



# Two States for Two Peoples

20 years after Oslo II: How to renew the peace  
process between Israel and the Palestinians

Edited by Alan Johnson, Toby Greene and Lorin Bell-Cross

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# Two States for Two Peoples

20 YEARS AFTER OSLO II:

HOW TO RENEW THE PEACE PROCESS  
BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIANS?

*Edited by*

Alan Johnson, Toby Greene and Lorin Bell-Cross

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# Contents

Introduction | *Toby Greene* 6

## **Part One: Renewing the Two State Paradigm**

1. Empower the nation-builders not the extremists | *Hussein Ibish* 12
2. The conflict is not yet soluble | *Joshua Muravchik* 15
3. Coordinated unilateralism as a strategy for peace | *Moshe Arens and Ami Ayalon* 17
4. Multi-stage coordinated unilateralism | *Cary Nelson* 21
5. For peace, we must end Palestinian incitement | *David Pollock* 41
6. UNWRA: An obstacle to peace? | *Einat Wilf* 44
7. Needed: a paradigm shift in the 'Middle East Peace Process' | *Shlomo Avineri* 47
8. Israel's National-Religious Jews and the quest for peace | *Ofer Zalzberg* 50
9. Building peace from the grassroots | *Joel Braunold* 54

## **Part Two: Israeli and Palestinian Views**

10. Two states is common sense | *Hitham Kayali* 58
11. We must divide the land | *Isaac Herzog* 60
12. The time to compromise is when you are strong | *Omer Bar-Lev* 64
13. Saving the promised land | *Ari Shavit* 68
14. Thoughts of a National Liberal | *Benny Begin* 72

## **Part Three: Debating the Core Issues**

15. A new vision for Jerusalem | *Meir Kraus* 75
16. On Jerusalem | *Danny Seidemann* 77
17. Settlements and the Two-State Solution | *Lior Amihai* 82
18. Settlements and the Two-State Solution | *Dani Dayan* 86

- 19. Demarcating the Israeli-Palestinian border | *David Newman* 91
- 20. Boycotting Israel is bad for conflict resolution | *Sapan Maini-Thompson* 97
- 21. Gaza Symposium: Reconstruction for demilitarisation | *Michael Herzog* 100
- 22. Gaza Symposium: Reconstruction for demilitarisation | *Gershon Baskin* 102
- 23. Gaza Symposium: Reconstruction for demilitarisation | *Shlomo Brom* 104

#### **Part Four: Debating the Strategic Environment**

- 24. There is no policy, we are on the edge of a volcano | *Efraim Halevy* 110
- 25. We must not ignore the gravity of the threat | *Dore Gold* 118

About the Contributors 123

# Introduction

## Renewing the peace process 20 Years After Oslo II

*Toby Greene, deputy editor of Fathom*

When Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat signed the 'Interim Agreement' at the White House on 28 September 1995, it was the high point of the Oslo Process. Coming two years after the initial Oslo Agreement, it was a key milestone, empowering the Palestinian Authority to govern all the large Palestinian population centres in the West Bank, and creating the division of powers according to Areas A, B and C that exists to this day.

Hundreds of pages of fine print were hammered out in an Eilat Hotel, with scores of Israeli and Palestinian negotiators spending long days together, in teams addressing every issue from electricity to archaeology. The US-envoy Dennis Ross described this remarkable scene, utterly unimaginable a few years earlier, as a 'peacemaking laboratory'.

The Interim Agreement was meant to last until 1999, by which time a permanent status agreement was meant to be negotiated. Now, 20 years later, after several major attempts and much violence, hope for such an agreement is very faint. The very possibility of a negotiated agreement between Israelis and Palestinians is in doubt.

There is no easy way to summarise the reasons for the failure of the Oslo process, since they are complex, multi-faceted, and mired in mutual and politically motivated recriminations.

What can be said is that the various official attempts to negotiate a permanent status agreement fell short. Significantly, Israel moved to a public and broad based acceptance of the creation of a Palestinian state, creating a consensus between the parties about a 'two-state solution'. But at no point have Israeli and Palestinian leaderships been able to agree a common position on borders, Jerusalem, and the disputed rights of Palestinian refugees and their descendants.

In the meantime, intensive rounds of violence have deepened a physical and psychological wedge between Israeli and Palestinian populations, increasing mutual distrust and suspicion. Remarkably, it is still the case that among both Israeli and Palestinian publics, the two state model is more popular than any alternative, but each side doubts its viability and believes the other is not seriously committed to it.

Today the positions of leaders on both sides are ambiguous. Netanyahu talks of the need to for a two-state solution to prevent Israel becoming a binational state. But he shows greater concern for the possibility of a Palestinian state in the West Bank becoming the next base for militant Islam, and remains wedded to domestic political partners who reject a Palestinian state.

PA President Mahmoud Abbas continues to speak of a two-state solution, and generally eschews any talk of a military confrontation with Israel, but he seems primarily concerned with bolstering his waning domestic legitimacy. Having declared bilateral negotiations a 'failure', he pursues a unilateral strategy to secure recognition and confront Israel in international forums, and showed little interest in John Kerry's framework for a negotiated agreement.

For several years we have been in a negative spiral, with international interventions, in particular US brokered talks, looking ever more futile. The very low credibility of the negotiated track has created opportunities for rejectionists on both sides.

In Israel, the lesson many took away from Oslo and the Gaza disengagement was that giving control of territory to the Palestinians did not bring peace, but rather brought terrorism. Politically, those who prefer to maintain the status quo, or to entrench Israel's control of the West Bank, are now ascendant.

For Palestinians in the West Bank, the Oslo process left deep disillusionment at a promise of political independence and economic opportunity unfulfilled. The Palestinian Authority that Oslo created lacks legitimacy, the Israeli occupation remains in place, and the settlement population continues to grow. Meanwhile Gaza, after Israel withdrew in 2005, has seen the occupation replaced by the autocratic rule of Islamist Hamas, leading to rounds of devastating conflict, shattered infrastructure, enormous human suffering and severe restrictions on movement.

It is not surprising that in European capitals, people who desperately want to see progress are deeply frustrated, and searching for ways to help break the deadlock. Many recognise that any intervention must reflect the complexities of the situation, and the need to address the legitimate concerns on both sides.

Regrettably however, for too many people, especially on the European left, an anti-Zionist narrative has increasingly taken hold. According to this narrative the conflict is reduced into a simplistic framework of occupier vs occupied, or oppressor vs oppressed. Cartoonish and wholly misleading images of both Israelis and Palestinians have become cemented in the prejudices of many activists.

In extreme, but sadly not uncommon cases, Israelis and the Israeli state is demonised as malevolent, cruel, racist, even genocidal. A publishing industry has grown up around the myth of 'nasty Israel', with a ready audience who will believe anything bad written about Israel, and cohort of ideologically driven writers happy to provide.

According to their narrative, only Palestinians have rights, and Israelis have none. Israel's desire to protect the Jewish national character of the State of Israel, and preserve the Jewish right to national self-determination are branded (uniquely) as racist. The second half of the 'land for peace' equation of UN Security Council Resolution 242 – which tied Israel's obligation to withdraw from occupied territories to the acknowledgement of its right to 'live in peace within secure and recognised boundaries free from threats' – is overlooked. The key lesson of Israel's 2005 disengagement from the Gaza Strip was that ending the occupation is necessary but not sufficient for ending the conflict, since a sovereign Palestinian territory taken over by armed Islamist extremists is the route to the next war. Yes still too often, Israeli concerns – that territory it evacuates will become a new base for Islamist extremists to attack it – are

dismissed. (Indeed some on the Left are yet to realise that treating Islamists as fellow 'anti-Imperialists', ignoring the incompatibility in values between the left and Islamism, in particular its anti-Semitism, is what the Professor Fred Halliday labelled the 'Jihadism of fools'.)

The dominance of the Israeli right in recent coalition governments has reinforced a view for many that the problem is simply Israeli intransigence, and the solution is international pressure.

Indeed, international pressure is a legitimate and at times effective tool to shape the calculations and behaviour of both parties. But unless it is used judiciously, it is likely to do more harm than good. One-sided pressure, which does not acknowledge any legitimate Israeli rights or concerns, risks fuelling an uncompromising attitude among Palestinians and suspicion among Israelis.

That means pressure should be well-intentioned, balanced and targeted. Too often the positions taken by activists on the European left are none of these things.

This anti-Zionist intellectual framing of the conflict has created the basis for an even more regressive phenomenon: the growing popularity of a global campaign in favour of the most maximalist Palestinian positions, amounting to the dismantling of the State of Israel. The chief expression of this phenomenon is 'BDS' – the demand to boycott, divest from and sanction Israel. It brands itself as a fight for Palestinian human rights, but this is smokescreen. Its explicit commitment to the unrestricted 'right of return' is a thinly coded call for the dissolution of the State of Israel.

The intellectual leaders of this movement, such as the signatories of the 2007 'One State Declaration' make no secret of their demand for a single Arab majority state, as opposed to a solution based on two states for two peoples. The call for BDS exhibits itself as call to end the suffering of Palestinians, but its agenda is in fact to perpetuate the conflict to the point of total Palestinian victory: a reversal of 1948, a rejection of the Jewish right to self-determination, and the repudiation of the negotiated two-state solution.

This demand by some Palestinians and their supporters for a 'one-state solution' is a road to nowhere. It is no more just than the aspiration by the Israeli right for perpetual Jewish sovereignty over the 'Greater Land of Israel.' Total victory for either side is impossible, and should not be promoted by third parties.

After more than a century of the Jewish-Arab struggle in Palestine, it should be clear that Jewish and Arab aspirations for national self-determination, as understood by the overwhelming majorities on both sides, are irreconcilable within a single state. This insight is hardly new. It was expressed most clearly in the 1937 Royal Commission report, which concluded that the only way each side could enjoy national self-determination was through partition into two states. For both sides, the report stated: 'Half a loaf is better than no bread.'

The basic ingredients of the conflict remain the same now as they were then: two entirely distinct national groups, both with legitimate claims to national self-determination in the same piece of land. The need for an arrangement which accommodates both these national movements is the crux of the matter. Any third party intervention which fails to acknowledge



the overwhelming and irreducible desire of both people for national self-determination is doomed to failure, and more likely to perpetuate conflict and suffering rather than shorten it.

BDS is not only unjust in its goals, but also in its methods. It advocates a form of collective punishment. It not only punishes all Israeli Jews for the actions of their government, which would be bad enough, it treats the very existence of the State of Israel as illegitimate, thereby justifying a blanket assault on the economic, cultural and intellectual life of its Jewish citizens. This is a double discrimination, firstly blaming Israel exclusively for the perpetuation of the conflict, and second applying standards to Israel not set for any other state in the world.

But BDS is not only unjust and discriminatory; by being unbalanced and untargeted it is also counter-productive from the perspective of those who want to promote conflict resolution. For the ideological drivers of this movement, preventing any negotiated solution is exactly their aim. It is tragic that well-intentioned supporters of peace and human rights may innocently be drawn into this web.

Even more tragic is the intellectual cul-de-sac the anti-Zionist narrative leads down. In order to justify itself, the BDS movement must convince people that this is a one-sided affair: that Israel is evil and the Palestinians innocent. Every claim of Israeli malevolence is automatically embraced, any evidence to the contrary is dismissed. Zionist myths are deconstructed, but Palestinian myths are held sacred. Once someone embraces the anti-Zionist narrative, they become a participant in the conflict, and lose their ability to objectively assess the rights and the behaviour on both sides.

The essays in this volume, all drawn from our online journal Fathom, are written in a very different spirit. They offer thinking about the conflict orientated to understanding its complexity and how it can be resolved within a framework of recognition of rights on both sides. They reflect the following principles.

1. Fair thinking: how can we target the drivers of conflict and encourage forces for peace and coexistence on both sides? On the Israeli side that may mean targeting settlement construction. On the Palestinian side it may mean targeting extremism, incitement, and antisemitism. On both sides it should be mean embracing and supporting those groups working within their own societies to promote peace as being in their nation's own interests.
2. Practical thinking: How can we improve the present reality, and ensure things don't get worse? If a bilateral political agreement is currently beyond reach, are their unilateral or incremental steps that would improve the situation and the chances for a future agreement, reversing the current negative cycle?
3. Creative thinking: If the conventional two state model envisioned by the Clinton Parameters has proven inadequate, are there new creative ideas that can solve old problems? There is no one-state alternative, but might there be unconventional ways in which the core demand of both sides – for distinct national sovereignty – be realised in overlapping spaces?

Twenty years on from the signing of the interim agreement, we are far away from being able to recreate the 'peacemaking laboratory' of those extraordinary days. We must acknowledge also that the peace agreement built in that laboratory did not fare well on the ground. But this collection reflects a commitment to the spirit that was created in the short heyday of the Oslo process: Israelis and Palestinians working together to design a way to live together.

The book is organised in four parts.

In part one, writers from several perspectives assess why the peace process has not succeeded so far and offer creative ideas about how it can be renewed. Hussein Ibish argues for the urgent empowerment of the Palestinian nation-builders, while Moshe Arens, Ami Ayalon and Cary Nelson explore the viability of 'coordinated unilateralism' as an approach to break the logjam. Obstacles to mutual recognition and negotiations are explored: David Pollock on incitement, Einat Wilf on UNWRA, and Ofer Zalsberg on the role of Israel's National-Religious community. Shlomo Avineri and Joshua Muravchik argue in favour for the cautious management of the conflict at an uncertain moment in the Middle East, while Joel Braunold appeals for support for those building peace now from the grassroots.

In part two, Israeli and Palestinian activists, politicians and writers – Hitham Kayali, Isaac Herzog, Omer Bar-Lev, and Ari Shavit – make the case for the two-state solution, with a dissenting note added by Benny Begin who asks the sceptical question: does Israel really have a partner for peace?

Part three explores in greater detail some of the difficult 'core issues' of the negotiating process. Meir Krauss and Danny Seidemann examine the future of Jerusalem, while Lior Amihai and Danny Dayan debate the settlements. David Newman looks at how the border between the two states might be demarcated, Sapan Maini-Thompson sets out the results of research undertaken by the Portland Trust to show that boycott campaigns damage peace-making, while three experts – Michael Herzog, Gershon Baskin and Shlomo Brom – make the case for a new compact for Gaza: reconstruction for demilitarisation.

Part four sees two Israeli foreign policy heavyweights – Efraim Halevy, the former head of the Mossad, and Dore Gold, the current Director-General of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs – wrestle with the implications of regional chaos for the peace process.

## **Part One: Renewing the Two State Paradigm**

# ONE

## Obama's second term: empower the nation-builders not the extremists

*Hussein Ibish (2013)*

*Former Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad's institution-building program remains the only policy available to lay the groundwork for a successful two-state outcome.*

As the Obama administration gears up for its second term, it faces an exceptionally difficult impasse in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Indeed, many who once had hopes for a two-state solution are now throwing up their hands in despair. But this is a luxury the United States cannot afford.

For almost a decade there has been a Washington consensus that Israeli-Palestinian peace is a vital American national interest. This was not a capricious or simplistic evaluation. And it did not come easily to the American political scene. It evolved slowly and painfully over several decades and is an accurate evaluation of the significance of ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to most, if not all, other American policy goals in the region.

The unfortunate reality is that any short or even medium-term breakthrough on final status issues between the parties is unlikely. The positions of the two leaderships on many of the key issues appear, at present, unbridgeable. And there are presently no mechanisms for dialogue or working terms of reference. Therefore negotiations on final status issues are unlikely to resume in the near future, and if they did, they are unlikely to provide any major breakthroughs.

This dangerous situation is being exacerbated by numerous worrying factors. Believing negotiations to be frozen for the time, the Palestine Liberation Organisation launched a series of symbolic but very costly diplomatic initiatives at the United Nations. In response, Israel has greatly intensified an aggressive program of settlement expansions, particularly planned building projects in strategic locations in and around East Jerusalem, for example in the so-called 'E1' corridor.

Also in response, the United States and Europe significantly cut their aid to the Palestinian Authority, heavily intensifying the Palestinian fiscal crisis. Many Arab states have pledged donations to offset the PA's financial woes but these donations often go unfulfilled. Worst of all, from a fiscal standpoint, Israel has been withholding Palestinian tax revenues, which constitute more than 50 per cent of the PA budget.



The PA fiscal crisis provides the greatest opportunity for American, international and Arab intervention to help stabilise the situation and reverse profoundly negative recent trends. In the absence of a workable political and diplomatic process at the moment, the best hope for practical progress on the ground, laying the groundwork for the realisation of a negotiated end-of-conflict agreement based on two states, is the PA institution-building program led by Prime Minister Salam Fayyad. But the PA fiscal crisis has brought that program to a screeching halt by depriving it of necessary funds.

The institutional-building program was inaugurated by Fayyad's government in August 2009. In its first two years, it made dramatic progress in creating the institutional framework for a successful Palestinian state. By early 2011, the program established over 1,700 community development programs, 120 new schools, three new hospitals and 50 new health clinics across the West Bank. Seventeen hundred kilometers of roads were paved and fourteen hundred kilometers of water pipes installed. Fayyad created what is still probably the most transparent public finance system in the Arab world.

While everyone agreed much work remained to be done, by the middle of 2011, the World Bank, the IMF and the UN all issued reports certifying that the program had advanced to the point where the PA met the criteria for independent statehood. The World Bank declared that the PA 'is well positioned for the establishment of a state at any point in the near future.' In April, 2011, the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee of international donors concluded, 'Palestinian institutions compare favorably with those in established states,' an evaluation reiterated by the EU and other multilateral institutions. The bedrock of the institution-building program was the professional, streamlined Palestinian security services enforcing law and order in the West Bank with success attested to by all parties, including Israel.

With the ongoing fiscal crisis, however, all of these gains are either frozen or being eroded. The PA has been unable to meet its salary commitments for public sector employees, in both the West Bank and Gaza, and faces a crisis that threatens to plunge 1 million Palestinians below the poverty line. The past several months have seen recurring protests based on economic grievances throughout the West Bank, and Hamas, and even some Fatah factions, have been attempting to use the crisis to undermine Fayyad's policies.

By contrast, Hamas is now able to argue that its approach of confrontation and armed conflict produces gains and political dividends. By capturing an Israeli soldier, they were able to secure the release of 1,000 Palestinian prisoners. By resuming armed conflict with Israel, they were able to secure diplomatic and financial benefits from some Arab states, most notably Qatar and Egypt, and score important political dividends in Palestinian politics.

The implicit message being communicated to the Palestinians over the past six months, at least, is disastrous: that confrontation and conflict can produce more results than instructive efforts or nonviolent diplomacy. If the current trends continue, the United States, the international community and Israel may find that, as a consequence of these developments, Hamas has become a defining power in the Palestinian national movement. This would be a disaster for all parties, not least the Palestinians, but also, of course, for Israel.

The outcome, however, has by no means been determined. Hamas' recent gains are all reversible, and it is still possible to restore vitality to the institution-building program by securing for it the requisite funding. It makes no sense for the United States or Israel to express annoyance with PLO diplomatic initiatives at the UN by withholding funding from Fayyad's PA government. This only plays into the hands of Hamas and other extremists. The Arab world, too, will have to play its part. Those states that encouraged the Palestinian UN initiatives and pledged funding to offset some of the anticipated shortfall have a special responsibility to live up to their promises.

For the Obama administration and its allies, including Israel, the choices becoming clear. Hamas, as things stand, can claim some vindication of its policies of armed struggle and confrontation, and can point to reliable patrons, diplomatic gains and claimed to be the Palestinian branch of an 'Islamic Awakening' in the wake of the 'Arab Spring.' All of these claims are exceptionally vulnerable among a skeptical Palestinian public, but as long as the PA remains unable to meet its basic obligations, especially payroll, it will be associated in the public consciousness with failure rather than success. It is by no means too late to reverse this process, but the steps necessary to do so must be taken urgently.

No one doubts that, ultimately, the only workable solution must come through a negotiated, end-of-conflict agreement, based on the creation of a Palestinian state to live alongside Israel in peace, security and dignity. However, for the Palestinian state to be successful, Palestinians have to work to create its framework and the international community, and Israel, has to support that project. And, at present, the institution-building program is the only policy available to the parties to effectively work towards laying the practical and political groundwork for a successful two-state outcome.

The first order of business, therefore, is to restore the viability and credibility of the program and its leadership. It is, simply, the only extant or viable program on the Palestinian side of the equation that promises to make anything better for anyone. It must be rescued from its potential collapse forthwith, as an indispensable precursor to, and parallel track with, diplomatic and political progress in the future.

## TWO

### Obama's second term: the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not yet soluble

*Joshua Muravchik (2013)*

*There is no alternative to the two-state solution, but neither party is yet in a position to make the deal.*

Conventional wisdom says that time is running out on a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict. The opposite is more nearly correct. While a two-state solution remains, and will remain for the foreseeable future the only feasible solution, the conflict is not yet soluble.

The imaginable terms of a settlement were embodied in the 2000 'Clinton Parameters' or the deal proposed to Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas by then-prime minister Ehud Olmert in 2008. The current Israeli government is unlikely to offer as much (for example, shared sovereignty over Jerusalem) and in any event, Abbas spurned Olmert's offer.

Today, circumstances are less propitious than they were in 2008. The Arab Spring may in the long run eventuate in a more liberal, humane, and pacific dispensation in the Arab world. However, so far the main product has been a wave of Islamism: illiberal, inhumane, and redolent of violence. In a best case scenario, the spirit of Sidi Bouzid and Tahrir Square somehow subdues the Islamist surge and at least two countries, Tunisia and Egypt, emerge as liberal democracies setting an example that influence others. But it is at least as likely that an era of darkness descends on the Arab world – a Sunni version of Khomeinism. The twentieth century saw many bad regimes succeeded by worse ones. It could happen again. How long an Islamist era might last, no one knows.

The specter of Islamist hegemony constrains both Israelis and the Palestinians. The experience of Gaza and south Lebanon makes it difficult for Israelis to picture withdrawing from the West Bank. True, a negotiated withdrawal would be different from the unilateral ones from Gaza and south Lebanon. But would whatever promises and guarantees Israel received hold up in the event of a Hamas takeover of the West Bank? Or of an Islamist takeover of Egypt, Syria, Jordan?

On the other side, Abbas, who in contrast to Yasser Arafat seems to be a man of peace, has never felt he had the political strength to strike a deal that means telling his people that the conflict is over; that Jaffa and Acre will never be theirs again; that there will be no Palestine 'from the river to the sea'; that it is time to forget heroic visions and settle down to the mundane work of state-building. On Israeli television recently, Abbas seemed to forsake the

‘right of return’ only to have his spokesmen retract the implication within a day. The distancing from the comment did not spare him from repudiation by Marwan Barghouti, who reaffirmed in a prison interview that this right was ‘sacred’. Although imprisoned, Barghouti continues to score far higher than Abbas in Palestinian polls, and Barghouti is a Fatah man. Needless to say, Hamas is even further from peace.

Can, should, will the United States exert itself to break the impasse? The argument that American influence is in decline is usually overstated. Claims of American decline were numerous in the 1980s, spearheaded by the historian Paul Kennedy. His observation – that the United States was exhausting itself with Cold War exertions proved exactly correct – except he got the country wrong: it was not America but America’s adversary to whom it applied. Today, America is exerting less influence in the Middle East by choice because that is the ideological bent of our current president and the popular backlash against the Iraq War. Neither this presidency nor this mood will last forever, and America’s underlying power, or potential power, has not eroded significantly.

However, more activist presidents at more favorable moments have flailed at this problem in vain. Israeli-Palestinian peace was Bill Clinton’s chief foreign policy goal and George W. Bush gave it his best shot in the Annapolis process of 2007. Barack Obama, who tried and failed in his first term, may give it another go, but he is unlikely to crack the code. He has other regional issues looming: Iran’s nuclear drive, the prospective disintegration of Syria, and a rapid withdrawal from Afghanistan that is likely to bring some vertiginous moments or worse.

The real challenge for Western policy is to do whatever can be done with the limited leverage we have to prevent a long night of Sunni Islamism from falling over the region. Success in this will serve our interests in many respects and benefit the people of the region, and it is also the most useful thing that can be done to bring Israeli-Palestinian peace closer. To engage with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood or Tunisia’s Ennahda in the hope of coaxing them toward moderation is all to the good, so long as we remain clear-eyed about the repugnance of their core ideology and that we do nothing to pull the rug out from under the liberals and secularists who are our true allies and the region’s best hope. Our top priority should be to strengthen them, even while we try to influence the Islamists, using the carrots and sticks we possess.

And what about that putative hour-glass on the peace process? Presumably those who say time is running out mean that the increase and expansion of Israeli settlements will eventually make a viable Palestine impossible. But settlements can be uprooted as well as implanted. Indeed, they were uprooted from the Sinai in 1979 and from Gaza and the Northern West Bank in 2005. In a peace agreement many settlements will have to be evacuated and others consolidated. It will be a wrenching process for Israel, but (as a wise Palestinian peace-advocate pointed out to me recently) resettling Israeli settlers within the Green Line or within consolidated settlements that remain Israeli in a peace agreement will be easier than resettling Russian or Ethiopian immigrants. Israel is the most accomplished country on earth in population absorption. That it will nonetheless be difficult is a strong reason why Israel would be wise to constrain settlement growth now while waiting for peace prospects to brighten.



# THREE

## Coordinated Unilateralism as a Strategy for Peace

*Moshe Arens and Ami Ayalon (2013)*

*Unilateral withdrawal from part of the West Bank was very much on the agenda following Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in 2005. The idea was that in the absence of peace agreement, Israel should move ahead unilaterally to create a separation between itself and the Palestinian Authority.*

*To explore this idea Fathom Deputy Editor Toby Greene interviewed two senior former Israeli officials with strongly opposing views.*

*Ami Ayalon is the former head of the Israeli Navy, a former head of Israel's Shin Bet internal security agency, and a former cabinet minister in the government of Ehud Olmert. He is one of the leading figures in the Blue White Future movement which advocates unilateral withdrawal.*

*Moshe Arens was a Likud Knesset member for more than 20 years. A professor of aeronautical engineering he served as Israel's ambassador to the US, three times as minister of defence, and once as Israel's foreign minister. He has been a sharp critic of unilateralism, accusing its proponents of suffering from 'unilateral withdrawal syndrome.' (Winter 2013)*

**Toby Greene:** *What is motivating some people to advocate unilateral disengagement?*

**Ami Ayalon:** Events in the last two years in the Middle East have created a very unique situation in which igniting the peace process has become much more urgent, much more important and much less possible. Why urgent? Settlements, and the idea that it is too late for an agreement, are becoming dangerous. Second, events in the Middle East create a situation in which a relatively pragmatic coalition of states that will face fundamentalism, radicalism, terror and attempts by Iran to dominate the region can be created. This coalition will be based on a coalition of Sunni states like Turkey, Egypt under the Muslim Brotherhood, Saudi Arabia and Jordan. For this coalition to be created, since leaders have become weaker and people in the street have become stronger, the only way to create this coalition – with the leadership of America and the West – will be to show progress on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

We are trying to convince our leaders and leaders of the international community, who still believe that the only way to achieve the two-state solution is through direct negotiations, that this approach will not work.

**Moshe Arens:** It's very easy to understand: Israeli presence in certain areas, like the Gaza Strip before the disengagement, in Judea and Samaria at the present and in the Lebanon Security Zone is inevitably accompanied by problems and sometimes by the loss of life due to terrorist activities. Some people tend to say 'let's cut our losses and get out of there; get rid of this problem!' At first this sounds like a very clever thing to do. But what Israelis have found over the years – and we've had a number of disengagements/withdrawals – is that all they did was bring terrorism closer to the population centres of the State of Israel. We withdrew from Judea and Samaria as part of the Oslo agreements (not unilaterally) and it brought terror to the heart of Tel Aviv. We withdrew from the Security Zone in Lebanon (unilaterally) and it brought on the Second Intifada and the Second Lebanon War. We withdrew unilaterally from Gush Katif – uprooting 8,000 Israelis from their homes – and it brought rockets onto southern Israel. The conclusion of most Israelis is that this is not a good way to go.

**TG:** *Could Israel become a bi-national state if it does not withdraw from parts of the West Bank?*

**AA:** In the past we understood Zionism as a very simple concept. If you would have asked my father, he would have told you during the 1930s when he left Europe – all his family stayed and were killed during the Holocaust – that the idea was to come to Israel and to create, in the future, a state that would be a safe home for the Jewish people and its borders would be wherever they could build a settlement, work the land and feed themselves. For him, in 1967 nothing happened – it was still a viable Zionist concept. This was the reason why people from my kibbutz went to create settlements in the Jordan Valley, in Sinai and in the Golan Heights. But, years later, we realised that based on this concept – that this land belongs to us and the borders would be wherever we can build a state, defend ourselves and work the land – we 'liberated' the West Bank (Judea and Samaria), but we occupied and conquered the people. This is the paradox in which we live. If this concept of my parents prevails, the immediate result will be that the Jordan Valley will be the Eastern border of Israel and Zionism will collapse. Israel will either cease to be a democracy or lose its Jewish identity. I believe that the two-state solution is the only viable solution not because the Palestinians deserve these places and not because of what we are doing in the West Bank – this is a totally different debate. I'm trying to take the two-state solution forward because I believe this is the only way Israel will be a Jewish democracy in which we Jews, as a majority, will be able to dictate the values, the calendar, the way we celebrate Shabbat or Yom Kippur and the stories we tell our children at school.

**MA:** I don't think it is correct that if Israel does not withdraw from the entirety of Judea and Samaria it will become a state with an Arab majority – not even numerically.

Let me weigh on one of the alternatives: say that we do not want more than 20 per cent of the citizens of Israel to be Arab and in order to maintain this we withdraw from Judea and Samaria – because if we incorporate Judea and Samaria we will be adding Arab citizens to Israel's population. If the end result of this is that terrorism would come into the cities of Israel as it did in the past then I'd say it's not a clear-cut decision by any means. We don't want something that will make things worse – we would like to improve the situation and look at alternative ways of improving the present situation. I don't know that any of the alternatives are better than the status-quo which many people – including myself – don't like, but everything else may be worse. We've seen worse. Some people say 'do something, do anything, anything you do will be better!' Unfortunately that is not the case.

**TG:** *What are the chances of the Israeli public getting behind the disengagement again after the experience of Gaza?*

**MA:** We've had a major change in Israeli public opinion on the peace process, which in the eyes of Israelis is connected with making territorial concessions. The Oslo agreements were supported by the majority of Israelis, and handed most of Judea and Samaria and the Gaza Strip over to Arafat and the PLO. Today, I think most Israelis would say that was a mistake. The Intifada and the terrible years when hundreds, if not more, Israelis were killed every year, have led Israelis to conclude that was a mistake. Most Israelis supported the disengagement from Gaza, the uprooting of 8,000 Israeli citizens from their homes – a terrible thing. Can you imagine that in England or anywhere else? Forcing 8,000 people out of their homes! But the Israeli public thought 'good riddance to bad rubbish – let's get out of there, we don't want any part of it!' If you look at the polls most Israelis now think it was a mistake. In the wake of that came Hamas – a terrorist organisation taking over Gaza and rockets over Israel.

**AA:** The mistakes that we did in Gaza were, first, that there was no political horizon – no one knew what was being done for. Second, we took huge security risks – because we created a vacuum – no one replaced the IDF. Third, we treated the settlers like traitors. Fourth, we reached the limits of what is right in democracy. What we are proposing now is to deal with these four great mistakes. We need to immediately stop construction to the east of the security barrier, continue building in major settlement blocs to the West of it and in the Jewish neighbourhoods of Jerusalem – but not in the Arab neighbourhoods – according to the Clinton Parameters. Second, to bring back all the settlers who wish to come back in the way they deserve, the IDF will stay and prepare a plan for the settlers who remain – at least temporarily – unless the Palestinians accept them as citizens. We have to remove the settlers in a different way than how we did it in Gaza. Additionally, the issue must be put to a referendum.

**TG:** *What would be the diplomatic impact of an Israeli withdrawal?*

**AA:** I believe that for the first time since we started negotiations with the Palestinians the international community will say that Israeli means business.

For the past 20 years we have sent out a double message. On the one hand, we have said that we are ready in the future to pull out of most of the territories. On the other hand, we build more settlements and send more settlers. We do not tell the settlers that they will only be living there for between five and 20 years. Most people around the world don't really know what we mean.

**MA:** For many, especially in Europe, any concession by Israel will be greeted by applause. I served as Israeli Ambassador to Washington and said then as I say today: it's very easy to become popular by announcing that you are prepared to make concessions, because people on the outside don't have to suffer the consequences of what you are about to do if it ends up going badly. They think it is a step in the direction of a peaceful settlement, so good for you if you are prepared to do that. We would be applauded, but we would also suffer the consequences if it turns out to be a mistake.

**TG:** *If Israel does not act unilaterally, where do you see Israel in ten years?*

**AA:** I would hate to describe the daily life in Israel 10 years from now in this scenario. I believe that violence will increase. What is important for me is that we may lose our identity – the reason our parents came to this place.

**MA:** It's important to realise that the present situation is one where the whole Palestinian political system is dysfunctional. It's very hard to negotiate and reach an agreement with a dysfunctional system. There are two Palestinian entities: Hamas in the Gaza Strip – who don't recognise and refuse to negotiate with Israel – and the Palestinian Authority in Judea and Samaria who maintain that they are prepared to negotiate and that they are not for pursuing acts of terrorism against Israel. Until this dysfunction is repaired and we see a responsible party that can speak for the Palestinians, it's difficult to see any real progress.

**TG:** *Does Israel have other options to improve the current situation?*

**AA:** I'm not pessimistic because I think that what we offer is something that is achievable. Within this coalition, this Knesset, the majority of MKs believe that the strategy we are proposing is not risky, but is a positive direction.

**MA:** One option is to wait. We don't like to view this option favourable because we are always in a hurry to get things done! Not all problems are soluble and I think many people are coming around to the view that the conflict cannot be solved in the immediate future and that you have to manage it.



# FOUR

## Multi-stage Coordinated Unilateralism: A Proposal to Rescue the Two-State Paradigm

*Cary Nelson (2015)*

*In this wide-ranging and hopeful essay, Cary Nelson aims to move the international conversation about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict away from mutual recriminations and towards practical steps to create a 'two-state dynamic'. Defying our fashionable pessimism, he sets out a detailed proposal for a multi-staged Israeli withdrawal from major portions of the West Bank and interim measures to increase Palestinian self governance and nation-building in the absence of final status peace agreement. We invite the critical responses of our readers.*

'So if it is so difficult to arrive at a solution of end of conflict, why not have one state? Because the one-state cure is the proverbial cure that kills the patient. I cannot think of any place on earth where two nations locked in conflict for over 100 years are offered a solution to be thrust together in a boiling pot of coexistence that would end no doubt in mutual destruction ... Mostly I would say the reason why this is a bad idea is because most Jews in Israel and most Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza don't want it. There are people in the Diaspora who may wish for such a solution, but they won't face the music and probably couldn't care less about it ... We, the Israelis, have to come to terms with the fact that we may have to withdraw for less than peace, that land for peace may be desirable, but not necessarily fully attainable. Why should we withdraw in the absence of full peace? If we don't, we are allowing those who resist the idea of peace with Israel, like Hamas and company, to dictate to Israel what kind of country we will live in in 10, 20, or 30 years time.' (Asher Susser) [1]

### INTRODUCTION

Confidence that Israelis and Palestinians can negotiate a final status agreement, settle the outstanding issues that have plagued them since 1948, and establish two secure states that enable their peoples to live in peace may well be at its lowest point in decades. As a consequence of the failure of previous negotiations and the lack of faith in either party's willingness to continue, the international conversation about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict says more about anger and frustration than it does about how to move forward productively. I have been writing about parts of that conversation – especially the parts taking place on campuses and among non-governmental organisations (NGOs) focused on the conflict – for many years.[2] I have also been an active opponent of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement since 2007.[3] Recent events suggest I should flesh out some of the positive

recommendations I have made during these debates, especially my endorsement of Israeli proposals for a multi-staged withdrawal from major portions of the West Bank.

While a comprehensive agreement is obviously preferable – and Israelis and Palestinians will never settle all their disagreements without one – I believe all of us need alternative ways of conceptualising what steps may be politically possible in the interim. My main aim here is to help move the international conversation in a different direction, from struggles over delegitimisation to practical solutions. Along the way, I also suggest productive opportunities for US and European activism. Meanwhile, even an Israeli government opposed, for now, to a fully realised Palestinian state may be forced by West Bank events and international action to consider interim options that offer increased Palestinian self-governance. We all need to understand such options if we are to promote them.

In what follows, I give no credence to any version of a one-state solution. I support the presence of a democratic Jewish state within modified pre-1967 borders. I do so not only because Jews are a people with an ancient history in the land, but also because – beginning with the Balfour Declaration, followed by the San Remo acceptance by the Entente powers of the Balfour Declaration, and continuing through to the post-World War II 1947 United Nations (UN) vote – the State of Israel has had a strong basis for its existence in international law. I also believe, more controversially, that the Allied Powers owed the Jews a homeland after they failed to respond to the Holocaust. The one-state or bi-national ‘solution’ – with two peoples sharing the same land and the same polity – is a recipe for war, not resolution. Indeed it has never found broad support in either the Jewish or Arab populations.[4] The resulting civil war would be one in which Jews and Arabs could die in significant numbers. Jews will fight before permitting their homeland to be dominated by an Arab majority.

I am also convinced the Israeli occupation of the West Bank is unsustainable, not because it cannot be enforced, but because its consequences are unacceptable. Of course, some in Israel – most prominently, Jewish Home leader and Education Minister Naftali Bennett – believe moderate improvement in Palestinian employment opportunities and living conditions, combined with settlement expansion, could not only sustain the present arrangements but also make them immutable.[5] Others in Israel and throughout the world see the West Bank status quo as leading to increased European political and economic pressure to recognise a Palestinian state in the future, along with both horrific local violence and an eventual third Intifada. Sanctions, the dormant third term of the BDS movement, could become a reality. Continued small-scale military conflicts with Hamas seem inevitable, and no one can rule out additional wars producing thousands of dead. Meanwhile, Israel’s democratic character would continue to be seriously eroded.

I thus remain a strong believer that only a two-state solution – two states for two peoples – offers a route to achievable justice for both Israelis and Palestinians and a means for the two peoples to control their own political destinies. The first thing I ask of any political proposal is whether it supports that goal and what practical steps it offers to take us there.

This paper summarises and elaborates upon some concepts and options developed by Israelis and offers them for consideration. While a comprehensive agreement is the ultimate goal, after more than half a century in which the parties have failed to achieve one we need alternative ways to move forward. I am not foolish enough to suppose I can lay out a comprehensive Israeli-Palestinian peace plan. Nor will the options described here be sufficient, in and of themselves, to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Only a comprehensive negotiated agreement has a chance to achieve that end. But those of us who care about the needs and aspirations of both peoples need to begin discussing other ways to improve the lives of and provide hope to the Palestinians, and to initiate Israeli disengagement from the West Bank.

I also need to emphasise at the outset that there are no risk free solutions to the Arab-Israeli conflict. History is fundamentally unpredictable, certainly no more so than in the Middle East. Regimes that appear to be stable become undone, social, political, and religious movements sweep countries to change the course of national and regional history and violent actors representing constituencies small or large intervene with overwhelming impact. If anyone predicted the rise of ISIS two years ago, I am unaware of it. Did many guess that the Muslim Brotherhood would so quickly be swept aside in Egypt? Is anyone still pinning utopian hopes on the Arab Spring? I didn't, by the way, but many of my friends did. The unprecedented cruelty we now see in Syria and Iraq has intensified the longstanding Israeli sense of insecurity and deepened the reluctance to take political chances, though it has also opened opportunities for limited cooperation with several Arab states.

It is clear that the Israelis do not have a governmental partner for peace at present and I am not persuaded that the Palestinians do either. In the years leading up to the 2015 Israeli elections, Benjamin Netanyahu and Mahmoud Abbas both played to their right-wing constituents. They expected their political challenges to come from the right and thus concentrated on defending that flank. Not all Israeli prime ministers have done so, but this one certainly did. We have a shorter list of Palestinian leaders, but both Yasser Arafat and Abbas regularly supplied their public spheres with radical rejectionist rhetoric. Neither Netanyahu nor Arafat nor Abbas prepared their peoples for the necessity of compromise. A reliable June 15-17 2014 survey of West Bank and Gazan Palestinians asked what percentage of Jerusalem the Palestinian Authority (PA) might control by way of an eventual negotiated agreement. The majority, whether pugnacious or naïve, unrealistically answered 100 per cent.[6] A 2012 poll of Israelis showed continuing support for a two-state solution, but the level of support declined when the question addressed territorial concessions.[7] Meanwhile, nothing about the settlement policy Netanyahu has advanced by his actions over the last six years suggests that he ever intended to give up an inch of the West Bank. Then, hours before the March 2015 vote, he put any doubts to the rest, pledging there would be no Palestinian state if he were re-elected. That being said, you can meet Arabs and Jews who give you hope, as well as Arabs and Jews who only see violence in the future and, indeed, some who advocate it. But I remain convinced that over time, most within each people will opt for peace if they are given good employment opportunities, good housing, the opportunity to raise families, and the right to political self-determination within limits that respect the needs of the other people.

Despite the bleak prospects facing us now, we should nonetheless think about how both groups might be pressed to negotiate in good faith – or at least not to undermine the potential

for future negotiations. Because Israel has a powerful military, some see pressure on Israel alone as the only appropriate strategy, and it is the priority, especially now that Netanyahu's pre-election remarks have changed the political dynamic. But 'How best to punish Israel?' is not a peace strategy. Regardless, the two parties are not equal, so practical strategies for dealing with them will have to differ. What's more, whatever options are adopted, they will at some point effectively be addressed to the Palestinian and Israeli people, not just to their respective leaders; the public reception of peace proposals in the respective societies is a matter of concern. But a model that casts one people as aggressors and the other as victims is not a rational basis for a conversation, let alone a negotiating strategy.

## **WHAT IS REQUIRED OF THE PALESTINIANS**

Let us begin with the Palestinians, because my suggestions there are limited, and then move on to Israel. One possible form of pressure would be to reach an international consensus that the PA must be subject to an ongoing independent audit that gives a full and transparent account of how all the foreign aid it receives is spent. The PA can never have the full trust of its own people if many continue to believe it is financially corrupt. Thus, the PA might benefit from pressure to reform itself. And that pressure could make it a better negotiating partner. Such pressure is unlikely to come from the UN, but it could be initiated in Europe or the US.

If Palestinians want to establish a popular basis for negotiation, they will also need to reform their educational system so it does not instil opposition to Israel's existence in the hearts and minds of their young. Such a change will not transform attitudes overnight, but Israelis are not likely to trust their Palestinian partners until they see this commitment at work. Both sides need to eliminate curricula that identify the other side as the enemy, but as a 2013 study of Israeli and Palestinian textbooks reports, 'Israeli state textbooks provided more information and less negative characterizations of the other side and more self-criticism regarding certain historical episodes than the ultra-Orthodox or Palestinian books. Addressing the 1948 massacre in the Arab village of Deir Yassin, for example, a book used in the state secular and religious schools noted that the battle "developed into the killing of dozens of helpless Arabs."' [8]

There also needs to be widespread recognition that neither negotiations nor withdrawal can readily take place amidst incitements to violence. The PA should be persuaded of the necessity to restrain religious and political figures from indulging in public calls for violence. Incitements to violence need to be made clearly illegal and punished accordingly. Even without the promise of negotiations, the time may have come for the PA to make more precise calibrations of the relationship between violence and the potential to achieve the national ambitions of its people. Violence may persuade Israelis that the West Bank is ungovernable, but that could simply mean no one, neither Israelis nor Palestinians, can govern it. One consequence of Operation Protective Edge that all the players in the area understand is the recognition that Palestinian casualties have considerable international political value.[9] But that also means the Israelis now realise that international opposition and Israeli moral anguish will quickly coalesce. And Palestinian deaths are only maximised by acts of war that threaten Israelis. So the cycle has escalation built into it. One key question is whether international attention and concern has become heightened enough for Palestinians to shift their strategy



to mass nonviolent protest and civil disobedience. That would, of course, necessitate the PA controlling violent elements in the West Bank, just as it would require the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) to master better policing practices. It is highly likely that international pressure will escalate in 2015 and 2016, in turn giving additional cultural and political leverage to civil disobedience.<sup>[10]</sup> Whether Americans or Europeans could safely participate in West Bank nonviolent civil disobedience more broadly than they have so far remains to be seen, but it is an option worth careful review.

Some BDS supporters I have talked with are inclined to set aside their avowals of pacifism and declare that only violence will work to influence Israel, thereby implying, in anti-Semitic fashion, that Israel is a country without a conscience (in line with Steven Salaita's now infamous formulation, 'Israel's soul died at the moment of its inception').<sup>[11]</sup> But many Israelis are themselves tortured by the routine violence that shapes the military occupation, and nonviolent activism has increased potential to influence both them and the international community. Unlike the British in India, however, Israelis cannot simply sail away; they have a proximity problem, and Yasser Arafat would have made a poor Gandhi. But it may well now be time for Palestinians to give nonviolence a try. The world *is* watching.

Coming up with means adequate to turn Hamas into a nonviolent partner for peace, however, is outside my imaginative capacity.<sup>[12]</sup> A prolonged truce, however, may be in Hamas's self-interest, and could reduce the number of its committed members if it is accompanied by progress on West Bank disengagement, but if Hamas actually made peace with Israel it would no longer be Hamas. And if Hamas were willing to take intermediate steps – like declaring and honouring the Mediterranean coast as a weapons-free zone for economic development – it would no longer be Hamas either. Some intransigent Hamas members would certainly face police and judicial action if moves toward peace became a reality. Others, along with some Palestinians not affiliated with Hamas, would no doubt simply live out their lives in bitter rejection of an unfolding peace. Among those would be Palestinians whose rejection of a Jewish state is grounded in a historic cultural and political rejection of any non-Muslim state in the region. More serious still, are those whose hatred of Israel is based on religious belief. Many on the Left tend to embrace the anti-Semitic conviction that the only religious impediment to peace in the region is Judaism. There is a dual denial involved – both of Arab anti-Semitism and of the Islamic history of classifying Jews and Christians as 'protected infidels.'<sup>[13]</sup> As we have repeatedly seen, protected infidels can become targeted infidels. Discussion of the anti-Semitic component in Islam in many quarters is still frequently blocked by the dominant politically correct stance that critique of any Islamic traditions or any Islamic sect amounts to Islamophobia. One might have thought that the rise of ISIS would open wider campus discussions of these issues, but it did not.<sup>[14]</sup> Whether the *Charlie Hebdo* and Kosher supermarket massacres in Paris will do so remains to be seen. Meanwhile, the presence of Hamas remains a basis of risk and uncertainty for any Israeli-Palestinian future.

In that regard, I was interested to find in conversations in Israel in 2014 that, in addition to those on the Israeli left who opposed military action in Gaza entirely, there existed a number of Israelis opposed to current government policy and committed to the left who expressed regret that the IDF had not acted more quickly and decisively to crush Hamas in July. Some of those I spoke with reasoned that only Hamas's complete military defeat would have made

it possible for the PA to become a true partner for peace. This realpolitik style of reasoning draws its conclusion not only from 20th century history and the defeat of Germany and Japan, but also from a cold take on Arab history.

## **WHAT IS REQUIRED OF ISRAEL?**

The world has been exposed to numerous scenarios for pressuring Israel, but most show no sign of being anything other than counter-productive or empty symbolism. The latter has been called the politics of radical gestures.[15] I see no prospect, however, that this politics of radical gestures expressed through boycotting or divesting from SodaStream or Hewlett Packard will bring the Israeli government to its knees or have any significant impact on the course of history. Yet in a political context in which broad agreement is rare, there is considerable international consensus on one point: that West Bank settlement expansion jeopardises both present and future potential for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, to any prospect for a negotiated agreement, and to long-term peace in the area. Of course there are powerful Israeli constituencies that disagree and a series of Israeli governments have either turned a blind eye to new or expanded settlements or actively promoted them. This is the most notable way in which present Israeli actions limit the policies future Israeli governments can adopt. The US government, Israel's single major international donor, has been entirely ineffective in extracting truly binding commitments to halt settlement creep. Yet belief in the principle that the US government, despite the combined force of political resistance and inertia, does have potential, if limited, leverage, is nonetheless warranted. And government policy in general is the place where US and European citizens, including faculty and students, have the greatest chance for influence.

Some people believe foreign military aid should be tied to Israel's adoption of a no-settlement expansion policy. That proposal fails every test of how either the Israeli government or the Israeli people would respond: for both, it would constitute a fundamental threat. Nor would withdrawal of US military aid clearly benefit the Palestinians. Consider, paradoxically, how many Palestinian lives Iron Dome may have saved. Had the rockets fired from Gaza in 2014 killed civilians in Tel Aviv or destroyed a passenger plane at Ben Gurion airport, Israel's military response would have been far more severe, and many more Palestinians would have died.

But that does not mean the US is powerless. We Americans might for example, as recent news reports demonstrate, begin to suggest that our diplomatic support in the UN or elsewhere be tied to serious progress on the settlement front. Hints of that possibility surfaced immediately after the 2015 Israeli elections. Doing so by way of high stakes US government public theatre will not work, at least not as an initial strategy, although it may come to that, especially if the Right remains in power in Israel. It is far better if negotiated policy changes precede an international political crisis. Meanwhile, concerned people worldwide should be organising to do at least three things: (1) criticise and discredit any effort either by individuals or NGOs to make financial contributions to the settlement movement; (2) put more pressure on their own government to extract settlement policy concessions from the Israelis; (3) advocate relentlessly for a two-state solution. No government lasts forever, and the government put in place after

the March 2015 elections may not outlast two years, but even short-term settlement policy and expansion can hamper future government negotiations.

That said, not all settlements are equal. Too many academics are too occupied with political posturing to look closely at the settlements and distinguish their types and locations. That leads to useless and unrealistic protests against any and all additions to existing settlements. The fundamental distinction, in my view (setting aside Jerusalem), is between settlements to the east and west of the fence, security barrier, or wall. No realistic observers expect settlements west of the fence to be part of an eventual Palestinian state; one expects them to be incorporated into Israel through land swaps.[16] Large settlement blocs close to the green line like Modiin Illit, northwest of Ramallah, or Beitar Illit, west of Bethlehem, with populations of 60,000 and 50,000 respectively, are not destined to be abandoned. The largest segment of Israeli land to be exchanged is likely to be to the southeast of Gaza, as Gaza is the Palestinian area with the most need for additional space and the land there will be less controversial for Israel to vacate. An additional land swap could include a segment immediately south of the West Bank, though some of that land is not considered of comparable quality as it is too rocky for agricultural use.

As this argument may suggest, the security barrier constitutes a potential border with a Palestinian state. It offers a prospective point of withdrawal even if that withdrawal is, at first, unilateral. The barrier unquestionably has been beneficial in helping to eliminate suicide bombings, but it also offers Palestinians a potential boundary for their own independent state. Indeed, can anyone imagine a two-state solution without such a barrier?[17] Many on the international left regard the wall as an unqualified obscenity, but as a potential international boundary it holds out the possibility of Palestinian statehood. Certainly settlers to the east of the security barrier recognise that, which is why many are opposed the wall's construction and still see it as a threat. Therefore, with the exception of Jerusalem, where drawing permanent borders presents special challenges and where an eventual solution will require continuing co-operation, the construction of new housing units west of the security barrier should not be the focus of controversy or political posturing.

That is not to say that the route the barrier takes cannot be adjusted. Under Aharon Barak, who served as President of the Israeli Supreme Court between 1995 and 2006, Palestinian efforts to reroute the security fence, block house demolitions, or win *habeas corpus* suits were more likely to receive sympathetic hearings. Barak, a thoughtful jurist of international stature, struggled continually with ways to grant justice to Palestinians within the legal system, but he is now often demonised by the Israeli far-right. Unlike the federal courts in the United States, the Israeli Supreme Court is set up to hear individual complaints at a reasonable cost. Legal support provided by NGOs is also sometimes available to those who need it. Progressive observers worldwide could collaborate with sympathetic Israelis and local NGOs like ACRI (The Association for Civil Rights in Israel) to select individual cases to publicise and promote so that the court's decision making becomes more visible worldwide. People can also help fund groups that bring appropriate cases before the court. Specific cases need international visibility before they are decided, and good and bad decisions need to be evaluated and publicised. The Israeli Supreme Court in, other words, should have the same international visibility that the US Supreme Court has. The goals should include encouraging the court to

revive its willingness to reroute the security barrier where appropriate and, alternatively, to mandate compensation to Palestinians who have suffered losses due to its location.

## THE SETTLEMENTS

Activists everywhere should focus on specific demands for curtailed settlement expansion and principled positions that draw politically useful distinctions. Some settlements present a serious impediment to establishing a viable Palestinian state; others do not.[18] While some non-contiguous areas can be part of a nation state – I know of no plans to build a land bridge to Hawaii – the broken pieces of the PA's Area A and the barriers to contiguity some Jewish settlements present constitute too much dislocation for coherent economic, political, and social development. Letting off steam about the settlements relieves frustration, but it is not a useful, practical, and effective form of protest. There are both major and minor settlements in the way that need to be taken into consideration according to their own particularities. Creating a Palestinian state may, for example, require Israel at the very least to negotiate the status of the city of Ariel, along with its university, and the city may end up having to be abandoned given that it is substantially east of the green line. In any case, its population has not been growing, and it is an example of a place where expansion should be prohibited. Several Israelis pressed me to consider giving up my firm opposition to boycotting Ariel University, given its location in occupied territory, its reluctance to admit West Bank Palestinian students (as opposed to Israeli Arabs), and its administrative separation from the rest of Israeli academia. My reply was twofold: first, either we hold to a universal principle rejecting all academic boycotts or we will end up debating scores of such proposals worldwide and the principle will have no value. A successful movement to boycott Ariel would soon be followed by intensified efforts to boycott Tel Aviv or Technion. Second, I am interested not in boycotting Ariel University, but in discussing the possibility of turning the whole city over to Palestinians (although Israelis will recall that the 'Clinton parameters' of December 2000 would have had them retain Ariel). On the other hand, there are a few settlements close to the green line that may have become so large that abandoning them is politically unrealistic. Maaleh Adumim east of Jerusalem may be one such example. Regardless, there are a number of smaller settlements in the Jerusalem area whose expansion should be prohibited so that they could be abandoned in a comprehensive settlement.

The settlements in the Palestinian city of Hebron, 19 miles south of Jerusalem, are perhaps the settlements in the West Bank that most cry out for abandonment. I would prefer to see them abandoned now, as a real and symbolic concession. The settlements in Hebron are a fragmented group of four tiny groups of Israelis, numbering altogether perhaps 800 people, and surrounded by a large Palestinian city of about a quarter million people. IDF soldiers there have the task of protecting settlers living atop the remains of a Biblical home where they are no longer welcome.[19] The motivation for living there is largely religious, testimony to an ancient heritage whose material revival is unremittingly bleak. The Jewish homes are spartan and the restraints on Palestinian movement necessary to ensure the safety of settlers, oppressive. Abandoned Arab markets are now scrawled with threats and obscenities and spread beneath homes protected with heavy wire mesh. Anger boils over everywhere. Yet I am nonetheless persuaded there would be no more controversial settlement to abandon because of its

religious status, and that the Left could not hope to reach resolution unless it found a way to honour what was culturally at stake in Hebron. The Jews, who first returned illegally in 1979, established the first Jewish presence there since 67 of their predecessors were massacred in Hebron in 1929. Ecstatic to be living on Abraham's territory, they were oblivious to what had become Palestinian facts on the ground in the intervening years.<sup>[20]</sup> Now they clung to what seemed a living miracle. Abandoning the Hebron settlement without honouring the loss would, I was finally convinced by Israelis I spoke with, be either politically costly or impossible. Some reasonably feel that abandoning Hebron now in effect validates the consequences of the 1929 massacre. I can only answer that both sides have benefitted from violence. Both sides will have to tolerate those consequences if they wish to live in peace.

I am convinced there is no other course, and activists may well want to make a focused cause of the need to abandon the Hebron settlements. They could sign petitions, offer public presentations, and participate in the annual 'Open Shuhada Street' demonstrations.<sup>[21]</sup> Unlike 'Israel Apartheid Week', which is mounted as a comprehensive condemnation of Israeli society, the pro-Israel left could focus 'Open Shuhada Street' events on a targeted critique of Israeli policy and on discussion of routes to peace. Al-Shuhada Street is a main Hebron road that was closed to Palestinians in 1994 and then reopened to vehicle and pedestrian traffic for a year in 1997. The market, however, remained closed and has never reopened. Palestinian vehicles as of now are prohibited there and Palestinian pedestrians are still banned from some areas. Surely, Jewish access to the nearby Tomb of the Patriarchs could be sustained by a combination of an agreement with the PA and a long-term IDF presence,<sup>[22]</sup> honouring those observant Jews around the world who mention the founding fathers daily in their prayers. Hebron does not require a Jewish settlement to justify an IDF role in preserving a corridor enabling access to the religious site. Indeed, the PA might help to secure that access as part of an agreement to abandon the Hebron settlements. What is clear is that there is no way forward unless both the Left and the Right in Israel find a way of respecting each other's values and passions. A deeply divided electorate cannot decide the future simply by one side winning an election. There are important political lessons to be learned from discussing Hebron and other individual settlements and by discussing settlements by type.

In advocating a form of withdrawal from Hebron that honours the loss some observant Jews throughout Israel would experience, I am not writing out of sympathy for the settlers themselves, some of whom can be belligerent in a way that does not win allies. I am seeking to address the wider cultural reality. Some on the Left – frustrated by the reality of the tiny settlements of Tel Rumeida, Beit Hadassah, Beit Romano, and Avraham Avinu that are isolated within downtown Hebron <sup>[23]</sup> – are willing to have the IDF announce a date of departure and leave those settlers determined to stay to their own devices. I doubt they would survive. That is not an outcome Israelis or Jews worldwide could accept.

## **CREATING A ‘TWO-STATE DYNAMIC’: THE CASE FOR PHASED WITHDRAWAL**

In grounding a phased withdrawal scenario that elaborates on Israeli proposals, one might point to two very different target areas, neither of which would border directly on pre-1967 Israel territory if West Bank buffer zones were maintained. The security implications of dealing with the western portion of the West Bank would be deferred. This is not to suggest precise boundaries for a targeted withdrawal, since that is Israel’s responsibility and since it would require very precise mastery of terrain that is often very hilly, but rather, two general areas subject to international discussion and debate. I am assuming in both cases that illegal outposts (small settlements established illegally even according to Israeli law) would be vacated; such action is overdue in any case and certainly necessary for these scenarios to succeed. Progress beyond one preliminary withdrawal might well be conditional upon the performance of the Palestinians, with the possibility of additional withdrawals held out as an encouragement toward cooperation, nonviolence, and negotiation over a comprehensive agreement. Performance might also include the evolution of political institutions in the West Bank. As Asher Susser has written, ‘as the Palestinians proceed to build the institutions of their state – we should withdraw from considerable territories in the West Bank, gradually – withdraw settlements, particularly – leave the military in many places where we still need them. Thereby we will create the possibility of what I call a “two-state dynamic” – instead of what we are presently creating ourselves, which is a one-state dynamic.’ [24] In the meantime, Israel would not waive control of any West Bank air space, but a managed right of return would operate in the area identified as a prototype Palestinian state or an enhanced Area A. Settlement of the most contentious issues – the borders of a divided Jerusalem and the final status of the Palestinian right of return – is almost certainly impossible without a negotiated agreement. Some, including some Israelis on the Left, feel that unilateral withdrawal amounts to yet one more Israeli political and military imposition on the Palestinians, as opposed to a product of negotiation and mutual consent, but the reality of new facts on the ground and the economic and political opportunities they offer to Palestinians should undercut resentment growing from that perception. A coordinated, staged series of withdrawals would preferably be characterised and managed as steps toward an agreement, as Amos Yadlin – former air force general, former head of the IDF Military Intelligence Directorate, and current director of Israel’s Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) – has argued, though the government elected in 2015 is unlikely to do so. Meanwhile, even a hypothetical future progressive Israeli government may well need options other than a comprehensive peace agreement, especially in the short and medium term. There need to be routes toward progress that do not require placing either all hope in, or a political consensus behind, a complete resolution of the conflict; Israeli governments of both the Right and the Left need options to be exercised in stages. International observers need them if they are to have productive conversations about the conflict. And Palestinians need to know that a comprehensive agreement is not the only way forward.

Since neither side now believes much of what the other side says, we need deeds rather than words to trigger the peace process. Writing in 2012, [Alan Johnson](#) gave a concise definition of coordinated unilateralism: ‘In other words, each party would make moves that the other accepts to be part of any final-status agreement (“coordinated”). However, given the paralysis of the negotiating process, they would do so with only the tacit approval of the other party



(“unilateral”).’ Johnson quotes Ami Ayalon, former head of Israel’s Shin Bet intelligence service, who has also endorsed the concept: ‘It is OK if the Palestinians are demanding unilaterally a Palestinian state – Israel should not be against it; it’s OK if Israel will act unilaterally in order to achieve a reality of two states, as long as it is coordinated with a shared vision.’ He also cites Gidi Grinstein, a veteran of earlier peace negotiations and president of Tel Aviv’s Reut Institute, on coordinated unilateralism: ‘First it would be a kind of Fayyadism-plus, green-lighting the PA to continue nation-building. Second, it would be low-risk, so less likely to experience the periodic screeching halts that plague the peace process. Third, unilateral measures can mostly be implemented by governments, so shielding the process from legislators. Fourth, it puts off a resolution of the Gaza-West Bank split (and so avoids having to pretend that a “demilitarized Palestine” is compatible with a militarized Gaza). Fifth, it evades unrealistic implementation arrangements and timetables. And finally, the creation of a Palestinian state may give many refugees the feeling that they have a home that realizes their collective desire for self-determination, draining away some of the venom from that issue.’

One potential first target area for withdrawal is in the north central area of the West Bank and it might be anchored in the north and the south respectively by the existing Palestinian cities of Jenin and Nablus.[25] Much of it is classified as Area A or B under the Oslo Accords and is under at least Palestinian civil control, but Area B areas are crisscrossed by Israeli roads and thus do not constitute a fully contiguous Palestinian area. The region has a substantial population and business base on which to build and there is also considerable area available for development. This amounts to the northern portion of the area of the West Bank that Amos Yadlin identified as a target for unilateral withdrawal should negotiations fail, but it is substantially less than the eventual target of 85 per cent of the West Bank he set.[26] Asher Susser, in 2012, proposed a 60-70 per cent withdrawal from the West Bank. Starting in the north, the issue is how far to the east and the south one chooses to go in stage one. The eastern boundary in the north could extend as far as the Palestinian town of Bala.

Between Nablus and Ramallah, a series of settlements cut through the centre of existing Palestinian areas . A realistic Palestinian state would require their elimination. There are also approximately 30 outposts with a total estimated population of about 4,000 to be dealt with in the area.[27] Evacuating 24,000 or more people in both very well established settlements and illegal outposts will not be easy. Thus the first phase of a unilateral withdrawal would likely have to make Nablus its southern border. The Jenin to Nablus withdrawal could be carried out without evacuating any settlements, thereby leaving the government with a more limited political problem to confront.[28] If that first withdrawal worked well and helped build trust, the more challenging withdrawal from the area between Nablus and Ramallah might follow. It might be possible to work further south in stages; general negotiations could be reopened at any point. Even a Netanyahu coalition, as I suggested, may need options to reduce West Bank unrest and international opposition.

Yadlin prefers to call this a ‘coordinated’ withdrawal, echoing Susser’s ‘coordinated unilateralism’ in his 2012 [BICOM interview](#) and [Foreign Policy Research Institute](#) essay, both to distinguish it from the pure unilateralism of Ariel Sharon’s 2005 withdrawal from Gaza and to foreground the key components he recommended, which would include beginning both with a public Israeli offer of a comprehensive solution and with coordination with other countries to

secure increased legitimacy and build trust. The final status offer to be made public, an event that likely awaits a future Israeli government, would embody the key concessions each side would have to make. Israel would (1) explicitly abandon all ambitions to establish a Greater Israel encompassing the West Bank; (2) commit itself to accepting a modified version of the pre-1967 borders; and (3) agree to the division of Jerusalem with East Jerusalem as the capital of a Palestinian state. The Palestinians would (1) specify that a final status agreement would settle all issues and end the conflict; (2) recognise Israel as a homeland for the Jewish people and agree that the right of return for Palestinian refugees would be limited to returning to a Palestinian state; and (3) accept a form of sovereignty consistent with restrictions to guarantee Israel's security. This last consideration will require a considerable international educational effort if it is to win broad understanding and acceptance.

One might clarify the Palestinian concessions by pointing out, first, that acknowledgement of Israel as a homeland of the Jews is not the same as declaring Israel to be a theocracy or possessing a state religion – it simply recognises a historical fact. Combined with recognition of Israel's borders and the country's democratic status, it effectively concedes that the Jewish majority has the key role in shaping the country's future. It is also important that Israel acknowledge the catastrophic character of the Nakba and support the principle of financial compensation for those who lost property. Israel could also accept the return of a limited number of refugees with a family member who actually resided there in 1948 and is now an Israeli citizen. If a partial withdrawal were executed in the light of these commitments, it would make it clear that Palestinians could gain more land and establish their East Jerusalem capital through a final status agreement. Meanwhile, as Susser has argued, the result of a partial withdrawal would be better than we have now. The door would continue to be open to renewed negotiations, and the partial withdrawal would leave most settlements in place as significant bargaining chips.[29] There would, however, be no commitment to the return of the Golan Heights.

## **CREATING A TWO-STATE DYNAMIC: PALESTINIAN NATION-BUILDING**

The inability of one side or the other to agree to the controversial but essential six principles above has played a major role in the failure of previous negotiations. Focusing instead on an interim partial West Bank withdrawal allows us to discuss making progress and bringing explicit benefits to the Palestinians. Thus, the viability of a Palestinian territory created by combining selective Areas A, B, and C would be enhanced by the fact that it would create significant possibilities for development. Small sized West Bank cities of 20,000 to 40,000 people are often started on a hilltop, spreading down its sides. There are many such potential locations in the West Bank. The model Palestinian city of Rawabi, located 9 kilometres north of Ramallah and designed for 25,000 or more residents, has already been partially built, largely with funds from Qatar. For two years, it awaited its water rights from Israel or from the Israeli-Palestinian Joint Water Committee for its first apartments to be filled, rights that should have been granted immediately.[30] Installation of the last small segment of water pipe was finally approved in March 2015. It would have been great to have seen resolutions from around the world throughout 2014 demanding that Rawabi get its water.

In the model very roughly sketched here, Israel would retain its buffer zone to the north as a security guarantee, but would cede control of the roads crossing the area to the PA so as to create a substantial contiguous territory that could anchor a fledgling Palestinian state. The fate of the few settlements in the area would partly determine the exact boundaries. Ideally, a narrow agreement specifying that the area would be demilitarised would be negotiated, but that could be achieved by Israeli declaration if necessary.

## **THE JORDAN VALLEY**

The other territorial suggestion here is far more speculative and controversial, and it would require a major international commitment to housing, infrastructure, and economic development: the Jordan Valley, an area presently classified as Area C under Israeli control in the terms of the Oslo Agreement. Discussing this option should help lead people to confront Israel's security needs, a subject critics of Israel often dismiss out of hand. Depending on how far south the targeted area goes – one could anchor this segment in Jericho – one is basically looking at about 20 very small existing Jewish settlements with a total population of about 6,500 to be dismantled. Those in the far north are larger – as large as 400-500 people – and tend to be more religious and nationalistic in character; the rest are secular, but with an ideological cast. The Jewish settlements, running north to south, with their approximate populations as of 2011 in parenthesis afterwards, are: Mechola (400), Shadmot Mehola (500), Maskiyot (60), Rotem (100), Chemdat (178), Roi (157), Bqaot (162), Argaman (169), Masua (141), Yafit (107), Petzael (214), Tomer (234), Netiv Hagdud (186), Niran (54), Yitav (139), Naama (100), Mitzpeh Yericho (1,851), Vered Yericho (196), Beit Haarava (120), Almog (170), Kalia (306). The residents perennially complain of being neglected and at least some suggest they would be willing to leave if decently compensated.

Though there are scattered Palestinian villages, the Jordan Valley is much less developed and amounts to something like a blank slate for developing a segment of a potential Palestinian state. It would be an opportunity to construct ideal communities somewhat like Rawabi – though Rawabi is also a project in social engineering, since it was designed for high-tech nuclear families and thus intended to break with the Arab pattern of extended families living together. The Jordan Valley thought experiment could not succeed without major foreign investment. It is notable that Qatar expects to make a profit from Rawabi, so not every West Bank home built needs to be a gift.

Israeli discussions of security considerations in the Jordan Valley go two very different ways. Some argue that the long-running peace with Jordan means Israel no longer needs a military presence along that border. They point to regional threats to Jordan that add to the need for continued cooperation with Israel. Others, to the contrary, point out that Jordan's large Palestinian population gives the country long-term potential for political transformation and instability, and the presence of a Palestinian state on that border throws additional uncertainty into the mix. As Dore Gold – Director-General of Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and former President of the Jerusalem Centre for Public Affairs – has pointed out, the risk of a large scale military incursion is far lower than the potential for weapons crossing the border, though he also emphasises that the strategic situation can change [\[31\]](#).

One may recall that, in the period immediately following the 1967 war, Israel perceived its security needs very differently, thinking that the risk was of a full-scale military invasion from the east. At that point, Deputy Prime Minister Yigal Alon drafted what is known as the Alon Plan, in which Israel would retain a full third of the West Bank in the form of a 10-15 kilometre wide area running along the Jordan River and the Dead Sea [32]. That would provide for an extensive swath of settlements and military installations to the east, rather than the heavy settlement development to the west that actually came to pass over time. The western two thirds of the West Bank would have been an autonomous Palestinian area. When that was rejected, Alon proposed returning that territory to Jordan, along with a corridor linking it to Jordan proper. Israel would get its east/west corridor as well. In contrast, the narrow Jordan River security corridor suggested above would have no Israeli settlements. The question for Israelis to decide on is whether that would provide sufficient protection against both possible contemporary threats – weapons smuggling and a transformed Jordan.

Both arguments about potential risk have merit. None of us can guarantee anything about the future of the Middle East. Recall that Israel was at one point willing to return the Golan Heights to Syria in exchange for a peace treaty. If Israel had done so, who would be ensconced there now? If you were to cede the Golan Heights tomorrow, to whom would you cede it? Regarding the Jordan Valley, however, one can point out two things: that a unilateral withdrawal could leave the Israelis with the option of retaining control over a buffer zone sufficient to interdict weapons, since preventing smuggling across the Jordan River would require less territory than repelling a full-scale ground invasion; and, again, that the present West Bank arrangement is unsustainable.

## **ISRAEL'S ARAB CITIZENS**

Meanwhile, unless Israel makes more rapid progress in meeting the quite reasonable demands among its Arab citizens for better educational and employment opportunities and better infrastructure in Arab communities, tensions with those communities will increase and support for coordinated unilateralism will be undermined. None of the Arab citizens of Israel I met or listened to as part of a Brandeis University study tour in 2014 – among them journalist Khaled Abu Toameh, activist and journalist Nazier Magally, and activist and prospective Knesset member Nabila Espanioly – want to live in a Palestinian state, let alone some nightmare caliphate, but they are quite justly impatient with the pace at which discrimination against them in Israel is being ameliorated, and they are alienated by anti-Arab sentiment from Israel's far right [33]. Yet they see the lack of freedom in the surrounding countries, and they do not wish it on themselves. There are professions, like medicine and higher education, in which Arab Israelis have done quite well and have relative equality, but the overall economic conditions for their communities are unacceptable. That, in turn, makes them more politically restless and more identified with their West Bank brothers and sisters. The statistic Nabila Espanioly cited – that Israeli Arabs constitute 20 per cent of the population but 50 per cent of those living in poverty – needs to be addressed with a timetable to cut the poverty level by half.

I have not met any West Bank Arabs, meanwhile, who do not feel deep resentment and anger at Israel. Their desire for nationhood is intense and deeply rooted. Few who are not stateless themselves can understand the psychological consequences. Meanwhile, the psychological cost among young IDF soldiers who do West Bank service is considerable. It seems that the experience is always psychologically and politically transformative. Some West Bank IDF veterans find their hearts hardened toward Palestinians, while many others migrate to the Left, adopt the terminology of occupation, and urge either a rapid settlement of the issues or unilateral withdrawal [34]. The idea that the West Bank can stabilise in its present configuration is fanciful.

## DEEP MUTUAL RECOGNITION

But if we want to think fairly and realistically about this intractable political problem, we have to realise that both the Israeli and the Palestinian narratives have a core of truth. Both Jews and Arabs have long histories with Palestine; it is useless to seek to give one people's history priority. The Nakba was a tragedy, whether or not some Arabs fled out of fear, some were forced out, or others left because they were encouraged to leave by neighbouring Arab states. The failure of the surrounding Arab states to integrate the Arab exiles of 1948 and their determination to use the refugees as a political weapon against Israel has helped create a Palestinian people who might otherwise not have sought separate nationhood. But there is no going back, no undoing the consequences of 75 years of history.

Despite Israel's military strength, the vulnerability some of its citizens feel is real. Try living in Sderot, within sight of Gaza, where thousands of rockets have landed over the last decade. You have 15 seconds to get to a shelter when the warning siren sounds. More than 1,000 Israelis were killed in suicide bombings before the security barrier was built; their names are inscribed in the hearts of millions of others. Indifference to Palestinian suffering is callous and inhumane, but so too is dismissal of the tensions and threats Israelis face. Concern about rockets landing on Ben Gurion airport is perfectly rational, even though Asher Susser, an Israeli scholar I admire, likes to quip that 'Herzl did not urge us to establish an airport.' A modern state cannot function without air travel and commerce. The military response to successful targeting of Ben Gurion would have to be overwhelming. The risk is already there in the form of long range rockets from Hezbollah, but anyone who asks Israelis to take on that risk from the West Bank as well needs to be realistic about the potential consequences. I met a highly educated Palestinian in Ramallah, a one-state advocate, who pointed out that, when Arabs look comprehensively at the map of the Middle East, they see Arab regimes everywhere except in Palestine. Why, he asked, should we alone suffer the presence of a non-Arab Jewish state in our homeland? Such sentiments give reason to take Israeli concerns for security very seriously. Israeli concern that the West Bank does not become another Gaza is not unwarranted. This paper has only begun to address the security question, though the areas from which Israel might withdraw could be constituted so as to lack the land, sea, and underground access for weapons smuggling that Gaza has possessed at various times. Israeli territory patrolled by the IDF would surround the two areas discussed above. Indeed, Israel could continue to provide an appropriate buffer zone if the prospective Palestinian state were extended somewhat to the west and the south. [Amos Yadlin's](#) 85 per cent eventual coordinated withdrawal zone

also provides comparable Israeli territorial buffers secured by the IDF. Only a comprehensive agreement could enlarge the Palestinian state beyond that.

Nonetheless, every possible solution to the conflict is a wager. There are no guarantees. There is risk at every turn. We gain nothing by postures that deny or minimise those risks. The risk is partly embodied in those on each side who reject compromise. If you meet the right fanatical Israeli settler or the right Palestinian zealot, full of hate, you will justly wonder whether peace has any chance. If you read the Hamas charter, you can conclude it does not [35]. The only hope is that those who wish the death of those they see as their opponents can gradually be marginalised by events. Meanwhile, those who are prone to violence need to be monitored and controlled. The murders on both sides that led up to the summer 2014 war are telling indication that single acts of violence embodying a hostile ideology can have catastrophic consequences in Palestine. It will be politically difficult for Israel to subject its violent Right to more thoroughgoing surveillance, but the kidnapping and murder of a Palestinian child in July 2014 proves it is necessary. Neither side can expect the other to succeed in constraining its own radical elements unless both sides do so. If both peoples are convinced that their police reliably interdict violent plots and public incitements to violence have been suppressed, then a rogue plan that succeeds has some chance to be viewed as rogue, rather than as an expression of popular will. With absent sufficient policing, however, peace efforts will forever remain hostage to events outside any control negotiators can exercise.

There are many groups across the world that discuss the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in terms of such very specific options as those briefly sketched here. People should discuss other alternatives as well. The focus on coordinated withdrawal from limited portions of the West Bank is intended both as a way of improving the current situation by giving Palestinians a greater level of control over their lives and as a means of building enough trust for negotiations over a final stage agreement to commence. The endnotes here provide links to a variety of maps detailing proposals for such an agreement. Whether people find these exact proposals persuasive, however, is less important than that we begin talking about and promoting options like them.

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[1] Asher Susser, 'The Two-State Solution: Getting From Here to There,' Foreign Policy Research Institute E-Notes (October 2012, available online at [http://www.fpri.org/docs/media/Susser\\_-\\_Two\\_State\\_Solution.pdf](http://www.fpri.org/docs/media/Susser_-_Two_State_Solution.pdf).

[2] For an analysis of the campus environment for discussions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, see the fourth chapter in my *No University Is an Island: Saving Academic Freedom* (New York: New York University Press, 2010). The environment has become more hostile since then. Also see Cary Nelson and Gabriel Noah Brahm, eds. *The Case Against Academic Boycotts of Israel* (Chicago and New York: MLA Members for Scholars' Rights, 2015).

[3] See, for example, Scott Jaschik, "A Moderate MLA," *Inside Higher Education* (31 December 2007), available online at <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2007/12/31/mla>.



[4] For a history of the bi-national concept, see Rachel Fish, 'The Bi-nationalist Fantasy Within Academia' in Cary Nelson and Gabriel Noah Brahm, eds. *The Case Against Academic Boycotts of Israel*, pp. 365-374. The most recent polemic in support of a one-state solution – by an Israeli journalist – is Caroline B. Glick's *The Israeli Solution* (New York: Crown Forum, 2014). For a critique of the one state solution see Benny Morris, *One State, Two States: Resolving the Israel/Palestine Conflict* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009). For earlier efforts to float unilateral withdrawal, see Shlomo Cesana, Yoav Limor, and Associated Press, 'Barak Floats Unilateral Withdrawal from Judea and Samaria,' *Israel Hayom*, 24 September 2012; See also 'Reassessment of Israeli-Palestinian Political Process: Build a Palestinian State in the West Bank,' Reut Institute, 5 May 2009; 'Israel Should Withdraw Unilaterally: Asher Susser interviewed by Toby Greene,' *BICOM*, 17 July 2012, available online at [http://static.bicom.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/120712\\_susser\\_upoad-II.pdf](http://static.bicom.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/120712_susser_upoad-II.pdf). As Toby Greene points out in a later piece, support for consideration of a graduated unilateral withdrawal from the West Bank has grown as advocacy for a one-state solution escalates. He argues persuasively that the diplomatic benefit from commitment to a graduated unilateral withdrawal depends in part on how the process is communicated internationally. See his 'Can Disengagement Secure Legitimacy?: The European Angle' *Strategic Assessment* 16:4 (January 2014), 47-60.

[5] See Naftali Bennett, 'For Israel, Two-State Is No Solution,' *New York Times* (November 5, 2014), available online at [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/06/opinion/naftali-bennett-for-israel-two-state-is-no-solution.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/06/opinion/naftali-bennett-for-israel-two-state-is-no-solution.html?_r=0). Also see his 'A New Plan for Peace in Palestine,' *The Wall Street Journal* (May 20, 2014), available online at <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702304081804579559432394067704>. For a dramatic presentation of Bennett's plan, accompanied with vivid maps, see his 'The Israeli Security Initiative: A Practical Program for Managing the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict,' available online at <http://www.myisrael.org.il/action/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Stability-Plan-EN-Final.pdf>. In his proposal there is no Palestinian state, merely disconnected fragments under overall Israeli military control. Palestinians would gain economic investment and greater physical mobility but have no real capacity for political self-determination. Moreover, there would be no right for Palestinian refugees to return, not even to the West Bank. Bennett's plan, unsurprisingly, is not the only West Bank proposal to come from the Israeli right. Avigdor Lieberman, the leader of party Yisrael Beiteinu, first proposed his 'Populated Area Exchange Plan' in 2004. Aimed at ensuring ethnic homogeneity for both Israel and a Palestinian state, it takes the extraordinary step of transferring not only a significant portion of Israel's Galilee region to a Palestinian state but also the Israeli Arab citizens living there. This would constitute a blatant violation of both Israeli and international law. Lieberman would, however, abandon Jewish settlements deep inside the West Bank. See Timothy Waters, 'The Blessing of Departure: Acceptable and Unacceptable State Support for Demographic Transformation: The Lieberman Plan to Exchange Populated Territories in Cisjordan' (*Law & Ethics of Human Rights*, 2008), available online at <http://www.repository.law.indiana.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1020&context=facpub>.

[6] The survey was conducted by The Washington Institute. An online summary is available at <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/new-palestinian-poll-shows-hardline-views-but-some-pragmatism-too>. It showed that 55 per cent in the West Bank and 68 per cent in Gaza believe the goal should be to reclaim 'all of historic Palestine, from the river to the sea,' but a majority preferred popular resistance rather than violence. A slide show of some of the data is available online at [http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/other/PalestinianPollingReport\\_June2014.pdf](http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/other/PalestinianPollingReport_June2014.pdf).

[7] See Yehuda Ben Meir and Olena Bagno-Moldavsky, *The Voice of the People: Israeli Public Opinion on National Security* 2012 (Tel Aviv: Institute for National Security Studies, 2013). There remains hope that Israelis will choose demography over geography when they confront the one state/two states choice.

[8] Isabel Kershner, 'Academic Study Weakens Israeli Claim The Palestinian School Texts Teach Hate,' *New York Times* (3 February 2013), available online at [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/04/world/middleeast/study-belies-israeli-claim-of-hate-in-palestinian-texts.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/04/world/middleeast/study-belies-israeli-claim-of-hate-in-palestinian-texts.html?_r=0).

[9] See Raphael Cohen and Gabriel Scheinmann, 'The Grim Lessons of "Protective Edge"' *The American Interest* (31 August 2014), available online at <http://www.the-american-interest.com/2014/08/31/the-grim-lessons-of-protective-edge/>, and Yaakov Lappin, Yonah Jeremy Bob, and Tovah Lazaroff, 'Ya'alon: We can apply lessons from Protective Edge to other arenas,' *The Jerusalem Post* (30 September 2014), available online at <http://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/Yaalon-tells-defense-conference-that-Hamas-did-not-intend-to-launch-war-376654>. For an ambitious analysis of the issues, see Anat Kurz and Shlomo Brom, eds. *The Lessons of Operation Protective Edge* (Tel Aviv: Institute for National Security Studies, 2014).

[10] At the 2015 annual J-Street conference, Peter Beinart suggested that concerned activists from other countries might join nonviolent West Bank protests. That is worth serious consideration, but it is important to note that assuring nonviolence would require advance notification and cooperation with both the IDF and that PA. Even in the US, police can be antagonistic when confronted with civil disobedience that is not coordinated with them in advance. The challenges in the West Bank are still greater, since radical elements among both peoples would need to assure nonviolence.

[11] Steven Salaita, *Israel's Dead Soul* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011), p. 10.

[12] In *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000) Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela argue that, 'Although it is doubtful that Hamas will revise its ultimate goal and its public attitude toward Israel, it may find that it can accept a workable formula of coexistence with Israel in place of armed struggle' (ix). They remind us of the community services Hamas provides and describe it as a complex, divided organization. Their view does not really survive the experience of July 2014, during which Hamas treated its own civilians as expendable. If Hamas wanted to give Gazans a taste of peace, it could declare and honour a demilitarised zone along the Mediterranean and encourage economic development there.

[13] See Richard Landes, 'Fatal Attraction: The Shared Antichrist of the Global Progressive Left and Jihad,' in Nelson and Brahm, eds. *The Case Against Academic Boycotts of Israel*, pp. 293-310. Also see Jacob Lassner and Ilan Tron, *Jews and Muslims in the Arab World: Haunted by Pasts Real and Imagined* (New York: Rowan & Littlefield, 2007).

[14] Campus debates are often dispiriting because the politicisation of humanities and soft social science disciplines has reached the point where entire areas of necessary rational reflection have become no-man zones, topics that many will simply not engage. See Sabah A. Salih, 'Islam, BDS, and the West,' in Nelson and Brahm, eds. *The Case Against Academic Boycotts of Israel*, pp. 141-155, for an account of the politicization of the humanities. Also see Heather Rogers, 'Holding Our Tongues: Why aren't more non-Muslim feminists decrying violence against women in Muslim-majority countries?' *Tablet* (4 March 2015), available online at <http://tabletmag.com/jewish-news-and-politics/189292/holding-our-tongues>

[15] See Todd Gitlin, 'BDS and the Politics of 'Radical' Gestures,' *Tablet* (27 October 2014), available online at <http://tablet-mag.com/jewish-news-and-politics/186468/bds-politics-radical-gestures>.

[16] Although some on the Israeli right reject the concept of land swaps entirely – and others envision a ratio more favourable to Israel than 1:1 – there seems little prospect of getting the Palestinians to agree to the fundamental concessions necessary to a final status agreement if the land swap ratio appears to be demeaning. The infrastructure Israel would be giving to the Palestinians is definitely a bargaining chip, but I do not see the Palestinians trading land for it. At least one dramatic piece of potential infrastructure – a mixed sunken road and underground tunnel linking Gaza and the West Bank (it is just over 22 miles from Targumiya to northern Gaza) – could have substantial weight in negotiations. The S. Daniel Abraham Center for Middle East Peace has a very clear oral presentation of the land swap issues at <http://centerpeace.org/learn/borders/>. It is part of a 4-part video series (Borders – Security – Refugees – Jerusalem) that is also available at <http://www.the-atlantic.com/special-report/is-peace-possible/>. The *Atlantic* also makes printable transcripts of the four presentations available on its site, though without the very helpful charts and graphics that are part of the videos. Also see David Makovsky, 'Imagining the Border: Options for Resolving the Israeli-Palestinian Territorial Issue' (The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2011), available at <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/StrategicReport06.pdf>. The Israeli architectural firm SAYA has a very detailed plan for managing Jerusalem after a final status agreement. 'The Border Regime for Jerusalem in Peace: An Israeli-Palestinian Proposal' is focused in part on maximizing tourist income for both parties. It is available online at [http://issuu.com/www.sayarch.com/docs/saya\\_jerusalem\\_border\\_regime?e=2112089/3364024](http://issuu.com/www.sayarch.com/docs/saya_jerusalem_border_regime?e=2112089/3364024). For a critique of current Israeli settlement policy and its impact on the final status of Jerusalem, see Daniel Seidman, 'Spatial Shaping: Unilaterally Determining Israel's Base-Line Border' *Terrestrial Jerusalem* (February 2013) and "'Spatial Shaping", the Ross Agenda and Proposals for a Partial Settlement Freeze,' *Terrestrial Jerusalem* (March 2013), available online at [http://t-j.org.il/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=QRDH\\_InqzyM%3d&tabid=1508](http://t-j.org.il/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=QRDH_InqzyM%3d&tabid=1508) and <http://t-j.org.il/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=hhUfE1PW-LA0%3d&tabid=1508>. For an earlier debate about land swaps between Israelis and Palestinians, see 'Land swaps and the two-state solution' on the bitterlemons website: <http://www.bitterlemons.org/previous/bl010210ed49.html>.

[17] As Shaul Arieli has written in 'What we have learned from the barrier' (*Haaretz*, 10 July 2012): 'We have learned that Israel is in need of a physical barrier between it and the Palestinian territories in any scenario, whether confrontation or negotiated agreement. This need springs from the ongoing threat of terror, of varying levels of intensity, on both sides ... A barrier on an agreed border line should be in the Israeli interest, since Israel would then be able to ensure that the border between it and Palestine is relatively porous, enabling the passage of goods, tourists, workers and vehicles. Building the barrier with security needs in mind will make it easier for Israel, when it signs an agreement, to prevent opponents on both sides from interfering with the implementation of a deal through violent acts, mass marches and so forth.' On the other hand, as points out, 'We have learned that all the Israeli governments since Sharon's have been inclined to revise the barrier's route on the basis of political considerations that take the needs of settlements into account, considerations that are alien to real security needs.' Available online at <http://www.haaretz.com/opinion/what-we-have-learned-from-the-barrier-1.450015>.

[18] Among prospective, as opposed to existing, settlements, none seems more controversial than the proposed plan to build in the E-1 area or corridor between Jerusalem and the large settlement of Maaleh Adumim to its east. If construction does not continue farther to the east beyond Maaleh Adumim, then E-1 development would not divide the West Bank in two and block establishment of a contiguous Palestinian state. A Palestinian state could still control the 12 miles between Maaleh Adumim and the Jordan River. Concerned about Palestinian construction in the E-1 area and about the potential

for Maaleh Adumim to become a permanently isolated enclave, and wanting to secure sufficient strategic depth on the eastern border of its capital, the Israelis have repeatedly announced plans to build in the E-1 area; international opposition has led them to desist. Both Palestinians and Israelis are interested in creating immutable facts on the ground by building in the area. The Palestinians are concerned about access to their own future East Jerusalem capital, which E-1 construction could make more time consuming, and see all construction in the Jerusalem area as a threat. Ideally, neither party would build in E-1 for now, instead waiting for negotiations to settle its status. A Google search on 'E-1 West Bank' will turn up a variety of position papers and historical accounts. See, for example, Nadav Shragai, 'Understanding Israeli Interests in the E-1 Area: Contiguity, Security, and Jerusalem,' Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs (2015), available online at <http://jcpa.org/understanding-israeli-interests-in-the-e1-area/>. Ramallah-based *Palestine Monitor* (<http://palestinemonitor.org/details.php?id=o3vocpa267yoe3465r87>) regularly reports on E-1 and other issues confronting Palestinians. For a concise summary of the Palestinian perspective, see Atif Shamim Syed, 'Israel's E1 Plan and Its Implications,' *The Palestine Chronicle* (22 December 2012), available online at <http://www.palestinechronicle.com/israels-e1-plan-and-its-practical-implications/>.

[19] See *Breaking the Silence: Soldiers' Testimonies From Hebron, 2005-2007* (Jerusalem: Breaking the Silence, 2008) for accounts of IDF service in Hebron. In December 2014 I spent a day in Hebron with Avner Gvanyahu, an IDF veteran who is now Breaking the Silence's Director of Public Outreach.

[20] See Yossi Klein Halevi, *Like Dreamers: The Story of the Israeli Paratroopers Who Reunited Jerusalem and Divided a Nation* (New York: HarperCollins, 2013) for a portrait of the settlers who returned to Hebron after the 1967 war. There are several full-length documentaries and numerous brief video segments about Hebron on Youtube.

[21] There are many articles about the status of Shuhada Street. See, for example, David Shulman, 'Hope in Hebron,' *New York Review of Books* (22 March 2013): 'Those who still live on Shuhada Street can't enter their own homes from the street. Some use the rooftops to go in and out, climbing from one roof to another before issuing into adjacent homes or alleys. Some have cut gaping holes in the walls connecting their homes to other (often deserted) houses and thus pass through these buildings until they can exit into a lane outside or up a flight of stairs to a passageway on top of the old casba market.' Available online at <https://web.archive.org/web/20130323220130/http://www.nybooks.com/blogs/nyrblog/2013/mar/22/hope-hebron/>. The sixth annual 'Open Shuhada Street' demonstration took place in Hebron on 27 February 2015. There are over 20 'Open Shuhada Street' demonstration videos on Youtube.

[22] The experience of relying completely on the PA to protect a religious site is not confidence inspiring. Consider the wholesale trashing of the Tomb of Joseph in Nablus.

[23] For a useful map that shows the settlements in Hebron, see *Humanitarian Atlas*, issued in 2011 by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and available online at [http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha\\_opt\\_humanitarian\\_atlas\\_dec\\_2011\\_full\\_resolution.pdf](http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_humanitarian_atlas_dec_2011_full_resolution.pdf). It includes detailed maps for a number of West Bank areas. Shaul Arieli maintains a very useful series of maps on his website: <http://www.shaularieli.com/?lat=en>. There, for example, one can see maps detailing the Israeli and Palestinian proposals that grew out of the 2007 Annapolis Conference attended by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, and US President George W. Bush.

[24] Asher Susser, 'The Two-State Solution: Getting From Here to There.' For a concise summary of the principle of 'coordinated unilateralism,' along with accounts of key Israelis supporting it, see Alan Johnson, 'Idealism Without Illusion: Should "Coordinated Unilateralism" Replace the Peace Process?' *World Affairs* (2 March 2012), available online at <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/blog/alan-johnson/should-coordinated-unilateralism-replace-peace-process>. Also see 'Head to Head: Moshe Arens and Ami Ayalon discuss coordinated unilateralism,' *Fathom* (Winter 2013), available online at <http://fathomjournal.org/head-to-head-moshe-arens-and-ami-ayalon-discuss-coordinated-unilateralism/>. A recent and quite ambitious study – *The Costs of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2015) – estimates that Israel will not derive significant economic benefit from either coordinated or uncoordinated withdrawal from the West Bank. On the other hand, Rand sees substantial economic benefit to both Israelis and Palestinians from a fully realised two-state solution. Of course coordinated unilateralism is not ideally intended as an end in itself but rather a route to a two-state solution, in which case the economic benefits would be achievable. Notably, however, the Rand report does not envision Israel's overall security expenditures declining under any scenario. It also adds that the economic costs of a new violent uprising would be considerable. Finally, readers will want to consult the concise 2012 white paper on coordinated unilateralism, "A New Paradigm for the Israeli-Palestinian Political Process," on the web site of Blue White Future, a group founded by Ami Ayalon, available online at <http://bluewhitefuture.org/the-new-paradigm-2012/>.

[25] There are a considerable number of maps of the West Bank available online, though many of them are too small for those unfamiliar with the area to use effectively. I recommend the map available on the [Peace Now website](#). Note that several Jewish settlements in the north central West Bank – Kadim, Ganim, Sa-nur, and Homesh – were abandoned and the settlers evicted as part of the August 2005 withdrawal that included Gaza. The settler movement, however, has not given up interest in returning. See, for example, 'Settler leaders vow to rebuild West Bank settlement of Homesh,' *The Jerusalem*

Post (16 January 2014), available online at <http://www.jpost.com/National-News/Settler-leaders-vow-to-rebuild-West-Bank-settlement-of-Homesh-338347>. It should be entirely impossible for settlers to return once a prototype Palestinian state is established. For a remarkable set of maps that begins with ancient near east empires and proceeds to the contemporary world see Max Fisher, '40 maps that explain the Middle East,' available online at [http://www.vox.com/a/maps-explain-the-middle-east?utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=facebook&utm\\_campaign=voxdotcom&utm\\_content=thursday](http://www.vox.com/a/maps-explain-the-middle-east?utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&utm_campaign=voxdotcom&utm_content=thursday).

[26] See Herb Keinson, 'Yadlin: Israel should consider 'coordinated unilateral' action if peace talks fail,' *The Jerusalem Post* (27 January 2014), available online at <http://www.jpost.com/Diplomacy-and-Politics/Yadlin-Israel-should-consider-co-ordinated-unilateral-action-if-peace-talks-fail-339493>, for a preliminary version of Yadlin's plan. He presented it in a full lecture at a 29 June 2014, symposium – 'In the Absence of Progress toward a Final Status Agreement: Options for Israel' – sponsored by The Institute for National Security Studies in Tel Aviv. A simultaneous English translation of Yadlin's presentation and numerous responses are available online in video format at <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLCapdZwzD-pNnYultApPpGDjy-OGwGGGOFT>. Yadlin's presentation is the third one on the list, titled 'An alternative option for Israel, "Plan B."' As of the end of February 2015, it had received only 550 views, some of which are no doubt repeat visits to the site. That is not a hopeful indication of international interest in these matters.

[27] Running north to south, the outposts (with Peace Now's population estimates as of 2011) include Skall's Farm (35), Bracha A (40), Sneh Ya'akov (100), Shalhevet Farm (120), Lehavat Yitzhar (40), Hill 725 (40), Mizpe Yitzhar (40), Hill 851 (100), Hill 782 (120) Hill 836 (20), Hill 777 (70), Gva'ot Olam (30), Tapuah West (50), Rechelim (240), Hotel Nehemia (100), Pagel Mayim (180), Nof Harim (160), Hayovel (150), Givat Harel (180), Shvut Rachel (400), Es Kodesh (80), Ahiya (130), Haroch (80), Kida (200), Adel Ad (150). Ofra North East (60), Amona (200), Jabel Artis (100), Beit El East (50), Givat Assaf (80), and Mizpe ha'al (90). There are a few additional outposts for which I do not have population figures.

[28] A second phase withdrawal could extend from Nablus to Ramallah. That would require evacuation of numerous settlements and outposts. Negotiations over Ariel's status, however, might be postponed, leaving it contained within a finger of Israeli territory extending from the west. From Bethlehem through Hebron to the far south is yet another target for withdrawal.

[29] It is possible of course that the Palestinians might refuse to cooperate. Susser thinks otherwise: 'it will be very difficult for Palestinians to resist an Israeli withdrawal. If Israelis decide to withdraw from 60 to 70 per cent of the West Bank, are the Palestinians going to ask the Israelis to remain? Probably not. It's true that the Palestinians, in principle, have resisted a negotiation on an interim settlement. But I am not talking about a negotiation' (p4).

[30] When I visited Rawabi in July 2014 as a member of a faculty study tour organised by Brandeis University's Shusterman Center for Israel Studies, the project's administrator, Palestinian businessman Bashar al-Masri, was asked what level of cooperation and assistance he'd had from either Israel or the Palestinian Authority. His answer: 'Zero from the Israelis, zero from the Palestinian Authority.' He emphasized the need for water rights from the Israelis and complained that the PA collected taxes and returned nothing. See Avi Issacharoff, 'Waterless, the first planned Palestinian city sits empty,' *The Times of Israel* (20 February 2015) for an analysis of the political manoeuvring that stalled Rawabi's opening to occupancy. Available online at <http://www.timesofisrael.com/waterless-the-first-planned-palestinian-city-sits-empty/>.

[31] See Dore Gold, 'Kerry and the struggle over the Jordan Valley,' *Israel Hayom* (5 July 2013). Available online at [http://www.israelhayom.com/site/newsletter\\_opinion.php?id=4877](http://www.israelhayom.com/site/newsletter_opinion.php?id=4877). Also see Shaul Arieli, 'A security plan for the Jordan Valley,' *The Jerusalem Report* (27 January 2014), available online at [http://sfile.f-static.com/image/users/77951/ftp/my\\_files/arieli.pdf?id=14283478](http://sfile.f-static.com/image/users/77951/ftp/my_files/arieli.pdf?id=14283478).

[32] For a convenient online map of the revised version of the Allon Plan see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allon\\_Plan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allon_Plan).

[33] Toameh, Magally, and Espanioli all talked to faculty members on a study tour organized by Brandeis University's Shusterman Center for Israel Studies in July 2014. I also talked privately with Toameh.

[34] For accounts of IDF soldiers' experience, see *Our Harsh Logic: Israeli Soldiers' Testimonies From The Occupied Territories 2000-2010* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2012).

[35] For an online copy of the 1988 Hamas Charter, see <http://www.thejerusalemfund.org/www.thejerusalemfund.org/carryover/documents/charter.html?chocaid=397>.

# FIVE

## Time to End Palestinian Incitement

*David Pollock (2013)*

*The glorification of violence in Palestinian Authority media must be addressed if peace talks are to succeed.*

Even as Israeli-Palestinian peace talks begin again, official Palestinian Authority (PA) media are still broadcasting girls singing about Jews as ‘the sons of apes and pigs,’ and still paying effusive tribute to Palestinian terrorists convicted for murdering Israeli civilians. To get these negotiations started, Israel agreed to release over one hundred such prisoners; but the Palestinian government continues to glorify them as heroes, offering them as role models for the next generation. If this kind of incitement keeps up, how can Israel reasonably take risks for peace – and how could any peace agreement endure?

The start of peace talks makes it all the more urgent to examine incitement and related inflammatory rhetoric – what would be referred to in the United States or Britain as hate speech – in the official public record of the PA. In recent years that record reveals relatively few high-level expressions of religious hatred, but numerous official messages that nonetheless run counter to the goal of peace. Addressing the problem of incitement now, at the start of this current peace effort, will help promote an atmosphere of good will and improve the chances of success in the negotiations.

On the whole, the PA messaging trend over the past year has been negative, and the tone has been reflected by the rhetoric of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas himself. A comparison of the UN General Assembly speeches by Abbas in September 2011 and September 2012 shows a much more accusatory and less conciliatory tone toward Israel in 2012, with just a passing mention of peace.

When examining day to day cases, the most common form of recent incitement, with nearly one hundred documented cases between March 2011 and December 2012 according to Palestine Media Watch, is that of glorifying terrorists, often manifested in statements by PA officials. The list of honourees includes occasional mention of earlier assassinated Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) leaders like Abu Iyad (Salah Khalaf) and Abu Jihad (Khalil al-Wazir). Most frequently mentioned, however, are individuals convicted of terrorism since the PLO officially renounced it at the start of the Oslo process in September 1993, and including those recently released from or currently serving time in Israeli jails.

In a particularly striking case, at the end of 2012, [the Fatah Facebook](#) page posted an image of Dalal Mughrabi, a female terrorist who participated in the deadliest attack in Israel’s history – the killing of 37 civilians in the 1978 Coastal Road Massacre. The image was posted with the declaration: ‘On this day in 1959 Martyr (Shahida) Dalal Mughrabi was born, hero of the ‘Martyr Kamal Adwan’ mission, bride of Jaffa and the gentle energizing force of Fatah.



Another theme of recent official Palestinian incitement is the demonisation of Israelis and Jews, often as animals. For example, on 9 January 2012 PA television broadcast a [speech](#) by a Palestinian Imam, in the presence of the PA Minister of Religious Affairs, referring to the Jews as ‘apes and pigs’ and repeating the *gharqad hadith*, a traditional Muslim text about Muslims killing Jews hiding behind trees and rocks, because ‘Judgment Day will not come before you fight the Jews.’

Denying Israel’s existence or rejecting the possibility of coexistence with it is another form of incitement. This may be either explicit or implicit. Fatah’s own websites in Arabic continue to feature the original PLO and Fatah covenants and other founding documents, all of which explicitly rule out recognition or peace with Israel and assert a claim to all of historic Palestine.

Direct statements by PA officials often deny Israel’s historical legitimacy and accuse it of inherent injustice, even if they do not deny its existence or explicitly threaten to destroy it. For example, PA Deputy Minister of Information Al-Mutawakkil Taha told official PA daily newspaper Al Hayat Al Jadida in early 2012 that, ‘Israel has gone beyond all forms of oppression practiced by fascism throughout history’ and that it ‘does more than racist discrimination and ethnic cleansing.’

But what are the motives behind such incidents? Many Palestinian officials, academic specialists, and other experts argue that this is simply an expression of anger at Israeli occupation, and the absence of any sign of it ending. Some Israeli analysts see this situation in precisely the opposite terms. Incitement, they maintain, is actually a form of political ‘insurance,’ keeping the fires of popular hostility and irredentist grievances smouldering, and therefore keeping open the option of reverting to ‘armed struggle’ even after signing an accord with Israel, as Arafat did in the Oslo era. A final, even more discouraging possibility is that senior PA officials actually believe some of the anti-Israeli and even antisemitic screeds that their media propagate.

Some argue that the trading of accusations over incitement is a secondary matter and a distraction from the substantive issues to be negotiated between the sides; a problem that will go away on its own once a peace accord is signed. However, the lesson from other conflicts is that waiting for a conflict to end before addressing the incitement which fuels it can be a prescription for disaster.

The international tribunals held following the end of armed conflict in the former Yugoslavia and in Rwanda set new precedents for the prosecution of incitement, at least of incitement to genocide. Perpetrators of the most serious forms of incitement were judged as international criminals deserving severe punishment. Sadly, these measures were taken only after the most deadly and destructive phase of conflict was over. Better late than never, some might say, but too late to avert the damage wrought by incitement while the conflict still raged. Furthermore, incitement that does not reach the level of instigating mass murder has not been prosecuted in international tribunals – leaving a vast playing field free for lesser yet still noxious forms.

It is difficult to make direct links from incitement of the kinds seen in Palestinian media to violent episodes. However, strong circumstantial evidence suggests a possible connection between particular messages and specific terrorist or other violent episodes. The Itamar massacre of March 2011 for example, in which five members of the Fogel family were murdered in their beds, followed a month of commemorations on PA media of other Palestinian terrorists



– beginning with a DFLP (Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine) militant who murdered two Israelis at the same West Bank settlement in 2002. A 2011 [Pew poll](#) shows that 68 per cent of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza say suicide bombing is justified, at least ‘sometimes’, compared with much lower percentages in other predominantly Muslim societies.

Finding ways to ensure the PA stop, or at least reduce, official incitement against Israel would have other positive effects, aside from potentially reducing the motivation for future would be terrorists. It would indicate that the PA was willing and able to take the kind of unpopular steps required to keep an agreement with Israel. Most important in the long run, it might gradually accustom or encourage more Palestinians to accept permanent peace with Israel, making a compromise agreement less risky and more durable.

So, tackling incitement matters; but how should international third parties address it? Beginning in the Bush Administration, the US paid particular attention to the issue of incitement in Palestinian and Israeli textbooks. In part, as one policymaker from that period privately explained, the decision to focus on textbooks reflected a feeling that teaching prejudice and training a new generation for endless conflict was tantamount to ‘child abuse.’ In tandem with the pressure on Arafat to empower Abbas as prime minister in 2003, and in particular following Arafat’s passing in late 2004, this counter-incitement initiative actually did produce results.

Similarly during the Obama Administration, public reproaches from Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and other relatively high-ranking officials in early 2010, along with their push for a halt in Israeli settlement-building to jump-start peace negotiations, helped produce a decline in PA anti-Israel media messages. This time, however, the improvement proved only temporary. Once the short-lived peace talks and Israeli settlement moratorium ended in September 2010, PA incitement picked up again, without eliciting a prompt high-level US or international protest. The lesson appears to be that unlike with textbooks, which are less susceptible to change, an improvement in media can easily retrench without persistent pressure. A counter-incitement effort should be serious, sustained, and comprehensive if it is to have any success at all.

It should also be focussed on the worst cases: any support on either side for violence or violent offenders coming from government officials or institutions with governmental authority or funding. The less extreme forms of incitement such as historical denials or distortions should be relegated to the background for now, however important those might be in the longer term. Neither side should be allowed to use allegations against the other to deflect or excuse its own failings. Leaders must set the right tone, and stick to it without exception or equivocation.

It is futile to debate whether Israeli settlements or Palestinian hate speech are more or less to blame for the conflict’s persistence. The major lesson of past successes, failures, and false starts are that incitement is a serious problem, but also a fixable one. It is at least as much an obstacle to peace as any other more tangible issue, so steps to end it should be integrated into any attempt to address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. All interested parties – Israelis, Palestinians, Americans, Europeans, and others – should now pay at least as much attention to hate speech as to housing starts.

## SIX

### UNRWA: an obstacle to peace?

*Einat Wilf (2013)*

*For the sake of peace, reform of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) is urgently needed, argues Einat Wilf.*

One of the greatest obstacles to peace, and certainly the least acknowledged, is the perpetuation of the Palestinian refugee problem and the inflation of its scale by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). Whereas the actual number of Arabs who could still claim to be refugees as a result of the Arab-Israeli war of 1947-1949 is today no more than several tens of thousands, the number of those registered as refugees is reaching 5 million, with millions more claiming to have that status.

#### **THE UNRWA PROBLEM**

Since the Second World War the UN High Commissioner for Refugees has been responsible for the welfare of all refugees in the world and has assisted in their resettlement and relocation – so that nearly all of them are no longer refugees – with one exception: the Arabs from Palestine. By contrast, UNRWA, the organisation created specifically to handle the Arab refugees from Palestine from the 1947-1949 Arab-Israel war, has collaborated with the Arab refusal to resettle the refugees in the areas where they reside, or to relocate them to third countries. Worse, UNRWA has ensured that the refugee issue only grows larger by automatically registering descendants of the original refugees from the war as refugees themselves in perpetuity. For Palestinians, uniquely, refugeehood is an hereditary trait.

For several decades UNRWA has been engaging in an act of bureaucratic self-aggrandisement, inflating the numbers of those in its care, ensuring the growth of its budget. If the descendants of the Arab refugees from the Arab-Israeli war were treated like all other refugees, including the Jewish ones, they would not qualify for refugee status because almost all of them (upward of 80 per cent) are either citizens of a third country, such as Jordan, or they live in the places where they were born and expect to have a future such as Gaza and the West Bank. The Palestinians born in the West Bank and Gaza are not fleeing war and are not seeking refuge. They are considered citizens of Palestine by the Palestinian Authority itself, just like all other Palestinians born in these territories. No other people in the world are registered as refugees while being citizens of another country or territory. Moreover, if the European Union has adopted the policy that Gaza and the West Bank are territories to be allocated to Palestine – and some EU countries already recognise Palestine as a state – then it makes no sense for it to argue that people who were born and are living in Palestine are refugees from... Palestine.

The remaining 20 per cent of the descendants who are not Jordanian citizens or citizens of the Palestinian Authority in Gaza and the West Bank, are inhabitants of Syria and Lebanon who are by law denied the right to citizenship granted to all other Syrians and Lebanese. Yet, UNRWA does nothing to fight for the right of these Lebanese and Syrian-born Arabs to citizenship, collaborating in their discrimination and the perpetuation of their refugee status.

Why does this matter for peace? Because if millions of Arabs who are citizens of Jordan and the Palestinian Authority, or inhabitants of Syria and Lebanon, claim to be refugees from what is today Israel, even though they were never born there and never lived there, and demand that as a result of this refugee status they be given the right to relocate to Israel ('the right of return'), *then the whole basis for peace by means of two states for two people crumbles*. If Israel with its 6 million Jews and more than 1.5 million Arabs has to absorb between 5 and 8 million Palestinians then the Jews will be relegated again to living as a minority among those who do not view them as equals; the only country in which the Jews are a majority and can exercise their right to self-determination would be no more.

## **WESTERN COMPLICITY**

Even more absurd is that UNRWA is funded by countries who support two states *for two peoples*. The United States, the EU, Canada, Japan and Australia fund 99 per cent of UNRWA's annual budget of over \$1 billion, whereas the 56 Islamic countries who supposedly grieve for their Palestinian brethren supply only a few million dollars.

If the policy of Western countries towards the Jewish settlements in the West Bank were to take its cue from their policy towards the Palestinian refugees as shaped by UNRWA, it would go as follows: 'Go ahead Israel, build as many settlements as you want and keep expanding them in perpetuity. We will accept the settlements as a natural expansion of Israel. We will even support the expansion effort financially. Don't tell the settlers that they will ever need to leave their homes, teach them that it is their legal right to be there. We trust that when the day comes to negotiate peace with the Arab world you will do so in good faith and in a way that guarantees the existence of a sovereign and contiguous Arab state in Gaza and the West Bank.'

As it stands right now the policy of Western countries towards UNRWA is precisely that – it is essentially telling the Arab world: 'Go ahead and keep inflating the numbers of refugees in perpetuity by registering descendants of refugees as refugees themselves. Register them as refugees from Palestine even though they were born and are living in the Palestinian Authority. Allow them to maintain both a refugee status and citizenship from a third country. Keep telling them that even though they were born in Gaza and Ramallah, they are actually from Ashdod and Ashkelon and can realistically expect to live there soon. Keep them in a discriminated-against state in Syria and Lebanon, where their basic human rights are denied, just so they can keep the conflict alive. We trust that when the day comes to negotiate a final settlement with Israel, you will do so in good faith in a way that guarantees the coherence and existence of a Jewish state.'

If the first policy appears preposterous to Western governments who support peace by means of a two-state solution, *then so should the second*. If Western countries truly want to remove obstacles on the road to peace they cannot condemn the growth of settlements on one hand and condone the manufactured growth of the number of refugees on the other. Either *both* the growth of settlements and the inflation in the number of refugees should be treated as obstacles to peace, or neither should be. Moreover, whereas Israel has demonstrated time and again that for peace with Egypt – and for much less than peace in Gaza and the northern West Bank – it will ruthlessly and effectively uproot settlements, the Palestinians have yet to demonstrate that they are willing to take even the smallest steps to give the refugee issue its true and proper proportions.

## ALTERNATIVES

If the West truly wants to promote a coherent policy that supports a two-state solution and does not favour one side over another, it should use its power as the financial supporter of UNRWA to steer its practices along a more constructive path. The welfare, education and health services provided by UNRWA could continue and even be expanded, but their provision should be based on need, not refugee status.

In Gaza, where there is no Israeli presence and which is clearly part of Palestine, the continued registration of Palestinians living in Palestine as refugees should be discontinued. In the West Bank, in the areas under Palestinian Authority control, the funds currently going to UNRWA should go to the Palestinian Authority for the provision of services, while the designation of the citizens of the Palestinian Authority as refugees should also be discontinued. Finally, outside the West Bank and Gaza, UNRWA's work should be merged with that of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and operate on the same basis as all other refugees in the world, with efforts directed at securing the equal rights of the descendants in Lebanon and Syria where they were born and have lived their entire lives.

A first effort in this direction was taken in 2012 when the US Senate, acting on the initiative of Senator Mark Kirk, introduced an amendment to the budget bill, requesting that UNRWA report 'on the number of refugees that it services separate from their descendants.' The US Senate Appropriations Committee asked for nothing more than information and transparency in reporting in return for the 250 million dollars of US taxpayers money that it supplies UNRWA annually. It did not ask for aid to be cut. It did not call for cessation of services to the millions of descendants; it only asked for transparency in numbers. Even though the amendment did not go through, given that the budget bill as a whole did not move forward, the US Senate sent out a powerful message for peace in that the attainment of a two-state solution cannot be congruent with UNRWA's practice of inflating the number of refugees. And if the EU wants its recent stringent steps against Israeli settlements to be taken as genuine efforts to keep the two-state solution alive as the path to peace, it must pursue policies that address *all* obstacles to peace.

# SEVEN

## Needed: a paradigm shift in the 'Middle East Peace Process'

*Shlomo Avineri (2013)*

*Almost twenty years after the signing of the Oslo Agreements between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation, the time has come for a new paradigm if one thinks seriously of moving ahead in addressing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Israel's upcoming election may now further this need for thinking outside the box, as practically all contending parties are still caught in the language of 'solving the conflict' that has until now failed to reach its declared goal. For almost two decades all Israeli governments, of the right and left, have tried but failed in this effort.*

It is easy to personalise the issues: Netanyahu is not interested in moving forward; Bush did very little to further negotiations; Obama misjudged the difficulties; Abbas has failed to create one legitimate political entity, able to speak on behalf of all Palestinians. All this is true, yet does not go far enough to explain the failure – some deeper and more structural issues are involved.

### **NO, 'EVERYBODY' DOES NOT KNOW THE SOLUTION**

The last time serious negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority took place under the Olmert government no agreement was reached, despite almost two years of continuous meetings by top officials from both sides. When negotiations reached the core issues of the conflict – borders/settlements, Jerusalem, refugees and security – it became clear that the gaps were too wide to overcome. This is significant, as both sides at that time represented the most conceivably moderate positions, and went into negotiations with a sincere commitment to a two-state solution. It was also in the political interests of both sides to reach an agreement. Had an agreement been reached, Olmert would in all probability still be Israel's Prime Minister, and Mahmoud Abbas would have a trump card in his internal conflict with Hamas.

The disagreements preventing a deal were fundamental ones. On Jerusalem, no formula acceptable to both sides could be found, and hazy ideas about some international involvement in the administration of the Old City and the 'Holy Basin' could not be translated into concrete arrangements. For the Palestinians, the 'Right of Return' of 1948 refugees and their descendants (*Ouda*) continues to be a major building block of their national narrative. Even

if the Palestinians were ready to negotiate numbers, they insisted on the principle, which to Israeli negotiators meant undermining and delegitimising the Jewish nation-state. And for Israel, the government insisted on some presence in the Jordan Valley and a complete demilitarisation of the future Palestinian state, which was rejected by the Palestinians as emasculating its sovereignty and independence. Moreover, no territorial swaps could address the issue of settlements and borders. As the Palestinians insisted on a full return to the 1967 lines, no Israeli government could conceivably evacuate a quarter of a million settlers.

These fundamental disagreements have not gone away. Even if negotiations between Israel and the PA are resumed, it is inconceivable that what was not acceptable to Olmert would be acceptable to a future Israeli government under Netanyahu. Or that a PA, emboldened by its support at the UN General Assembly, will be more flexible now than it was four years ago. When one recalls that for all the US pressure on both Israel and the Palestinians, President Obama's special envoy, Senator George Mitchell, was not able in more than three years to even bring Israel and the PA to the negotiating table, it is unrealistic to imagine that negotiations, even if resumed, would end in something else other than failure. This would further exacerbate enmity and hatred on both sides, as did the failure in 2000 of the Camp David conference convened by President Clinton.

## **A NEW PARADIGM**

If this is the case, what can be done? Perhaps a lesson can be learned from how similar conflicts have been addressed.

It is clear that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is both complex and multi-faceted, which is why – in part – a solution remains intractable. For obvious reasons, the territorial aspects have been seen as the major bone of contention between the two parties, but this is only part of the story. The conflict is also between two national movements and two historical narratives; it is about legitimacy and sovereignty; it entails military occupation, settlers and terrorism; it is not a religious conflict as such, but it has religious dimensions, which exacerbate it; and it involves, in one way or another, neighboring countries. Viewed through this prism, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is similar to the conflicts in Cyprus, Bosnia, Kosovo and Kashmir. All of them have the same complex ingredients, though the intensity may differ, a divided Nicosia or Mitrovica has less historical and emotional resonance than a divided Jerusalem.

None of these conflicts have been resolved or seem likely to be resolved any time soon. The Annan plan for Cyprus, supported by the UN, US, EU, Russia, even Turkey and Greece, fell flat on its face when one player – the Greek Cypriots – rejected it; the Dayton agreements stopped the killings, ethnic cleansings and rapes in Bosnia, but failed to establish the envisaged multi-ethnic, multi-confessional confederate Bosnia-Herzegovina; Kosovo achieved its independence, but because Serbia has not accepted it yet, the conflict has not been resolved; and the dispute over Kashmir is also not close to being solved either.



Yet in all these cases, the absence of conflict resolution and the failure to reach a comprehensive, final status agreement has not prevented partial, step-by-step measures aimed at confidence-building and de-escalation. Some of these steps have been unilateral (as in the Turkish decision to open the crossings in Nicosia) or negotiated through a third party (as in the recent cross-border arrangements in Kosovo). To use political science jargon, none of these conflicts have been resolved: their aims are more modest: conflict management, conflict attenuation or conflict de-escalation.

At a time when the EU cannot solve Kosovo, it is presumptuous on its part to imagine that it can solve Israel-Palestine. Similarly, at a time when the US cannot make Serbia accept Kosovo's independence, it is unrealistic to imagine it can push either the Israelis or the Palestinians, supported as they are by all Arab League countries, to make the concessions neither side is willing to make. Playing the blame game does not move the conflict one inch closer to a resolution.

What is needed is a paradigm change – a realisation, difficult as it may be, like in Cyprus, Kosovo and Bosnia that at the moment there is no possibility of reaching a final status agreement. So in the case of Israel-Palestine there are numerous ways to diminish the conflict, to achieve partial agreements and to create a less tense atmosphere, which may eventually help in bridging gaps that at the moment appear unbridgeable. There would be numerous steps that could be taken both by Israel and the PA in this direction, but if the international community continues to insist on a final status solution it will continue to undermine the chances of a less ambitious but more realistic approach to the issues involved.

There is another lesson to be learned from a previous failed attempt to move towards a final status agreement: when at Camp David in 2000 President Clinton failed to reach an agreement between Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Chairman Yasser Arafat, the consequences on both sides were not only frustration, but a heightened level of enmity, hatred and fear. This is a cautionary tale to all those who advocate another attempt at final status negotiations. They should bear in mind that the outcome of such another failure will not mean a return to square one, but may push both sides closer towards the abyss. Another failed attempt could further widen the gaps and deepen suspicion on both sides – there are penalties, both politically and psychologically, in failure.

Almost twenty years after Oslo, even those like myself who supported the process have to admit that while it was a major step forward – mutual acceptance of each side by the other – it failed to achieve its underlying subtext: an agreed two-state solution. Not realising what was envisaged at Oslo has endangered meaningful progress, and the time has come for the international community to lower its sights and attempt to reach attainable goals, not well-meaning but at the moment utopian ones which attempt to resolve the entire conflict.

# EIGHT

## Israel's National-Religious Jews and the quest for peace

*Ofer Zalzburg (2014)*

*The Middle East Peace Process has often marginalised the voice of the 'National-Religious,' or 'Religious Zionist' Jews. Ofer Zalzburg argues that this has been a mistake. Drawing on the fruits of a major report produced by the International Crisis Group, he sets out why it is vital to include religious Zionism in the quest for peace, and how its support or at least its acquiescence might be secured.*

Although the most recent Israeli-Palestinian peace talks resembled previous rounds of failed negotiations in many ways, when assessing developments since the Camp David summit in 2000 one change is unmistakable: right wing parties opposing partition are stronger within Israel and the national-religious are stronger within the right. Though Israel's national-religious (or 'Religious Zionist') Jews comprise only eight to 10 per cent of the population, the 2013 elections brought 20 national-religious representatives into the Knesset. It proved the strong influence which national-religious Likud party members have within their party, and established the national-religious Jewish Home party under the leadership of Naftali Bennett as a major partner in the coalition. The increasingly visible power of Israel's national-religious community presents both an opportunity and an obligation to address a longstanding weakness of the peace process: the near-total exclusion of religious interests and stakeholders.

How to include this religious community in conflict resolution efforts is far from obvious. Its ideological core, composed of followers of the teachings of Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak HaCohen Kook, the first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of the pre-1948 Jewish community in Mandatory Palestine, hold the view that full redemption will come only when the entire People of Israel live in the Land of Israel under full Jewish sovereignty. Settlement construction, it follows, forms an intrinsic part of their project.

Indeed, Kook's contemporary followers are among the most ardent opponents of the two-state solution. They are of interest to the international community primarily because they continue to spearhead the settlement project. However, while international observers have tended to view the national-religious as successful in advancing the settlement project, in reality they have been more innovative and assertive in recent years precisely because they have sensed it is facing major setbacks.

Despite the outward appearance of success, Israel's national-religious are more concerned than ever that the settlement project has reached a ceiling which it has failed to break through in nearly 20 years of effort. Existing settlements have continued to grow, but virtually no new official settlements have been established since 1996. Over 100 outposts – settlements

deemed illegal under Israeli law – are home to no more than 5,000 settlers and face major legal challenges in Israel, putting settlement advocates on the defensive. This sense of failure dramatically increased with the 2005 Gaza disengagement, which saw all Israeli settlements in the Gaza Strip and four small settlements in the West Bank removed in an Israeli unilateral step. Nearly 9,000 settlers were uprooted in less than a week, demonstrating to national-religious settlers that 35 years of construction can be reversed much more easily than they wanted to think. Those who truly believed until the very day of the disengagement that divine intervention would prevent it from happening came to realise that political action, not prayer alone, is needed if they are to realise their objectives.

Those who try to challenge the state's limits on construction of new settlements are mostly young activists, living in outposts, who bridle at not only state restrictions but the compromises of the mainstream settlement movement. Their frustration is expressed, among other things, in their resorting to vandalism and violence – infamously known as 'price tag' attacks. In such attacks they target the property and houses of prayer of Palestinian neighbours, non-Arab churches, and sometimes political opponents in Israel, in reaction to Israeli governmental action against settlement in outposts. Recently they have increasingly become embroiled in direct confrontation with the IDF itself over the Israeli military's attempts to contain their activities.

The ideological core of the national-religious have reacted in recent years by accumulating power within the Likud party in order to affect national decision making from within. They have also launched assertive campaigns to win public hearts and minds in favour of retaining Israeli control over the Land of Israel. Some of their prominent leaders, realising the need to articulate a clear alternative to the two-state solution, began calling more explicitly and systematically than ever to annex some or all of the West Bank/Judea and Samaria and to naturalise some or all of its Arab-Palestinian residents.

## **BEYOND THE STEREOTYPES**

But there is far more to the story of Israel's national-religious than their political struggle over the land of Israel. Kook's teachings and the sociological profile of his followers are multifaceted and one should reduce neither the doctrine nor its followers to their attachment to the land. Their theology does not sanctify only the land, and not all national-religious are equally inflexible about it.

First, the Gaza disengagement has all but disproven the numerous experts and pundits arguing that Israel's national-religious settlers are fundamentalists who, when faced with the choice, would select land over country and turn to violence against the state. The community's ideological core sanctifies not only the land but also, just as forcefully, both the Jewish people and the State of Israel. Indeed, they consider the state's very existence to be a step in the process of redemption.

Consequently, Kook's followers exhibit strong deference to decisions backed by a Jewish majority and strongly oppose forceful resistance to the state. These doctrinal elements could prove highly relevant in the event of a breakthrough with the Palestinians. Indeed, it

is revealing that the youth perpetrating 'price tag' attacks have abandoned Kook's teachings and follow instead rabbis who are disciples of Rabbi Yosef Ginsburg of Chabad or of the late Rabbi Meir Kahane. The teachings of these two rabbis are focused not on the State of Israel as a step in the process of redemption but on a purportedly sharp qualitative difference between Gentiles and Jews.

Second, the community is divided between an ideological core, for whom rabbis have come to play outsized roles, both religiously and politically, and a mainstream that tends to consult its rabbis only on matters of personal religious observance. Unlike the ideological core, the national-religious mainstream does not look to the Torah for guidance on national matters and is therefore more amenable to pragmatic compromise. Winning support for a two-state solution from the latter group is within reach under certain conditions.

## **INCLUDING ISRAEL'S NATIONAL-RELIGIOUS IN PEACE-MAKING**

Until now, the peace process has been principally advanced by the Israeli left and centre and premised on the exclusion of the religious-right. It is time to reconsider this approach by taking greater account of the national-religious community's needs, and their critique of negotiations to date, some of which is sensible.

The national-religious point to at least four errors the left made in advancing peace. First, they thought ensuring a Jewish majority was sufficient for the future of the Jewish state, and therefore avoided efforts to shape the character and ensure the prosperity of a Jewish society. Second, they considered religion purely in individual terms, and approached the religious dimension of the peace process by mainly focusing on access to holy sites and worship rights, as opposed to Israel's role in determining and maintaining the sites' very character. Third, they showed all but hostility to the settler population – which it considered an obstacle, not a partner to peace – and its desire to maintain a connection to the entire Land of Israel. Fourth, they assumed Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation and mutual recognition of the other people's national narrative would come, if at all, only after the conflict was settled.

If the goal is an agreement with maximum legitimacy which secures national-religious support or at least acquiescence, three kinds of changes to the reigning paradigm are needed: addressing their core interests; ratifying a putative agreement in a manner expressing clear majority (Jewish) support; and implementing it in a manner which reduces risks of confrontation.

First, in terms of the agreement's substantive framing, national-religious Jews would more easily stomach territorial withdrawals if they believed the agreement ultimately solidified and secured Israel's Jewish character. Current peace negotiations all but prove that insisting on Palestinian recognition of Israel's Jewish character, as Netanyahu does, could kill the process, as Palestinians believe it would harm some of their core interests. However, committing to strengthening Jewish education and culture in a post-agreement Israel, though certain to trigger some opposition from other sectors in Israel, could be as effective in winning over the national-religious and would appeal to much broader right-of-centre Israeli constituencies. An investment in peace would become tantamount to an investment in Jewish culture and

identity, instead of the opposite, which is how an agreement with the Palestinians has been seen until now.

In terms of the agreement's substance, and bearing in mind the complex task of balancing national-religious concerns with the interests of both Palestinians and other Israeli constituencies, two adjustments could be helpful. Granting worship and visitation rights for Israeli Jews at holy sites falling under Palestinian sovereignty, like residency rights in a putative Palestinian state, would attenuate national-religious opposition to a deal. The effect would be all the more positive were these rights predicated on Palestinian recognition of Jewish religious and historical linkages to the territory between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, as already alluded to in the 1988 Palestinian Declaration of Independence. Granting sovereignty to Palestinians over the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif, given the Temple Mount's centrality in Jewish messianism, would be considered a theological defeat and thus fiercely opposed. Therefore, if it were possible to dodge the question of sovereignty – for instance by agreeing that sovereignty belongs to God or keeping silent about it altogether – national-religious resistance would be lowered significantly.

Second, any agreement would need to be ratified in a manner demonstrating that a majority of Israeli Jews support it. Because the ideological core of the national-religious community sanctifies the 'People of Israel' – a theological term referring to Jews, not to Israeli citizens – it tends to defer to decisions of a Jewish majority. This could be secured with a supra-majority in the Knesset or, more convincingly still for the community, a popular referendum. Such a ratification mechanism likely would be contentious, among Jewish no less than Arab constituencies, since democratic norms do not permit investing one community with special prerogatives. A creative solution would need to be found.

Third, the agreement would need to be implemented less abruptly and confrontationally than Israel's 2005 withdrawal from Gaza and four settlements in the northern West Bank. Housing for evacuees, like financial assistance, would need to be prepared well in advance. Moreover, Israel's government would do well to consider a gradual settlement evacuation. For example, the state might provide settlements slated for evacuation with only critical services while already built alternative communal housing would be offered to settlers relocating to Israel proper or to areas annexed to Israel as part of an agreement. Granting residency rights to Jews wishing to live under Palestinian sovereignty could also further mitigate the challenge of evacuation.

Many national-religious demands undoubtedly are problematic for other sectors of Israeli society and for Palestinians. But if national-religious acquiescence is vital to an accord, and all indications today in Israel are that it is, the challenge will be to offer inducements to both sides and craft mutually acceptable reciprocal arrangements. It is high time for peacemakers to cease looking at Israel's national-religious community as mere spoilers and to make a genuine effort to include them in the quest for peace.

# NINE

## Building Peace from the Grassroots

*Joel Braunold (2015)*

*On 30 June 2015, Joel Braunold, US Director of the Alliance for Middle East Peace (ALLMEP) spoke to a Fathom Forum on the importance of people-to-people movements to any eventual resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.*

When the Palestine Survey and Research Group published their quarterly research on levels of support for the two-state solution, everyone concentrated on the top line point, which is that support for the two-state solution has dropped to 51 per cent support in Israel and has stayed steady on 51 per cent support among Palestinians. But the really worrying statistics were below the fold. As many as 56 per cent of Israelis are worried or very worried on a daily basis that they will be murdered by Arabs and 79 per cent of Palestinians are worried or very worried on a daily basis that they will be murdered or have their land confiscated by Jews. It gets worse. 56 per cent of Palestinians believe that the Israeli objective is to expel them from the land, 25 per cent that the objective is annexation, whilst 43 per cent of Israelis believe that all Arabs are out to kill them and 18 per cent believe their aim is the conquest of Israel and the removal of their citizenship. Aggregated, between 60 and 80 per cent percent of the two populations believe that the intent of the other is the removal of their rights or their actual destruction. The Pew opinion surveys demonstrate that the youth of Israel and Palestine are even more pessimistic than their elders about the future, so any hopes that change may come with the new generation are likely misplaced.

The international community has been very good at focusing on doing civics, economics, or politics at any one time, but never all three simultaneously. When diplomatic efforts seemed to be succeeding during the Oslo years, governments placed a heavy emphasis on ‘people-to-people’ programmes designed to bring Jews and Arabs together, but post-Intifada there was a move towards a more economic approach with state building that saw \$3 billion of US loans being poured into the construction of a Palestinian state. When this failed to lead to the creation of Palestinian state, the economic approach was abandoned in favour of a renewed focus on diplomacy, exemplified in John Kerry’s belief that if you managed to get the right people in the room and push hard enough a solution could be found. In short, the three components for Palestinian statehood and the end of occupation – which are all necessary but insufficient in themselves – have been segmented, resulting in repeated failure.

Underlying these failures has been a huge gulf in trust. It is that gulf which the ‘people-to-people’ community has been trying to close. Both within the Green Line and beyond it, there are a number of civil society groups that seek to bring Israelis and Palestinians, Jews and Arabs together, in agriculture, education, industry, high-tech work, and advocacy programmes. The Alliance for Middle East Peace (ALLMEP) was established in 2003 in Washington DC by Avi



Meyerstein in response to the tendency of such 'people-to-people' movements to travel to Washington, meet with a member of the administration, and then leave empty-handed. ALLMEP is a coalition of 91 organisations which seeks to persuade lawmakers that the work of grassroots programmes is not only nice, but also necessary. At the moment, ALLMEP secures \$10 million a year for grassroots programmes, 23 per cent of the global total, but this is not enough. The \$1.5 billion fund that the International Fund for Ireland (IFI) had at its disposal over a 25 year period ensured that \$33 per capita was spent on reconciliation programmes there, as opposed to \$3.75 in Israel-Palestine. ALLMEP's calculations suggest a \$200 million Israeli-Palestinian Fund for International Peace is required to properly finance the vital work of peace and reconciliation organisations.

ALLMEP's work extends beyond the financial dimension. On the human capital front, our regional director Huda Abuarquob seeks to build a sense of community amongst these extremely diverse groups, covering everything from Kids4Peace to Center for Religious Tolerance, and to help them co-operate, learn from each other, and leverage each other's successes. We seek attention not to simply generate positive news stories but to ensure such stories are both noticed and seen as important. This is vital as Jewish philanthropists are prepared to channel vast sums of money into efforts to combat the movement for Boycotts, Divestments and Sanctions (BDS), but are more reluctant to give to efforts to build peace between Israelis and Palestinians. The Joint Social Venture Fund, the collective giving fund of the Jewish Federations of North America with a combined income of \$3 billion per annum, gives only \$800,000 towards efforts to build bridges between Jews and Arabs. There are some federations that sponsor this work such as in San Francisco and New York, but this lack of collective giving is a serious problem. So a greater focus on this work, whilst not a panacea, will go a long way to correct this problem of under-resourcing.

There are some, especially within the BDS movement who say our work is pointless, that it will never lead anywhere, and that it has no endgame. All I ask is that they hold their own community to the same standard to which they hold ours. The concept that the arc of history will suddenly bend and all will be well when you apply enough pressure is an absurdity today, when you have an armed and secure Israel that will under no circumstances give up that status. The best the BDS movement can hope for is an impoverished pariah state with unconfirmed nuclear weapons. The BDS movement has won the spotlight, but it needs to mature and decide how it wants to use it. At the moment, it promises full equality to Palestinians who live in Israel, the end of occupation to those who live in Gaza and the West Bank, and the full right of return to refugees. Everyone wins. The reality is that not everyone will win because there is another population there. The challenge the BDS movement faces is how they come to terms with that fact and engage with it.

More worrying still is the anti-normalisation movement, which seeks to police interactions between Israelis and Palestinians, cutting off all links that the BDS activists deem not to contribute to the right of return, the end of occupation, or full equality. Ultimately, these attempts to enforce separation are futile. But they make life especially difficult for those in the 'people-to-people' community, whose work is premised on bringing Israelis and Palestinians together. The philosophy of the anti-normalisation movement, built as it is on a refusal to believe in the power of conflict resolution or in the value of anything that does not directly

support Palestinian struggle or protest, is intellectually coherent, but ultimately self-defeating. The average Israeli is not going to join Anarchists Against The Wall, yet almost everyone in the anti-normalisation movement is from the constituency of people who would. This ideological dogmatism chokes these movements, as they will achieve none of their goals by refusing to engage with the very Israeli Jews who disagree with them and that they need to persuade.

The unhelpful attitude prevails on both sides of the conflict. Anti-normalisation should be set alongside the proposed Israeli NGO laws to tax donations from foreign governments, brand NGOs that receive such donations as ‘foreign agents’, and limit government co-operation with such potential. Government restriction of funding to control the debate is the parallel of the anti-normalisation community. Just as the anti-normalisation community seeks to shut down anything that does not directly advance their specific agenda, such legislation attempts to shut down anything that disrupt the image that Israel puts out to the world.

‘People-to-people’ work has brought thousands together and has the potential to do so much more. A sceptical parent’s outlook might be changed by sending their children to a Hand In Hand School, a farmer’s through cross-border agricultural work with Olive Oil Without Borders, and someone with limited access to water can be reached by a cross-border water programme with EcoPeace. The best people to convince Israelis that Palestinians are not monsters, and to show the Palestinians that Israelis are not monsters, are the respective populations. It is only through affecting this kind of change by building trust that Arab-Jewish relations will be normalised. Yes, Jewish-Arab alliances must be built on the political level: Israeli governments routinely exclude 20 per cent of the population and a fundamental shift in political culture is needed there. But they must also exist on the local level. Until trust is built through practical action on the ground, every solution will ultimately be swallowed up by its absence.

## **Part Two: Israeli and Palestinian Views**

# TEN

## Two States is Common Sense

*Hitham Kayali (2013)*

*The one-state solution is a mirage. Only the two state solution can meet the national aspirations of both peoples. It is time to give common sense its day.*

Cast your eye over two decades of attempts to turn the two-state solution into a reality since the Oslo Accords and you are confronted with a bleak picture. Many of the initial enthusiasts have come to favour other solutions or have simply chosen to turn a blind eye to the conflict. Within both political elites, and among the two peoples, there does not seem to be much hope.

But despite all, the two-state solution still has one thing in its favor: common sense. For make no mistake, the last 20 years have not produced any better alternatives, nor have they fulfilled the desires of two-state rejectionists. And when we look at the regional picture, it becomes clear that the two-state solution still benefits all neighbours. Moreover, the opportunities for both peoples that the two-state solution offers remain as huge as ever; most obviously, it guarantees the right to national self-determination of both peoples.

It is clear that Israel is not in favor of a bi-national state. The status quo has been, and continues to be, rejected by the world and the occupation affects Israel's standing among nations and the Jewish Diaspora. And with all its consequences, the occupation does not comply with the great values of Judaism.

The status-quo can also not continue for Palestinians either; not only because of the hardships and injustices of living under occupation, but because of the lost opportunities for producing a more enlightened, skillful and ambitious generation that is capable of shaping the future Palestinian state as we would like to see it. Our rejection of a bi-national state was declared with our pursuit of statehood after Oslo. For let us not forget the peaceful circumstances that existed between Palestinians and Israeli up until the nineties *and why they came to an end*: they did not fulfill Palestinian national aspirations and other demands, such as the right of return among others, hence the two-state solution – it was the common sense approach.

But common sense has had a hard time of it. For Israel, it's hard to understand how the interests of around 500,000 settlers can outweigh the deepest needs of the state and of the Jewish Diaspora, even in the face of a renewed Arab peace initiative that could guarantee normal relations in the region. Of course, it is not easy; the current instability in the Arab world and the disappointing outcomes so far of the Arab Spring makes it understandable that Israel finds it difficult to make peace with an Arab world that cannot seem to make peace with itself.

Common sense should dictate that Arabs look hard at Israel's record-breaking success in building a modern nation that competes at the highest levels of productivity and development.

This should be something that Arab states can use to respond to the demands of the eager youth leading revolutions across the region. In fact, the resources available to the Arab nations mixed with Israel's drive for prosperity and its experience in creating fertile start-up environments, should be the perfect formula; the entire Middle East would look very different under conditions of cooperation – a new regional start up of a unique kind!

Common sense should also guide our attempts to resolve final status issues. The logic of the 'land for peace' formula should remain the basis for resolving the conflict, and yet, standing on the land to be traded to the Palestinians are settlements preventing an agreement on future borders. Israel claims that settlements are not the problem, but if you ask yourself why the occupation exists with all its features – closures, checkpoints, separation wall – you will find it is entirely for the preservation of settlements; their security and the provision of space for them to expand. Hence, while actual settlement building is on only two per cent of the West Bank, they control over 40 per cent of the entire land designated for a future Palestinian state.

The history of the settlements growth illustrates the threat they pose to a two-state solution. After the Six-Day War in 1967, when Israel became the occupying power in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, several plans to build settlements were proposed by different Israeli leaders; all were explicitly aimed at *preventing the existence of an Arab state*. The architects of these plans executed their plans rapidly so as to create such a large settlement presence; their hope was that if any future Israeli government decided to concede the land for peace through the creation of an Arab state, it would have to face an Israeli civil war.

Among the first architects of the Israeli settlement plan was Matityahu Drobless, at the time Co-Chair of the World Zionist Organization's Settlement Department, who stated: 'There must not be the slightest doubt regarding our intention to hold the areas of Judea and Samaria for ever ... [t]he best and most effective way to remove any shred of doubt regarding our intention to hold Judea and Samaria forever is a rapid settlement drive in these areas.' (see *The Settlement in Judea and Samaria – Strategy, Policy and Program* [in Hebrew] World Zionist Organization, 1980, p. 3.). Another architect of the settlement plan, Ariel Sharon when Minister of Agriculture and Land, believed that 'it was important to prevent the creation of a contiguous area populated by Arabs on either side of the Green Line, leading to the connection of the area west of Jenin and Nablus, and north of Ramallah, to the Palestinian communities within Israel adjacent to the Green Line, such as Umm el-Fahm and Kafr Qasem.' (see Geoffrey Aronson, *Creating Facts: Israel, Palestinians and the West Bank*, 1987, p. 71.)

While the official Israeli position is that security demanded the introduction of settlements, those same settlements are today a central *reason* for Israel's security quandaries. They are the reason why Israel remains without internationally recognised borders, even by its closest allies. While the existence of long range missiles means there is very little that settlements can do to guarantee Israel's security in the future, what settlements have been very successful in doing so far is fulfilling their planners' vision of preventing the establishment of a Palestinian state.

Reaching an agreement in the early nineties with less than half the existing settlements was less complicated. Both sides are now striving once more to negotiate a two-state solution, but the settlements still expand. The question one has to ask is: why? Both Israelis and Palestinians know what they want and dream of the same brighter future. Our greatest untapped asset remains: common sense. It is time to give it its day.

# ELEVEN

## We must divide the land: an interview with Isaac Herzog (2014)

*The newly elected Labour leader Isaac Herzog sat down with Fathom to discuss what the Britain-Israel relationship means to him, the golden opportunity he sees in the current peace process, and the challenge of building Israel as a multi-cultural society. He was interviewed in Jerusalem on 7 January by Toby Greene, the Fathom deputy editor and Richard Pater, Head of BICOM in Israel.*

### **PART 1: BRITAIN AND ISRAEL – A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP?**

**Toby Greene:** *Your father served in the British Army. Does that affect the way you look at the UK? How important is Britain for Israel today?*

**Isaac Herzog:** I have a special affinity and respect for Britain and its history, not least its heroic role in the defeat of Nazism in World War Two. I take special pride in the fact that my late father, Chaim Herzog, served as an officer in the worst of battles in the war against the Nazis and was one of the liberators of Holland. Prior to becoming chairman of the Labour Party and Head of the Opposition, I served as the chairman of the UK-Israel Parliamentary friendship group. Lastly, I've been watching *The Politician's Husband*, which is a British TV series!

**TG:** *You're more up to date with British TV than we are!*

**IH:** And of course we respect British football. There are a lot of good things that come from Britain. To be more serious, Britain is a very important player in the region and globally, not only because of its historic role, not only because it is part of the P5+1, but due to its leadership role with the United States and other Western powers in dealing with the Iranian nuclear program and promoting peace in the region.

### **PART 2: THE PEACE PROCESS**

**Richard Pater:** *At the next election you will be a candidate for Prime Minister. How will you convince a sceptical Israeli public that peace is possible and worth the risks?*



**IH:** It is not only that peace is possible, but I need to convince the Israeli public to see me as somebody able to lead in a responsible manner and protect the interests of the nation. I believe that my political record, my record as a minister, as a member of the Security Cabinet and as a member of the Knesset stands for me. I enjoy a certain good will in the public that I need to transform into political support.

I speak in a very frank and open manner. I believe that Israel must move for peace. We must move towards the division of the land between the Palestinians and us in order to maintain the future of Israel as a Jewish democratic state. I say this very bluntly.

For example, on the issue of Jerusalem, I don't rule out the possibility that as part of a political solution there will be government institutions of the Palestinian state in one of the Arab neighbourhoods of Jerusalem. I don't think that violates our loyalty, love and affection for Jerusalem. In the eastern Arab neighbourhoods of Jerusalem there reside over 300,000 Palestinians. They are not seen as part of Israel, and rightly so. I think that we need to be innovative and bold and tell the truth to the people. Part of the truth is that in order for Zionism to prevail and to succeed we must make sure that Gush Etzion and Maaleh Adumim will be part of Israel for ever. This needs to be done by way of a swap of land with the Palestinians. If we reach an agreement to separate from the Palestinians, this will be a victory for Zionism.

**RP:** *If I could push you on the Jerusalem issue, what do you see as the solution for the Holy Basin of the Old City?*

**IH:** That needs to be left open. I think the Clinton formula should be a point of reference. However, the Holy Basin is a complicated issue; we are dealing with the most difficult and sensitive beliefs, prayers and wishes of generations. Three things must be clear and unequivocal: the Kotel [the Western or 'Wailing' Wall] must stay in Israeli sovereignty under any circumstances, no right of return for the Palestinians to Israel in any way, and Israeli security needs must be met.

**RP:** *As leader of the opposition you now meet regularly with the Prime Minister Netanyahu. How do you assess his seriousness in the current peace process?*

**IH:** Well, I'm following it closely. Like many in Israel, we in the Labour Party have questions. I believe the Prime Minister understands the necessity and urgency of moving towards peace, but I'm not sure he has the guts to do it. I hope that he and Abbas meet, look each other in the eye and don't blink. They have a golden, historic opportunity of moving towards peace. John Kerry is making a major effort in moving the sides towards a joint formula in the framework agreement; they need to accept it. They also need to speak to their people, speak in each others parliament and speak frankly. I think there is a moment here where most of the desires of both sides can be met, in spite of all the disappointments and pain that this entails.

**RP:** *As leader of the opposition you are the leader of a disparate group of parties including not only Labour but the ultra-Orthodox parties and the Israeli Arab parties. How can you be a viable opposition?*

**IH:** The opposition has a large common denominator – social issues are the top priority of all our parties. Dealing with the social gaps, privatisation and social justice are major elements in Labour’s agenda, especially emanating from the massive social protests of 2011. I want to bring the whole opposition to support the peace process as well. The only dissenting voice in the opposition is from the ultra-Orthodox, but if you listen to them carefully, for quite a while, they’ve been much more accommodating about the process with the Palestinians. Of course, there are thorny issues amongst us – civil rights, religious issues and others. There are conflicting views in this realm in the opposition, but that’s only natural.

### **PART 3: BUILDING MULTI-CULTURAL SOCIETIES**

**TG:** *Let’s talk about the challenge of integrating the two marginalised sectors in Israeli society – ultra-Orthodox Jews and Israel’s Arab citizens. This is one of the big social challenges facing Israel. How do you think it should be addressed?*

**IH:** Israel is a multi-cultural society. My policy is based on four legs: a Zionist approach to preserving the Zionist legacy and the Zionist spirit in our nation, promoting democracy and liberalism, advocating social justice in all forms, and recognising the multi-cultural change that has taken place in Israel. We must attend to all those groups. In my speech at the party conference I said we’re fed up of one group fighting the other; we all chose to live here and we must all maintain the unique fabric of our society, which is a mosaic.

I have been heavily involved in dealing with both the Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) and the Arabs, and in both groups there are major social changes taking place; more social mobility, more empowerment of women, more inclusion in the workforce, more learning. But it’s an uphill battle.

There is a process of inclusion and ‘Israelisation’ of the Arabs in Israel. With all the problems that are still there, it is an impressive process. My intention is to hug all those groups with affection, with warmth, with a welcoming spirit that will include them and strengthen them, and mould society into a more prosperous, successful and equal place.

**TG:** *This week we have seen demonstrations for African migrants. How would your policy differ from the current government’s approach?*

**IH:** That is a very complicated issue. There is no clear answer. I believe that Israel must negotiate with Eritrea. There are tens of thousands of Eritreans here, and Eritrea has diplomatic relations with Israel, so we must commence a process with the Eritrean leadership to ensure that whoever returns to Eritrea does so safely. In the mean time we must make sure that those who cannot go back to their country should have a basic ability to earn for a provisional period. It’s complicated because one doesn’t want to create a precedent which could affect the equilibrium of the nation. There are millions out there who may want to come to Israel.

This complex situation is the subject of a major public debate in Israel today and we are crafting our message on it. It's a question that many social democratic parties confront. On the one hand social democratic parties are more liberal towards immigrants, and on the other hand there are social issues that lead to a certain objection to an influx of migrants; certainly in a state like Israel.

**TG:** *Another thorny issue which has got a lot of international attention is the legislation that was proceeding through the Knesset to address the long-standing land claims of the Bedouin in the Negev. Where do you stand on the government's attempts to resolve this question?*

**IH:** I think that there is a false campaign of diatribe and baseless claims against Israel and the way it is dealing with the Negev Bedouin. The Labour party had reservations about the Bedouin legislation because we thought that it needed to be dealt with differently; namely the manner of the review of the land claims needed to be done through a different process. The government chose to try to introduce legislation to ensure a good quality of life for the Bedouin, while – parallel to that – also resolving the land claims. It has turned into a political battle.

Yesterday, we met with the government agency that deals with this issue and we heard their side of the story. They say that many Bedouins are eager to resolve the issue because in Bedouin society there are a large number of polygamous families that have no income. There is a lot of poverty, which I can confirm as a former Minister of Welfare. There is no adequate infrastructure because of the unresolved land claims, which does not allow correct zoning and planning until you have determined who the owner of the land is. The government are trying to find a way. It has allotted a substantial amount of money towards this project. I hope that there will be a formula devised that will enable swifter negotiations between the government and those who claim ownership of the land. Separate from the land issue, Labour demands a much larger investment by the government in infrastructure for Bedouin society.

## TWELVE

### ‘The time to compromise is when you are strong’

*Omer Bar-Lev MK (2015)*

*Omer Bar-Lev is an MK for the Zionist Union. He was a commander in one of the IDF's elite units – Sayeret Matkal – before becoming a high tech entrepreneur and an MK in 2013. He spoke with Fathom editor Alan Johnson about his plan from separating from and making peace with the Palestinians.*

**Alan Johnson:** *Let me begin with the 1973 Yom Kippur War. How did it form you as a person? What lessons did you draw from it?*

**Omer Bar-Lev:** Between the Six-Day War (1967) and the Yom Kippur War (1973) – during the years I was a teenager – Israel was in a state of euphoria. After the success of the Six-Day War, Israelis believed that things could remain the same forever: we are strong and the Arab countries around us are weak. Peace talks and compromise with Egypt, Jordan and the Palestinians were not even part of the vocabulary at that time. When the Yom Kippur War happened six years later, I had been in the IDF for two years. Most of my generation were the soldiers that were attacked without warning by Egypt and Syria. We had to try and stop them, until the IDF reserves could join us. The result was that some of my very close friends were killed and injured. I think the main lesson from that time is that the time to compromise is when you are strong. You should not believe that the current situation will continue forever. Instead, you should use your strength to try and make a change.

This is exactly the situation in which we have been for the last 10 years. Israel is very strong, maybe stronger than it has ever been, from an economic and military point of view. This is the time to use our strength and move forward. We shouldn't believe that if we just stick to the status quo it will last forever – nothing lasts forever. This is the main lesson I learnt from the Yom Kippur War.

**AJ:** *You put that lesson into practice when you spent a large sum of money printing 3,000 copies of your 2013 'peace plan' to separate the State of Israel from the Palestinians. You believe that 'in order to keep Zionism and to keep the Jewish State, we don't need a partner' and that 'We can lead today and not be led.' How should Israel lead?*

**OB-L:** The basis of the vision of Zionism is that Israel should be the homeland for the Jewish people. In order for that to be achieved, there has to be a clear Jewish majority in Israel. As long as Israel wants to be part of the enlightened Western world – part of the democratic world

– it must give equal rights to all human beings living in the borders of the country. So, in order to keep the Zionist vision alive, Israel has to separate from the Palestinians. But right now, we are controlling, one way or another, 2.8 million Palestinians in the West Bank who don't have equal rights and who don't vote for the Knesset. If Israel wants to be a democratic state, which it does, then it has to *either* grant them full citizenship rights, which will subsequently destroy Zionism (one state for two nations) *or* separate from the Palestinians (two states for two nations). In that case, Israel can keep the Zionist spirit. Then, it is for the Palestinians to decide to create their Palestinian State, which is in their interests and they will make their own decisions.

What I was saying in my proposal was that 'it's in our hands.' To achieve separation, the best way to do it is through an agreement with the Palestinians, for sure. The two sides would agree to make their compromises, sign an agreement, and peace and love will reign forever. However, the probability of both sides, simultaneously, producing leaders who can make that strategic decision, and that strategic compromise, is very low.

Israel cannot put its future in the hands of the other side. If we had a partner, then great, we should make an agreement and move forward and sign a two-state solution. However, even if the other side is not prepared to do so, Israel has a lot of steps it can take to begin the separation from the Palestinians. Therefore, I called my initiative – 'it's in our hands.'

**AJ:** *Tell me some of the practical steps Israel could take, in the early stages.*

**OB-L:** The first step would be to stop building settlements outside the blocs. It is not in Israel's interest. I'm not sure when the new future will come, either in one year or 10 years, but when it will come, these settlements will not be part of Israel.

The second step is to pass a bill in the Knesset to compensate any Israeli settler living outside of the blocs, once he or she decides to resettle in Israel. In order to do so, we have to build the infrastructure within Israel; we have to relocate tens of thousands of settlers and this will take time.

A third step is to enlarge the areas of the West Bank where the Palestinians hold full responsibility and formal independence.

**AJ:** *What was the reaction to your plan from the international community and the Palestinian national movement?*

**OB-L:** Most reactions were very positive. There was some negative reaction on the far-right claiming that 'it's not in our hands' or 'we don't have a partner.' And there were also reactions on the Israeli left which opposed all unilateral steps because they saw no alternative to a peace agreement.

Look, I am not against negotiating or achieving an agreement, but I am trying to be realistic. We must take steps to begin to separate ourselves from the Palestinians. I believe that those steps will create better opportunities than we see today.

**AJ:** *Let's talk about Israeli opinion. How many Israelis think like you and are willing to take these kinds of risks? In Europe, there is a lot of scepticism about the viability of the two-state solution and the state of Israeli opinion. Many think that Israel is moving to the Right, that most Israelis think that they can keep all of the land, and so on. Is that an accurate understanding of Israeli opinion?*

**OB-L:** First of all, one strange phenomenon is that internal polls in Israel show 60 per cent of the Jewish population in Israel would like to see a two-state solution; this means 80 per cent of Israel's population favour it. The problem is that over 50 per cent of the population do not see a way of achieving it. The conversation in Israel is stuck between two statements: the centre left say 'two states for two nations' and the Right say 'we have tried everything, we have no partner.' It is important, today, to deepen the discussion. There are a lot of intermediate steps which can be taken. We should not place the future of Zionism on the hope that there will be a Palestinian leader who will agree to make peace agreement with us.

Regarding the last elections, the size of the camps, the Right and the centre-left, did not change. There were changes within the camps. Jewish Home voters moved to the Likud, which brought Likud up to 30 seats. Looking at the centre-left, if the equivalent shift from Yesh Atid (Yair Lapid's party) to our party, Zionist Union, had taken place, then that would have made all the difference. The election result was not caused by a dramatic change within the Israeli public from centre-left to right. That is just not true.

Of course, when time goes by, it is more and more difficult to achieve an agreement. Right now, it is more difficult than it was 10 years ago and 10 years ago it was more difficult than 20 years ago.

**AJ:** *Let's turn our focus towards Gaza. I spoke to the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) conference and the American Jewish Committee (AJC) recently. I said that the awful expression 'mowing the lawn', the periodic restoration of deterrence by military force in Gaza, leaves behind only scorched earth when it comes to European elite opinion. You believe there was a missed opportunity to take a diplomatic, political initiative towards Gaza in the summer of 2014. What should have happened? What's possible now?*

**OB-L:** Yes, it was a missed opportunity, but this opportunity still exists. After the war, both regional and international interests converged: to weaken Hamas, to ensure that the PA gained a foothold in Gaza, that Gaza be demilitarised, and that Gaza be reconstructed through rebuilding, development projects, an airport and a harbour.

The regional interest that I am talking about is of course Egyptian. President al-Sisi wants to weaken Hamas. But the same is true of Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Jordan, the PA and other Sunni moderate countries.

There are converging interests and this was not so two years ago. I don't know for how long these interests will converge. Israel should use back-channels with Egypt and Saudi Arabia to reach a certain understanding. With this understanding, Israel should then approach the European Union (EU), the United States (US) and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). The UNSC could then pass a resolution stating that the formula in Gaza should be demilitarising



Hamas, denying it attack capabilities against Israel, and, on the other hand, the development and reconstruction of Gaza. This is exactly what the EU declared twice last summer, so why not make it a Security Council resolution?

**AJ:** *You are now a Zionist Union MK – how does the Left win next time? What do you think needs to happen for a victory to be secured in the next election?*

**OB-L:** First of all, we should not be viewed as a 'left block'. You are using terminology from inside of Britain – Left and Right. I believe that the Zionist Union represents the centre as well as the Left. In order to win the next elections, we should strengthen our image on the centre and not the Left. I don't know why, but security in Israel is not seen as an issue of the Left or of the Right. I think that the main thing that most Israelis think about when they go to vote is security. We should be clearer about our position regarding the security of Israel while combining that with an opening to new options and alternatives to begin a process which will end all conflict with the Palestinians. I think this is what we should focus on to achieve the majority of Israeli voters next time.

# THIRTEEN

## Saving the Promised Land

*Ari Shavit (2014)*

*Ari Shavit's My Promised Land: The Triumph and the Tragedy of Israel is one of the most talked about books to be published about the country in recent years. According to Thomas Friedman, Shavit's 'painful love story' offers, 'the real Israel, not the fantasy, do-no-wrong Israel peddled by its most besotted supporters or the do-no-right colonial monster portrayed by its most savage critics.' Fathom editor Alan Johnson spoke to Ari Shavit, a senior correspondent at Haaretz and a member of its editorial board, in London in February 2014.*

### ON ZIONISM AND LYDDA

**Alan Johnson:** *The book has been praised for rejecting the easy simplicities of 'left' and 'right.' You talk about Zionism being historically miraculous, but also historically culpable. If we turn to the culpable: you've devoted a whole chapter to events in the Arab town of Lydda in 1948 [from which Arabs fled during fighting]. You write, 'Lydda is our black box ... in it lies the dark secret of Zionism ... if Zionism was to be, Lydda could not be.' Why is Lydda the 'black box'— the 'dark secret' of Zionism?*

**Ari Shavit:** First of all, let me express my concern about taking the Lydda chapter out of context. The Lydda chapter is one of 18 chapters: I think it's very important to see it within that context. My book is a painful love story which expresses my love and admiration to my nation, my total commitment to Israel, and my admiration for the Zionist project. My claim is that Israel is a man-made miracle. It's not only just and needed, but a remarkable human endeavour. I think that if people look at Israel as it is, they should see an astonishing triumph of the human spirit. Israel is the very much needed home for a homeless people, in many ways created against all odds; it expressed and expresses the will, wisdom and determination of a people that faced extinction – a people still in danger – to save itself, not to surrender to death, but to choose and celebrate life. This is what the book is about. Lydda cannot be discussed without that context: I really take issue with people who pick out Lydda and ignore the rest of the book.

**AJ:** *As some reviewers have done...*

**AS:** ...exactly. It's very important for me. I claim that there was no other way, because according to the UN Resolution in 1947, rejected by the Arab League and by the Palestinian movement, the Jewish State would have had 55 per cent of the land with a huge (45 per cent) Arab minority. I do not believe this would have been a viable state, nor do I think the Zionists or the Arabs thought it would.

So, not only Lydda specifically, but this kind of brutal civil war within which Lydda happened was almost an historic necessity: it was part of the 'tragic flaw'. I celebrate and believe in Zionism, but I look at the tragic part of it, and the tragedy was waiting to happen. Specifically, I do not believe that the Partition Plan could have worked with the tiny Israel having such a huge Arab minority. That's why what happened in Lydda was not some sort of accident. Some of the specific brutal actions which led to the killing of many civilians were perhaps accidental, but were the result of a certain chain of events. Otherwise, Israel would not have been able to emerge as a strong, solid state. It would have had Lydda and many other Arab towns and villages at its very heart, not very far from Tel Aviv, on the road to Jerusalem and near the only international airport at the time.

Some Israelis have difficulty in acknowledging the tragedy; they try to believe this was just accidental. I beg to differ. If you look at the record, there is overwhelming evidence to prove my point.

Yet, I find it very important to put Lydda back in context because some people try to take it out. There are layers of context here that are really essential. One is the fact that wherever the Arabs won in the 1948 War, not one Jew remained. In many places there were atrocities. So the reason there is a Lydda chapter and not a Ness Ziona chapter, or a Rishon LeZion chapter, or a Rehovot chapter is that we happened to win. But had we not won, there is no doubt that many, if not most of us, would have been slaughtered. This was a brutal civil war, and what happened in Lydda and elsewhere was what happens in brutal civil wars.

The other point is that the 1940s were very, very brutal. Hiroshima was a thousand times worse than Lydda, and no one argues that because of Hiroshima the US is not legitimate. Dresden was a hundred times worse than Lydda, but no one claims the UK is not legitimate. I totally reject the attempt of some anti-Israelis or anti-Zionists to use this tragedy in order to undermine Israel's legitimacy. This is the dark side of history, this is the black box, a terribly tragic event – but it should not be abused and taken out of context. While it is my duty as a Jewish Israeli to address this with empathy and precision, it is the duty of Palestinians not to be addicted to that painful past, or poisoned by the tragedy, but to try to move on in the way that Jewish Israelis moved on; not becoming addicted to their tragic past but trying to build a life for themselves, for their children and their grandchildren. I wish the Palestinians could do the same. I wish that while we acknowledge their tragedy, past and pain, they will move forward and create a future, both for them and for us.

## **ON ISRAEL AND THE DIASPORA**

**AJ:** *You are passionately committed to a liberal, democratic, egalitarian Israel. Not least because only that Israel can attract, yes?*

**AS:** What really concerns me is the young Jews of the Diaspora. In North America, Europe and elsewhere, I see that the vast majority of them – definitely the ones who are not Orthodox or ultra-Orthodox – are progressive. Their values are social justice, universal, peace-seeking values. My greatest concern is that so many of them perceive Israel as a tribal entity and find difficulty with its ‘tribalism.’ I’m proud of our tribe – I’m not ashamed and I think that our tribe is unique in that it is universal; it has universal values and a universal mission –*Tikkun Olam*. But I think it’s our duty to reach out to the young Diaspora Jews and convince them that Israel is relevant and attractive to them. An Israel perceived as a semi-theocracy cannot be attractive.

If we are to save them for Judaism, for Jewish life: we have to change. We have to move beyond occupation and we have to prove that even within Israel itself we are a real liberal democracy which respects the rights of individuals and minorities. I think that basically we are: Israel is a remarkably free democracy, our spirit is free, and our society is free. But our democratic institutions are somewhat dysfunctional. The values of Israel are democratic, but there are darker forces within Israel and sometimes we surrender to them. I think we should not. We should point out to those people in Israel, on the far right or in ultra-religious parties, that they are, ironically, risking the Jewish future. The Jewish future depends on us saving the young Jews of the Diaspora. This is in my mind a most important mission and I hope, I plead, that my government, prime minister and the Israeli body politic will internalise the fact that not only is settlement activity wrong, that it endangers our relationship with our neighbours and our legitimacy worldwide, but that it endangers our ability to win hearts and minds in the Jewish world. We have to act quickly, dramatically, to reposition Israel both for the outside world, to strengthen our legitimacy, and for the Jewish world. One of my greatest fears is that if things go on the way they are now, we will endanger the much needed alliance between the Jewish Diaspora and the Jewish state.

## **ON OCCUPATION AND INTIMIDATION**

**AJ:** *How optimistic or pessimistic are you about Israel’s future?*

**AS:** In the book I followed two different courses. On the one hand, I emphasise how challenged Israel is. In order to get the Israeli condition today you have to realise there are two pillars: occupation and intimidation. My argument is that while people on the left – in Israel, the UK, Europe and North America – tend to focus on the occupation and overlook intimidation, the right emphasises intimidation, overlooking occupation. You have to deal with both. One of the reasons we have failed in dealing in with the occupation (and I’m anti-occupation) is that we have not addressed intimidation seriously enough. Had we convinced the Israeli majority that we were serious about understanding their legitimate concerns of security, we would have been in a much better position right now regarding occupation.

In the book I make it clear how endangered Israel is – one of the most endangered nations on the face of the Earth. No other OECD nation faces what we face. If you read through the book and get the story of Israel and the conflict, you see that there is an inherent tension between the Jewish democratic state and many of its neighbours. This is because of many layers – religious, national, the intolerance towards minorities in the Middle East, especially

non Arab minorities. There is a difficulty in accepting us as a real people with legitimate rights. That creates intimidation. Israel is fundamentally challenged and in danger. The overload of challenges and stress is astounding. That's the pessimistic part.

The optimistic part is that having made this journey, becoming an amateur historian, going through our history, you are amazed: despite a hundred years of the walls closing in on us, something happened almost every decade to open the space for us. The most striking example is the late '80s or early '90s, when people were very pessimistic about our future – demographically, economically, and politically.

Within a few years amazing things happened: we got out of Lebanon, the economy picked up, the Russian immigration energised the country in astounding ways and was a remarkable success, contributing to our economy and to our culture (imagine Britain having to absorb 12 million immigrants within two years, Britain would have been in shock!). At the same time, hi-tech appeared – and for all my criticism of the Israeli government, it was government decisions that enabled this to happen.

So my answer to the question is that it's very much up to us. We should go back to the old wisdom of the early Zionists, to see how challenged we are, not to panic, despair or become too self-righteous or sentimental, but to deal with the cruel reality, the existential challenges we are facing in a creative, imaginative manner. I think that the energy within Israel is astounding – Israel is a powerhouse of vitality in every way possible. The problem is that our politics are so dysfunctional, and our leadership in many ways so unworthy (not to talk about any specific politician). There has been political failure in Israel for 30, 40 years in dealing with the fundamental issues in an overall way. If we can get the leadership and the political system right, and bring the great energy you see in Israeli society, economy, culture and arts back to politics, then I'm hopeful that we can deal with the challenges.

# FOURTEEN

## Thoughts of a National Liberal

*Benny Begin (2013)*

*First elected to the Knesset in 1988 as a Likud MK, in 2013 Benny Begin was Minister without Portfolio in the Israeli government. A critic of the Oslo Peace Process, he spoke to Fathom editor Alan Johnson about his scepticism about the Palestinians commitment to peace with Israel. (Winter 2013)*

**Alan Johnson:** *Why do you insist that Palestinian rejection of the Jewish State is the reason for the impasse in the Peace Process?*

**Benny Begin:** I can quote from the platform adopted only three years ago in August 2009 in Bethlehem, in Fatah's 6<sup>th</sup> Congress. Fatah is considered to be the 'mild' political group within the PLO and the benign political group within the Palestinian Arab camp at large.

Article 19 of the Fatah constitution states that their goal is to liberate Palestine from the Jordan River to the sea and it becomes explicit when they say 'through the elimination of the Zionist entity.' They don't even recognise that Jews are a nation. I can quote from others like Saeb Erekat who, in a long interview to Al Dustour, the Jordanian newspaper, alluded to the fact that, for them, Judaism is only a religion – not a nationality.

Why is this political gymnastics important? Because a religion is not eligible to sovereignty – only nations are. In order to deprive us of our eligibility to sovereignty, they describe Jews as belonging to a religion and not a nationality.

I could try and prove the case in another way: it can be safely stated that the issue between the PLO and Israel is not a territorial issue.

A way to prove it is to look at the far-reaching concessions put on the table by Prime Minister Olmert in September 2008. I will detail them now: 98 per cent of the total area of Judea, Samaria and Gaza would come directly under PLO sovereignty; the remaining two per cent would be swapped with territory within the State of Israel 'proper'; a safe passage connecting Gaza and Judea; splitting Jerusalem into two separate capitals; relinquishing sovereignty over the Temple Mound to be replaced by an international consortium containing Saudi Arabia, Jordan, the US, the PLO and Israel. In addition to that, Olmert agreed for some several thousand refugees, on a humanitarian basis, to come to the State of Israel proper.

When President Abbas was asked about this in an interview with the Washington Post in May 2009, six months after he deserted the negotiations table, he was asked why he declined all this. His answer, amazingly, but I think truthfully, was that 'the gaps were wide.'



You need to stretch your imagination a long distance to understand how, under this proposal, the gaps could be described as 'wide'. The reason is of course that they do not accept the legitimacy of a sovereign Jewish entity in any part of Palestine. Otherwise there is no explanation for this rejection.

There is no doubt that they rejected it – Mr Olmert also published an article in the Washington Post in 2009 to say he didn't understand why they dragged their feet and rejected his far-reaching plan. The conclusion is that the conflict is not territorial, not settlements, but some basic rejection of the rights of the Jewish people and Jews at large.

## **Part Three: Debating the Core Issues**

## FIFTEEN

### A New Vision for Jerusalem

*Meir Kraus (2013)*

*The Arab League decision to create a \$1bn fund to ‘maintain the Arab and Islamic character’ of Jerusalem exemplifies the way all sides compete to shape the city according to their own agenda. Meir Kraus argues for a radically different vision.*

To see Jerusalem only through the prism of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict ignores the present-day needs and desires of those who live the city on a daily basis, and prevents us from realising its potential to become a flourishing world centre by virtue of its extraordinary historical and spiritual legacy. Modern Jerusalem is only 160 years old and is home to some 800,000 people; 500,000 are Jewish, the remainder are Palestinian and almost half the population lives below the poverty line. These are the ones who suffer most from the city’s inability to capitalise on its strategic assets and become a world centre.

The on-going Israeli-Palestinian conflict harms the ability of Jerusalem’s administrators to plan for the future. The result is that Israelis and Palestinians, Jews of varying denominations, Muslims and Christians, are in competition for power and control over Jerusalem’s physical, social, spiritual and symbolic identity. This competition can be seen in the battle over planning and building, over investments, and in the struggle to mould the city’s character. Most of all there is a struggle of narratives, with each party trying to strengthen the case for its own historic tie to the city whilst denying that of others.

The Jerusalem municipality and other bodies do make a concerted effort to plan for tomorrow, even in the absence of a peace agreement. Advances in higher education, burgeoning local biotech, new media industries, and a drive to turn the city centre into a modern cultural hub are each important, but they do not come close to exploiting Jerusalem’s full potential.

Historical Jerusalem offers 3,000 years of culture; Jebusites, Israelites, Hellenists, Romans, Jews, Christians, Muslims, Crusaders and Palestinians have all left their mark. ‘Heavenly Jerusalem’ is a source of profound inspiration for hundreds of millions of people across the globe, making the city a universal centre of spirituality unlike anywhere else in the world.

To stroll through Jerusalem’s streets is to be immersed in many cultures. There are synagogues, mosques and churches offering distinctive ideals, alongside myriad places of learning and enlightenment. Diverse communities from abroad, whether sovereign states or international organisations, have a presence through their envoys.

To see the city as a mosaic of the world's identities, each with a stake in the city, just look at the map of land and property ownership or, better still, drill down into the history of particular buildings. Take, for example, the downtown Sergei Building, constructed in 1890 for Russian pilgrims, used by the British for public administration during the Mandate period, then, from Israel's independence in 1948 until 2011, to house the Agriculture Ministry, only to be reclaimed by the Russian government recently.

Diversity should not be Jerusalem's weakness but its source of strength, regarded as the city's 'infrastructure' and the key to its prosperity. Strengthening and deepening Jerusalem as a universal centre of spirituality, valuing the unique emotional attraction Jerusalem has for so much of the world, could position the city as a place where people want to visit, build, invest and be inspired. While concrete thinking will be required to translate this vision of the city into practice, what matters for now is getting the broad principles right: partnership, dialogue and creative thinking.

First, it is imperative that all those who care about the city stop the competition to define Jerusalem as essentially Jewish or Muslim or Christian, and instead become partners in building the city's future.

Second, it is vital to open a dialogue on this unique treasure even in the absence of a peace agreement, and before the on-going conflict further harms the city. If the State of Israel was to invite all stakeholders to the table to talk about Jerusalem, and they would embrace the opportunity, all sides would benefit. By creating a dialogue about the city that is framed in terms of universal collaboration we may generate new and creative ways of looking at the formal arrangements that can later be embodied in a political agreement. At the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies we explored possible scenarios for Jerusalem and found that progress might be made if we disconnect issues of sovereignty and management, at least for the Old City area, known as the holy basin.

Sovereignty is a concept created to define arrangements between people, between the countries they represent and their legal systems. Where Jerusalem is concerned, the zero-sum competition over sovereignty, reflecting national aspirations, may be to the detriment of the city's ability to exploit its unique potential for the benefit of all its inhabitants, so we should try to be unfettered by overly formal and standardised terminology. Let us instead reflect on those biblical prophets who envisaged Jerusalem as belonging to all people. Isaiah said: 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established at the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.'

Are we ready to change our conceptual thinking? Are we willing to think of Jerusalem as a universal centre of spirituality rather than fighting over control? Whatever we choose, Jerusalem will bear the consequences

# SIXTEEN

## Jerusalem and the Two State Solution

*Danny Seidemann (2013)*

*Daniel Seidemann is an Israeli attorney specialising in Israeli-Palestinian relations in Jerusalem, and the founder of [Terrestrial Jerusalem](#), an NGO that works towards a resolution of the Jerusalem question that is consistent with the two-state solution.*

*Seidemann spoke to Fathom editor Alan Johnson about what a permanent status agreement will look like in the city, and why it is so hard to reach; the lessons to be learned from previous negotiations, and the continuing importance of the 'Parameters' set out by former President Bill Clinton. He also discussed a model of sovereignty in the Holy City, and why he believes the Israeli people really will divide the city if it will help end the conflict. (Autumn 2013)*

**Alan Johnson:** *You've described relations between Israelis and Palestinians in Jerusalem as your sandbox and your focus as being obsessive. Can you tell us how you first got involved in this issue?*

**Danny Seidemann:** I can give you the date. On the night between 9 October and 10 October 1991, in semi-military fashion, settlers took over 11 Palestinian homes in the Palestinian neighbourhood of Silwan, south of the Old City.

The following day I was contacted by an MK who asked me to challenge these takeovers in the Supreme Court. I asked him on what basis and he said 'that's what we intend to find out.' In the months that followed we were able to crack the genetic code of a covert and largely illegal government campaign to take over targeted Palestinian properties and to turn them over as ideological trinkets to extreme settler organisations.

**AJ:** *John Kerry is making a push for peace: an agreement between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Jerusalem will be central to any deal and a particularly tough one to negotiate. You wrote, 'I think everybody knows what a final status in Jerusalem looks like but no one knows how to get there'. What do you think 'final status' looks like and why is it so difficult to chart a route towards it?*

**DS:** Let's start with the principle: if you come to me and say that you don't believe that an agreement between Israelis and Palestinians is possible, I will disagree with you vehemently; but you could make a decent and compelling argument. On the other hand, if you come to me and say that there will be a two-state solution but Israel will have sole control over Jerusalem,

I will take you aside and quietly ask ‘what have you been smoking?’ The conflict ends in Jerusalem or it doesn’t end at all.

Where Israelis walk today will be Israel – and that includes 195,000 Israelis living in the settler neighbourhoods of East Jerusalem which will be incorporated into Israel in the framework of an equitable land swap. Where Palestinians walk today will be Palestine – in many ways it is already Palestine. 95 per cent of the border and its location are self evident. Five per cent is up for grabs, those are the places where both walk, it also happens to be the volcanic core of the conflict, the Old City and its holy sites – that’s where the heavy lifting begins. But how to address the core grievances of a permanent status in Jerusalem – were perhaps quantum physics in the summer of 2000, they are now high school trigonometry.

**AJ:** *What can we learn from previous rounds of negotiations? You were involved in most of the unofficial talks that took place between Israelis and Palestinians considering the political future of the city and you had a role during the negotiations at Camp David. Could you tell us what your role was and how close in your view did the parties come to an agreement in that time?*

**DS:** My role was not even worthy of a footnote in history: I was a minor kibitzer, no more than that. Immediately before the negotiations began, I got a phone call from the American negotiating team. I was asked to come across to the King David hotel and meet with them, there I met with the four negotiators and heard the following immortal words: ‘Danny, we’re about to start permanent status agreement talks on the subject of Jerusalem for the first time, we don’t know very much about the subject, could you give us Bar Mitzvah lessons?’

I gasped, came up for air and said ‘excuse me, am I the only superpower in the world or are you the only superpower in the world?’ Until Camp David, Jerusalem was such a radioactive issue, it was so much the burial ground of promising diplomatic and political careers that there was little house expertise on the subject. Even I, who had been involved for a decade perhaps, by then, in track two diplomacy on Jerusalem, did not have a ready answer. Within six months after two failed rounds of negotiations, the contours of a political agreement became self evident. They were put on the table by President Clinton at the time, the Clinton Parameters – a geo-demographic political division of Jerusalem: Israeli neighbourhoods would become part of Israel and Palestinian neighbourhoods would become part of Palestine.

Everything that has ensued from then has been a variation on the Clintonian theme – 95 per cent of the agreement at this point is self evident. There are a couple of large decisions that remain: it is clear that it will be necessary to deviate from the primitive and problematic strictures of binary territorial sovereignty in the volcanic core of the conflict. It’s not enough to simply create a border in the Old City. Whether you deviate from that in a minor way as President Clinton, Ehud Barak and the Geneva Accords proposed, or whether you deviate in a more significant way, by creating a special regime – that’s a big decision. The end result of negotiations could be either one of these or anywhere in between.

**AJ:** *What do you mean by ‘regime’?*

**DS:** Let’s look at the two pure models. One pure model says: just as we are dividing sovereignty and the city of Jerusalem, we will do so in the Old City itself, meaning that the Jewish Quarter,



the Western Wall and perhaps a bit of the Armenian Quarter will be under Israeli sovereignty; the Muslim, Christian and the rest of the Armenian Quarter under Palestinian sovereignty. That's the direction President Clinton went in, that's the direction that the Geneva Accords went in. It has huge advantages but it's also very problematic, because it contains the seeds of a mortal wound, that this gem of the Old City, by scouring it with barriers, and – let's put it bluntly – Israelis and Palestinians have not been blessed with Scandinavian temperaments, each side will be able to inflict and likely to inflict inordinate pain on the other side, even without crossing the border in the Old City: defiling archaeological sites, access to holy sites – things of that nature.

The other pull goes in the direction of the original UN resolution of *Corpus separatum*, in this case it would be a mini *Corpus separatum*. The question of sovereignty is either suspended, deferred or negated and Jerusalem is not under anybody's sovereignty except, as King Hussein suggested, divine sovereignty or, as Olmert suggested, a steering committee which under Olmert's plan was the United States, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Palestine and Israel.

That idea also has enormous charms: it maintains the geographical integrity of the Old City, it contains responsible adults, because Israelis and Palestinians in this context are neither responsible, nor adults. On the other hand, the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians is a very visceral and possessive one and I doubt that the national aspirations of Israelis or Palestinians would be satisfied by turning over control of the Old City to a clueless Norwegian.

In all likelihood, I believe the end result will be something of a hybrid between the two, the physical boundary of the Old City will be its perimeter, there will be no physical boundary within the Old City, but the political boundary will be in the Old City. The Jewish Quarter and the Western Wall will be Israel, the other quarters will be Palestine but with no physical boundary, and in conflict-sensitive areas there will be robust international involvement, but only in those areas that are prone to be conflict sensitive – such as the integrity of the holy sites, access to the holy sites, and things of that nature.

**AJ:** *How do you assess Israeli political opinion on the question of Jerusalem today? Yair Lapid made a speech in the last election in which he said the Palestinians would eventually come around to accepting that there wasn't going to be a Palestinian capital in East Jerusalem. How do you read that speech from him? Where are Israeli politicians at in terms of dividing the city? How do you read Israeli public opinion about dividing the city?*

**DS:** Yair Lapid is a quintessential Israeli because he said precisely the opposite in *Der Spiegel* in 2008 I think; the zigzagging and the contradictory positions make him very representative of Israeli public opinion.

When I started to appear before the Supreme Court of Israel when it was hearing Jerusalem-related cases, and I would see Supreme Court justices in the centre of town, they would cross over to the other side of the street. Not because I was toxic and not because I was a bra-burning liberal, but because I compelled them to deal with the most sensitive issue on the agenda in Israel, and that's the political future of the city. Hard cases make bad law. They suspected that I had a hidden agenda of exposing the absurdities of Israeli rule, so they avoided me.

During the last ten years I have argued a series of cases before the Supreme Court about Israel's failure to build schools in East Jerusalem. Is there a greater gift that Israel could give

to Hamas than an uneducated Palestinian population? I have filed suits to compel the Israeli government to build schools. At one point the state said 'we're going to build 400 classrooms' and I showed, by their own statistics, that 1,800 were needed in five years time. The Chief Justice in the Supreme Court turned to me and said 'Mr. Seidemann, you and I both know it's highly unlikely that Beit Hanina will be part of Jerusalem in five years time.'

What was beyond the pale is now very much a consensus. Most Israelis know that this conflict ends in a political division of the city. They vote with their feet on a daily basis by not going to East Jerusalem. This is reflected in the polls that consistently demonstrate that 60-65 per cent of the population of Israel believe in the two-state solution. Having said that, an equal number of Israelis believe that the two-state solution is inaccessible and that the Palestinians are not a partner. As a result of that, I am completely distrustful of all polling on the subject of Jerusalem. You will get the answer you are looking for, because Israelis are torn within their souls between what is politically impossible today and historically inevitable tomorrow. The challenge of statesmanship today is to build a bridge between the two. Most Israelis know that this conflict ends as I've described it and I believe that when a duly elected government of Israel brings an agreement that divides Jerusalem to a referendum, it will enjoy a large majority of the Israeli public.

**AJ:** *In a talk you gave in London you said you'd been very concerned about developments on the ground. Where are we now in terms of developments on the ground and how they affect the options?*

**DS:** About a year ago I said the following: firstly, we are in the midst of a settlement surge in East Jerusalem unprecedented since 1967.

Now, both Israelis and the Palestinians are Olympic whiners when it comes to martyrdom. I'm not talking about feeling sorry for one's-self; I'm thinking empirically verifiable benchmarks. Being familiar with every plan at any stage in the pipeline and how they are being acted upon and at what pace, how long it takes, we were able then to project what the map of Jerusalem and its environs would look like at the end of 2013 and the beginning of 2014, perhaps a bit longer, and there would not be a possibility, should that trajectory have continued – by that date, the two-state solution would be impossible. The mechanisms that usually put brakes on this, most importantly a robust American engagement, did not exist.

There is a semi-vulgar quip in Hebrew: 'everybody pisses in the swimming pool, not everybody does it from the diving board.' During 2012 Netanyahu was doing it from the high board when it came to settlements and what we heard from Washington is 'hey, there's a light rain'. I was sounding then the clarion call that the two-state solution is in mortal danger. But we are out flanked. There are those who say the two-state solution is dead. I believe that those who say so come from three categories: the Israeli right, who never really accepted the existence of Palestinian national claims; the Palestinian left, who never accepted the legitimacy of the state of Israel; and people in a foul mood – give them two drinks, you would be amazed how rapidly the two-state solution emerges like a phoenix out of the ashes! That's one category. The other category is people like Dennis Ross, who say, 'not only is the two-state solution not dead, it's immortal, it can't be killed. Settlements that go up can come down.' Both of these positions share one thing: they're post-modernists who say 'the facts don't matter.'

Look, facts on the ground matter. There is just so much territorial abuse that this small patch of land can absorb before the political options evaporate. Have my projections changed? Moderately so; perhaps temporarily, there has been a de-facto settlement freeze, initially as a result of the Obama visit, then because of the Kerry initiative. If the Kerry initiative fails, the floodgates will open and we'll be making up for lost time.

I will be more than delighted to say 'there's an all-clear siren at the moment, the danger has passed,' but I don't believe the danger has passed; it's in a lull. Should this continue, the two-state solution will be on life support. Should the floodgates open, it's gone. In the past this was seen to be as perhaps a bit too much of a doomsday scenario, but in testimony given last month by Secretary Kerry before Congress, based on our materials, he has said 'we have a year, year and a half at most to achieve the two-state solution'.

**AJ:** *When I said I was going to interview you, some people were surprised and concerned. I said 'look, he always writes "I am an Israeli trying to advocate an Israeli interest as I see it"'. Could you talk a little bit about that?*

**DS:** I think the tension is in my critics and not in me. I am a Zionist. I represented 30,000 Palestinian refugees in one refugee camp in Jerusalem, about the routing of the barrier that excised them from the city of Jerusalem. I had a series of town meetings before I accepted the request that I represent them and I would begin those town meetings with 'I'm a Jew. I'm a Zionist. I'm an Israeli. I'm a Reserve Major in the Israeli Army. Does anyone have a problem with that? No? Okay, let's get down to work'.

I'm a Zionist because I think that the world is a dangerous place. It is doubly and triply dangerous for Jews. Jews need to wield power in order to survive and to serve Jewish survival. Power is also military power; it is certainly not exclusively military power, its wisdom, its manoeuvring, and it is playing on a regional and international chess board. My Zionism is not theoretical. For me, Zionism is also the return of the Jewish people to history in order to wield that power. For me, history is a participation sport.

Upon arrival in Israel I spent five years in the Israeli army and retired with the rank of Major. The same motivations that led me to serve in the Israeli army are those motivations that have led me to be committed to an equitable resolution of the conflict in Jerusalem. Nobody need convince me about the hypnotic allure of Jerusalem – the cradle of our civilization. I am suspect in certain ideological left-wing quarters of sleeping with the enemy, not without justification. I work with the Prime Minister's office when they're willing to work with me. I have bloodied the settlers of Silwan for the last 21 years and we have maintained cordial relations. I see what they see, so I am a suspect quantity.

However, my motivations are patriotic; I am not a human rights lawyer, although I have taken many human rights issues to court. I am not a peace activist – I don't talk about a peace agreement, I talk about a permanent status agreement with mutual waivers of claims. Because of that, I believe that I am more sympathetic towards Palestinian rights. I am not terrified when Palestinians raise the issue of Right of Return; I think it's unconscionable for a Jew to celebrate our collective historical memory and to deny that to others. I do not blame the Palestinians for remembering the Nakba – I challenge them to find a way of reaching an accommodation on that. It is because I am an Israeli patriot that I can be respectful of Palestinian national aspirations.

# SEVENTEEN

## Settlements and the Two-State Solution:

### A view from the Left

*Lior Amihai (2014)*

*Settlement construction beyond Israel's internationally recognised borders is a controversial topic within Israel and often the subject of international criticism and concern. Fathom Editor Alan Johnson spoke to Lior Amihai, head of Peace Now's Settlement Watch project, which monitors the building of settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.*

#### **THE SETTLEMENT PROJECT AND ITS IMPACT**

**Alan Johnson:** *What's the current picture in regards to the settlement project? How many settlements, how many settlers and where are they?*

**Lior Amihai:** The settlers comprise a population of about 350,000 people, excluding those living in East Jerusalem (about 200,000). Altogether you can say there are 550,000 Israelis living beyond the Green Line, however, only 350,000 of them are in what we would term the West Bank (i.e. excluding East Jerusalem). They are spread out in about 200 communities, with approximately 120 recognised settlements (recognised by the Israeli government), and about 100 more outposts – illegal, unauthorised outposts – which are smaller communities not recognised by the Israeli government.

**AJ:** *After the recent failure of the peace talks, there was a debate about the extent to which settlement building during the negotiations was a factor in their failure. What's your opinion?*

**LA:** I think it had a massive impact on the negotiations. The timing of the different announcements and actions that the Israeli government chose to promote were in sensitive moments of the negotiations – usually after releasing Palestinian prisoners from Israeli prisons. The meaning and facts which these settlement announcements create on the ground is working against the possibility of the two-state solution. This sent out a message to the international community, but first and foremost to the Palestinians, that the Israeli government did not have any intention of reaching a two-state solution, or reaching an agreement.

**AJ:** *Are there any particular settlement hotspots that you're looking at as an organisation or is there anything that you find particularly concerning at the moment?*

**LA:** The term ‘settlement blocs’ is not defined by anyone, not by the Palestinians, clearly not by the international community, but also not by the Israeli government or the Israelis; we’re not really sure what these settlement blocs are. Nonetheless, they are used in the discourse to say ‘well it’s alright; it’s only within the settlement blocs, these will certainly stay under Israeli sovereignty once there’s a two-state solution.’

However, when we analyse these settlement blocs, we come to a conclusion that actually, the most sensitive areas to the two-state solution are within these settlement blocs. We point to Ariel which is very problematic, E1 and the areas surrounding Maaleh Adumim, Givat Hamatos, Efrat (which is just east of other settlements in the Gush Etzion area), and of course East Jerusalem and developments within Palestinian neighbourhoods in and around the Old City. All these sensitive areas have seen many developments in recent years with the excuse that, ‘it’s in the blocs so its ok.’

However, the Israeli and Palestinian negotiation teams were not negotiating the isolated areas. It is fairly clear that the isolated settlements would have to be evacuated (in the event of a peace agreement). It’s the sensitive places that they were negotiating – trying to reach a solution best for both parties. In these particular areas, the Israeli government put its focus on creating facts on the ground with greater intensity, perhaps trying to make them areas that would never be evacuated – even though, from a Palestinian perspective, they clearly must be.

## **THE FUTURE OF THE TWO-STATE SOLUTION**

**AJ:** *Even though there’s development and mistrust – and you’ve explained why the term ‘settlement bloc’ needs to be unpacked and that some of the very sensitive issues are within the blocs – do you think we’re still, in principle, in the area of an agreement being possible with land swaps?*

**LA:** My view is clear: if the parties were to reach an agreement today then the two-state solution is very possible.

Luckily, the majority of settlers live in areas that would most probably be ‘land swapped’. However, this does not undermine the current developments which I highlighted – the trend of putting emphasis on the sensitive areas will make the conflict much more difficult to resolve. During the negotiation period and before, the emphasis of the Israeli government – in where they are constructing new houses and promoting construction plans – is sending a message to the public that it doesn’t have any interest in finding a solution.

I’m certain that if there was a true desire to reach a solution, it would be possible. It could be done so the majority of settlers stay in their homes and would not need to be evacuated. However, on the ground, the Israeli government is working to the contrary.

**AJ:** *Since the collapse of the peace talks there has been a debate within Israel that calls for a search for an end to the conflict, sometimes just summed up as the 'Plan B debate.' Many people's version of 'Plan B' is some form of Israeli unilateralism. With regards to the settlements, the debate is around whether or not it's feasible for the Israeli government to disengage – against the will of a sizeable number of settlers on the West Bank – on a much larger scale than it did in Gaza, but with the same kind of principle? What's your view of that?*

**LA:** I am very scared of a unilateral disengagement. Because I come from an understanding that a two-state solution is possible, I don't see the need for a unilateral disengagement. I believe that if the parties are sincere, and actually seek a two-state solution, then it is possible to reach an agreement. More than that, if Israel does carry out a unilateral disengagement, it will have many problematic outcomes. If Israel plans to unilaterally disengage from only *part* of the West Bank, no-one will support it and Israel will still remain without recognised borders.

Furthermore, the Palestinians would not recognise these borders and this would give an incentive to groups in Palestine to oppose Israel and perhaps to attack it. The risk of a unilateral disengagement, where there won't be recognised borders, and which will give further strength for Palestinians to oppose it, just doesn't make sense for me; especially when I believe that a two-state solution is possible.

**AJ:** *When I debate on campuses I often use two anecdotes: One is a speech given by David Grossman when he said that 'flare of identity' in Israel 'reaches as far as the Green Line,' but 'no farther.' He thinks that Israel's basic sense of identity is still a Green Line identity and the Greater Israel project doesn't really carry the majority of Israelis. The other anecdote I use is when Times of Israel, before the last general election, carried out a poll and said 'we know there's an austerity budget coming, who do you think should be cut?' I think over 70 per cent said settlement budgets should be cut. Am I right to use those anecdotes, is that still a reasonable thing to say about Israeli public opinion? That even though it doesn't see a two-state solution on the horizon it's no longer a Greater Israel public?*

**LA:** I think the majority of people in Israel would support a two-state solution, and that's shown in different polls and in various other ways. The Israeli people in general are supportive of what the government does; they were very supportive of the disengagement from the Gaza Strip and we don't see them oppose very much the (current) settlement policy. However, if the government would seek to evacuate, disengage or reach a two-state solution, I think there would be high support for it from the Israeli public; they would understand that this is what's best to be done.

Even more so, a large portion of the settlers themselves understand this. If they were to be presented with a dilemma where settlement activity risks the existence of the State of Israel as we know it, as a national home for the Jewish people and a democracy, then the majority of settlers themselves would come to a point where they would wish to evacuate. Of course, there are extremists within the settler community, but they are a minority.



The settler ideology has a lot of power and influence within Israel. Almost ten per cent of the Israeli parliament is comprised of settlers. They have their own party, Jewish Home, and even a high proportion of the Likud, the Prime Minister's party, is comprised of settlers and those who support the settlement movement. Thus, But, they don't represent the majority of Israelis who really do want to live in peace and harmony in a nation state for the Jewish people, but also in a democracy.

**AJ:** *Tell us a bit more about Settlement Watch and the work that you do.*

**LA:** Settlement Watch is a project within the Peace Now movement. The Peace Now movement represents Israeli citizens who want to reach a two-state solution and peace between neighbouring countries – first and foremost the Palestinians. Settlement Watch was created about 20 years ago when Peace Now understood that facts were being created on the ground with little knowledge and little public debate. They started driving to the West Bank to see what was happening and report this back to the Israeli public, in order to create a debate in Israel about these settlements. Over the years we've improved, developed, and gained a lot of experience about how settlements work; about the planning process and procedures that come with creating settlements – legal or illegal. And today, it has become quite an authoritative body on these settlements. We have many different methods: online research, field study and also aerial photos. We accumulate data in order to show the Israeli public what is actually happening.

# EIGHTEEN

## Settlements and the Two-State Solution:

### A view from the Right

*Dani Dayan (2014)*

*Settlement construction is a controversial topic within Israel and is often the subject of international criticism and concern. Fathom Assistant Editor Lorin Bell-Cross spoke with Dani Dayan, former Chairman and current Chief Foreign Envoy of the Yesha Council, an umbrella organisation which represents Jewish settlements in the West Bank (known historically by their biblical names of Judea and Samaria).*

#### **PART I: THE SETTLEMENT PROJECT**

**Lorin Bell-Cross:** *You are a supporter of settlement construction. Is the current Israeli government?*

**Dani Dayan:** The answer is complex; I of course am a firm supporter of constructing housing for new Jewish families in Judea and Samaria and of the renaissance of Jewish life in this ancient cradle of Judaism and the Jewish civilisation. Regarding the current Israeli government, the answer is much more complex. I cannot judge their intentions; I can only judge policy and results and I must say that the results are poor. There have been highly publicised announcements regarding potential construction, but very little was done on the ground. Moreover, I would say that in the last six months there has been a complete freeze in planning. Today we still see construction because there was planning in the pipeline, but if you do not plan for construction then the pipeline will dry up and, a year from now, construction will cease. Therefore, I cannot say that I am satisfied with the record of the current government. The world's perception of the Netanyahu government's attitude to settlement construction is completely different to the reality – they assume that the Netanyahu government is building at high rates in Judea and Samaria.

**LBC:** *Before the 2013 Israeli elections, a Panels poll suggested that 81.9 per cent of the Israeli public thought that settlements should be the first source of budget cuts. To what extent do you feel the Israeli public is supportive of the settlement project?*

**DD:** I am not aware of this specific poll and I find the results surprising. Israeli opinion polls are frequently used as a political tool; you can find a poll to corroborate every position (even contradicting positions), so I wouldn't allocate too much importance to a specific poll.

I feel very comfortable with the level of support emanating from Israeli society towards us. We are a democratic country, it is completely absurd to believe that we could have achieved what we have – or even close to that – without staunch support from the general public; the governments that made our achievements possible were elected democratically.

Obviously there are sectors in society which are opposed to what we do and they oppose it very loudly, but mainstream Israeli society supports us. I would even dare say that the average Israeli admires what we are doing for the sake of the country. The grassroots support that we see is heart-warming and this is despite a well-orchestrated and very well-funded opposition campaign, funded in part by European governments, and other European actors, to defame us. They use, among other things, completely false or cherry-picked data about the alleged cost of our communities.

**LBC:** *What do you see as the biggest threat to the settlement project in the West Bank?*

**DD:** I am quite optimistic regarding what you just referred to as the 'settlement project'. We are not a 'project' any more than the creation of the State of Israel was a 'project' or the hundreds of kibbutzim, moshavim or development towns that were established all across Israel were 'projects'. We are a cause – a fulfilment – of the Zionist dream of the revival of Jewish life in the ancient Land of Israel.

Having said that, the most serious threat I see to our cause comes from within: fringe elements very small in number but very loud in their actions, for example the so-called 'price tag' attacks, which are violent and criminal acts. They desecrate mosques, harm property and in some cases even cause physical harm to innocent Palestinians, Israelis, soldiers or civilians. These are despicable actions which have an extremely damaging effect on our communities.

They are carried out by an extremely small number of individuals, but they damage a whole community. I and my colleagues in the leadership of our movement have unequivocally condemned these acts, innumerable times. I myself have been to the Minister of Justice, Chief Inspector of Police, the Attorney General, the army and the secret service to demand more effectiveness in their actions to eradicate this sort of activity. The people who participate in this sort of activity (not all of whom are residents of Judea and Samaria) are both criminals and, excuse me, idiots.

## **PART 2: SETTLEMENTS AND ISRAEL'S INTERNATIONAL STANDING**

**LBC:** *Support for a boycott of settlement products has gathered some support in the UK. Many in the international community see the settlements as an obstacle to peace. David Cameron described a recent Israeli land appropriation in the West Bank as 'deplorable'. How do you respond to Israelis like Ari Shavit who argue that 'not only is settlement activity wrong ... it endangers our relationship with our neighbours and our legitimacy worldwide ... it endangers our ability to win hearts and minds in the Jewish world'?*

**DD:** I am aware of the fact that from a public opinion perspective there is damage. Incidentally, a few days ago I saw a replay of the first interview (in 1977) which former-Prime Minister Menachim Begin gave to Israeli television when he was still prime minister-elect. He was asked, 'How do you come to Washington or to London to speak on behalf of Judea and Samaria when not even one senator, MP or leader accepts the policy that Judea and Samaria should be an integral part of the State of Israel?' Mr Begin's answer was very clear: 'Why would they be more pro-Israeli than the previous Israeli governments?' That is exactly the problem: unfortunately even the governments which promoted the construction of communities in Judea and Samaria were somewhat shy in explaining why.

If the government of Israel does not make it clear that Judea and Samaria will remain part of the State of Israel, and explain the logic of the construction of homes for Jewish families in those areas, then we cannot expect the world to understand it or to accept it. As Mr Begin said we cannot expect the world to be more 'pro-Israeli' than the Israeli government .

That's the reason that when I stepped down in January 2013 as Chairman of the Yesha Council, I decided to form an international arm of our movement in order to explain that. Today I am welcomed even in the European External Action Service and the US State Department ; but it is still not an alternative to a government policy which says loud and clear what the importance of the settlements is.

I also have no doubt whatsoever that, at some point in the future, the international community (even if they will not admit it) will understand the vital role we play and understand that we were instrumental in preventing the establishment of a destabilising Palestinian entity in the heart of the region – which would destabilise Jordan and Israel. This happened with the destruction of the Iraqi nuclear reactor in 1981 (again by Prime Minister Begin), which the world condemned. Today, the world congratulates and thanks Israel for doing that and I'm quite sure the same thing will happen regarding our communities here.

**LBC:** *To what extent do you think the announcement of settlement construction plans during the recent Kerry-led peace talks with the Palestinians was a factor in their collapse?*

**DD:** Not at all. If anything, what caused the damage was the American and European reaction to the announcements – not the announcements themselves. The announcements made during the negotiations were about construction planned for 18 or 24 months down the road. Therefore, they had no real implications or impact on the negotiations themselves or on the ability to implement an agreement. What caused a psychological effect, what Secretary Kerry called ‘a cloud over the negotiations,’ was not the announcement but the turmoil created by the American and European reaction.

It would have been much wiser if Secretary Kerry and the European Union, instead of denouncing and condemning, would have turned to President Abbas and told him to stop dragging his feet and to be more flexible, otherwise the Israelis would convert those announcements into actual construction. Mr Kerry knew how to do this towards Israel: he threatened Israel with a third Intifada, with an international boycott and even, unfortunately, used the word ‘apartheid’ in one instance regarding the future of Israel. When it came to the real intransigent player, the Palestinians, for some reason he did not use the same methods. He had a golden opportunity to use the settlement announcements as a catalyst for the advancement of the negotiations but unfortunately he chose to use it as an obstacle. It’s his fault – not Israel’s fault.

This is further proof of my claim that the opposition to the housing for Jewish families in Judea and Samaria has acquired the status of a quasi-dogma: a religious article of faith which is irrational in the sense that it is detached from its real geo-political significance.

**LBC:** *Even you, I think, accept that the current situation cannot remain as it is. In an article for the New York Times you set out a plan: ‘Israel must initiate an ambitious and bold plan to improve every aspect of day-to-day life for Palestinians ... The security barrier separating Judea and Samaria from the rest of Israel should ultimately be dismantled ... Barriers, checkpoints and military restrictions on movement must be lifted.’ How do you see these ideas being implemented given the tense climate in the West Bank and Palestinian opposition to interim measures that are proposed as an alternative to statehood?*

**DD:** First of all, I think that the current situation can be maintained, but it’s not desirable. It depends very much on the other side, whether or not my ideas can be implemented; you need two to tango.

It’s quite clear today that a political agreement to end the conflict is not in anyone’s reach; we are unfortunately far from it. Therefore, what was suggested in the op-ed in the *New York Times* is what I call ‘peaceful non-reconciliation.’ If we cannot solve the conflict right now, let’s opt, in the meantime, for the second best – the fairest possible way to conduct our co-existence until a political solution becomes possible. There are improvements to the situation which we can make unilaterally, for instance the erasing of checkpoints or the ultimate dismantling of the security barrier that Israel was forced to erect some ten years ago. But it is then up to the Palestinians. If what I’m suggesting is adopted by my government, it will pose the Palestinians with a political and moral decision; all I can say is that I hope they do not, as usual, miss an opportunity.

**LBC:** *Ehud Barak, Tzipi Livni, Ehud Olmert and even Dan Meridor have warned that Israel will face a choice in the future between being Jewish and democratic if peace talks fail and there is no Palestinian state. What is your response to their concerns?*

**DD:** Their mistake stems from the fact that they only look at what I would call the simplistic solutions. They speak in terms of 'one-state' or 'two-states' whilst in reality the Jewish-Palestinian conflict is a unique one, a peculiar one, and will need a unique and peculiar formula to solve it. One of the tragedies of the conflict is that the tyranny of the two-state solution in international discourse has prevented innovative thinking. Whoever dared to challenge that formula was immediately targeted as a lunatic, as an extremist; and that inhibited out-of-the-box thinking, which is essential to resolve the conflict.

In my view there are four principles that should be part of any solution. First, Israel should be a Jewish and democratic country. Second, Israel has to be in charge of security over the whole area from the Mediterranean to the Jordan because otherwise any arrangement will collapse and will succumb to terrorism and violence. Third, no individual, Israeli or Palestinian, should be forced to leave his or her home. The fourth principle is that, every person, Israeli, Jewish, or Palestinian should be a fully-fledged citizen of the state that governs their life.

The simplistic one-state or two-state formulas contradict some of these principles, if not all of them, so now we have to think of innovative, out-of-the-box solutions for the conflict. Our ex-President Shimon Peres, who is now 91 years old, was already a senior cabinet minister in the 1970s. Before he switched to what I call the 'Oslo religion', he advocated two precepts: he used to talk about the 'Jordanian option' as opposed to the 'Palestinian option' and more importantly, he used to speak about a functional compromise, not a territorial one. And who knows, I think that maybe we will go back to those principles now that everything else is failing. For instance, enlarging the pie (including Jordan in the equation) and dividing – this is the most important thing in my opinion – dividing authority and not territory. We have to free ourselves from the constraints of rigid thought and seek a solution to the conflict that will allow Israel to remain a Jewish and democratic country and the Palestinians to enjoy fully fledged citizenship of a country that rules their lives and homes.



# NINETEEN

## Demarcating the Israeli-Palestinian Border

*David Newman (2014)*

*One reason for the foundering of the recent Israeli-Palestinian peace talks was the failure of the parties to agree the line of the border separating Israel and a Palestinian state. David Newman examines the history of the border question, the key factors involved in reaching agreement, and brings to light challenging new proposals for 'extra-territorial exclaves', that may have to be considered for a two-state solution to remain viable.*

### **ISRAEL'S BOUNDARIES**

Israel has five potential land boundaries with neighbouring states – with Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Egypt and a future Palestinian state (not including maritime boundaries that it also shares with Cyprus – and hence the European Union). Only two of these boundaries – with Egypt and part of the boundary with Jordan – have the legal status of international boundaries, resulting from the formal peace treaties which have been signed between Israel and these countries, as recently as 1979 (Egypt) and 1994 (Jordan). The respective treaties included a clear and final delineation of the boundaries between the neighbouring states on maps which were included as an annex to the agreements.

In the case of the peace treaty with Jordan, the latter only agreed to ratify the course of the boundary from the Eilat/Aqaba northwards to the southern point of the West Bank, and then again from the northern point to the tri-border meeting of Jordan, Syria and Israel. Jordan refused to ratify the course of the line along the part of the Jordan Valley which lies within the West Bank, arguing that this was for a future independent Palestinian state to determine.

Prior to the signing of these peace agreements, all of Israel's boundaries were no more than armistice lines which had been demarcated between Israel and the neighbouring countries in the talks which took place between Israel and each of her neighbours in Rhodes, following Israel's War of Independence in 1948-49. Since no peace agreement has yet been entered into between Israel and Lebanon or Syria, the formal status of the borders has not changed. In the case of Lebanon, the course of the line is clear and it only remains to be ratified in a future agreement (with the minor exception of the Shebaa Farms). This was clearly indicated when Israel withdrew from South Lebanon in 2000, to the accepted line of demarcation between the two countries. In the case of Syria, the armistice line is the pre-1967 line, under which the Golan Heights are part of Syria, not Israel. This remains a major point of contention between the two countries and will figure prominently in any future negotiations, if they are ever to take place.

## **DEMARCATING THE ISRAEL-PALESTINE BORDER**

The default border line between Israel and a future Palestinian state is widely regarded to be the Green Line, which formally separates Israel from the West Bank and which was also drawn up in the 1949 Rhodes Armistice Talks, negotiated between Israel and Jordan. The border, which was the first formal political division of territory between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, reflected the outcome of the war and, along with some adjustments – especially in the Wadi Ara region enabling Israel to maintain a territorial link between the coastal towns and Afula – was superimposed upon the landscape. This was far from satisfactory as far as the Arab-Palestinian population were concerned. The imposition, and closing, of the border effectively created separate Arab-Palestinian populations and societies. Those remaining on the Israeli side of the border became Arab citizens of Israel, making up approximately 20 per cent of the country's population, while those on the other side of the border, within the areas now known for the first time in history as the West Bank and Gaza Strip, became stateless Palestinians, initially under Jordanian and Egyptian administration (1949-1967) and subject to Israeli rule following the Six Day War.

Palestinian claims to a sovereign territory focus on the demand for a state established on 'the borders of 1967,' namely the Green Line. They see this as constituting a minimalist demand as they no longer lay claim to the rest of Mandate Palestine (over 70 per cent of the territory which now constitutes the State of Israel). For Israel on the other hand, the calls for a return to the Green Line are perceived as being a maximalist demand, arguing that the Palestinians should be prepared to 'compromise' over some parts of that territory, given the geographical and demographic changes that have taken place in the 45 years which have passed since the 1967 War, most notably the construction of Israeli settlements throughout the West Bank.

Five key factors have influenced the ongoing border negotiations during the past 20 years: The original Green Line; the impact of the separation barrier; the role of Israeli settlements in determining the line of the boundary; the proposal for land swaps as part of boundary re-demarcation; and, most recently, the idea of territorial exclaves remaining on each side of a future boundary.

### **(I) THE GREEN LINE**

The Green Line, separating Israel from the West Bank, was drawn as an armistice line immediately after the country's War of Independence in 1948-1949, following the Rhodes armistice talks which took place between Israel and Jordan. The Line largely reflected the position of the respective troops at the cessation of hostilities. The course of the Green Line remained the official line of separation between Israel and the West Bank. Since 1967, Israel has constituted the occupying power throughout the West Bank, such that the Green Line was relegated to the status of an internal administrative boundary between sovereign Israel and those territories under occupation and governed according to the Civil Administration of the military government.

The Green Line was called as such because of the green pen which was used to draw the line at the Rhodes talks and which was the subsequently used on all official Israeli maps. Despite the fact that successive Israeli governments pronounced the demise of the Green Line, and for a lengthy period of time removed it from all official maps, atlases and school geography texts, the Green Line remained the formal line of separation between the two territorial entities, with or without fences and border guards. No Israeli government attempted to annex the newly acquired territories to the State of Israel (with the notable exception of East Jerusalem) and the laws for the civilian administration of the Palestinian population residing inside the West Bank (and Gaza Strip), remained different from the Israeli side of the border. Israeli citizenship rights were not granted to the Palestinian residents. Internationally, this continues to be considered the border even though the territory east of the Green Line is not formally recognised as falling under the formal jurisdiction of any single authority.

## **(II) THE SEPARATION BARRIER**

The construction of the separation barrier was, first and foremost, a unilateral Israeli response to the worsening of its national security and the infiltration of suicide bombers from the West Bank and Gaza into Israel's main population centres. This barrier, in part electronically monitored fence, and in part concrete wall (especially in urban areas) is true to the course of the Green Line for approximately 70 per cent of its length, deviating from the line mostly in those areas where the government has desired to keep large Israeli settlement blocks on the Israeli side of the line. Many of these demarcation deviations have been ruled as illegal by both the International Court of Justice and the Israeli Supreme Court and have, in some areas, had to be redrawn. In no case has the line deviated to the west, inside Israel, meaning that all such modifications have effectively created small areas of land which have a border both to the west (Israel) and to the east (the West Bank).

Many Israelis encounter the separation barrier as they drive through Jerusalem or along the Trans-Israel Highway. Because of this visibility, the vast majority of Israeli citizens, who never travel into the West Bank either out of fear for their personal safety or because they are opposed to driving into what they perceive as illegally occupied territory, are now more aware of the existence of a border and what this means in the eventuality of a two-state solution to the conflict. Five distinct border crossing points have been constructed along the course of the separation barrier, at which point travellers have to show their documents or be recognised as bona fide travellers to pass from one side to the other.

For their part, Palestinians encounter the barrier as a border which limits their freedom of movement to pass from the West Bank into Israel. They require special permits to enter Israel and cars with Palestinian license plates are not generally allowed beyond the border. (Israelis do not require any special documents to enter the West Bank, except for the main Palestinian population areas, known as Area A, which are under Palestinian control and off limits to most Israelis.)

Although the separation barrier has effectively transformed into an international border, with sophisticated surveillance technology and a limited number of crossing points, its initial rationale was, as far as the vast majority of Israelis were concerned, to prevent terrorists from entering Israel. It is for this reason that it enjoyed the support of most Israeli citizens, regardless of their positions along the right-left political spectrum. It was initially implemented by a right-wing Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, who had previously been opposed to constructing a physical barrier, precisely because it would create a line of physical separation which would be automatically construed as being a political border, but not in the location that he would have chosen. However, the constantly heard argument by all leading Israeli politicians, including the respective prime ministers that this is 'not a political border between two states, but just a security barrier' is difficult to accept when encountering the procedures required for crossing from one side to the other.

### **(III) THE IMPACT OF SETTLEMENTS ON BORDER DEMARCATION**

When the pro-settler movement began to construct settlements in the West Bank in the late 1960s and then again after the Yom Kippur War, under the leadership of the Gush Emunim movement, their objective was to create a situation where the 'facts on the ground' made it impossible to undertake any future territorial withdrawal. The assumption was that no Israeli government would forcefully remove Jewish settlers as this was in opposition to the Zionist ideal which had guided the earlier generations of kibbutzim and moshavim in laying claim to the land and expanding areas under Jewish control.

Notwithstanding, by the time of the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993 and 1995, despite the rapid growth of the settlements during the previous 20 years, it became clear that the wider Israeli public was prepared to undertake territorial withdrawal and that they would not give up the chance of peace for the sake of a Greater Israel. For a short time, the settler movement faced defeat and acknowledged the fact that their dream of extending sovereignty throughout the West Bank would not materialise.

The widespread dispersal of settlements meant that it was difficult to draw borders which would create compact Israeli and Palestinian territories. Settlements became the basis for exclaves, enclaves, territorial discontinuity and safe passage roads, thus fragmenting the area into small pieces of unmanageable territories. As the growth and construction of settlements continued, even in the post-Oslo period, so the ability to draw borders became increasingly difficult to implement. Even without the dream of a Greater Israel, the settlements did indeed become a major obstacle to implementing a territorial separation along the lines of a two-state solution, with facts on the ground preventing any form of territorial continuity without forceful evacuation of a significant number of settlements.

#### **(IV) REDRAWING THE BORDER AND LAND SWAPS**

Notions of territorial exchange and land swaps, ideas which would have seemed fictional to the average Israeli as recently as the period of the Oslo Agreements in the mid-1990s, have now become a central part of the discussion about borders. This is based on the idea that if Israel were to demand the redrawing of the border in such a way as to annex anywhere up to 10 per cent of the West Bank to Israel, the Palestinian state would have to be compensated by an equal amount of land on the Israeli side of the border.

In numerous Track II discussions over the past decade, two areas of potential exchange along the course of the Green Line between Israel and the West Bank have been identified, with vastly different political and demographic significance for both Israel and a Palestinian state. The area south of the Green Line, south of Qiryat Gat and bordering on the Be'er Sheva and Hebron Hills region, is largely unsettled, although there have been attempts to bolster the Jewish presence in this region during the past two decades. This is also an area where the country's growing Bedouin population (roughly estimated to be approximately 200,000 at the beginning of 2011) is concentrated. Cross-border links between the Bedouin population inside Israel and the Palestinian residents of the southern parts of the West Bank exist, although this has become increasingly difficult with the construction of the separation barrier.

The second area of potential swaps to have been identified is in the northern section of the West Bank. Unlike the relatively unsettled southern area, the northern region consists of a dense population of Arab-Palestinian citizens of the state of Israel, including such major towns as Um el Fahm and Tayibe, and numerous smaller townships and villages. Some right-wing politicians within Israel, principally Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman, have proposed land swaps that would include some of the Arab towns and villages inside Israel. In this way, they would even further reduce the percentage of Israel's Arab minority population (currently about 20 per cent) and implement their own policy of 'transfer' without actually having forcefully to evacuate a single resident. This is considered a total non-starter by the Arab-Palestinian population who oppose any form of 'silent' transfer through the manipulation of borders.

Whatever the configurations of a land swap, there will always be a significant percentage of Israeli West Bank settlements that remain on the 'wrong' side of the border. Approximately a third of the Israeli settlements (approximately 100,000) would remain on the Palestinian side and would have to be evacuated by the Israeli government or remain under some arrangement within the borders of a Palestinian state. Not only is this a large number, but it consists of the most ideologically-oriented groups among the settler population, those who settled in the region out of a strong historic or religious belief that the land belongs to them by right. This contrasts with those settlers who came because of the economic incentives such as the cheap houses or low interest mortgages which have been offered to Israeli residents by right-wing governments as an incentive to get them to relocate beyond the Green Line. There is a geographic paradox here, in that many of the settlers who would be prepared to evacuate voluntarily, if and when they were offered adequate economic compensation, would not have to relocate because the border changes would leave their settlements inside Israel. However, those who would likely refuse to relocate, and may have to be forcefully evacuated, are mostly

located in those areas which, under any form of territorial redrawing of the borders, would remain on the Palestinian side of the line. This is one of the major difficulties for any Israeli government in moving ahead with the implementation of a two-state solution.

## **(V) EXCLAVES AND CROSS-CITIZENSHIP**

Recently part of the public discourse is the idea that, given the inability of even land swaps to bring about acceptable conflict resolution, some settlements could remain as extra-territorial exclaves surrounded by the territory of the other state. This has recently been discussed in a Hebrew University project of the Shasha Center, headed by former Mossad director Efraim Halevy. Citizenship would be based on the national and ethnic affiliation of the community rather than on their geographical location. In theory, this would enable the management of the two-state solution with the minimum of physical dislocation or relocation of peoples and could, ostensibly, stretch to peoples on both sides of the border.

However such a solution would mean that the territory controlled by each of the two entities – Israel and Palestine – would not be compact or contiguous (and this is not even referring to the problem of the land link between the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which would remain a problem under any form of territorial division). It was the territorial fragmentation into Areas A, B and C under the Oslo Agreements which led to many of the post-Oslo problems, since when the necessity for each state to control a clearly defined, compact piece of territory, has always been uppermost in the thinking of all negotiators.

At this time in writing, this has not been developed beyond a general idea and, for many, it appears to be quite untenable. It raises a whole host of questions which have not yet been addressed, such as the functional nature of the borders (open or closed), freedom of movement and passage beyond borders, as well as the respective location of security forces and policing of the two populations. A solution based on ethnic exclaves may, on the one hand, solve problems of settler evacuation and citizenship rights, but would equally create a potential situation of instability which could lead to a further breakdown of the process.

Nonetheless, as time moves on without a resolution of the conflict, so the facts on the ground create new situations which require new solutions, often involving thinking outside the traditional territorial box. The discourse about the border continues to evolve, reflecting the changes in the conflict itself. A return to the default Green Line involving the evacuation of hundreds of thousands of settlers, appears almost impossible to achieve, even by a strongly pro-peace Israeli government. Equally it is difficult to envisage any form of final agreement without bilaterally agreed borders between the two sides.



# TWENTY

## BDS vs Conflict Resolution

*Sapan Maini-Thompson (2014)*

*The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement ignores a key principle of conflict-resolution: severing economic ties risks perpetuating political conflict.*

According to the [Portland Trust](#), the respected non-for-profit British foundation committed to encouraging peace and stability between Palestinians and Israelis through economic development, ‘the overarching economic lesson from Bosnia and Herzegovina is that the structure of the political settlement controls the nature of the post-conflict economy.’ The Trust points out that it is vital the political solution ‘is structured in a way that encourages optimal economic development’ because ‘a strong post-conflict economy is essential for keeping the peace’. Conversely, ‘economic disparities and poor financial prospects endanger a fragile peace accord’. Economic divisions between the Republic Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia Herzegovina, the Trust notes, have stifled economic growth and entrenched ethnic divisions.[1] The lesson for Israel-Palestine is plain: severing economic ties risks perpetuating political conflict.

BDS will only worsen the economic disparities between Israelis and Palestinians that have the potential to endanger a peaceful settlement. The Palestinian economy suffers from a number of structural weaknesses in addition to the considerable economic impediments created by the occupation. These include the weakness of the law and court system, susceptibility to undue political influence, low productivity, low foreign direct investment, weak competitiveness (though this is inextricably linked to the heavy Israeli security apparatus) and dependence on foreign aid.[2]

In the pre-Second Intifada years (1998-September 2000), there were 150,000 – 200,000 Palestinians working in Israel and the settlements, constituting approximately 20 per cent of total Palestinian employment.[3] The monthly salaries of these people averaged NIS 4000-5000.[4] Jobs in the Palestinian territories, on the other hand, typically paid NIS 1500 per month.[5] The surge in unemployment, from 10-15 per cent in the pre-intifada years to 20-25 per cent in the post-intifada years (2005 onwards), stems largely from the sharp decline in Palestinian employment in Israel.[6] Indeed, the [value](#) of the gap created by the decline in Palestinian labour exports and remittances amounted to \$500 million per year or 13 per cent of Palestinian GDP in 2005–2006.[7] At present, work in Israel still contributes more than one quarter of all wage income in the West Bank.[8] Moreover, ‘it should be noted that if not for the work in Israel, the unemployment rate in the West Bank would have been as high as in Gaza: 30-35 per cent.’[9] In short, Palestinian labour in Israel is crucial to the sustenance of the Palestinian economy.

Palestinians need a multifaceted economic strategy and the academic consensus is that export-driven growth is essential for job creation. However, the AIX Group — a France-based partnership of Israeli, Palestinian, and international economists — has pointed out that ‘even if internal restrictions are removed and the border regime between Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories is improved, a 20 per cent hike in exports cannot offset the economic gap left by continuing restrictions on Palestinian labour in Israel.’<sup>[10]</sup> This finding clarifies that an immediate end to the occupation would not quickly remedy the under-development of the Palestinian economy. Improving the labour flow into Israel will be necessary in the short to medium term to alleviate Palestinian economic difficulties. Current demographic trends in the Palestinian territories (the working-age population is currently growing at a rate of 100,000 per annum) are also expected to place increasing pressure on the Palestinian labour market.<sup>[11]</sup> According to estimates based on the 2010 Palestinian Labour Force Survey, the Palestinian economy needs to more than double the number of available jobs this decade to merely maintain an unemployment rate of 30 per cent.<sup>[12]</sup> This further demonstrates why easing Palestinian access to the Israeli labour market is so important. Positively, the number of Palestinians with work permits in Israel has started to recover from the post-intifada slump.<sup>[13]</sup>

In this depressed economic context, boycotts and divestment from Israeli companies employing Palestinian labour would raise Palestinian poverty levels.

When the BDS movement opposes all economic ties between Israel and the Palestinians as a ‘normalisation’ of the conflict, it does not even represent the views of the Palestinian people. According to a poll commissioned by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 72.9 per cent of Gazans answered ‘definitely yes’ or ‘probably yes’ to the question ‘Would you like to see Israel allow more Palestinians to work inside Israel?’<sup>[14]</sup>

While Israeli settlement construction in the West Bank should be opposed because it obstructs a two-state solution, boycotts of settlement products would only damage the Palestinian economy, exacerbating the peace-threatening economic disparities. The settlements are the biggest employer of Palestinians in the territories, providing work for some 25,000 Palestinians who, on average, earn over twice as much those employed in the Palestinian Authority.<sup>[15]</sup> Officially, these Palestinians get the same employment benefits as Israeli workers. Settlement boycotts will impact their families (100,000-200,000 people) and force the withdrawal of Israeli investment from the territory. Boycotts also have the potential to fracture successful Israeli-Palestinian partnerships. Examples of this include co-operation in agriculture in the Jordan Valley<sup>[16]</sup> and Israeli investment in Palestinian technology firms near Ramallah.<sup>[17]</sup> Economic unity that builds trust and prosperity across the Green Line can only be constructive. A boycott will also place immense pressure on the Palestinian Authority to find new jobs for the newly unemployed at a time when it is trying to reduce the public sector wage bill.<sup>[18]</sup> The strain on local social services would also be significant and— given the correlation between economic distress and the rise of political extremism — that risks endangering peace efforts. Hamas is known to have gained popularity amongst Palestinians for its extensive social welfare provision. Damaging an already fragile and volatile Palestinian economic situation via BDS risks making such anti-peace organisations more attractive.

Liberalising the Gazan import and export regime is fundamental to enhancing Palestinian socio-economic welfare. Moreover, re-establishing trading routes between the Palestinian territories as well as easing the constraints on the employment of Gazans in Israel are possibilities that merit urgent attention. Such moves to boost Palestinian trade would also develop Palestinian economic independence. The construction of a sea port and airport in Gaza, under international trusteeship, could be adopted on a similar platform. Implementing an international taskforce to prevent an influx of weaponry perhaps offers the best way of addressing Israeli security concerns.

Reviving and developing the Paris Protocol – the framework for economic relations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority signed in April 1994 – offers a mechanism to boost economic co-operation, develop financial and physical infrastructure in Palestine, increase trade, improve training and incentivise entrepreneurship. Boycotts and divestment, however, will contribute nothing to the development of Palestinian economic sovereignty. Calling for Israel's economic strangulation will not only inevitably harm Palestinian economic interests but will also undermine the process of economic development necessary to secure an enduring peace. Ironically, it is the advancement of economic ties promoting peaceful co-existence, not BDS, which will make the termination of the military occupation more likely.

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## TWENTY ONE

### Gaza Symposium: Reconstruction for Demilitarisation View I

*Michael Herzog (2014)*

**Alan Johnson:** *There have been three military operations in Gaza since 2008. Not just Israelis and Gazans, but the international community are now increasingly vocal in saying we need a political solution to avoid a fourth round. [Udi Dekel](#) and [Shlomo Brom](#) of the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) have proposed the policy of ‘reconstruction for demilitarisation’. What is your general assessment of this approach?*

**Michael Herzog:** First, I support the approach as a matter of principle. However, we have to distinguish between shorter and longer term goals. The shorter term goal is to reach some kind of ceasefire arrangement, where both sides commit to a cessation of hostilities, coupled with the opening of Gaza to reconstruction and humanitarian assistance. The longer term goal is to secure regional and international backing for a more ambitious approach of demilitarisation for reconstruction, opening Gaza to a ‘mini Marshall Plan’.

In practical terms, I think we all understand that *demilitarising* Gaza, disarming the armed factions in Gaza, is a daunting challenge. Hamas is not going to disarm voluntarily. I don’t know of any outside force that is both willing and capable of doing the job other than Israel, and it would require the conquest of Gaza and staying there for a very long time. In terms of cost effectiveness, I don’t think this is an Israel priority.

The international and regional backing that exists for the demilitarisation of Gaza is important in several senses. First, as a conceptual recognition that if you want to stabilise Gaza over the long run and prevent the repetition of violent rounds of conflict, you have to support this. Second, as far as Israel is concerned, if we are faced yet again with a situation where we have to stop the firing of rockets from Gaza, such international recognition adds legitimacy to Israel’s self-defence. Third, it enhances the already agreed principle that any future Palestinian state has to be demilitarised and that includes Gaza.

**AJ:** *What’s your assessment of which regional actors would be interested and supportive of this broad approach, and which would be in opposition and what’s the balance of force between those two kinds of regional actors?*

**MH:** There’s no doubt in my mind that Egypt would support it, though I’m not sure to what extent it will cooperate practically. Egypt will do its part in preventing the *re-armament*

of Gaza; of that I'm quite confident. But if we are talking about a broader approach advocating *demilitarisation* then I believe that while they will support the principle, Egypt does not want to come under pressure to play an active role. It much prefers to support the idea of *demilitarising* Gaza if others will do the job.

I would also count Abu Mazen and the Palestinian Authority (PA) [as supportive of the idea]; the problem is that because the PA is rather a weak actor and comes under a lot of public pressure internally, it cannot present itself openly as leading a move to demilitarise Gaza. It would prefer to lead the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Gaza. Demilitarisation – which ultimately translates into weakening Hamas's resistance to Israel – is problematic for them to support publicly. They might support some moves behind the scenes – they have accepted the principle of demilitarisation of a Palestinian state – but I think they are reluctant to be an active partner with Israel on this. Other regional actors that would certainly support such a move are Saudi Arabia, Jordan and the UAE.

On the other hand, we should expect efforts to undermine the whole idea by some other important regional actors. First, Iran: what we've seen during this round of confrontation is that Iran, Hezbollah and the members of the so called 'resistance axis' have closed ranks. Before this confrontation there was a rift between Hamas, Iran and Hezbollah, because Hamas would not support Bashar al-Assad; and they lost some Iranian financial support as a result. Now we see Qasem Soleimani, the Commander of the Al-Quds Force, saying the idea of demilitarisation of Gaza is to be resisted. They will try and play a role in re-arming Hamas, it's not going to be easy because Egypt will close its borders, but they will try every way they can.

Another challenge to the policy is to be expected from Qatar and Turkey, the traditional political and financial supporters of Hamas. Both support Islamist, Muslim Brotherhood type parties in general, and Hamas in particular. They would like to channel support; not weapons but certainly money, to Hamas. The question is: Will outside economic or financial support be directed only to rehabilitation, reconstruction and humanitarian needs? Or will it be abused by Hamas to build up its military capabilities? I believe that if we have a firm ceasefire arrangement, which comes with security guarantees to make sure that what goes into Gaza is not used to smuggle weapons, and that building materials are not used to build tunnels, then the challenge from Qatar and Turkey can be tackled.

**AJ:** *Dekel and Brom talk about a US-led political initiative. How realistic do you think that is? Do you think America still has the interest and the capability to lead a broad international alliance in a project of this scale and ambition?*

**MH:** Potentially, yes. Secretary Kerry would definitely be interested in leading an effort which combines demilitarisation with rehabilitation. I also believe that if there is a strong enough regional and international alliance that wants to go down that road, then the US may be inclined to lead it.

# TWENTY TWO

## Gaza Symposium: Reconstruction for Demilitarisation View 2

*Gershon Baskin (2014)*

**Alan Johnson:** *There have been three military operations in Gaza since 2008. Not just the Israelis and Gazans, but the international community are now increasingly vocal in saying that we must avoid a fourth. [Udi Dekel](#) and [Shlomo Brom](#) of the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) have proposed a new policy – ‘Reconstruction for Demilitarisation’. What is your general assessment of that approach?*

**Gershon Baskin:** You cannot resolve the problem by just throwing money at it. The reconstruction of Gaza is essential, but when we began the official negotiations to free Gilad Shalit, one of the messages I was asked to send to Hamas by the Israeli government was that when Gilad was free, Israel would allow a large amount of development to take place. I discovered Hamas wasn't the least bit interested in this. This was not what motivated them. It is very much an Israeli/Jewish mindset which says 'let's throw money at the problem and resolve it.'

So I think that the answer is only one third about economic development. The other two-thirds are a security plan and, most importantly, a political plan. In my view, it would be against the interests of Israel, and the interests of the region, to end this war with Hamas being able to claim victory. I know that certain people in the Israeli military think that we should be talking to Hamas and bring them to the table; I think that would be a huge mistake.

We have an opportunity to create a political process with allies in the region who view the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas like we do, as an enemy. We need to identify this opportunity and capitalise on it – that's why the plan needs to have economic, security and political components.

It is clear to me – from the behaviour of Egypt during this war, from what is happening in the West Bank, with the Palestinian Authority (PA) taking extreme measures to crush dissent, and from Jordanian concerns about the Muslim Brotherhood – that we should create a new quartet. A new quartet not of the US, UN, EU and Russia; but of Israel, Egypt, Jordan and the PA led by the PLO of Mahmoud Abbas. This quartet should develop a plan based on the following elements.

First, Israel should accept the Arab League Peace Initiative. This is a major step which no government of Israel has taken so far. In recent clarifications by [Saudi] Prince Turki [bin Faisal] in a [Haaretz](#) article, he says that the Initiative is not a dictate and that should the Israelis and the Palestinians agree between themselves to things that are not in the Initiative – or that go beyond the Initiative – then this would be accepted by the Arab world.

Second, in exchange for accepting the Arab Peace Initiative and holding negotiations for the creation of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, led by the PLO, Israel could then – together with Egypt, Jordan and the PLO – ask the Arab League to take responsibility for Gaza for an interim period of time, in order to stabilise Gaza and disarm Hamas of its weapons. Obviously, Hamas would not agree to this, but think of the position Hamas would be in if it opposed disarmament against the wishes of the Arab League. That would be a completely different to Hamas objecting to an Israeli wish.

This is a package deal. It is obviously complex and you need to negotiate for border control and security arrangements, but the general idea is an acceptance by Israel of the Arab Peace Initiative in exchange for stabilisation of the Gaza Strip – as part of the future Palestinian state under PLO leadership – supported by the Arab League. If we have to, we can also get a UN Security Council resolution to give us the backing of international law.

**AJ:** *Is it realistic to think that Hamas opposition could be overcome by the combined political weight of this new quartet?*

**GB:** I think this is very realistic. If the Palestinian people, in Gaza in particular, knew that this plan would finally lead to the end of the occupation and Palestinian independence, they would get rid of Hamas from within.

I'm not being naïve here. Not at all. Two months ago, before the beginning of this war, Hamas was at its weakest point. The experts say that Hamas didn't have more than 15 per cent support in Gaza. Hamas went into a national reconciliation government capitulating on all their demands: going into government without any representation, agreeing that this government could continue security cooperation with Israel – essentially against Hamas – because they were so weak.

This war has strengthened them. It has strengthened solidarity with them among the Palestinian public and in the Arab streets of the Middle East. That is a negative outcome of the war, and we need to work against that by a *political* initiative that will change the face of the region.

Israel is based on the Zionist idea of taking our fate into our own hands and not waiting for others to determine who and what we are. That's what Israel is about. We are a 'start up nation' which invents new patents in the world of high-tech. Our military knows how to take the initiative. I just can't fathom why the government of Israel is always waiting for someone else to take the *political* initiative.



## TWENTY THREE

### Gaza Symposium: Reconstruction for Demilitarisation View I

*Shlomo Brom (2014)*

**Toby Greene:** *We have been interviewing a number of analysts over the last few weeks about how to bring a long-term change in the Gaza Strip. We have been asking them to respond to [your paper](#), co-authored with Udi Dekel your colleague at the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), which proposes an equation of ‘demilitarisation for reconstruction’.*

*Now a ceasefire has been declared, the big questions about the long term future of the Gaza Strip are yet to be addressed in negotiations. The question of demilitarisation is central to the Israeli and international discussion about Gaza; many of the respondents in our symposium have pointed out that it may be unrealistic in practice. Indeed, Israel has just agreed to allow material for reconstruction into the Gaza Strip without any commitment to demilitarisation on the other side. Can you clarify what you mean by demilitarisation and perhaps say what you think can be achieved realistically at this point?*

**Shlomo Brom:** We relate to demilitarisation as a process, not as an item in the agreement with Hamas that can be achieved during negotiations for a long-term ceasefire. It was clear to us that it is not realistic to expect that Hamas will agree to disarm – we actually say this in the paper. What we meant is that we have to start a process that increases the long-term probability that the Gaza Strip will be demilitarised and the first stage is the prevention of rearmament.

We may say, a little bit cynically, that this long round of fighting caused Hamas to demilitarise themselves to a considerable extent – by losing the majority of their weapons systems.

**TG:** *You spoke about an Arab League role in the future of the Gaza Strip, which some of the respondents to the symposium have picked up on. I think there is a shared understanding that certain Arab states share Israel’s interest in disarming Hamas. What is the practical role of Arab states including Egypt and Jordan in building the future of the Gaza Strip?*

**SB:** We did not mean that all Arab League states will cooperate with our ideas. It is quite clear that Syria – the ally of Iran, Hezbollah and Islamic Jihad – is not going to cooperate in the demilitarisation of the Gaza Strip. But when you look at the current situation of the Arab League you can see that, practically, there are a number of states who form of a ‘coalition of the willing’ and who share the same interests. The main interest they share is in increasing

the stability of the Middle East by a struggle against the destabilising forces: the so-called 'Shiite Axis' on the one hand and extreme Sunni Islamists on the other. We think that we can work with this coalition of the willing, which is formalised in the Follow-Up Committee on the Arab Peace Initiative which was established by the Arab League, and we think it is feasible to mobilise them for these purposes.

**TG:** *What about the Palestinian Authority (PA) role? Do you think it is realistic that the PA can be reinstalled on Gaza's borders? Will Hamas accept this, and will it make any difference, or will it just be the PA on the borders and Hamas in control behind the scenes?*

**SB:** You have to look at this as a long-term process. Clearly Hamas will not give up its military control of the Gaza Strip soon, but one has to be open to the opportunities which have arisen, even before this round of violence.

Because of the deep crisis that Hamas is suffering and because it is disconnected from the few allies it had left (the only real allies of Hamas in the Middle East are Qatar and Turkey, who do not have access to the Gaza Strip), this provides a situation in which Hamas has no alternative but to yield gradually to the PA in different areas. In the Palestinian reconciliation agreement, Hamas decided to give up the civilian authorities in the Gaza Strip and let the Palestinian unity government control these authorities.

This is a good basis to start building a longer process which may lead to a full return of the PA to the Gaza Strip and to the constitution of a regime which is frequently described by President Abbas as 'one authority, one gun'.

**TG:** *If we think in practical terms about concrete and steel coming into the Gaza Strip, with the aim of helping reconstruct some of what has been damaged over the last few weeks, it appears that Hamas has the indigenous capabilities to produce rockets and dig tunnels with those raw materials. Is there any practical way of getting those materials in for reconstruction – which is in everyone's interests – without them being diverted to Hamas for their own use?*

**SB:** For the indigenous production of weapons they need dual use goods and machines. Practically, you can build a credible monitoring mechanism that will prevent – and I'm trying to be very accurate in describing it – *large scale* misuse of dual use materials and machines. I'm putting an emphasis on *large scale* because there is no monitoring mechanism that is perfect – there will be some leakage even with the best monitoring system. But there is a difference between the very limited capabilities of Hamas to self-produce these kinds of items in the Gaza Strip and large scale capabilities which is what we should aim to prevent.

**TG:** *You spoke in your original paper about a UN Security Council resolution. Some respondents have noted that UN resolutions after similar conflicts in the past – such as those which followed*

*the Second Lebanon War in 2006 and Operation Cast Lead in 2009 – have not had much impact. What should be in a UN resolution and what difference can it make?*

**SB:** UN Security Council Resolution 1701 which ended the Second Lebanon War in 2006 prohibits the transfer of weapons into Lebanon to elements that are not legal elements of the Lebanese Government. This kind of wording can be even more helpful in the case of the Gaza Strip. In Lebanon, when this resolution was passed, it was quite clear that it could not be implemented: Syria shares a long border with Lebanon and because Syria was interested in transferring these weapons to Hezbollah there was no way of preventing it.

The reality in the Gaza Strip is completely different. Once there is such a resolution, it can be implemented, because of the full control of the borders of Gaza by Israel and Egypt. These two states share the interest of preventing the rearming of Hamas and other militant groups. So this time, I believe it is realistic to expect such a resolution will be implemented and such a resolution gives international legitimacy to what we want to take place in Gaza.

**TG:** *The European Union has played an active role in the past with a Border Assistance Mission in Rafah on the Gaza-Egypt border, and it is offering to play an even more substantial role in future, whether that relates to borders or a sea port. Do you think the Europeans can play a positive role?*

**SB:** I am certain that the EU can play a positive role. Looking at the experience of the last decade, usually the pattern is that the US leads the political process, mediates between the two parties and brings about agreements between them. But, the ones who usually implement these agreements when there is a need for third party intervention are the Europeans, so it looks probable that we will follow the same pattern.

The experience with the Europeans in these roles was usually positive, as long as the circumstances didn't prevent their operation. That was the case with the European Border Assistance Mission at Rafah (EU-BAM). When Hamas took over the Gaza Strip they could not continue to operate and then the Rafah crossing stopped operating most of the time, because the Egyptians closed it. This threat will continue to exist, if Hamas will not allow the monitoring mechanism in these crossing, it will still be possible to close them.

**TG:** *One specific proposal that has been floated is some kind of maritime channel from the Gaza Strip to Cyprus under special supervision. Do you think that is realistic?*

**SB:** Yes, that is actually an idea that I was working on for a couple of years. It will not be possible to operate a sea port in Gaza – with international shipping coming in – without a credible monitoring mechanism. This mechanism should be outside the Gaza Strip because we cannot count on Hamas giving the monitors the full freedom they need to do their work. So it seems like a good idea to have a location – a sea port in Cyprus – to which every naval

vessel that wants to enter the Gaza Strip will be checked, cleared and allowed to go to the Gaza port. I think Israel has the means to verify that nothing is put on board during this short sail between Cyprus and Gaza, so it can be a reliable mechanism.

**TG:** *If the ceasefire holds within the next few weeks, Israeli and Palestinian delegations will travel to Cairo and negotiate, with Egyptian mediation, over the issues which remain outstanding. If you were part of the Israeli delegation travelling to Cairo in the coming weeks: what would be your negotiating principles, and what outcome you would be aiming for?*

**SB:** I would try to free myself as much as possible from considerations of prestige or the 'victory picture' – this phrase is playing an important role in Israeli discourse; the feeling that Hamas must not be allowed to present a picture of victory. Hamas will present a picture of victory whatever we do, that is the nature of this conflict. As long as they exist and claim they fought until the last moment, they can present a picture of victory.

The real consideration should be: what are the necessary steps to assure the long-term stability of the ceasefire. In this military conflict, we dealt with one part of the deterrence equation – the threat of punishment. We proved to Hamas that we can punish them badly, now it is time to deal with the opposite side of the deterrence equation, which is motivation. If the motivation of the party you wish to deter is extremely high, then it will be almost impossible to deter it.

We have to take care of the motivation factor. That can be done by creating a situation in which Hamas and other groups will have a lot to lose if they start another armed conflict in Gaza. From my point of view, a sea port, maybe an airport, and economic reconstruction of the Gaza Strip can all be assets which will make Hamas calculate whether it is worth starting a new conflict with Israel and losing all these assets.

**TG:** *One of the criticisms in the symposium is that this reflects a misreading of Hamas and their interests, representing them as having pragmatic goals, when in fact they are an organisation more concerned with their radical Islamist ideology and continuing its fight against Israel, and that those pragmatic incentives are not effective against them. How would you respond?*

**SB:** I think that the biggest mistake is to take a very one-dimensional view of a political movement like Hamas. We use language that is pushing us towards this view by repeating the term 'terrorist organisation'. Of course it is a terrorist organisation, but it is also a political and social movement. That is the difference between a movement like the Muslim Brotherhood – and Hamas is the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood – and those crazy, Salafi, Jihadist groups like ISIS; they are not the same.

Hamas has very clear political aims and for these aims they must also be pragmatic. They may be very radical in their final aims, but they must be pragmatic in what they are doing in

order to sell their objectives. I think that everyone who follows the conduct of Hamas since they decided to participate in the Palestinian elections in 2006, and even before, can see very clearly that there is this element of pragmatism which exists side-by-side with its extremism. As political movements do, they are looking for a compromise between the two.

**TG:** *One of the criticisms from the centre and left in Israel of the government's strategy has been the lack of a clear diplomatic end to the strategy or a political horizon. Prime Minister Netanyahu has hinted recently at the possibility of a broader diplomatic horizon, which might apply to the broader final status negotiations on the Palestinian issue. Do you have much optimism that we will see a diplomatic breakthrough?*

**SB:** I must say that I agree with this criticism. We can do all these things that I am recommending, which will serve the purpose of a long-term ceasefire, but it will not be indefinite. As long as the conflict with the Palestinian continues, there will be outbreaks of violence during this conflict – sometimes in the Gaza Strip and sometimes in the West Bank. If we really want stability and normal relations with the Palestinians then we must have a political resolution of the conflict.

Here I am not optimistic. I think that the Israeli government – particularly Netanyahu – have gone through a tactical change in their thinking. Now they see the utility of the Palestinian unity government and will be willing to work with them to some extent. Now they see the re-entry of some PA elements into the Gaza Strip may be useful, but I don't think that they have changed their basic concept, which is to continue with the status quo.

They do not believe that a permanent status agreement with the Palestinians is possible in their terms – the terms of the current Israeli government; but I think that these terms can and should be changed.

**TG:** *There were many other responses to your paper in our symposium, are there any other elements you would like to respond to?*

**SB:** To conclude I would say, we used the term 'reconstruction for demilitarisation' because it is a good catchphrase. In retrospect, it caused some misunderstanding. Too many people understood that what we mean is an immediate demilitarisation and that we think this is feasible. I hope that I clarified that this is not what we meant.

## **Part Four: Debating the Strategic Environment**

## TWENTY FOUR

‘There is no policy, we are on  
the edge of a volcano’

*Efraim Halevy (2015)*

*Efraim Halevy was Director of Mossad from 1998 to 2002. Alan Johnson is the editor of Fathom. They spoke on 28 January 2015.*

### **PART I: THE ISRAELI ELECTIONS AND THE PEACE PROCESS**

**Alan Johnson:** *You have said that the March 2015 elections in Israel pose ‘a choice the like of which we have never had.’ What is that choice?*

**Efraim Halevy:** I think the choice facing Israeli voters is a choice on the fundamentals of our grand strategy, both defence strategy and political strategy, relating to the future of the Palestinian conflict. There are two clear options. One is to vote for the Likud and the Bennett party [Jewish Home], which means to say, to all intents and purposes, that there will be no negotiation on the Palestinian issue, and we will continue to control the territories indefinitely. The other option is to vote to put an alternative government into power led by the Zionist Camp led by Herzog, with other parties. There will be a very steadfast position on security and defence, including in the North, of course [seven Israeli soldiers had been wounded on the Northern border shortly before the interview began. Ed.]. But when it comes to the Palestinians there will be an attempt to negotiate by a territorial compromise in the West Bank which will result in the establishment of a Palestinian state. I think the choice has never been so clear as it is now.

**AJ:** *If the Israeli public vote for the first option, what happens next? Can the conflict be kept in a holding pattern?*

**EH:** I don’t think that this time round there will be a holding pattern. I think there will be no option but to flesh out a policy, which has not been done up to now. There will be enormous pressure from Jewish Home to begin the gradual annexation of Area C [of the West Bank]. Mr Bennett has made no secret of this in his campaigning. The prime minister [Netanyahu] will not be able to hold out, because he has no alternative. The alternative of simply being in a holding pattern has exhausted itself, I think. It is no longer sustainable. It is not sustainable, by the way, for the Palestinians, the wider Arab world, or the international community. And therefore, this will mean that there will be a clear confrontation between us and the Palestinians, which could lead ultimately to the dissolution of the Palestinian Authority (PA),



which will no longer be a useful tool in the hands of the Palestinians, and the situation will degenerate into a third Intifada.

**AJ:** *Sceptics say there is no Palestinian partner for peace, so this is not the time to take risks, or to offer a territorial compromise. How do you respond to that oft-heard objection?*

**EH:** Look, we have a tendency only to look at things from our angle and not to look at events from the other side. My personal history has been a history of trying to look at an issue as best I could through the lens of our own glasses but also through the lens of the enemy, or our interlocutor. The question is not only whether *we* don't believe that this is the time, the question is also whether *they* go along with this idea that this is not the time. From their point of view, there would be a gradual but clear movement in the direction of the annexation of territory and a narrowing of the areas where Palestinians will be able to stake out whatever their status will be, if it will be state or a form of 'self-rule' as some people say. Therefore, it will not be possible to synchronise the two timetables.

We often have a tendency in Israel to believe that the only timetable which is relevant is our timetable, and if it's not conducive to us at this particular point in time to deal with something then it's obvious that everyone has to fall in line. But this is not the way international relations, or inter-state relations, are conducted. And what this means is, if we insist on freezing the negotiations, or to all intents and purposes abandoning the negotiations, it's not as if the other side will play ball and say, 'Ok, you call the tune, and we will fall in with what you say, and we will allow you to do whatever we want you to do. And if a time arises when you think we can talk, we will do, but if not we will simply be dormant.' That is not the way life is conducted.

**AJ:** *It sounds as if you are worried that Israel is sleepwalking into disaster. That would not be an unreasonable gloss on what you have said. Why do you think there is not a sense of urgency, of impending disaster in the absence of a diplomatic solution? This puzzles a lot of Europeans.*

**EH:** Well, look, we had a 51-day war this last summer. Large tracts of the country were subject to rocket attacks. Most of them were ineffective. Life did not come to a halt but life was disrupted in this country. And they were serious costs in terms of the national budget and the livelihood of the many people. For weeks, Israelis could not go about their lives; but, having said that, once the 51-day war came to an end, life was resumed very quickly. Of course there is a lot of discussion about damages and of course there was suffering. But by and large people have gone back to their daily lives.

As we speak there is an exchange of fire in the North, but cars have not stopped running through the streets of Tel Aviv, no events have been cancelled. It is a problem of the North and the North will take care of it. The IDF has beefed up its presence in the North. We go about this not with equanimity but with a sense of confidence that things will be taken care of, one way or another. I accept that there are people like me, and maybe a few others, who believe that we are on the edge of a volcano. The normal citizen of Israel does not feel it [to be] so. Our

stock exchange went up today, and the dollar went down and the shekel went up, and all this is part of a daily routine which has not been disrupted since the end of the war last summer.

**AJ:** *That is a huge strength, making Israel very resilient. Can it also be a weakness, preventing the urgency required on the diplomatic front?*

**EH:** Well, you and I might think so, but, you know, we had 51 days last summer and by and large people thought that the IDF did well. In terms of fatalities, the number of military fatalities was over 70 and of course many wounded, some virtually unconscious with little to no hope of recovery. This did have a serious impact on the public. However, the number of civilian casualties was in one digit; five I think. So, there is not a feeling here that we are on the edge of a precipice.

## **PART 2: FRAMING THE THREATS**

**EH:** The powers that be in this country send a very mixed message. On the one hand the prime minister shouts from the rooftops that Israel is in mortal danger of destruction. Yesterday, again, he took advantage of the occasion of International Holocaust Memorial Day to say that we will do everything we can to prevent a Holocaust. The mention of the Holocaust touches a very sensitive nerve here in Israel, and not only amongst the survivors. I have always said that it is bad thing to use the terms 'Holocaust' and 'existential threat'...

**AJ:** *Why?*

**EH:** Because we are not in a Holocaust situation. Then, six million Jews were herded into compounds and exterminated. And this can never happen again, certainly not in Israel. We have a very effective defence system. If you say there is a danger of a Holocaust it's like saying the IDF is of no consequence. The IDF is here not only to prevent a Holocaust but to prevent an atmosphere of fear that we can ever be on the verge of a Holocaust. That's exactly why we build up our defence and our intelligence community. Both serve the purpose of negating the idea of a future Holocaust. There cannot be another Holocaust.

Also, I think it is a terrible mistake to use the term 'existential threat' because I do not believe there is an existential threat to Israel. I think the Iranians can cause us a lot of damage, if they succeed in one way or another to launch a nuclear device which will actually hit the ground here in Israel. But this in itself would not bring the State of Israel to an end. I also think that it is a terrible mistake to tell your enemy – in this case, the Iranians – 'you are an existential threat to Israel, we the Israelis believe that you have the power to destroy us.' It's almost inviting them to do so, because they will say, 'If the Israelis themselves believe that they are vulnerable and can be destroyed then that is sufficient basis to go and do it. Don't you think so?'

I am now 80 years old. I was born in 1934 and as a young boy I was in Britain in World War Two. I have a very vivid memory of those days. I knew what was going on. And I remember the chats of Winston Churchill over the radio. We used to crowd round the radio receiver and listen to him. At no time, even at the height of the Blitz, did Churchill say that there was a mortal danger to Britain's very existence. On the contrary, he said even if, in the extreme, the Germans succeed in landing, and even if they overcome resistance and put themselves in charge, we will continue fighting overseas and in the end we will triumph! *That's* what he said. And that kept up the morale of the British population. Look, you don't tell you own people that there is an existential threat. You tell them there is a threat, perhaps a most serious threat, but we are in a position to meet it. We have a lot of means at our disposal, some of which are well-known, some of which are less known. We are not sitting ducks waiting to be destroyed one fine morning.

The prime minister views the British wartime prime minister as his role model – he prominently displays a photograph of the British leader in his office. But, in truth, he is the absolute antithesis of Churchill; whereas Churchill projected power, confidence, strategy and absolute belief in Britain's ultimate victory, Netanyahu repeatedly mentions the Holocaust, the Spanish Inquisition, terror, antisemitism, isolation and despair as embodied in his frequent allusion to the 'existential threat.' It was American President Franklin Roosevelt who led the United States and the free world to victory in World War Two who said 'There is nothing to fear but fear itself.' I fear the 'fear' that the prime minister of Israel is propagating.

I have said this on many occasions. I repeat it wherever I go. And I strongly object to the prime minister using this term 'existential' time and time again. He did it again last night. I think it is a terrible mistake.

**AJ:** *And why is this mistake, as you see it, made so often?*

**EH:** Because the prime minister has his approach to life, very much influenced by his father [Benzion Netanyahu]. When the events took place in Paris the prime minister came to Paris and told the Jewish leadership there, in a closed session, that they were on the verge of a situation similar to the Spanish Inquisition. He recalled the work of his father who was a renowned scholar, a historian of that period in Jewish history, who wrote about Don Yitschak Abrabanel who served as Minister of Finance in the court of King Fernando of Aragon and Queen Isabella of Castillia in Spain. It was said that he failed to warn the Jews of their impending fate and he proved unable to thwart the ultimate inquisition and expulsion of the Jews from Spain in the year 1492. The prime minister told the Jews in Paris that they are today in a situation parallel to the situation of the Spanish Jews on the eve of the Inquisition, and that they better be clear as to what it is that they are facing. I think this is really to preach despair as a motive for making Aliyah to Israel and this is abhorrent.

**AJ:** *In Britain there has been debate, sparked by some polls, about attitudes towards Jews. The knowledgeable Jewish community professionals are worried about a distorted depiction of*

*British Jews as a community about to start hiding in cellars. They think that picture bears no relationship to reality. But no one wants to be seen as complacent.*

**EH:** Of course no one should be complacent. You should take precautions. You should know what is going on. In Britain the authorities are very well aware of the threats. The British defence and security system is very effective. Not fool proof, nothing is; you had 7/7 and other events. And now there are people travelling to the Middle East to fight and some will return home and try to prepare terrorist attacks. But the British Security Service (MI5) is very professional. I've known them for years. When I served in Europe in the seventies I met Stella Rimington, who later became head of the service, and Eliza-Mannigham Buller who also became head of the service. These two leaders were extremely capable and competent intelligence chiefs as were their successors. The British system now has more expert manpower and capabilities than ever before. There is not a shadow of a doubt in my mind that what must and should be done is, indeed, being done, and ultimate victory in the international campaign against terror is within reach.

### **PART 3: ISRAEL AND AMERICA**

**AJ:** *There is now a furore in Israel and in America about the controversial decision of the Israeli prime minister to accept an invitation from the US Congress to address a joint session – an invitation issued and accepted, seemingly, without the knowledge of the US president. This is the latest incident in a series of incidents that suggest the relationship is in some trouble. How do you interpret these events? What's the meaning of the invitation? What's the meaning of the acceptance? And was that acceptance wise?*

**EH:** I think the entire business of the invitation to the prime minister was woefully handled. First of all, the assessment that the procedures used in this case would be accepted by the administration and the Democratic Party were totally mistaken. When this was announced, Jerusalem let it be known that this was a bipartisan decision in Congress. It was not. We now know that within hours the Democrats dissociated themselves from the invitation saying they knew nothing about it. Then the Speaker said he had the authority to invite in the name of Congress. Yes, but that is not what was said initially. Second, I think the likely reaction of the president was woefully miscalculated. It was obvious he could not take this blatant insult lying down or he would become a damp squib. Moreover the Democrats in the Senate have now lined behind the president and will not support a Republican legislative move to institute an automatic roster of fresh sanctions against Iran and the result is that the prime minister's forthcoming speech to Congress is doomed to failure from the very start. A presidential veto of this initiative cannot be overturned – it lacks the votes.

All this should have been checked in advance. That is one of the reasons we have an Embassy in Washington D.C. That is why we have an Ambassador whose task is to sound out people in advance and to ascertain how they might respond to this or that initiative. This is the A-B-C of diplomatic activity – to collect information and then to analyse it and send the product back to the political master. But if the Ambassador is a member of the clandestine plot to

circumnavigate the President of the United States and his party's representatives in Congress, he cannot perform the professional role required of him because he deliberately blocs all the access he needs to perform his basic functions.

Last week President Obama visited India and Saudi Arabia. In India he was received almost royally. Prime Minister Modi broke with protocol and personally rushed to the airport to greet the visitor alongside the Indian president. The following day he shared the dais with Modi when the Indian Armed Forces held a parade, including an aerial display of Russian-built MiG aircraft, which saluted the American president savoring this moment in history. The following day Obama flew to Riyadh and there led a delegation that included Secretary of State Kerry and two of his predecessors, both Republican eminent figures, and Senator John McCain – the Republican chairman of the powerful Armed Services Committee who ran against him for the Presidency in 2008. This was a show of bipartisanship towards Saudi Arabia – how different from the clumsy way Israel has trodden on American turf in recent days.

## **PART 4: WE MUST HAVE A POLITICAL POLICY AND A POLITICAL HORIZON**

**AJ:** *Many Europeans, including friends of Israel, find it difficult to work out what strategy is being pursued by Israel. They see a fraying of the relations with the US, to some degree, and with the Europeans; they see the gradual loss of the 'quality minority' at the UN; they see increasing international diplomatic isolation with more legal moves being made by the Palestinians, including at the ICC; and they see global public opinion becoming more hostile to Israel. They don't see the strategy.*

**EH:** In the past, the common wisdom was that in an election campaign everything is permitted, and after the election, you resort to normal policies; and that people should understand this because, as Henry Kissinger said 'Israel does not have a foreign policy, it only has a domestic policy.' And that sounds very nice; it's nice to quip about it. My complaint is that we do not have policy concerning affairs of state and security; we have a negative approach to what is going on around us.

Take the war in the summer of 2014. We fought for 51 days and the prime minister said at the end that Hamas had received a beating like they had never received before. He then said that his aim was that Hamas should gain nothing from this. No port, no airport, no political gain. But you and I know that there are always two sides to the equation when you have a war or military campaign. You have to have a military and security capability to achieve the maximum result. After that there has to follow a policy, *the political* side of the equation. But if you describe your policy aim as preventing the other side from getting any political advantage there is no positive policy in this. Just maintaining the present situation for a year or two years – this is not policy.

In *Israel Hayom* – the free newspaper published by Mr Sheldon Adelson, which has the widest circulation in Israel and it is more or less the prime minister's newspaper – the prime minister said 'if we had gone to war for 500 days not for 50 days, the price would have been enormous, but the result would have been no different.' But if this is the case, what is your policy? What do you intend to achieve? What are your political aims for the Gaza Strip? Just that they will not shoot at you? But there are two million people there and they must have the means to live. You can't simply say 'my aim is that they get no advantage.' That is not a policy.

It's the same with the West Bank. We say we can't give up any area of the West Bank because the moment we do, we will have Hamas or ISIS on our doorstep, and surface to air missiles on Ben-Gurion [Lod] airport, even shoulder-launched missiles. But today, as we speak, Hezbollah has rockets of all kinds targeted at Lod airport, already, so you can't say we won't give up territory 15 kilometres from Lod because of the threat of a strike from the West Bank. Nasrallah can already strike from Lebanon. Or you could bring an aircraft down from some place across the Jordan River, in Jordan. You can stand there with a missile with a capability, a homing device, and in four-five minutes it will be over Lod airport.

We have to hammer out a policy. It has not been done. We remain, so to speak, in a holding pattern. But every aircraft has to land sometime. We can't stay up in the air indefinitely, going round and round, waiting for a nod from the tower to say you can land. You will run out of fuel! And that is exactly where we are. We are out of political, diplomatic, foreign policy fuel. The fuel tanks are empty.

**AJ:** *Is this lack of policy, as you see it, connected to another problem you have identified, that 'peace will elude us until we treat the Palestinians with dignity' as negotiating parties need to feel they are, roughly, 'on a par'?*

**EH:** Right. We treat the Palestinians as inferior to us. We say that we are very generous the way we treat them. We give our VIP cards to the Palestinian leaders and they have freedom of movement and so forth, so what are they complaining about. But it is we who gave them the VIP card. And so just as we issue it we can withdraw it. See?

I'll give you another example. About a year or so ago I met an Iranian involved in the periphery of the negotiations of the P5+1 on the nuclear issue. I meet these people quite often on what we call 'Track II' meetings. I asked him, 'How did you feel sitting across the P5+1, it must have been exhilarating for you?' He said to me 'You don't understand. The table was a round table.' You see? *Apropos dignity.*

Don't forget what the crowds were shouting for in the Arab Spring. They wanted dignity. Yes, they wanted a decent salary, but above all they wanted dignity. And we, when we deal with people, we do not treat them with the requisite dignity. Look, Mr Bennett says that when he takes over he will give citizenship to about 70,000 Palestinians and if they do not agree we will just move in and take over. That is not dignity is it?

When Mr Bennett says that Abu Mazen (Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas) is a terrorist – and he says it incessantly – or when Mr Lieberman says Abu Masen is a terrorist, it is degrading. I don't think Abu Masen is a great friend of Israel and I don't expect him to be. So he will never be considered as a candidate for president of the World Zionist Organisation. But we should not expect this. He is trying to fight for the survival of his people but we accuse him of 'diplomatic terror'. What does that mean? He went to the ICC so he is a 'terrorist', an arch-terrorist, some say. My Lieberman says he is a terrorist. Mr Bennett says he is a terrorist. And as you know our policy is that we don't deal with terrorists. So we are saying we won't deal with him.

**AJ:** *You have said Fatah is a 'hollow movement' that is 'preparing to leave the historical scene.' Some people claim not to see anyone below Abu Mazen that is likely to be more accommodating, and these people are surprised by this treatment of Abu Mazen, in the absence of that better alternative.*

**EH:** I am not surprised. It is a clear indication that the powers that be do not want to reach an accommodation with the Palestinians. And Mr Bennett says that he wants to encourage the Palestinians in 'bottom up' economic development, through joint projects and so on. Mr Netanyahu said this some years ago. First of all, it's a degrading term in itself, 'bottom up'. It says you are on the bottom and we are on the top. Anyway, do we mean it? We have an entire city in the West Bank built by the Palestinians using money from Qatar and elsewhere. It's called Rawabi. But it is uninhabited because Israel has not allowed water to be pumped into the city. Palestinians have made an enormous investment in it but for various bureaucratic reasons – and I am sure there are people who could talk for an hour about why this situation came about – we are not letting them get water. Period. Is this 'bottom up'? They took their destiny in their own hands and built a city but we prevented them from occupying it.

And talking of dignity, the way that we are handling their finances is deplorable. We have frozen the money that we collect *for them*. According to the Oslo Agreement we collect duties and so on. We are *trustees* of this money. And we have decided because they have done this or that we are not giving them their money.

There was a famous British General called General Barker in WW2. He commanded the British forces in Palestine. He once said, 'You should hit the Jews through their pockets.' Everyone was up in arms and said 'this is antisemitism!' But what are we doing? We are doing exactly what General Barker suggested should be done to the Jews. Aren't we?



## TWENTY FIVE

‘Only a blind person would ignore the gravity of the threat which is emerging’

*Dore Gold (2015)*

*To get a contrasting view on Prime Minister Netanyahu’s national security policy, Fathom deputy editor Toby Greene spoke with Dore Gold. A former Israeli ambassador to the UN, Gold is President of the Jerusalem Centre for Public Affairs, a leading security and diplomatic think tank in Israel, and has been a close advisor to Prime Minister Netanyahu over many years. He is also the author of, ‘The Rise of Nuclear Iran: How Tehran Defies the West’.*

**Toby Greene:** *One of the challenges posed to Prime Minister Netanyahu is that there is a lack of clear strategy, in particular regarding the Palestinian issue. A concern expressed is that trying to preserve the status quo will lead to disaster, or even a third Intifada. Prime Minister Netanyahu himself has said he wants to avoid heading towards a bi-national state, but in the absence of peace talks it’s not clear how he plans to meet that concern. What do you think about that criticism of Prime Minister Netanyahu?*

**Dore Gold:** I think critics of Israel often have a short memory and they forget the actions the Israeli government has taken to try and make the peace process work, even when it has many faults. It was Prime Minister Netanyahu who moved his own position with respect to a number of key issues to try and reach out to the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

It was Prime Minister Netanyahu who accepted the idea of a demilitarised Palestinian state in his famous Bar-Ilan speech a few years back. And when it was suggested to Prime Minister Netanyahu that in order to prepare the ground for a resumption of negotiations with the Palestinians, Israel should implement a settlement freeze for ten months (a policy that no previous Israeli government had undertaken) Prime Minister Netanyahu met the challenge and actually implemented a freeze.

Finally, when Secretary of State John Kerry suggested that in order to help Mahmoud Abbas come back to the negotiating table, yet again, it would be necessary for Israel to free a large number of Palestinian prisoners, three tranches of prisoner releases were implemented by the Netanyahu government. Unfortunately, at the end of the day, it was President Mahmoud Abbas who balked at peace diplomacy with Israel.

There had been a very carefully negotiated framework agreement worked out between the United States, Israel and the Palestinians to set the stage for resuming negotiations. The framework agreement was very carefully drafted to allow each party to accept the framework

with reservations. Under those terms, Israel accepted Secretary Kerry's framework proposal. In March of 2014 when the same framework proposal was presented by President Obama in the Oval Office to Mahmoud Abbas the Palestinian answer was 'I'll get back to you'. In other words, Israel said 'yes' to peace and unfortunately the Palestinian leader said 'no'.

We could analyse why Abbas gave a negative answer: he has competition from the Hamas movement which has gained strength; he has internal problems in the Fatah movement, with hardliners there and with Mohammed Dahlan, who seeks to oust Abbas, and is living in the United Arab Emirates at present. Regardless of the reasons why Abbas had to turn down the American peace proposal, the fact of the matter is that Israel has been on board in trying to make the peace process yield positive results. Unfortunately, we do not have cooperation from the Palestinian side.

**TG:** *If that's the case, obviously the threat which Prime Minister Netanyahu has articulated about the possibility of a bi-national state remains, how do we move forward? What does Israel do next?*

**DG:** New initiatives will have to be taken after the Israeli elections, but the prime minister has hinted at a changed environment in the Middle East which could be a source of optimism. For the first time, many of the large Sunni Arab states in the region face the same identical threats that Israel faces. I'm speaking specifically about Egypt under President Sisi; Saudi Arabia, now under King Salman; Jordan under King Abdullah, and others in the region.

Because they face similar threats to Israel, from the Sunni extremists like ISIS or the Muslim Brotherhood, and secondly from Iran and its various clients in the region, these countries are more pre-disposed to quietly speaking to Israel about how to solve the region's problems. This is precisely where creative diplomacy has to be undertaken by Israel, its Sunni Arab allies and by concerned Western governments, to build on the emerging common perspectives forming in the Middle East where the two sides face a mutual threat. This is very similar to what happened in Europe after the Second World War: former adversaries, like France and Germany, found themselves having to cooperate because they faced a much larger threat from the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact. There are dramatic changes occurring in the Middle East and I'm sure Prime Minister Netanyahu will be putting thought into building on those changes to create a much more stable region in the future.

**TG:** *You referred to the framework agreement which Secretary Kerry worked on with Prime Minister Netanyahu and which was presented to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in the Oval Office. According to many reports, that document included at least some reference to the '67 lines. Can you explain what you see as the significance of those lines in reaching a territorial agreement?*

**DG:** Many people forget that Israel was never required to withdraw to the 1949 armistice lines – which are often misnamed 'the 1967 borders'. It was the UN Security Council Resolution 242, adopted in the aftermath of the Six-Day War, which stated explicitly that Israel was expected to withdraw from 'territories' and not from all the territories. The common understanding of the US and the UK at the time was that there had to be an Israeli withdrawal, but it wouldn't have to be a full withdrawal. And this was reflected in the language of the chief British diplomat

who drafted Resolution 242, Lord Caradon, as well as by the British Foreign Secretary, George Brown. Israel received assurances from successive US administrations that it was entitled to defensible borders which would replace the fragile pre-1967 lines from which it was attacked more than 40 years ago.

**TG:** *Do you see a solution which could meet Israel's need for defensible borders and at least be based, or have some reference to the 67 lines, with territorial land swaps?*

**DG:** All I can say is that Israel has to negotiate a new border with the Palestinians. Since the pre-67 lines were only armistice lines, were only military lines, governed by an armistice agreement and not real international boundaries.

In the context of negotiating those new borders, Israel will seek ways to assure that, at the end of the day, it will have secure boundaries which are defensible, given the multiple threats mushrooming around Israel at present, from ISIS to Iran.

**TG:** *Turning to Iran, which you mentioned. Prime Minister Netanyahu frequently talks about the threat as an existential threat, which some regard as the wrong approach, projecting weakness on the part of Israel instead of strength. Why do you think Prime Minister Netanyahu speaks about the Iranian threat the way he does, do you think it's the right language to use?*

**DG:** I can't speak for Prime Minister Netanyahu and what his exact thinking is. But I can put forward a number of facts which would lead any reasonable person to conclude that Iran is seeking to develop an existential threat against Israel. First, the Iranian missile programme began with the first test of the Shahab-3 ballistic missile, back in 1988, which has a 1,300 kilometre range and puts Israel in striking distance from Iranian territory. That missile became operational in 2003. In 2012, reports of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) suggested, on the basis of information they had, that Iran was seeking to remove the conventional warheads from its Shahab-3 missiles and replace them with what the IAEA described as a spherical nuclear device. Put all of that together and you have Iran seeking to have a nuclear capability to destroy the State of Israel.

But how are we to understand Iran's intent? Not just its capabilities. For that, one has to look at Iranian military parades over the last decade, and what one sees are the Shahab-3 missiles being paraded on missile carriers. Draped on the side of those very same missile carriers are mottos in Farsi which say 'Israel must be wiped off the map', an expression used by Iranian leaders quite frequently. So you have Iranian capabilities pointing towards missiles which can strike at Israel, eventually with nuclear warheads, and you have Iran juxtaposing with those capabilities its own intent to destroy the Jewish state. Only a blind person would ignore the gravity of the threat which is emerging. Israel is not helpless – it has its own deterrent strength, it has worked with the United States on the only operational missile defence programme in the world, the Arrow Programme, and the Israeli government will defend its population. It must also sound the alarm of the dangers emerging from Iran – not belittle them.

I have to say I noticed a few years back that British Prime Minister David Cameron, after a meeting with the heads of MI6, spoke about Iran developing a missile capability to strike

Britain as well. So this is a problem which is shared across our Western alliance, but Israel is in the front line.

**TG:** *Do you think it projects a kind of weakness or it causes fear mongering to talk about Iran as an existential threat? Accepting, as most people in Israel do, Iran's intent with regards to its nuclear programme, do you think that language [of an existential threat] is fear mongering?*

**DG:** In history, there have been a number of world leaders who carefully monitored developments of their adversaries. I see Prime Minister Netanyahu operating in a very similar tradition, of making a very careful calculation about what Iran is capable of doing and what is Iran's intent, and warning his own population as well as the world about the problem that we are about to face.

**TG:** *Another recurring theme with respect to Prime Minister Netanyahu's premiership are questions around his relationship with the US administration and in particular with President Obama. It has been suggested that his decision to accept an invitation to address both houses of Congress, an address which is scheduled to take place in March, without the coordination of the White House, may have caused Democrats who would have voted for a new sanctions bill against Iran to back off. In retrospect, do you think that this visit to Washington is helpful?*

**DG:** The prime minister of Israel received an invitation from John Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives. If you read the invitation itself it says that it is a bi-partisan invitation, in black and white, in terms of how it is drafted. In the American hierarchy, the successor to the president is the vice president and in the case of a national emergency the successor to the vice president is the speaker of the House of Representatives. In other words, this invitation comes from one of the most powerful individuals in the United States governmental system. For the prime minister of Israel to refuse such an invitation would be a terrible mistake. More than that, it is not just permissible to come and speak to both houses of Congress, it is his national responsibility, considering the nature of the developing Iranian threat.

Just in the last six months or so, Iran has again revealed its hegemonic intent in the Middle East: deploying forces not only in Syria, where it is killing Sunni Arabs, but also large numbers in Iraq, where it says it's trying to defend the Iraqi regime. The Iranians have also been working hard to support the Houthi rebellion in Yemen, which places them and their clients at the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, which, like the Strait of Hormuz, is one of the key naval choke points for the movement of oil from the Middle East to Europe.

Prime Minister Netanyahu is witnessing the rise of Iranian power, the projection of their presence around the Middle East and he is fully cognisant that they are hell-bent on trying to obtain an operational nuclear weapon. I don't know what the prime minister will precisely say in Washington, but he has to issue that warning.

If I may go back to yet the same British prime minister: back in 1946, Winston Churchill had been voted out of office. He had been invited to a small college in Fulton, Missouri, to give a speech about the current state of the world.

At the time, the United States had been a wartime ally of the Soviet Union; they used to call Stalin 'Uncle Joe'. Prime Minister Churchill saw a rising Soviet threat emerging across Europe, and he gave a speech – on US soil, as an ex prime minister – speaking about an 'iron curtain' descending across Europe. He shared the speech beforehand with the Truman administration, although later President Truman denied that he had known about the content of the speech. And he came under severe criticism from the British press, who thought perhaps he was causing many people in the world to fear the Soviet Union unnecessarily. But it was incumbent upon him to warn the world of what the Soviet Union was up to at the time, or to warn the world of the nature of Soviet expansionism which had been, until that time, unfortunately ignored.

When a world leader, who is an ally of the United States, needs to express his views, it's incumbent upon him to do so, and he has to do it with respect. The United States and Israel are allies – that alliance is unbreakable – but there are disagreements between the two countries from time to time. You have to know how to disagree and yet how to assert what you believe is a disastrous threat to both countries. Both the United States and Israel have the ability to fend off the Iranian challenge, but unless you know there is a challenge out there you can make terrible mistakes.

**TG:** *In the context of the election campaign, another challenge to Prime Minister Netanyahu is that he is dragged to the right by Naftali Bennett and Jewish Home, which openly opposes the two state solution, which as we've discussed, Prime Minister Netanyahu supports. They actively promote settlement plans, even at the most sensitive moments. How do you respond to that criticism?*

**DG:** Normally around Israeli elections there are members of the international media who believe that if the Likud gets elected the sky will fall and peace will be endangered. I remember when Prime Minister Menachem Begin was first elected and *Time Magazine* ran an article about him with an uncomplimentary drawing, giving him warts, and saying that you pronounce the word 'Begin' like 'Feigin'. And of course it turned out that it was Prime Minister Begin who made the first Israeli peace treaty with an Arab state, namely with the Arab Republic of Egypt.

Again, people thought Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir would lose the opportunity to begin the foundations of a peace process after the first Gulf War, but it was actually Yitzhak Shamir who went to the Madrid Peace Conference in 1991, which laid the foundations of Arab-Israeli bilateral talks. So the sayers of doom are out again, asserting that Prime Minister Netanyahu will lead a government which will evade peace and instead seek destabilisation of the region. That couldn't be further from the truth. Likud leaders do not oppose making peace with Israel's Arab neighbours. They simply drive a harder bargain.

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**Amnon Rubinstein** was a member of the Knesset for Meretz between 1977 and 2002 and he served in several ministerial positions.

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