2020 at the **PIJ** offices. Ziad AbuZayyad is one of the co-founders of the **Palestine-Israel Journal**. Previously he worked as an attorney and journalist, and served as a minister in the Palestinian Authority. Hillel Schenker is a journalist and peace activist; he was an editor for the Israeli peace monthly New Outlook and was involved in the founding of the Peace Now movement. Phillip Fischer is an intern at the **Palestine-Israel Journal**, whose MA thesis will be devoted to the influence of local and international NGOs on the peacebuilding and reconciliation process in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.*

In early 1994, in the midst of the Oslo peace process, Palestinian journalist Ziad AbuZayyad and Israeli journalist Victor Cygelman decided to launch the bi-national **Palestine-Israel Journal**. Hillel Schenker, a journalist and veteran peace activist, has served as the Israeli co-editor since 2005.

Despite the ongoing challenges the peace process faces, especially in light of the Trump administration's so-called peace plan, the **Palestine-Israel Journal** remains faithful to its roots and diligently continues its quest for a political settlement between Israel and Palestine based on the two-state solution: Israel and Palestine living in peace and harmony along the June

4, 1967 lines, with Jerusalem shared as the two capitals of the two states. Motivated by the principle of advancing nonviolent, peaceful solutions and advocating for a better understanding of each other, the *Journal* continues to include in its issues a great variety of political views from Palestinian, Israeli and international contributors. Throughout its prolific history, the *Journal* has served as a channel for debate and a public platform for different academics, decision-makers, activists and journalists who seek a just solution to the conflict.

Philipp Fischer: The first issue of the Palestine-Israel Journal was published 25 years ago. Which events led to the foundation of the Journal?

Ziad AbuZayyad: I was publishing a Hebrew-language Palestinian newspaper called *Gesher (Bridge)*. When the Oslo Accords were signed, I stopped publishing the paper. At the same time, Victor Cygelman, a friend of mine who was involved in *New Outlook* magazine, an Israeli peace monthly based in Tel Aviv, also stopped publishing. So, we started talking about having a joint publication which could support the Oslo Accords and encourage people to start talking about sensitive issues related to the peace process. We also wanted to provide decision-makers and negotiators with material about each side.

After agreeing on the goal and mission of such a publication, we started working with a small number of Israelis and Palestinians to advance the idea. We tried to register the *Journal* at the Israeli Ministry of Interior as a nonprofit organization, but they refused to register us because of the word “Palestine” in our name, so we went to the High Court. Eventually, our lawyers found a compromise and registered us as Middle East Publications, telling us that we can use any name we want without officially registering it at the ministry. So, officially we are a nonprofit organization called Middle East Publications, but in practice we are the **Palestine-Israel Journal**.

Our idea was to have an equal partnership between Israelis and Palestinians. We had two editors — one Israeli and one Palestinian; two managing editors — one Israeli and one Palestinian; and an equal number of staff from both sides. But more important is the Editorial Board and also the material in the *Journal*. We do our best to have an equal number of Israelis and Palestinians on the Editorial Board, and we try our best to have half the material in the *Journal* written by Israelis and half written by Palestinians. On occasion there are more articles by Palestinians or by Israelis, but we don’t make a big fuss about it as long as we are covering the subject from the point of view of the two sides.

Fischer: After Victor Cygelman left, Hillel Schenker took over his position?

AbuZayyad: Victor Cygelman wanted to retire at the end of 2001, so he was replaced by Danny Bar-Tal, a professor from Tel Aviv University. Danny was here for a few years until he left for a sabbatical in the United States. He chose Hillel to succeed him, and since then I have been working together with Hillel.

Hillel Schenker: I first came to the *Journal* in 2002, but I replaced Danny Bar-Tal in 2004-05. I have felt for many years that it is very important that Israelis and Palestinians work together to end the conflict. We will always be neighbors, we will always work with each other, and it's in both the Israelis' and Palestinians' interests. Palestinians, of course, want to end the occupation and achieve national rights, national self-determination, and I always felt this was [in the] Israeli interest as well. It's very important to end the occupation for both the Israeli and Palestinian interests.

AbuZayyad: Hillel was not new to this field. He was involved in *New Outlook*, and we had known each other for a long time. So, when he came here, he wasn't new to us, and we weren't new to him. He believes in the same cause that we believe in and work for, so he just came home. We both feel that we belong to the same school, the same idea and the same struggle for peace and justice to end the occupation.

Schenker: Exactly! I think we had met already in the 1970s. In other words, we knew each other beforehand, but then I came to the conclusion that it is vitally important that we work together.

What happened, essentially, was that I was studying at Tel Aviv University, considering an academic career, and then two things happened. The first thing was the Yom Kippur War, and I ended up spending seven months on the Golan Heights as a soldier. That convinced me that I had to change my priorities and devote all of my energy to achieving peace and preventing another war. Then in 1977, [Egyptian] President [Anwar] Sadat came, and peace no longer was just theoretical; it became a very concrete thing. That's when I began working at *New Outlook*. The step after the Egypt-Israeli peace was to get to the core of Israeli-Palestinian conflict and resolve it.

Fischer: How did the atmosphere change over the years from the founding till today?

AbuZayyad: We started against the background of the Oslo Accords. We were enthusiastic about making peace, and we wanted to contribute

something to the process. Well, now we, like many other people, are disappointed and frustrated. We feel that all our hopes were not realized, and we lost faith in the process. But we still hope that one day things will change for the better in the direction we want. At the moment, however, we are very disappointed in the failure of the Oslo Accords and the continued occupation and settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), which are killing any possibility of reconciliation and undermining the idea of the two-state solution.

Schenker: The first major turning point was when the 2000 Camp David summit failed to produce results, although the Oslo Accords said that a permanent agreement would be reached after five years. The 2000 Camp David summit, hosted by [U.S.] President [Bill] Clinton with [Israeli Prime Minister Ehud] Barak and [Palestine Liberation Organization President Yasser] Arafat, was the attempt to do that but, unfortunately, it did not produce a solution. Then came the second intifada which, unlike the first intifada, was very violent, and that essentially marked the end of the Oslo process. It became much more difficult, but the goal remained the same. We knew that we have to resolve the conflict based on a two-state solution, if possible. Despite the difficult conditions of the second intifada, the *Journal* continued its joint work.

Fischer: Did the failure of the Oslo Accords affect your work?

AbuZayyad: Of course we were affected: first, becoming frustrated and disappointed, and second, regarding the journal itself, we realized that we have to continue our work but expand the area of our attention beyond only supporting the negotiations to dealing with more general topics of concern to the future of the two peoples.

Furthermore, concerning our joint dialogue activities, we were confronted with new regulations preventing Israelis from going to the Palestinian side and Palestinians from coming to the Israeli side. As a result, if we want to invite Palestinians to participate in joint activities on the Israeli side, we have to obtain permits from the Israeli security authorities, which means, practically, that the Israeli security decides with whom we can or cannot work. This is a problem for the freedom, neutrality and objectivity of our work.

Later, people-to-people programs were halted, and we are facing financial difficulties as a result of lack of funding from international sources. The *Journal* is facing financial difficulties which are threatening our ability to continue to function.

Fischer: So, there was less funding for your approach?

Schenker: There are two factors. One factor is that there are many other competing issues, such as the problem of the refugees from the Middle East going to Europe and the Syrian civil war creating many more refugees. A lot of the international community's attention went to those needs. Also, the failure to be able to resolve the conflict has led to frustration on the part of the international community and donors in terms of investing and trying to resolve the conflict.

One of the ideas, for example, is the creation of an international fund for Israel/Palestine. We did a special issue on the Northern Ireland peace process, where the international community created a huge international fund to help support Irish civil society in building a constituency for peace on all sides to the conflict. Unfortunately, the international community has not done the same thing yet for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We really need that, but that's the big challenge. The international community, we believe, is affected by the conflict and should increase its efforts to support those on the ground who are working to resolve it. Right now, that's why we face serious financial challenges.

Fischer: The *Palestine-Israel Journal* is a joint project of Palestinians and Israelis. How did this cooperation develop over the years, and what challenges did you face?

AbuZayyad: At the beginning, we worked very well and didn't have any problems, but later, as a result of the deterioration of the political situation in Israeli-Palestinian relations, all joint projects became difficult. This is true especially for the Palestinians, because some Palestinians think that any kind of joint activity is a kind of normalization of the occupation. So, we faced difficulties. My advantage on the Palestinian side is my background. I was one of the active national leaders in the OPT before the creation of the Palestinian Authority (PA) and before the Oslo process. I've been arrested by the Israeli authorities several times, and I was an elected member of the Palestinian Legislative Council (the PA parliament). So, I have my own legitimacy and credibility in my own society. Therefore, it is not easy for people who are against normalization to discredit me. My presence here gives some protection to the *Journal* and to the joint work. We are an integral part of the struggle against the occupation for the sake of a just, durable peace.

Schenker: On the Israeli side, there has been an attempt by the right wing, which has been growing all the time, to delegitimize any joint work

with Palestinians as being disloyal to Israeli interests and working with the enemy, etc. There is another factor: fear. Many people in Tel Aviv, where I live, ask: “Aren’t you afraid to go regularly to East Jerusalem?” “Because that’s their image, that it is a dangerous place. But it is absolutely essential to continue working together with the hope that Jerusalem will be a shared city, a capital for both — West Jerusalem a capital for Israel, East Jerusalem a capital for a future Palestinian state. So, on the one hand, people ask, “Aren’t you afraid,” but on the other hand, many people will say — Tel Aviv, after all, is a very liberal city — that they are very proud of the fact that I am continuing to do this, that I am representing them. They see the continued existence of a joint journal to be a source of hope and light in a very pessimistic situation.

Fischer: What would you describe as the biggest achievement of the past 25 years?

AbuZayyad: Well, first of all, the biggest achievement is that we are still publishing (laughs). Many others would have become desperate and stopped doing what they believed in a long time ago. So, the biggest achievement, in my opinion, is that we are still fighting, we are still struggling, and we are still publishing this journal. On the other hand, despite all the difficulties, there are people — especially the young generation worldwide — who read the *Journal*, are influenced by it, and who make use of it. We see this as an achievement.

Schenker: I would say that there are two particular sectors where we have a really strong impact. One is the area of students and lecturers who are dealing with political science, international relations, Middle Eastern studies and other related areas. We have been a very major resource in their work, and that’s why so many of the international interns come to us — because they have found us in the course of their studies. Students, after all, are the future of civil society activism, academia and sometimes also political leadership. The second thing you can see whenever we have a public launch of one of our issues is that there is a tremendous interest on the part of the diplomatic community based here in Israel and Palestine, who are always very eager to come. They receive the issues with great appreciation, and they come to the events because it really helps them in terms of their formulation of policy advice for their various foreign ministries.

Fischer: Now that things have changed so much over the last 25 years, and now that this already infamous “peace plan” has been published,

what do you hope for the future? Do you have any hope that things will change, or will they deteriorate?

AbuZayyad: We are going through a very delicate and dangerous stage of the conflict. Things can't be achieved without the involvement of the United States, because it is the leading figure of the world and has its special relationship with Israel and is influenced by Israel. Now, however, we see that the United States is becoming part of Israel, not that Israel is becoming part of the United States. We see that there is an administration in Washington which is to the right of the current right-wing Israeli government. We see an American ambassador in Israel who is like a fanatic settler, and he is proud of being a supporter of the Beit El settlement. He speaks exactly like any right-wing fanatic settler in the OPT. So, with this administration, I don't see any chance for any solution sponsored by the United States.

On the contrary, what Trump announced lately and described as a vision for peace or the "ultimate deal" or the "Deal of the Century" only had a very negative impact on the situation. That is because, on the one hand, it is encouraging the Israeli right to continue the plans for annexation and it legitimizes the Israeli occupation and annexation and discredits the United Nations resolutions and international legitimacy. At the same time, it may push the Palestinians to become more violent. Since 1988, the Palestinians have adhered to the principle of the two-state solution, and to this day the Palestinians are trying to remain committed to the talks and agreements with Israel and keep the security coordination between the Palestinian and the Israeli security forces to prevent violent, bloody attacks against Israelis and against Jews. But I think what Trump is doing is endangering the Israelis, because he is pushing some Palestinians to go back to violence and terror against the Jews and to pressure their government to stop security coordination with Israel.

Schenker: First of all, the alternative of a one-state solution is not realistic in any foreseeable future, given the ongoing conflict and the wars in 1948, 1967, 1973, 1982 and the Israeli-Gaza wars. There is so much suspicion and lack of trust between the two sides that any idea of having a one-state solution in any foreseeable future is simply unrealistic. That's why the two-state solution remains the only viable solution, even if it is becoming more difficult to achieve. There is no question that the Trump plan was formulated with only one of the two partners to what is supposed to be the solution. It's absurd to have a plan that did not have any input from the other partner, the Palestinians.

Looking toward the future, I am hopeful that in November 2020 there will be a new president of the United States, because all of the Democratic candidates, from the moderates to the more progressive ones, have been highly critical of this “Deal of the Century.” They have all said that they would want to re-establish ties with the Palestinians and move toward serious negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians. Now, we all know, as Ziad said, that you can’t really expect any solution without American involvement, but it has to be constructive American involvement.

The international community has always played a role, starting with the Balfour Declaration and the British Mandate, the UN Partition Plan, Resolutions 242 and 338, and most recently, in December 2016, Resolution 2334, which stated clearly that the settlements are illegal according to international law and that you must have a two-state solution. So, we are looking to the international community, also to Europe, and to a degree to the Arab League, for support. After all, the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002 is essentially a formula where the entire Arab world, backed by the entire Islamic world, would be ready to recognize Israel and have normal relations with it on condition that a Palestinian state is established in the West Bank and Gaza, with East Jerusalem as its capital. So, we have formulas to achieve a solution; we have the Geneva Initiative. What we need is greater international involvement, and we also need — we, as Israelis and Palestinians — to develop effective strategies to face current realities. That is one of the roles that we at the *Journal* are playing: analyzing and making proposals for strategies that should be adopted by Israelis, Palestinians and the international community.

Fischer: There is a great variety of views and opinions in the *Journal*. Why is it so important to cover every opinion from left to right, and which opinions are not represented in the issue?

AbuZayyad: From the very beginning, we decided that there should be no censorship. We are totally against censorship. But we agreed that the platform of the *Journal* would be: support for the two-state solution, for peace between the two peoples and for the right of self-determination. So, our platform is that we are for a two-state solution, for a Palestinian state alongside the Israeli state. We don’t publish any article that denies the right of the Israelis or the Palestinians to exist, and we don’t publish any article by a Jewish settler in the OPT because we view the settlements and the settlers as part of the infrastructure of the Israeli military occupation.

Schenker: As far as the diversity of views, of course, most of the authors are people who essentially support the position of the editors and

the Editorial Board. We also welcome well-written and serious articles from people on the Israeli right whose opinions we would like to know. We have published articles by members of the Likud party and by other right-wingers in order to be able to understand their reasoning and to be able to confront them. The same goes for the Palestinian side. If there is somebody close to Hamas who wants to present Hamas's views, we welcome that in order to be able to understand and to confront. Of course, this is on condition that the author doesn't deny the other's right to exist.

Fischer: After all the disappointment due to the failure of the Oslo Accords, what keeps you going to do this work as a joint journal working for peace and reconciliation?

AbuZayyad: Well, it's a challenge for us. We believe in the idea, and we don't want to throw our hands up in the air and say that we failed and that the idea failed (laughs). We are still trying to do what we believe in, despite all the difficulties and despite the lack of funding for the *Journal*.

Schenker: I would add that if you look at our archives, you will see that we have had hundreds, maybe even close to a thousand, authors who have contributed articles, and we don't have the funds to pay them. Serious people, influential people, voluntarily contribute articles because they feel it is important and also influential. We have never had a problem finding enough articles to fill each 128-page regular issue. On the contrary, sometimes we don't have room for all of the articles. People are continually ready to send articles, because they feel it is important to write for the Journal.

Fischer: What are your hopes for the future?

AbuZayyad: We hope that we get funding and continue publishing (laughs).

Schenker: That's basically it. I also hope that the international community will become more involved in helping to resolve the conflict.

AbuZayyad: Our ultimate goal would be that we see a solution to the conflict. Our hope is not only to continue publishing — on the contrary. We want to see that our goal is accomplished, that there is peace, and then there would be no need for us and we would have to think and write about other topics related to a fruitful future post-conflict and post-occupation.

Schenker: We would like to be living in a post-conflict reality.

Book Review

Reflections on *Hen Efshar* by Menny Mautner

Hen Efshar:ⁱ A Futuristic Middle-Eastern Story (Hebrew, September 2019). Carmel Publishers, series “*Parshanut ve Tarbut*.” 157 pp.

Khaled Furani

Khaled Furani is assistant professor of anthropology at Tel-Aviv University and author of Silencing the Sea: Secular Rhythms in Palestinian Poetry.

“You are acting within a tragic condition,” Professor Palmon tells Maggie Oren, Israeli prime minister in 2031, “[you are] trapped between two values, each of which you find precious....” Like Maggie, I also feel caught between two poles: between recognizing Menny Mautner’s honest, brave, and heartfelt imagination and being honest to my own. I wish at once to convey how profoundly I value what Mautner does in this book and to let imagination be true to itself, beholden to no graven images, that is, to no idols of states, markets, tribes, personal fears, or desires. I must try to walk this narrow path.

In a very personal, perhaps even idiosyncratic, way, what I especially love about *Hen Efshar* is its prose. It offers up Hebrew as a language whose eloquence, at even a syntactic level, intimately reverberates with Arabic, demonstrating how, as Maggie would say, they can stand as “deeply bonded” languages. *Hen Efshar* makes it possible for this reader to approach the Hebrew language undaunted, at a measured distance from its conquests, denials, and deceptions.

I was also charmed by Maggie, the story’s complex and contradictory heroine. For someone like myself—who comes from a neighborhood (Wadi Nisnas in Haifa) where in the 1950s Arab women sent their infants to Um Hayim, the Iraqi Jewish nursemaid, and whose grandmother told of how

ⁱ “*Hen Efshar*” is the title and refrain of a song written by songwriter Haim Hefer (melody: David Zehavi) during the war of 1948, meaning “Let it be possible,” expressing a wish that the war will end soon.

in Safed, our ancestral town, Muslims, Christians, and Jews were genuine neighbors, regularly borrowing foodstuffs from one another — Maggie shines like The North Star guiding a freedom train, seeking a way out of the darkness of our mental enslavement. She boldly attains an inspiring balance between humility and courage, announcing, “We are not afraid of the East.”

It is tempting to try to find oneself in the “East” that Maggie and *Hen Efshar* embrace, even if at times assuming the identity of a European outsider. But I am refraining from doing so. I also refrain from focusing on the times when Maggie memorably succeeds in prevailing over fears or denials of Arabs and Muslims, and when she also sometimes fails. Instead, I wish to focus on two key topics that the novel addresses: art and liberal norms.

For Maggie, art “is a secular substitute for religion.” While art may not provide as much meaning as does religion, Maggie tells us that it elevates “the status of [the state’s] secularity.” I assume that this is how Maggie advocates for tolerance and pluralism in modern conditions. Yet if modern history is any indicator, there may be no grounds for trusting the modern category (and practice) of art as Maggie does. To put it in question form: Did Bach prevent the erection of concentration camps in Europe? Did Camus end French colonialism in Africa? Did Shakespeare avert the devastation of Ireland?

Yet if modern history is any indicator, there may be no grounds for trusting the modern category (and practice) of art as Maggie does.

Imprecise as these questions may be, my point in raising them is to plea caution. Now 70 years or so after Frantz Fanon and Martin Heidegger, especially after Heidegger’s *Letter on Humanism*, which warns of the danger of metaphysics dwelling in modern humanism, we might expect Maggie to trust less the redemptive power she attributes to modern art. Even earlier, Walter Benjamin noticed how “aesthetic pleasure” becomes an act of self-destruction among alienated masses. His friend Theodor Adorno questioned poetry’s existence after Auschwitz. Lebanese poet Khalil Hawi felt his poems’ powerlessness against Israeli tanks entering Beirut in their 1982 operation, “Peace for the Galilee,” resorted to exercising his only remaining power: suicide.

Maggie’s concern for art speaks for her liberal concern for, even reverence of, norm and normalcy. She thus speaks of “an effort to preserve normality” and aspiring for a “normalcy of the majority,” since without this norm, violence — of religious and nationalist extremists — will prevail. Or so we are asked to believe.

My sense is that placing violence solely or primarily on the extreme and counterpoising it to a supposedly benign norm, clips Maggie's wings of imagination in two ways. First, it likely weakens her access to the extra-ordinary as a primal source of creativity and even divinity within the ordinary itself. Second, it also conceals the norm being constituted by violence and continuously participating in it. Her excess of trust in the "the majority's normalcy" precludes Maggie from seeing its masquerading as Hannah Arendt's "banality of evil" and precludes her from witnessing the daily, ordinary violence, or potential violence, criminality, and corruption of unthinking "normative" populations.

As a result, Maggie is able to locate violence among Rabbi Kook's disciples wanting to purify the land from its impurities (*goyim*/non-Jews), but not in the Haganah forces naming their 1948 operation to conquer Haifa as nothing less than "*Bi'ur Chametz*" ("eliminating leaven" — a purification ritual in preparation for Passover). Similarly, *Hen Efshar* mentions that another character in the novel, Jamal, came from erased Tantura, but does not mention the 1948 massacre in this coastal village. And if you imagine that in 2030, when the plot of the futurist novel takes place, the violence that once constituted the norm — and was constituted by it — has become the stuff of a dead past, you will be disappointed. Under Maggie's reign, Israel still enjoys a "flourishing security industry." That is, it would still be exporting violence worldwide, with "fringe" non-state actors still being outdone by states in their violent destruction of bodies, lives, homelands, and generations, as occurs today in Southern Sudan, Myanmar, and Gaza, all enabled by the normal and flourishing weapons produced, tested, sold, and operated by states, hardly a dividend of "peace."

There is additional violence concealed in Maggie's "peace." Why else would the majority of states readily available to strike peace with Israel, as described in the novel, come from the ruling Gulf families of Saudi Arabia,

Qatar, Abu Dhabi, and Oman? Maybe *Hen Efshar* intends to remind us how regimes of a feather flock together. That is, if like Israel, your state has come into being as an Anglospheric "Western installation," then it may enjoy premium entry into the region's new "peace club." Excluded from this list until much later in the novel, if at

all, are countries with differing pedigrees and with democratic processes of representation, defective and corrupted as they may be, including Iran, Lebanon, Tunisia, Algiers, and Sudan.

Moreover, Maggie's peace appears to transform Israel, but in a deep way keeps the Middle East largely stagnant. While Israeli youth can finally "fulfill an old dream" and drive unfettered to Rome, Paris, and London, *Hen Efshar* provides no clues as to the freedom of mobility of Arab and Muslim youth. Can they, like their Israeli peers, drive over newly erased borders, say from Um Durman in the Sudan to Um al-Fahm? From Ta'iz in Yemen to Tangiers? From Kabul in Afghanistan to Galilee? That this "Middle Eastern Cosmopolitanism" would do well for the Jewish people and the Israeli regime, while keeping the masses of the region captive in crony regimes, to me appears as a dystopia, not a utopia.

Some things imagined in *Hen Efshar* have already come to exist on some level. In Haifa, it is called Beit-Hagefen, a center for Jewish and Arab "coexistence," where Jews come to feel unafraid in "Arab" spaces. They come to Wadi Nisnas, eat hummus and kanafeh and photograph the "ruins," but after they leave at the end of the day, the wadi (like the region writ large in *Hen Efshar*) stays exactly where it is. Well, maybe the streets are swept a little more thoroughly. *Hen*

Efshar imagines a Jewish people's "homecoming" to the region, while in contrast imagining that Arabs and Muslims had somehow "settled" here. I would like to see it envisioning the whole of the region coming home

Hen Efshar imagines a Jewish people's "homecoming" to the region, while in contrast imagining that Arabs and Muslims had somehow "settled" here.

to itself. For then we might learn how alongside the flourishing of the Palestinian, Arab, Muslim subject, a Jewish people might also come to genuinely flourish, and not live to serve as an emissary of Western domination.

I want to conclude with a question that *Hen Efshar* brilliantly raises and begins to answer: the question of tolerating plurality, a question crucial to the fundamental health of persons and polities alike. For me, the novel raises this question by exhibiting the types of misunderstanding that can arise while attempting to address it. One type of misunderstanding that *Hen Efshar* makes evident is the vision offered of Islam's presence in this land. It views this presence as based on occupation and settlement, even equated with Zionism in this way. This reading of the more distant past in terms of the more recent one, and through paradigms of property law, lacks the recognition that Muslims here have not been "others" who conquered, settled, and thereby earned the right to property. Rather, Islam came out of this land, appealing to those already living in it, bringing into the folds of a community dwellers whose home was always here, without force

and far from uniformly, opening to a mélange from the land's incredible historic diversity, not only Byzantine Christians and Jews, but possibly remnants of groups more ancient than both: Jebusites, Canaanites, Moabites, Phoenicians, Nabateans, and so forth.

My point is that if we want to bravely imagine, then let us take *Hen Efshar* beyond where Maggie and Jamal discuss the rightfulness of Arab and Muslim claims to the land as in the lines, "Others have settled in the land ... in places that were already taken by an organic society that is centuries old, which by power of its staying has acquired rights ... that are valid in any recognizable property jurisprudence in the world."

To truly not be afraid of the East, as Maggie would like us to be, we might want to re-activate native muscles of religious toleration, which we can

To truly not be afraid of the East, as Maggie would like us to be, we might want to re-activate native muscles of religious toleration.

recall flexing in Baghdad, Damascus, Cairo, Morocco, and Andalusia. This reactivation could perhaps also inspire Fortress Europe to not be afraid of the Other, a fear evident in the ongoing maritime holocaust off its shores today. To shed that fear we may also be wise to shed the idea that "religious" constitutes a

"phase" we need outgrow, and instead embrace it as a resource from our native heritage for recognizing the equal value of all humanity.

By way of closing I want to cite from the brief, tense, and soul-searching vacation that Dan and Maggie had in Italy. From an unspoiled Mediterranean landscape, *Hen Efshar* raises a beautiful and poignant question. Dan tells Maggie: "Perhaps you can't incorporate me,"

to which Maggie responds, "Perhaps you can't incorporate me." In similar fashion, we could ask the question, if we must live together, as I believe we must, then who is more equipped to "incorporate" the other? Who has greater resources for acknowledging and even cherishing the region's multiplicity? Who can make possible the homecoming of the entire region — including the Jewish people, to be welcomed to the land just as any other community fleeing persecution throughout history (Bahai, Druze, Armenians, Circassians, and Jews, to name a few) — which, for over a century since Sykes-Picot, has been suffering the ever-growing endangerment, if not de facto devastation, of its cultural rainforest.

Culture

Alfa Theater — the Biography of an Independent Fringe Theater

Avraham Oz

Avraham Oz is professor emeritus at the University of Haifa and resident director at Alfa Theater, Tel Aviv. He has translated numerous plays and operas, was head of the Theater Department at Tel Aviv University, founded and chaired the Department of Theater at the University of Haifa, and taught at Beit-Zvi, the Hebrew University, the Kibbutzim College, and Sapir College, among others. He has published numerous books and articles, edited academic magazines, broadcast television and radio programs, was associate artistic director at the Cameri Theater, dramaturg at the Haifa Theater, and artistic director of the Haifa University Theater. Oz is working now on a production of his own play, Glorious Mountain, about the origins of the Jewish-Palestinian conflict in 19th-century Palestine.



Like all other theaters in Israel, the doors of Alfa Theater for Performing Arts were closed in March 2020 under “coronavirus emergency regulations.” At this time, when no one can tell how, and if, any artistic organization will survive the crisis, it may be an appropriate moment to pause for a brief review of the past, in the hope that it is not an obituary for a life project gone.

The highly praised, unique and intimate fringe Alfa Theatre, residing in an industrial, unprivileged quarter of Tel Aviv, was initiated as a drama school. The Academy of Performing Arts was launched by a group of theater artists as a nonprofit charity in 2010. All of its initial founders, well-known practitioners in Israeli theater, were resolved to train a fresh, new core of theater practitioners. From the very start, the students included a variety of ethnicities, coming to Tel Aviv from all areas of the country, Jews and Palestinians together. Several of the initial founders of the project had been part of the Haifa University Theater, which was closed by university authorities in 2004 after it insisted on mounting plays in Arabic side by side with the official Hebrew tuition language. Following a cooperation agreement with the Open University, the Academy of Performing Arts, Tel Aviv, was established as a professional conservatory, allowing students

who chose to get academic credits on top of the professional training in acting, movement voice training, and speech to do so by arrangement with the university.

No ideological agenda was drafted for the new project, except for the initial definition, “a studying theater,” which was coined by Tal Itzhaki, its managing director since its establishment to this day. Patterns of action, however, started to take shape as its artistic activity was progressing. From the outset, the school’s productions, unlike other drama schools in the country, involved professional actors performing side by side with the students. This plurality has been manifested not only regarding the variety of experience but also in terms of social and ethnic pluralism. Since the very first production, *Split Screen* (2011), a combined intertwined dramatization of short stories by Israeli poet Dalia Rabikowitz and Egyptian novelist Naguib Mahfouz, co-directed respectively by Jewish and Palestinian directors, the repertory involved Jewish and Palestinian actors and creators working together. The juxtaposition of the two novellas, written at different times and in different contexts, created a harmonized dramatic narrative correlating two youth experiences, growing out of separate traditions, backgrounds, and social contexts. The second production, directed by Palestinian actor Amer Hlehel, was a revival of a San Francisco Mime Troupe adaptation of Goldoni’s commedia *The Military Lover*. Originally adapted in 1967 to fit the anti-Vietnam war period, it reverberated closer to home in the war-ridden Middle East.

Groundbreaking Productions

A groundbreaking production of Federico García Lorca’s *The House of Bernarda Alba* (2012), directed by Moneer Bakri, cast renowned Palestinian actor Mohammad Bakri in the role of Bernarda, clad in a white Arab *gallabia*, against a typical Middle Eastern set. Bakri’s virile portrayal of Lorca’s conservative mother forcefully emphasized her assimilated patriarchal values harshly judged by the play itself. Bakri, who used to play major roles on most repertory stages in Israel, had been silently boycotted by all major Israeli theaters, a reaction to his documentary film *Jenin, Jenin*, which recorded the voices of the residents of the Jenin refugee camp in the aftermath of the Israeli army’s raid on the camp in 2002. While no obvious attempt was made to read up-to-date political allusions into the play, the production, highly praised by both critics and audience, was confronted by right-wing and ultranationalist demonstrations, supported by the highly nationalistic Minister of Education and Culture Limor Livnat, who also threatened the venue where the production was performed with budget cuts.

While admitting Bakri's excellent stature as an actor, the demonstrators protested against "giving the stage" to the director of Jenin, Jenin. The result of the controversy brought the young new fringe theater to the public notice.

The following production, Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, was directed by Amit Gazit, formerly the artistic and resident director of major repertory theaters in the country, who served as a chief acting teacher and resident director at the Alfa Theatre until his death in 2019. Gazit's period-attired production made no attempts to read modern allusions into the play in addition to those implied by Miller's text. Yet the opening scene, where Salem's residents raised the buildings of the set from timber boards strewn on stage while a nationalist/religious hymn sounded, was often interpreted as a visual allusion to Jewish settlements built on occupied Palestinian lands. Gazit's consequent productions helped shape the theatrical language of the theater inspired by the tradition of realism in theater in which he was trained. Gazit did much to distantiate the single stance of the purely realistic theater from the multi-layered style he developed throughout years



Actors Suheil Haddad as Shylock (r) and Dan Turgeman as Antonio (l) in a scene from Shakespeare's *"The Merchant of Venice."*

of cooperation with designer and dramaturg Tal Itzhaki (both were invited as guest artists to Columbia University/Barnard College from 2003 to 2005). The culmination of Gazit's work at the Alfa Theater was his revival of Sarah Daniels' *Neaptide*, which focuses on the political encounters between a teacher turned lesbian and the surrounding conservative society. Gazit enriched the realistic core of the conflict by implanting into his multi-layered production a nonrealistic visual, musical, and movement framework leaning on a major theme of witches and mystery drawn from Daniel's text, emphasizing its feminist message.

A great blow to the theater was the assassination, in 2011, of actor and director Juliano Mer-Hamis, who had planned to direct bilingual productions in Hebrew and Arabic. Pam Gems' *Dusa, Fish, Vi and Stas* (2013), directed by Orna Akad, marked the first Arabic-speaking production in the new, Hebrew-speaking theater. It combined a pioneering feminist Palestinian production directed at an audience not acquainted with such dramatic material. Years later, in 2019, the Alfa Theater was to partake in the only Arabic theater festival in Israel, the Masrahid, producing an Arabic version of Michael Morris-Reich's monodrama *Eyes Talking*, which won the best actor's prize for Suheil Haddad and best director for Akram Tellawi.

A Permanent Home

The year 2013 marked both the departure from semi-school productions and the launch of the theater's own permanent auditorium. Converted by Itzhaki from a former snooker club and illegal casino planted between garages in daytime and fairly sleazy clubs at night, the new fringe venue was inaugurated by a daring production of two Harold Pinter plays, not as a double bill but as one combined play. The author of this article initiated in this production the ongoing work of his permanent theater group, to become one of the two professional groups operating under the umbrella of the Alfa Theater center. The "contamination" practice (blending of two plays) initiated in the first production of the theater was followed by a combination of Pinter's *Ashes to Ashes* with his *Mountain Language* into one piece.

By adding a chorus of singers and dancers enveloping the first play, originally a two-hander (two-actor play), and adding a complex musical and video art frame (including Pinter poems set to music especially for this production), the inherent violence informing the action in which Devlin, interrogating his partner Rebecca regarding her mysterious former lover (who turns out to be a Nazi monster tearing babies from their mothers' arms), led to the open violence of the second play. In the passage from *Ashes to Ashes* to *Mountain Language*, where the military soldiers and prison

guards of the city people prohibit the mountain people from speaking their own language, Devlin becomes the officer of the repressive city regime, and Rebecca is put at the side of the stage in her armchair (which served as a central object in the former play) as an observer of the plot, as if the action of *Mountain Language* were yet another of her visions informing the former play. The chorus of singers and dancers and the music and video art enveloping the scene lent continuity to the action, which ended with Devlin and Rebecca resuming the latent violence informing Devlin's gesture of holding Rebecca's throat, which started the first play.

Political plays, enveloped by a choral, musical and video setting with covert topical allusions, became the token of the group's work. C.P. Taylor's *Good* (2014) deployed a rich chorus singing, dancing, and interfering with the plot to create the ominous shadow of the Nazi atrocities to come. The story of Johnny Halder, a professor of Goethe and humanist literature, active in 1930s Germany and gradually turning into a Nazi monster, did not have to contain familiar allusions in order to raise unavoidable associations with the reality surrounding the Israeli political situation, resulting in a haunting effect on the audience.

An Ambitious *Merchant of Venice*

The most ambitious project of the Alfa Theater to date has been an adaptation of William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. In it, I took the liberty of introducing an extra character into the play. The production was set in 1516, the year the Jewish Ghetto in Venice was inaugurated. It opened with a caravan of Jewish refugees wandering from the Iberian Peninsula on the byways of Europe. It was an image corresponding to both the image of the "Wandering Jew" and the acute image of displaced refugees in today's Europe. In the vein of the "ethnic blindness" that had become a persistent tradition in the work of the Alfa Theater, Shylock's alienation from the Venetian community received an added suggestive layer as the role was played by a Palestinian actor. In the production's early performances, the role was played by Morad Hassan, who had played the title role in a monumental production of Georg Büchner's *Woyzeck*, directed by David Braslavi. He was succeeded by veteran actor Suheil Haddad, who, having retired from his long-term job as a producer at the Israeli Educational TV, joined the company as a permanent member. Rave reviews compared his Shylock to those of Al Pacino and Lawrence Olivier.

In this production, the opening procession of Jewish refugees entered the stage against the background of Louis Aragon's poem on the precarious life of the alien as permanent wandering. It was chanted by Salarina, a

character added to the original play (converted from Shakespeare's male merchant). Throughout the production, she accompanies the action like a chorus, both as a singer interfering with the action at key moments with poems by Aragon, Leonard Cohen, and others, and as a media presenter investigating plots and motives, as an emissary of the spectators.

Once the initial poem was done, the group of refugees, led by Shylock, addresses Venice in words taken from the traditional Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) prayer: "Open a gate for us, while the gate is closing, for the day has turned." Their ensuing journey proceeds throughout the play, from their temporary residence in Venice, where their attempts to preserve their separation from the Christian community of Venice, while assimilating into the city's mainstream economy and citizenship, fail. Their primary economic conduct, usury, clashes with the official code of "romantic mercantilism" upheld by Antonio, Venice's "Prince of merchants" and his associates. The wandering of the Jews into the realm of perpetual nomadism eventually provides the play with an open ending when Shylock's daughter Jessica, frustrated and disappointed by her continuous alienation from her non-welcoming newly adopted community, joins her father, his assistant Tubal and their fellow wanderers hitting the roads anew. The gate in the scene symbolizes passage and addresses the seemingly stable inmates of the bordered land.

To accompany the pilgrimage of Shylock and Antonio into their innermost subjectivity, the external plot was assisted by a few fresh readings of the Shakespearean characters and moves: a scheming Duchess of Venice, using her troops of pirates to abduct Antonio's ships; the aforementioned Salarina as a TV presenter accompanying the narrative as a sharp interviewer and cabaret singer; and a Tubalas as an economic commentator providing historical insights and perspectives. With Antonio and Shylock's conflict exemplifying the polarity of romantic and coarse mercantile capitalism, the plot of Shakespeare's play, clad in the modern imagery of golden capital, stock exchange fluctuations, political machination, and biased media coverage, is grasped as a nucleus and blueprint for the present day world.

Focusing on the "Others" of Modern Society

About a year after my own theater group was formed, fellow director Dor Peles' group started with a different vein of plays, focused on the "others" of modern society. Paul Zindel's *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds* (2015), depicting the underprivileged family of Beatrice Hunsdorfer and her daughters Tilly and Ruth, with the compelling prospects that nuclear power and science might set before humanity, started

a line of plays exploring the individual other in society. Jonathan Harvey's *Beautiful Thing* (2015), where a gay romance between two adolescent boys against the background of London's poverty and broken families leads to a similar hopeful ending. Tom Griffin's *Boys Next Door* (2017) accounted for the social other from a different angle — that of the encounter between challenged individuals trying to live in an open community and the “normal” society surrounding them. A year later, a new adapted version of the play in the spirit of immersive theater — actively involving both the site and the audience — was mounted under the title *Jackie's Party*. The traditional frontal theater was converted into the boys' apartment, and the characters welcomed the audience at the theater bar, conducting them to the venue of the farewell party thrown for the boys' coach, transformed in this version into a female character. The audience was urged by the actors to partake in the dance, put on party props, and help themselves to modest refreshments, thus directly encountering the characters within their local habitation of the theater.

Only the Future Will Tell the Consequences of Coronavirus

Since its establishment, the Alfa Theater has not been supported by either government or municipal sources, nor sponsored by commercial bodies, which rendered its budget scarce. In 2018, it was subsidized for the first time by the Ministry of Culture as a theater center, as an acknowledgment of its years of hosting guest fringe companies. However, a project involving a dramatic study of the nascent Zionist movement and early Jewish settlement in Palestine at the end of the 19th century, which was welcomed enthusiastically by the artistic committee of the ministry and budgeted accordingly, met with repeated technical difficulties from the executives of the ministry, which raised concerns regarding political intervention. Mobilizing mass donations from individual donors in the country and abroad helped the theater survive the difficult times, and a new production of Pinter's *Landscape* was recently launched and drew much praise. Ambitious and expensive theatrical enterprises, such as *The Merchant of Venice*, *Woyzeck*, or *Good*, are hardly affordable nowadays until subsidies come in. The immense blow of the coronavirus crisis, which has closed all Israeli theaters at the moment, has added a severe blow. Only the future will tell the consequences of the crisis on the fate of the intriguing and unique enterprise of an independent fringe theater in Israel.

New Suggestions¹

Ahmad Dahbour

*Ahmad Dahbour (1946-2017) is a renowned Palestinian poet born in Haifa, Palestine. On the day of his second birthday, his family was exiled from Palestine to Lebanon as Haifa fell into the hands of the Jewish paramilitary organizations during the 1948 War. His family ultimately settled in a refugee camp in Homs, Syria. Due to the harsh conditions and poverty that refugees faced, Dahbour did not complete high school; however, he was an avid reader and continued to teach himself, demonstrating an early gift for writing poetry in his teen years. He published his first collection of poetry, *The Predators and the Children's Eyes*, when he was 18 years old, and his first complete book, which included seven collections of poetry, in 1983. His poem "The Tale of the Palestinian Child" written in 1969, appeared in his second collection, which bore the same title and gained him a distinguished place amongst prominent Palestinian and Arab poets. Dahbour worked as editor of *Lotus* magazine, editor-in-chief of *Albayadir*, general director of the Culture Department of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), and deputy minister of culture of the Palestinian Authority, the position from which he ultimately retired. He published 13 collections of poetry in two books, and efforts are under way to publish his work, including some previously unpublished writings. Dahbour was presented with Tawfiq Zayyad Poetry Award in 1988 and was granted the Medal of the Order of Merit and Superiority by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in 2012. He also received the Palestinian Jerusalem Award for Culture and Creativity in 2015.*

Out of what lair did the earthy tyrants escape?
Nero burned Rome twice, then composed a discordant tune
he went on playing till the city sang with him.
Holako who inherited that melody
set fire
to the world's library, the river ran
with ink, and from the ashes was born
the language of locusts which rose
to thank the madman.
After the salutations to madness, Hitler came
and fashioned soap-bars from the dead;
but unable to be appeased,
had to include the sea
in his vital destruction,
and war at sea, turmoil on land,
combined in their angry conflagration.
I too have seen a tyrant—
whose power diminished the other three.

¹ Jayyusi, S. K. ed., 1992. Poetry. In: *Anthology of Modern Palestinian Literature*. s.l.:Columbia University Press, p. 139.

He has committed every atrocity,
and yet: in his day,
there were five poets,
who took to silence.

Translated by Lena Jayyousi and Jeremy Reed

From “I Do Not Renounce Madness”²

NO, whether near or far, high or low, her heart will not change
But I have one condition to state: ask the question:
Who is the enemy?
The shaken sky-sieve sprinkles delicate death
Who is the enemy?
The rest of the white clouds are lit with thunder
And have split into boats, while exiles were preparing to leave
Who is the enemy?
The sea is treacherous
The sky is treacherous
The enemy extracts the essence from olive trees
But the essence is in the eyes and the roots
And we shall not die!
God’s camping grounds are vast, and His exile, so full of traps,
is loaded with police reconnaissance
but we do not die
we generate new life in wombs and the dead
return and multiply,
between the wind and explosives, they prevail
and under their cloths a spirit asks: who is the enemy?
The Enemy is the Enemy
These locusts are the Enemy
This siege is the Enemy
Equal divisions as they split the camp between them
But the camp does not die
And here the children carry the bomb and wheat stalks, and
the good is abundant in this world, and chains are not sufficient
to close the playgrounds, and one clear day, the children shall
return to the same boats. Come Laila, come!
Your eyes are black, and I love black eyes!
I have died so often before
But when I promise to return, I always return
And perhaps we believe the white night had never been?

² Jayyusi, S. K. ed., 1992. Poetry. In: *Anthology of Modern Palestinian Literature*. s.l.:Columbia University Press, p. 140-141.

But we prepare for it, and forgive no mistakes
I have dreamt that I dreamt
and woke up from consciousness, and when the day returned, I was split:
My voice was three, my ears were here
And I saw you and did not see you
Forgive me, sad lover... but I don't regret
There's no time for that ...but when I promise to clear
The rains and the past and not to journey far
I do it. I'll tell the trees to unite
I'll tell the sorrows to join forces
I'll tell the motherland to unite
and I promise
to do like wise
Laila is with me
We walk on rubble, and weep like this, in public,
No, we shan't return to our childhood
From here, the new begins, and childhood shall return to
Laila's womb, be born in the camp, and the camp shall grow
And grow, then it will run
in the direction of the water spring
and engender a world
And I shall have time to write a different poem.

Translated by Lena Jayyousi and Jeremy Reed

Note: As with other Palestinian poets, Dahbour is alluding in this poem to "neglect" and sometimes to the "coercion" Palestinians feel they have received from other Arabs.

Palestinian Embroidery, Collective Memory and Land Ownership

Laura Lamberti

Laura Lamberti, an Italian from Naples, is a recent graduate of the dual BA program between Sciences Po and Columbia University, where she studied political science, human rights and Middle Eastern Studies. She has always been interested in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and passionate about Arab literature and poetry and is currently interning at the Palestine-Israel Journal before delving into her graduate studies.



“Every nation portrays its heritage with the color of its soil”

As I sat at the dinner table in a Christian Palestinian home in Beit Jala, a town on the outskirts of Bethlehem, my eyes fell upon a poster on traditional Palestinian dresses published by the Palestinian Heritage Center. The center, established in 1991 with the aim of reviving and documenting Palestinian cultural heritage, is known for spreading cultural awareness as a form of activism on behalf of the Palestinian struggle through museum exhibits and posters as well as shows and replicas of original pieces. This specific poster I found in the house of a man who, despite having the credentials to obtain a well-paid public accountancy job, decided to dedicate his life to teaching foreigners about the Holy Land, guiding them through its cities, villages, checkpoints and landmarks, focused on one of Palestine’s oldest art forms: *tatreez*, or embroidery. Featuring a map of Palestine with examples of the various regional versions of traditional Palestinian embroidered dresses, the poster read: “Its woven fabrics, motifs and colors tell the story of the village or city it belongs to. Each dress also shows the history and myths associated with the land, nature and beliefs.”

Various Forms of *Tatreez*

Throughout history, cultural heritage has served as proof of land ownership and belonging, and the specific case of Palestinian *tatreez* perfectly exemplifies the natural transformation of a cultural tradition into a form of political engagement and resistance, an artistic political statement that very loudly voices the determination of a people not to be erased.

In the period preceding 1948, Palestinian dress embroidery very heavily featured stylistic regional differences, reflecting the different

characteristics of villages and also expressing the wearer's status, wealth and geographic origin. Such stylistic differences in color, patterns, stitches and embroidery placement were representations of regional identity. Despite not being as heavily political as in the post-*Nakba* period, dress embroidery has always reflected the political environment of the period to some extent, as is proven by the existence of patterns such as the Pasha's Tent pattern under Ottoman rule and the Officer Pip's pattern at the time of the British Mandate. A beautifully colored and elegantly woven identity card, a *thobe* could reveal the origin and status of whoever wore it at first glance. This tradition, passed on from mother to daughter, brought to life by the threading of silk, filaments of gold and silver as well as the finest fabrics, was completely disrupted, like all aspects of Palestinian life, by the events of 1948.

Little is known of *tatreez* in the 1950s and 1960s, as forced displacement and the ensuing economic difficulties obviously had a heavy impact on the ability of Palestinian women to dedicate themselves to the craft and on their access to the necessary materials. In the course of the 1970s, *tatreez* slowly began to take hold again, with stylistically regional differences becoming increasingly blurred in favor of a rather communal style that grew more and more political until it resulted in the 1980s in the *shawal* style of dress, also known as the intifada dress, a clear statement of national consciousness.

The new *shawal* style came to be seen as a symbol of support for the uprising, because it boldly featured embroidery of the colors of the then



Detail of a "Intifada Dress" on display in the exhibition "At the Seams: A Political History of Palestinian Embroidery." The dress is from the collection of Tiraz: Widad Kawar Home for Arab Dress. Photo by Tanya Traboulsi for the Palestinian Museum. Site: Guernica Magazine

banned Palestinian flag, as well as the flag itself, in addition to political messages in calligraphy and mythological and folkloric scenes that could be easily related to the Palestinian struggle. With the establishment of various handicraft projects and cooperatives involving women from various Palestinian refugee camps, Palestinian women started embroidering for Western markets as well, with their products reflecting Western influences from the patterns to the embroidery placement to the materials being used. This opening to the international market was not only a source of economic revenue but also an extremely politically savvy move which was able to spread the call for recognition of the Palestinian people and their rights to audiences who might not have been reached as effectively through other means.

The Sunbula Project

One such fair-trade organization is the Jerusalem-based Sunbula, which started as a small project in 1988 organized by American Carol Morton. Through the decades, Sunbula grew, reaching over 25 partnerships in terms of grassroots organizations, developing into an income-generation source for hundreds of women and their families. A staff member of Sunbula stated in an interview that one of the reasons why it became necessary to modernize the craft was that many of the original pre-*Nakba* embroidery pieces disappeared after 1948, and the ones that did survive were often exhibited in museums, hence inaccessible to the majority of women who consequently were not exposed to the traditional patterns anymore: “What you see right now is the survival of what is left of Palestinian traditional embroidery.”

In addition, a serious threat facing the preservation and continued survival of this craft is the demographic threat, which sees the new generation of women, including those who benefited from their mothers’ embroidery-driven income in terms of increased educational opportunities, determined to pursue other paths.

When asked about the possible implications of cultural appropriation resulting from an increasing percentage of the products being sold abroad, the staff member explained that while the appreciation of embroidered pieces abroad is seen in a very positive light, what is problematic is the appropriation of the craft on the part of Israelis, who have in certain instances and locations claimed Palestinian embroidery patterns as their own.

Embroidered Palestine Maps

The art of *tatreez* does not only come to life through garments, however, but also through various forms of tapestries destined to be hung on the walls of Palestinian homes. One such form is the embroidered *khartat*

Falastin or map of Palestine. In her work *Embroidered Palestine*, Hagar Salamon, senior lecturer at Hebrew University's Jewish and Comparative Folklore Program, delves into the analysis of the origins, significance and symbolic role of this embroidered map of Palestine, which preserves the long-gone geography of pre-Nakba Palestinian villages. Salamon's research highlights the role played by politics in the development and popularization of this craft, as well as the intensity with which Palestinians cherish it to the point of not being able to commercialize it. Most of the women interviewed by Salamon said they had begun to embroider maps around the time of the Oslo Accords, when various forms of popular culture that had been sidelined until then began to re-emerge. The emergence of this craft at the time of the Oslo Accords is a clear reflection of the nature of map embroidery as a form of political mobilization and resistance through celebration and preservation of an identity-related memory. Sociologically, it is pivotal to note that the mobilization it represents is not a transnational one based mainly on an ideology and the rallying of sympathies for such ideology; rather, it's a mobilization that can be better described as internal resistance, which only Palestinians themselves can access and engage in.



Embroidered Map of Palestine. "The Art of Resistance;" Transnational Institute

While you might never have an embroidered map of Palestine hanging on your wall, if you readers ever do invest in any Palestinian embroidered product, make sure to tell the people who will compliment you on the colorful patterns and the fine fabrics that *tatreez* is much more than a decorative craft for your aesthetic pleasure; it's an embroidered history of pride, determination and the refusal to surrender.

Recently Received Books and Publications

Cline, Eric, Digging up Armageddon: *The Search for The Lost City of Solomon*, Princeton University Press, 2020, (496 pages)

In 1925, James Henry Breasted, a well-known Egyptologist and director of the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago, set out on an expedition to excavate Megiddo, referred to as Armageddon in the New Testament. Set in the backdrop of the Great Depression in the United States, as well as the brewing tension in British Mandate Palestine, Eric Cline gives readers a behind the scenes look at the exploration of the ancient city, believed to be fortified by King Solomon. By drawing on letters, cablegrams, notes and diaries, Cline attempts to present the inner debates and feuds that emerged from such an undertaking, and explores the implications of discovering a city that helped shape humanity's understanding of the ancient world.

Cornerstone, Issue 81, Winter 2019/2020, *Theologies of Palestine*, a publication by Sabeel Ecumenical Theology Center, (27 pages)

Cornerstone is a Sabeel publication which is published a few times a year. 2019 has seen editions on interfaith and interreligious dialogue, and Christian communities in Palestine and Israel. The 81st edition of *Cornerstone* is the product of an attempt to bring together the various organizations and theologies among the Palestinian Christians. Therefore, Sabeel interviewed a number of Palestinian theologians and the transcripts of those interviews make up this edition of *Cornerstone*. This collection of interviews aim to give the reader a wide overview of the different theologies among Palestinian Christians both within Palestine and Israel.

Nathanson, Roby Dr. and Yanai Weiss, editors: *Generation Z in the MENA Region – Similarities and Variances among Young Adults in Israel and Selected MENA Arab Countries*, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2019, (71 pages)

This study, which was published by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation Israel in cooperation with the Macro Centre for Political Economics, compares the attitudes of young people in Arab countries to the attitudes of young people in Israel, both in Jewish and Arab society. The research is based on a survey from 2016 that tested a wide range of social, demographic, and attitudinal trends of young people in Israel and a similar survey which

was undertaken by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation offices in nine major Arab countries – Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, the Palestinian Authority, Syrian refugees, Morocco, Yemen, Bahrain, and Tunisia. This unique study summarizes the findings and insights about what the youth of each society share – and where they are different. The analysis compares the Jewish and the Arab youth in Israel to their counterparts in the Arab world, and particularly in the Palestinian Authority – Israel’s closest neighbors. There are several trajectories of comparison: Jews relative to the Arab World, Arab citizens of Israel relative to the Arab World and compared to Palestinian youth in the Occupied Territories, and Palestinians compared to both Israeli Jews and the Arab world.

Fischbach, Michael R., *The Movement and the Middle East: How the Arab-Israeli Conflict Divided the American Left*, Stanford University Press, 2019, (312 pages)

The Arab-Israeli conflict constituted a serious problem for the American Left in the 1960s: pro-Palestinian activists hailed the Palestinian struggle against Israel as part of a fundamental restructuring of the global imperialist order, while pro-Israeli leftists held a less revolutionary worldview that understood Israel as a paragon of democratic socialist virtue. This intra-left debate was in part doctrinal, in part generational. But further woven into this split were sometimes agonizing questions of identity. Jews were disproportionately well-represented in the Movement, and their personal and communal lives could deeply affect their stances vis-à-vis the Middle East.

The Movement and the Middle East offers the first assessment of the controversial and ultimately debilitating role of the Arab-Israeli conflict among left-wing activists during a turbulent period of American history. Michael R. Fischbach draws on a deep well of original sources—from personal interviews to declassified FBI and CIA documents—to present a story of the left-wing responses to the question of Palestine and Israel. He shows how, as the 1970s wore on, the cleavages emerging within the American Left widened, weakening the Movement and leaving a lasting impact that still affects progressive American politics today.

Ian S. Lustick: *Paradigm Lost: From Two-State Solution to One-State Reality*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019, 232 pages

Why have Israelis and Palestinians failed to achieve a two-state solution to the conflict that has cost so much and lasted so long? In *Paradigm Lost*, Ian S. Lustick brings fifty years as an analyst of the Arab-Israeli dispute to bear on this question and offers a provocative explanation of

why continued attempts to divide the land will have no more success than would negotiations to establish a one-state solution.

Basing his argument on the decisiveness of unanticipated consequences, Lustick shows how the combination of Zionism's partially successful Iron Wall strategy for dealing with Arabs, an Israeli political culture saturated with what the author calls "Holocaustia," and the Israel lobby's dominant influence on American policy toward the Arab-Israeli conflict scuttled efforts to establish a Palestinian state alongside Israel. Yet, he demonstrates, it has also unintentionally set the stage for new struggles and "better problems" for both Israel and the Palestinians. Drawing on the history of scientific ideas that once seemed certain but were ultimately discarded, Lustick encourages shifting attention from two-state blueprints that provide no map for realistic action to the democratizing competition that arises when different subgroups, forced to be part of the same polity, redefine their interests and form new alliances to pursue them.

Paradigm Lost argues that negotiations for a two-state solution between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River are doomed and counterproductive. Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs can enjoy the democracy they deserve but only after decades of struggle amid the unintended but powerful consequences of today's one-state reality.

Chavez, Karma, *Palestine on The Air*, University of Illinois Press, 2019, (188 Pages)

Karma R. Chavez brings to her audience a collected series of interviews with Palestinians, who describe to her their conditions of living under Israeli occupation. The idea of bringing this work to American audiences, stems from showing Americans a perspective that differs from the pro-Israel rhetoric frequently aired on U.S. media networks and publications. Chavez conducted the ten interviews that make up this book between 2013 and 2016 for a local community radio station. One of the reasons she listed that convinced her to publish these conversations was her visit to the Occupied Palestinian Territory in 2015. The book tries to explain the reasons for the U.S. government's role in the subjugation of Palestinian rights and authority over the occupied land, and wishes to encourage American readers to become more involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conversation.

Sara Yael Hirschhorn: *City on a Hilltop: American Jews and the Israeli Settler Movement*, Harvard University Press, 2017, 368 pages

Since 1967, more than 60,000 Jewish-Americans have settled in the territories captured by the state of Israel during the 1967 war. Comprising

15 percent of the settler population today, these immigrants have established major communities, transformed domestic politics and international relations, and committed shocking acts of terrorism. They demand attention in both Israel and the United States but little is known about who they are and why they chose to leave America to live at the center of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

In this deeply researched, engaging work, Sara Yael Hirschhorn deconstructs stereotypes, and shows that some members of the 1960's generation who moved to the occupied territories were not necessarily messianic zealots or right-wing extremists, but rather idealists who had engaged in liberal causes in the U.S. who believed that they weren't abandoning their progressive heritage when they crossed the Green Line. They were motivated by what they saw as an historic opportunity to create new communities to serve as a beacon—a “city on a hilltop”—to Jews across the globe. She gives voice to those who carried out this vision in Yamit in the Sinai, which was later evacuated in the wake of the Israeli–Egyptian peace treaty, and in the settlements of Efrat and Tekoa in the West Bank. Later, some of them tried even to mobilize the rhetoric of civil rights to rebrand themselves, particularly in the wake of the 1994 Hebron massacre of 29 Palestinian worshippers, perpetrated by Baruch Goldstein, himself an American immigrant, though one who had been a follower of extreme right-wing Rabbi Meir Kahane in the U.S., definitely not a civil rights activist.

On the fiftieth anniversary of the 1967 war, Hirschhorn illuminates the changing face of the settlements and the clash between liberal values and political realities at the heart of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

B'Tselem Report, *Playing the Security Card: Israeli Policy in Hebron as a Means to Effect Forcible Transfer of Local Palestinians*, 2019, 35 pages

For 25 years, Israel has been openly pursuing a policy of segregation in the center of Hebron, in order to allow a handful of Jewish residents to live as though they had not settled in the middle of a bustling Palestinian city, in the heart of an occupied territory. This policy completely ignores the needs of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and sentences them to an unbearable reality, with the hope that they will leave their homes ostensibly of their own free will.

The latest report by B'Tselem describes the harsh results of the separation regime Israel has implemented in the city of Hebron for the last past 25 years and shows an updated map of Hebron settlements and movement restrictions on Palestinians.

Levac, Alex, Mohammad Eman, Gisha: *Distant Relatives*, Gisha, 2014, 9 pages

In 2014 just before the Israeli military operation against the Gaza Strip, known as Protective Edge, began, Gisha – Legal Center for Freedom of Movement, asked Palestinian photographer Eman Mohammad and Israeli photographer Alex Levac to help the organization document moments in the daily lives of Palestinian families who are split between Gaza and the West Bank. The pictures showed in the brochure tell the stories of families who have generously agreed to allow a glimpse into their lives. To the observers, their lives seem normal enough, but just below the surface lies the constant ache of longing for a parent's touch, a grandchild's hug, or the encouraging presence of a sister.

Compiled by Sabeth Vater and Jugal Bhide

Documents

RAMIFICATIONS OF THE US MIDDLE EAST PLAN ON THE FUTURE OF JERUSALEM

ANALYSIS PAPER

April 2020



BACKGROUND

The US Middle East Plan formally released in January 2020 by US President Trump grants for the first time international recognition of Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem in 1967. As of the date of the plan's publication, East Jerusalem remains the only area in the West Bank that was formally annexed by Israel since 1967. Affirmation of Israel's sovereignty over East Jerusalem constitutes a direct continuation of previous measures taken by the Trump administration over the past three years, including the transfer of the US Embassy to Jerusalem and the closure of the US Consulate that operated as the direct US diplomatic mission to the West Bank and East Jerusalem, independent of the US Embassy in Israel. Contrary to Trump's declaration at the time, the significance of the embassy's transfer went far beyond mere recognition of the existing reality. The move was rather part and parcel of a joint American-Israeli effort to unilaterally dictate the final status of Jerusalem along with the other core issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and to impose an irreversible reality which is advantageous to one party.

Against the backdrop of these measures, the US Plan reveals the complete scope of understanding reached between Israel and the Trump administration and underscores the stark resemblance between the plan and the Israeli right-wing agenda. This understanding is clearly "the deal within the deal," as Ambassador Friedman himself described.¹ In other words, rather than proposing a viable basis for negotiation, the Trump administration put forth an outline which enables Israel to carry out provisions in the plan that are convenient for it regardless of Palestinian consent or implementation of the plan's sections concerning them. This is particularly evident in terms of the status of Jerusalem and its borders.

The unilateral recognition of Israeli sovereignty over East Jerusalem includes the entire Old City Basin, home to the city's historical and religious sites, and is accompanied by far-reaching measures of separation and annexation which completely alter Jerusalem's character and its boundaries. The totality of these measures, which are detailed in this paper, constitutes a deep erosion of the Palestinian collective attachment to Jerusalem and hence the character of the city as the home and capital of two peoples. In its sweeping unilateral decisions regarding Jerusalem, the American Plan essentially

¹ Aviv Tatarsky & Yudith Oppenheimer, *The Deal within the Deal*, *Haaretz*, 18 February 2020 [Hebrew]

removes the issue of Jerusalem from the negotiating table in any future peace process. Even if the plan pays lip service to a semblance of a two-state solution, the exclusion of Jerusalem from the terms of debate renders it all but futile and nonviable and will only serve to further fuel the conflict, while inflicting harm on the residents of the city and the entire region.

Netanyahu's declarations concerning the advancement of building in Givat Hamatos, Har Homa and E1, which were made shortly after publication of the Trump Plan lend further credence to the notion that US affirmation of Israeli sovereignty over East Jerusalem is not just mere symbolic recognition. Its formal acknowledgement of Israeli sovereignty over a "united Jerusalem" emboldened the Israeli government and essentially gave it carte blanche to carry out unilateral measures of settlement expansion in areas of East Jerusalem and its vicinity, which have remained longstanding international redlines. The advancement of such moves has been consistently regarded as destructive to the prospect of a future Palestinian capital in the city within a viable two-state framework.

THE TRUMP PLAN'S PROCLAMATIONS CONCERNING JERUSALEM

1. The plan recognizes "united" Jerusalem, including its entire historical center (Old City Basin), as the capital of Israel under its complete sovereignty.
2. The route of the Separation Barrier will serve as the municipal boundary of Jerusalem. The East Jerusalem Palestinian neighborhoods that are physically detached from the city by the Separation Barrier (the Kufr Aqab-Semiramis area and Shuafat Refugee Camp area) will be formally cut off from Jerusalem and transferred to Palestinian control.
3. The route of the Separation Barrier similarly sets the metropolitan borders of Jerusalem, implying that the settlement blocs of Maaleh Adumim (including E1 area), Gush Etzion and Givat Ze'ev, located on the Jerusalem side of the existing/planned route of the barrier will not only be annexed to Israel, but immediately considered an integral part of Jerusalem.
4. A Palestinian capital will be established to the east and north of the Separation Barrier and will include the East Jerusalem neighborhoods beyond the barrier and the Palestinian town of Abu Dis. As stated in the plan, it "could be named Al-Quds or another name as determined by the State of Palestine."²
5. Palestinian residents of Jerusalem who reside within the Separation Barrier will be able to choose between three options concerning their legal status: 1. Israeli citizenship 2. Palestinian citizenship or 3. Retain permanent residency status in Israel (their current status).
6. All of Jerusalem's holy sites, including the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif, will remain subject to the existing governance regimes and "should remain open and available for peaceful worshippers and tourists of all faiths." While omitting a

² *Peace to Prosperity: A Vision to Improve the Lives of the Palestinian and Israeli People*, Trump Administration, January 2020, p. 17

number of Muslim and Christian sites, the list adds various Jewish sites which Israel has never officially regarded or recognized as holy.

7. Although the plan theoretically states that the status quo on the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif will be maintained, it substantially deviates from these arrangements by providing that “people of every faith should be permitted to pray on the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif, in a manner that is fully respectful to their religion, taking into account the times of each religion’s prayers and holidays, as well as other religious factors.”³ Such a statement implies the possibility of a division of worship space and time which would undermine the status of the place as a Muslim religious site.
8. The State of Palestine would be permitted to develop a special tourism zone in an agreed upon area in Atarot along the northern border of Jerusalem. This zone will provide services to Muslim tourists who visit Jerusalem, including transportation, restaurants, stores, hotels and a cultural center.
9. Points four and eight along with apparently five are contingent upon Palestinian agreement to the entire outline. For its part, Israel can implement the measures contingent upon the state in a unilateral and unconditional manner.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE PLAN'S PROVISIONS FOR JERUSALEM

Recognition of Israel's Annexation and Application of its Sovereignty over East Jerusalem in 1967 Unilaterally Grants Israeli Control over the Entire Historic Area of the City.

Comprising the heart of East Jerusalem with its concentration of sites of historic, religious and political import, the Old City Basin—the Old City and the Palestinian neighborhoods encompassing it—is inherently the core of the conflict in Jerusalem and the most politically and religiously sensitive area in the city. Negotiating teams along with Israeli, Palestinian and international stakeholders involved in the peace talks over the years have all been well aware of the tremendous complexity of this area and the immense sensitivity required in dealing with the issues concerning it. The deep significance of this area to the two peoples and three world religions was the basis for the decision to internationalize Jerusalem (*corpus separatum*) as laid out in the 1947 UN Partition Resolution and the fact that until 2017, no country in the world recognized Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem (including West Jerusalem).

Even following the Trump administration’s unilateral recognition and transfer of the American embassy to Jerusalem, the rest of the world, save for Guatemala, did not follow suit in moving their embassies to the city. The position of the international community concerning Jerusalem has remained that its permanent status must be determined through negotiation and full agreement between the two parties based on respect and recognition of the national and religious heritage of both sides. The plan’s position with respect to the historical area of East Jerusalem significantly harms the Palestinian ties to the city as well as erodes its status as the capital of two peoples and its importance to three world religions. This alone for the Palestinians, renders the plan unviable and undermines the legitimacy of US arbitration.

³ Ibid, p. 16.

Official Removal of Neighborhoods Beyond the Barrier from Jerusalem (*refer to map in appendix*)

The US Plan's declaration that the Separation Barrier marks the border of Jerusalem essentially finalizes the process undertaken by Israel over the past few years to formally cut-off eight East Jerusalem neighborhoods from the city. These neighborhoods include Kufr Aqab-Semiramis and the area of Ras Shehadeh, Ras Khamis, Dahiyat a-Salaam, and the Shuafat Refugee camp, referred to as "East Shuafat" in the plan. They are currently home to 120,000 to 140,000 Palestinians, most of whom have Israeli residency, and account for more than one-third of East Jerusalem residents.

Since the construction of the Separation Barrier, Israel has steadily increased its pressure on Palestinian residents in the form of mass restrictions on Palestinian planning and building and an intensification of punitive measures against unpermitted construction in areas within the barrier, driving many to seek "refuge" in the neighborhoods beyond the barrier. In tandem, Israeli authorities overlook the unrestrained and unregulated construction in the neighborhoods beyond the barrier, turning them into grossly neglected and densely populated enclaves overrun by poverty with little municipal oversight and provision of services. Tens of thousands of residents who were forced to migrate to these neighborhoods as the sole "escape" from the longstanding planning stranglehold have found themselves trapped between the necessity to provide a roof over their families' heads and the concern that Israel's ultimate objective is to sever them from the city as explicitly reflected in the Trump Plan.

The plan's position regarding the neighborhoods beyond the barrier directly contradicts its declaration that "peace should not demand the uprooting of people – Arab or Jew – from their homes."⁴ While it is true that the residents of these neighborhoods will not necessarily be displaced from their private homes, they will rather be imprisoned within them and uprooted from everything that constitutes home in its broader, collective sense: identity, legal status, space, community, and the right to the city. If until now the Separation Barrier caused them to be 'uprooted *within* their city,' in the wake of the Trump Plan, they will become 'uprooted from their city.'

• Ramifications

After the construction of the Separation Barrier, tens of thousands of East Jerusalem residents who had been living on the outskirts of Jerusalem returned to live within the city. The return of these residents created tremendous pressure on the failing infrastructure and exacerbated the already existing severe housing shortage in East Jerusalem, which accelerated the migration to the neighborhoods beyond the barrier. If actual moves are taken to formally sunder these neighborhoods from Jerusalem, large waves of Palestinians will presumably return to the city, this time to Palestinian neighborhoods within the barrier and potentially to nearby Jewish neighborhoods/ settlements such as Pisgat Ze'ev, Neve Yaakov and Armon Hanatziv.

Driven by a sense of crisis and duress, these waves will only increase the pressures and distress already implicit within East Jerusalem. As a result, throughout the

⁴ And in continuation: "Such a construct, which is more likely to lead to civil unrest, runs counter to the idea of co-existence." *Peace to Prosperity: A Vision to Improve the Lives of the Palestinian and Israeli People*, Trump Administration, January 2020, p. 8.

city and within a distance of only one barrier from it will live large Palestinian populations in greater poverty, neglect and desperation. This dire reality imposed on both Palestinians and Israelis alike will only fuel more friction between the two populations and escalate overall tension throughout the entire city.

- **A Legislative Element**

Formal removal of these neighborhoods from Jerusalem would require the Knesset to pass a law overriding previous legislation, which acutely prohibits the transfer of territory from Jerusalem within the 1967 annexation line to a foreign entity. While legislative measures have been advanced by the right-wing in recent years to amend the law for the purpose of detaching these neighborhoods, certain right-wing factions ultimately opposed the move due to apprehension it would legitimize a future compromise on Jerusalem.⁵ If the right comes to an internal agreement regarding this matter, it is reasonable to assert that they would succeed in overcoming this obstacle to amend the aforementioned clause. It is likewise worth noting that previous political statements made by center-left political parties indicate their support for such a move.⁶

- **A Legal Element**

As is the case for the entire Palestinian population in East Jerusalem, the residents of the neighborhoods beyond the barrier possess permanent residency status in the State of Israel. While the Trump plan does not explicitly address this issue, provisions within the plan imply the potential sweeping revocation of residency status of more than 120,000 Palestinian residents who reside within the neighborhoods beyond the barrier.

Although according to Israel, East Jerusalem was officially annexed in 1967, Israel has refrained from granting collective citizenship to its residents. They instead have been conferred with permanent residency, the only status for the past 53 years with which they could maintain their ties to their birthplace and to all aspects of their lives. In 2017, the Supreme Court recognized the status of East Jerusalem residents as unique by virtue of being “indigenous inhabitants.”⁷ International judicial forums have equally adjudicated in recent years against the revocation of residency status in various countries.⁸ The uniqueness of the status of East Jerusalem residents merits immediate discussion, utilizing both Israeli and international law (which cannot be exhaustively discussed in this paper), in order to prevent the potential exploitation of their residency status to displace Palestinian residents from Jerusalem.

⁵ Ir Amim, *Destructive Unilateral Measures to Redraw the Borders of Jerusalem*, January 2018.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ AAA 3268/14 Al-Haq v. Minister of Interior; Ronen, Yael, *Pnei Hilkhatah Awad – To Where? The Status of the Palestinian Residents of East Jerusalem* [Hebrew]

⁸ Ronen, Yael, *The Ties that Bind: Family and Private Life as Bars to the Deportation of Immigrants*, INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LAW IN CONTEXT 8.2 pp. 283-96 (2012) Cambridge University Press

Actualization of "Greater Jerusalem" – Annexation of the Three Settlement Blocs within the Existing/Planned Route of the Separation Barrier (*refer to map in appendix*)

Even prior to publication of the Trump Plan, Israel had initiated legislative measures (which were not passed) to annex the three settlement blocs of Maaleh Adumim, Givat Zeev and Gush Etzion to Jerusalem as part of its "Greater Jerusalem" policy.⁹ Since the US plan confers Israel with the right to annex all West Bank settlements, it would appear there is no particular significance to this additional provision. However, the inclusion of these blocs within Jerusalem's metropolitan borders grants them a unique status. The immediate manifestation of this is exemplified by the US' tacit acquiescence to Netanyahu's promotion of construction in the E1 area just prior to the March 2020 elections as part of a spate of new settlement plans advanced in East Jerusalem and its vicinity since the plan's release.

Until the unveiling of the US Plan, the E1 area, located within the Maaleh Adumim settlement bloc, constituted a red line in longstanding US foreign policy due to its dire ramifications on the viability of a two-state solution with two capitals in Jerusalem. Israeli construction in the E1 area would bifurcate the West Bank along every axis, driving a wedge between the Ramallah and Bethlehem areas as well as fracture the contiguous Palestinian space between East Jerusalem and the West Bank necessary for a viable Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital. This territorial contiguity is likewise essential for preserving the Palestinian fabric of life and the ability for Palestinians to conduct sustainable independent lives in the future. Building within the E1 area would thus advance implementation of the "Greater Jerusalem" concept, creating more Israeli contiguity, while rupturing the Palestinian environs into fragmented and disconnected enclaves.

- **A Demographic Dimension** is likewise implicit in the annexation of the three settlement blocs to Jerusalem. Such a move will artificially add some 140,000 settlers to Jerusalem's demographic balance while removing a similar number of Palestinian residents living in the neighborhoods beyond the barrier (as described above). The realization of "Greater Jerusalem" will create one large metropolitan body, which will guarantee a solid Israeli Jewish majority and a further diminished and weakened Palestinian minority. Thus, by officially excising the neighborhoods beyond the barrier from Jerusalem and annexing the settlement blocs to a Jerusalem metropolis, the Trump Plan brings Israel substantially closer to achieving its longstanding goal of controlling East Jerusalem without its residents.

The Status Quo on the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif

As is the case with many other provisions, the Trump Plan uses ambiguous and contradictory language, but in actuality leads to a radical and unilateral shift of the existing reality in favor of the Israeli right-wing agenda. Although the plan avers to uphold the status quo on the Holy Esplanade, it contains blatant contradictions which constitute a flagrant breach to the status quo. It states that "people of every faith should

⁹ Ir Amim, *Destructive Unilateral Measures to Redraw the Borders of Jerusalem*, January 2018.

be permitted to pray on the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif, in a manner that is fully respectful to their religion, taking into account the times of each religion's prayers and holidays, as well as other religious factors."¹⁰ Enshrined in peace agreements with Jordan and upheld since 1967, the status quo confers only Muslims with worship rights, while all others are visitors. In the words of Prime Minister Netanyahu himself in October 2015, "Muslims pray at the Temple Mount, non-Muslims visit it."¹¹

Permitting people of all faiths to pray on the Mount marks a dramatic shift in the longstanding policy concerning worship rights on the Holy Esplanade and implies the establishment of division of worship space and time. In addition, the plan adopts the distinction -- promoted by state-backed Temple Movements - between Al-Aqsa Mosque as an exclusively Muslim holy site and the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif complex as a site where all three religions should enjoy equal worship rights. This stands in blatant violation of the status quo which avows that the entire compound is a Muslim religious site.

While Netanyahu explicitly confirmed his commitment to the status quo in 2015, he simultaneously continued to lend support to the Temple Movements who are acting to overturn the status quo on the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif. The proposed changes in the plan contravene the peace agreements between Israel and Jordan and will exacerbate the already tenuous relations between the two countries. In recent years, serious escalations in clashes between Israelis and Palestinians have derived from tensions surrounding the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif.¹²

Holy Sites in Jerusalem

The plan's only operative statement with respect to the holy sites is the necessity of ensuring freedom of access to them for worshippers of all faiths. The main significance of this section is rather its problematic proclamations: **a.** Save for the Haram al-Sharif and a general reference to Muslim holy shrines, the list of holy sites neglects to include a number of Muslim sites in East Jerusalem, while entirely excluding other Muslim and Christian sites in West Jerusalem, such as the Muslim cemetery in Mamilla and the churches in Ein Kerem (*to which Palestinians have strong ties*). **b.** Conversely, the list expands the number of Jewish holy places to include sites which according to Israel and/or Jewish tradition have never been officially regarded or recognized as holy. These include: archeological sites in Silwan and its vicinity, Tomb of Absalom, the Tomb of Zechariah, Second Temple Pilgrimage Road, Gihon Spring, the Pool of Siloam, City of David, as well as the Mount of Olives and the Sambuski Jewish cemetery on Mount Zion. The common feature between many of the additional Jewish sites on the list is that they are managed by the Elad settler organization and constitute the epicenter of the organization's settlement operations.

The ascription of 'holiness' to historical/touristic sites reinforces the aim of state-backed settler organizations like Elad in erasing the historic Palestinian connection to Jerusalem

¹⁰ *Peace to Prosperity: A Vision to Improve the Lives of the Palestinian and Israeli People*, Trump Administration, January 2020

¹¹ TOI Staff, *Netanyahu Pledges to Prevent Jewish Prayer on Temple Mount*, *Times of Israel*, 25 October 2015; Ir Amim, *Collective Restrictions on the Entry Muslim Worshippers to the TM/HAS...*, November 2015

¹² *Ibid.*

and blurring the multicultural and multi-religious heritage of the Old City Basin by superimposing an exclusive Israeli Jewish narrative of the space. These efforts bolster the ring of settlement activity around the Old City Basin, marked by settler-operated touristic projects, including national parks and the planned controversial cable car, settler-initiated evictions of Palestinians and takeovers of their homes.¹³

Abu-Dis and the Neighborhoods Beyond the Barrier as Al-Quds

In order to thwart any basis for a Palestinian claim to East Jerusalem, the Trump Plan provides for the establishment of the capital of the future Palestinian state in an aggregate that is municipally and geographically unviable. This artificially engineered construct would be comprised of the neighborhoods beyond the barrier--Kufr Aqab-Semiramis in the north and the Shuafat Refugee Camp area in the northeast-- and the West Bank town of Abu-Dis to the east of Jerusalem. Located in peripheral areas which possess no religious, historical or political significance, these geographically fragmented locales cannot constitute a substitute for the historic East Jerusalem with its deep symbolic value.

The efforts to exchange Abu Dis for historic East Jerusalem are not new. This concept has repeatedly been raised in previous rounds of negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians as part of a relentless Israeli effort to reinvent a "Palestinian Jerusalem" outside of Jerusalem and consistently rejected by the Palestinian side. Proposing Abu-Dis and the neighborhoods beyond the barrier as Al Quds 'or another name as determined by the State of Palestine' in the framework of the US Plan is intended to remove the issue of Jerusalem from the future negotiating table and to mark the Palestinian claim to East Jerusalem as entirely illegitimate.

Furthermore, at one stage prior to the formal release of the Trump Plan, it was leaked that the Abu Dis concept would include, in addition to the neighborhoods beyond the barrier, Jabal Mukabber and Issawiya--two East Jerusalem neighborhoods both located within the barrier.¹⁴ While this idea was ultimately not included within the published plan, it appears that there has been consideration among some to also detach these neighborhoods from Jerusalem, and it is uncertain that this notion has been shelved entirely.¹⁵ Since the summer of 2019, Issawiya in particular has been the target of an unprecedented aggressive police campaign, accompanied by incessant police raids and harassment, which has generated immense friction within the community.¹⁶ The goal of such measures may serve to effectively mark these neighborhoods with the stigma of being a violent, fringe enclave inhabited by lawbreakers in order to justify any potential future steps towards excluding them from the city, which in turn will further reduce the number of Palestinians in Jerusalem.¹⁷

¹³ Ir Amim, *Settlement Ring Map Around the Old City and Accompanying Map Notes*, March 2019

¹⁴ Nadav Shragai, *Jerusalem in the Deal of the Century*, *Israel Hayom*, March 7, 2019 [Hebrew]

¹⁵ *ibid*

¹⁶ Nir Hasson, *340 Arrests and Only Five Indictments: Summer-long Police Sweep Strikes Fear in Issawiyah*, *Haaretz*, August 28, 2019; Noa Dagoni, *In Issawiya, Who Should Be Feared More: the Coronavirus or the Police?*, *Local Call*, March 22, 2020 [Hebrew]

¹⁷ Yudit Oppenheimer, *The Security Excuse for Pushing Al-Issawiya Out*, *Times of Israel*, August 2, 2019

The Legal Status of East Jerusalem Residents

The US Plan provides that East Jerusalem residents living on the Jerusalem side of the Separation Barrier will be able to choose among three options: Israeli citizenship, Palestinian citizenship or retain their current permanent residency status in Israel. Under any other conditions, the multiple options proposed by the plan could be interpreted as a sign of goodwill and recognition of the immense complexity of the identity of Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem. Yet, none of the proposed possibilities ensure an adequate level of guarantee. Since 1967, East Jerusalem residents have been granted the ability to apply for Israeli citizenship. Due to growing uncertainty concerning their residency status, a large number of Palestinian residents have requested Israeli citizenship in recent years, yet the process is often hampered and drawn out by stringent bureaucratic hurdles, including conditioning the receipt of citizenship on a declaration of loyalty to the Jewish state and knowledge of Hebrew. Approval of the application is likewise subject to the discretion of the Minister of Interior. Under these circumstances, the ability to apply for Israeli citizenship is just a mere formality that only a few succeed in attaining.¹⁸ The US plan neither lays out demands to amend this procedure nor does it obligate Israel to approve Israeli citizenship for any resident who submits an application.

Likewise, the possibility of obtaining future Palestinian citizenship comes with its own obstacles. First, the chances of a Palestinian state being established according to the conditions set forth in the Trump Plan are exceedingly slim. Second, the plan does not indicate how Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem who choose to receive Palestinian citizenship will continue to remain in the city under full Israeli sovereignty. Since the 1990's, Israel has prohibited residents of the West Bank and/or Gaza, including spouses of East Jerusalem residents, to live or spend time within the State, save for those with special work permits. The lack of any precedent of those with Palestinian citizenship or IDs living securely under Israeli sovereignty casts serious doubts on the likelihood that such an arrangement for East Jerusalem residents is realistic and viable.

Most East Jerusalem Palestinians will presumably continue to remain within the current anomalous framework – stateless residents – dependent upon the goodwill of the sovereign state and perpetually apprehensive over the possible revocation of their residency status for one reason or another. Given the general spirit of the Trump Plan and the non-obligatory manner in which it presents options concerning the legal status of East Jerusalem residents, it appears that this issue has been intentionally left nebulous, conditional per individual case, and entirely subject to Israel's goodwill. This inevitably confers Israel with the utmost discretion while releasing it entirely from overall responsibility and the fulfillment of any obligation in advance. Moreover, the plan does not provide a timeframe for implementation of this section.

Tourism Zone in Atarot

While this provision is marginal in relation to the others, it is indicative of the Trump Plan's overall approach and fits into the general framework of offering Palestinians amorphous economic benefits as a substitute for sovereignty, self-rule and territory, as encapsulated in the plan's title "Peace to Prosperity." The area of Atarot is located

¹⁸ Yael Ronen, *id.*

on the northern edge of Jerusalem and has no symbolic importance or touristic value – a choice which further highlights Palestinian displacement and dispossession from every place of significance in Jerusalem. This supposed tourism zone will be no more than a commercial and transportation terminal adjacent to the Qalandia checkpoint in one of the most environmentally polluted areas in Jerusalem.¹⁹ The touted success of the proposals contained in this section is equally questionable from an economic perspective. Moreover, just weeks after the unveiling of the Trump Plan, Israel advanced building plans for a new Israeli neighborhood/settlement in the majority of the area designated for this theoretical tourism zone.

IR AMIM'S POSITION

In close coordination with the current American administration, Israel is advancing a policy of annexation and separation of 'Greater Jerusalem.' A large portion of the Trump plan is not a basis for negotiation or peace, but rather constitutes a fleshed-out work plan, which both echoes and advances measures already being implemented on the ground. It likewise further entrenches Israeli control of East Jerusalem and the majority of the West Bank, while foiling any prospect for a just and agreed resolution to the conflict. As both US Ambassador Friedman and Prime Minister Netanyahu stated, an agreement has been reached between the US and Israel concerning the advancement of Israeli moves regardless of Palestinian position or consent. This policy will not only impact the future of Jerusalem, but also the entire Israeli-Palestinian conflict and will consign both Israelis and Palestinians alike to an accelerating apartheid reality. In Jerusalem, the uprooting of approximately one-third or more of the Palestinians living in East Jerusalem from the city and their confinement to neglected enclaves along with further isolation and suppression of those who remain within the city will fracture the urban fabric and liable to increase confrontation between the two populations of the city.

As opposed to the destructive conditions and measures laid out within the US Plan concerning Jerusalem, Ir Amim's position rather holds that Jerusalem is the current home of two peoples whom both regard as their capital and the source of their historic, religious and political attachments. A secure and stable life in Jerusalem can exist only out of recognition of the entirety of the connections of both peoples to the city, and when both are able to conduct their daily and public lives in an independent and sovereign manner. In the absence of a permanent solution in the foreseeable future, the two peoples will continue to share a complex urban reality dependent on a delicate weave of symbiotic relations and interdependence. In this current reality, policies should be adopted to enhance the living environment and personal security of all of Jerusalem's residents and to reduce elements that exacerbate tension in the city.

First and foremost, the living conditions and the existential security of East Jerusalem residents must be significantly improved, both within and outside of the Separation Barrier, in an adequate and non-coercive manner. Palestinians must be permitted to physically and socially develop their communities in the urban sphere, preserve the wholeness of their community and physical surroundings, and conduct their affairs in the city through their own institutions without fear. Living conditions in West Jerusalem also require improvement, while positive economic, social and political

¹⁹ Nir Hasson, *Report: Air Pollution in the Industrial Area of Atarot in Jerusalem is Several Hundred Percentages Above the Standard*, Haaretz, March 3, 2020.

channels for dialogue and cooperation must be established. The residents of both parts of Jerusalem and their respective political leaderships, along with the support of the international community, must be full partners in determining the political future of the city. The shared life in the city can and must constitute a basis for negotiations for a viable sustainable solution, out of the understanding that in every possible political constellation, the two peoples will live alongside each other in Jerusalem.

APPENDIX



Speech by HR/VP Josep Borrell in the European Parliament on the US Middle East Initiative – February 11, 2020

Mr President, Honourable Members,

I am really grateful for having this opportunity to address you today on the Middle East Peace Process. This issue is of fundamental, strategic importance to the European Union.

For too long we have been witnessing a conflict that has caused endless suffering for generations of Israelis and Palestinians alike. The increasingly dire situation on the ground – including violence, terrorism, incitement, settlement expansion, illegal by the way, and the consequences of the ongoing occupation – has destroyed hope on both sides and reduced the viability of a two-state solution.

At an international level, for a number of years, there has been little or no substantive engagement in efforts to resolve the conflict. Indeed, as one observer pointed out to me recently, there is neither peace nor a process.

In recent years, we on the European Union side, are perhaps the only actor to have stayed the course.

We have been vocal in our support for a negotiated two-state solution, based on the internationally agreed parameters and in accordance with international law. This means a two-state solution based on the parameters set in the Council Conclusions of July 2014 that meets Israeli and Palestinian security needs and Palestinian aspirations for statehood and sovereignty, ends the occupation that began in 1967, and resolves all permanent status issues in order to end the conflict.

Our European vision is a principled one and a pragmatic one. It reflects our broader attachment, as Europeans, to the rules-based international order.

We are also active on the ground. No other international actor has been as engaged as we have been in practical efforts to build a future Palestinian state. In 2019 alone, the European Union and its Member States had an open portfolio of some €600 million in assistance to the Palestinians. I have said it during my hearing, €600 million is almost €1.5 Million a day.

But where are we today?

It remains my firm view that there is still a way forward if both the parties are willing to resume credible and meaningful negotiations. International support for any such efforts will clearly be crucial to their success. In this regard, the tabling of concrete proposals such as the United States did can be helpful, both as a catalyst for deeper reflection on the way forward, and as a potential opportunity to kick-start a political process which has been at a standstill for too long.

However, as I have said, the proposals tabled two weeks ago clearly challenge the internationally agreed parameters. It is difficult to see how this initiative can bring both parties back to the table.

Twenty-five out of twenty-seven Member States of the Foreign Affairs Council support this consideration. Two were against it. So it was not a unanimous decision of the Council and I cannot present it like this but as a statement of the High Representative, which I am repeating here again.

Last week I was in Washington, during a very busy day talking with all foreign affairs external policies higher authorities of the US government interlocutors. I made this point to my interlocutors: we need to ask ourselves whether this plan provides a basis for progress or not. We need to know whether the proposals themselves are really open for negotiations. Is it a starting point or the end? For the European Union's part, our position is clear: we are ready to work with the international community to revive a political process in line with international law, which ensures equal rights and which is acceptable to both parties.

Thank you for your attention and I look forward to an important discussion, which I am sure will now follow.

Closing remarks

Mr President,

This is a very divisive issue. It is in the Council, it is in the parliament. But I would like to remind you that I am not expressing my personal opinion. My job is to be the High Representative of the Council. And I have to represent what I think is the opinion of the Council. I have not said, that this statement was the position of the European Union. I precisely said, that since it was not unanimity, I could not present an agreement of the Council. It was a statement of the High Representative. Representing whom? Representing the twenty-five Member States whom agreed to the statement. It was not a statement of the European Union. It was a statement of the High-Representative, it was not unanimity.

Why have I gone to Iran? Because I have a mandate. A unanimous mandate of the Member States of the Council asking me to go and to talk to everyone in the broader region of the far Middle East to try and to look if there is any possibility for us, the European Union, to contribute to increase the stability and peace in the region. I have a mandate to go talk to everybody, everybody means everybody.

I have been talking with the State Minister for Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia. I have been to Jordan, I have been talking to Emirates, I have been to Teheran. I will go to Iraq. In order to have a look at what can we do to contribute if we can to the peace and stability in this region.

And for sure we talk with Iranians about everything that worries them and that worries us but the purpose was to say what we can do in order to save the nuclear deal and to stabilise the region. We did not spend much time talking about the Israeli Palestine issue because Iranians are very much aware they have nothing to say on that problem.

Another Member was asking, with whom have you been talking in the USA? Well with the most prominent people. With the Secretary of State Pompeo [Mike Pompeo], with

the security adviser Mr O'Brien [Robert C. O'Brien], with Mr Kushner [Jared Kushner] and with Ms Nancy Pelosi [Speaker of the United States House of Representatives] and for sure the three first were very much supporting their plan and Ms Nancy Pelosi, who as you know is a Democrat, was very much critical about it.

As I am saying, I am not expressing my opinion. In fact, my opinion has no place here. I am expression the opinion of the majority of the Council. And the majority of the Council has supported a statement by which we send a message saying that first: everybody has refrained from any unilateral actions contrary to international law and that could exacerbate the tensions further.

We are really asking not to declare the annexation of Jordan valley. And this may happen. And if this happens, you can be sure that this is not going to be peaceful. Maybe someone does not mind but for us, it matters a lot because it can raise another wave of violence in Palestine. We are asking Palestinians to keep calm and not go to violent demonstrations.

We asked the proposal to be considered a starting point. And I said clearly that maybe it could break the stalemate and create a dynamics in which we can go and talk again about what can we do in order to look for a solution to this very old and damaging and painful problem.

I am not denying this being the possibility of a starting point. What I am denying is the fact that it can be considered an end point. Because if I tell you, come and negotiate, but I tell you if we do not agree I will implement anyway my proposal, well this is not a big incentive to negotiate. Come and negotiate but be aware if you do not agree with me I will anyway implement the proposal. Do you call that a negotiation? That is what we refuse and what we have been saying. And believe me we invited the Secretary of State Pompeo to come to the Foreign Affairs Council to explain directly to all of the Member States their proposal. I know there are some who are closer to this proposition and others who are very far away from this proposition. I know it is not going to be a unanimous position on that. It is too divisive. But we have to discuss and we have to look for, if not unanimity, the majority, whatever it is. And believe me I do not believe that the majority of the Member States of the European Union are considering this proposal as a good starting point. But we will do our best. Talking with everyone in order to try to break this stalemate and to push for negotiations. Some very optimistic people told me "why do we not try to do something like we did many years ago in Madrid? Oslo Process and Madrid Process. I think that we have the commitment to do something. We cannot just refuse, we cannot say that is not good enough, we have to look for something that works and this is going to be part of the discussion we are going to have next Monday on the Foreign Affairs Council.

Thank you

Joint statement by Belgium, France, Germany, Estonia and Poland, current and former EU members of the Security Council

Security Council – 11 February 2020

I would like to make the following statement today on behalf of the four EU Members of the Security Council (Belgium, Estonia, France and Germany), and Poland, as former EU member of the Security Council.

We are fully committed to the transatlantic partnership and value all efforts, including by the United States, to help find a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We have taken note of the proposals presented by the United States with regard to a resolution to this conflict.

In line with the long-standing EU position, we remain committed to a negotiated two-State solution, based on 1967 lines, with equivalent land swaps, as may be agreed between the parties, with the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous, sovereign and viable State of Palestine, living side by side in peace, security and mutual recognition.

The US initiative, as presented on 28 January, departs from these internationally agreed parameters.

We reaffirm our readiness to work towards the resumption of direct negotiations between both parties to resolve all final status issues, including issues related to borders, the status of Jerusalem, security and the refugee question, with the aim of building a just and lasting peace.

We call on both sides to exercise restraint and abstain from any unilateral actions contrary to international law and to re-engage in negotiations. We condemn all acts of violence against civilians, including acts of terror, as well as acts of provocation, incitement and destruction. We reaffirm our concern about Israel's settlement activity in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which is illegal under international law and constitute an obstacle to peace and a two-State solution. We are also deeply concerned about potential steps towards annexation after repeated calls for a possible annexation of areas in the West Bank. The annexation of any part of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, constitutes a breach of international law, undermines the viability of the two-State solution and challenges the prospects for just, comprehensive and lasting peace. In line with international law and relevant UN Security Council resolutions, we do not recognise Israel's sovereignty over the territories occupied since 1967.

We will continue to engage with the parties and relevant stakeholders to revive a political process in line with international law, which ensures equal rights and which is acceptable to both parties. We also reiterate our commitment to the security of Israel, including with regard to current and emerging threats in the region.

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