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Israel and Palestine: The Demise of the Two-State Solution

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A two-state solution to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, with a Palestinian state along the lines of the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital, the “mandated” settlement for decades, is no longer either a viable outcome or one that can be implemented. In the past fifty years, the “facts on the ground” have changed, but, perhaps more important, so too have “facts in the mind.” The geopolitical landscape in the Middle East bears little resemblance to “facts” back to 1967. The context of negotiations has changed at least four times: first, after Gaza’s spin-off in 2006; second, after the Gaza war in 2014; third, because of Israel’s increasing religiosity; and fourth, because of the detritus of the Syrian Civil War, ISIS, and Islamic militancy roiling the post–Arab Spring Middle East.

On December 23, 2016, weeks before President Barack Obama stepped into history, the United States abstained on UN Security Council Resolution 2334. The resolution called on Israel to stop all settlement activity on the grounds that it is an impediment to a two-state solution.¹ The settlements are illegal under international law, but the resolution was the first of its kind, because heretofore all resolutions along these lines were vetoed by US presidents. In practical terms the resolution means little, since the international community has failed to sanction Israel and the countries in the European Union that might have been expected to take some action are too preoccupied with their internal problems. For Obama, withholding the veto signified less the use of power than a departing gesture of impotence, the culmination of eight years of contrarian and cantankerous relations with Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who consistently stymied his attempts to forge initiatives. At the end of Obama’s presidency, some would say the prospects for a two-state solution were much diminished. This article argues that they were already dead in the water.

Donald Trump’s inauguration, his promise to relocate the US embassy to Jerusalem, and his nomination of David Friedman, a right-wing American Jew who has vociferously supported the annexation of the West Bank, galvanized the Israeli right. More than six thousand settlement units were authorized; calls to annex Ma’ale Adumim reached a new pitch, and the Knesset passed a law (sure to be overturned by Israel’s High Court, even according to many of its proponents) that retroactively legalized thousands of settlement units built on privately owned Palestinian land. Such was the excess that even the White House called the move “not helpful.”

When he met with Netanyahu on February 15, 2017, however, Trump turned to his friend “Bibi” during their press conference and casually abandoned the decades-held position of both Republican and Democratic presidents of two states for two peoples. He was, he said, for “one

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state or two states, and I like the one that both parties like.” Bibi beamed. His beaming, however, may be short lived since there is a strong likelihood that he may be indicted on any one of a number of criminal investigations for corruption. In Likud, would-be successors are jostling for pole position. Among his coalition partners would-be prime ministers are conniving.

In the commentary that followed Trump’s about-face (the following day Nikki Haley, the US ambassador to the UN, reiterated the United States’ support for a two-state solution, reflecting the inchoate foreign policy that marks the first months of the administration), perhaps the tenor of the occasion was best expressed by Aaron David Miller, a senior Middle East negotiator during the presidencies of George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton. “Sure,” he wrote, “the two-state paradigm has been more fiction and illusion than functional concept these last few years. But sometimes fiction is useful, particularly when the concept is so widely supported—at least in theory—by so much of the Arab world, the international community and Israelis and Palestinians. There is no tooth fairy and no angels, and yet they both serve a purpose for millions of people. *This isn’t entirely willful self-delusion; it’s based on the notion that separation through negotiations into some kind of semi-sovereign Palestinian polity is likely the least bad solution to the conflict* [my italics]. And to casually abandon it without an alternative, due diligence, or consultations with any of the parties (minus the Israelis) calls into question US credibility as an effective broker.”²

Although I believe that Trump is unfit to serve as president, I find myself in agreement with the sentiments he expressed, though not the words he used to express them. Bearing in mind, however, that the president is a serial liar, his words will have no real impact on the situation, other than sending the right wing in Israel into a delirium of delight. Although Trump cautioned, in his feckless way, that Israel should “hold back” on further settlements and show “flexibility,” he will no doubt give it a pass when it resumes settlement expansion, as long as it is “reasonable.” The word “Palestinians” was absent from his vocabulary, other than to chide the Palestinians for teaching their children to hate “at a very early age.” On the question of relocating the embassy, which was slated to be his first official act as president, wiser heads have prevailed, at least for the moment.

The Palestinian leadership’s response in both the West Bank and Gaza was surprisingly muted—the usual chorus of objections, some calls for Trump to spell out what he means by one state, low expectations, less hope. Mahmoud Abbas, president of the Palestinian Authority, is preoccupied with the increasingly vocal calls for him to step down. Internecine politicking in Fatah among his would-be successors could spill over into conflict. In Gaza, Hamas elected Yahya Sinwar, who spent twenty-three years in Israeli jails, to succeed Ismail Haniya, a choice regarded as more hardline but also pragmatic. Hamas is unfazed by Trump’s unformed policies, as irrelevant to it as were Obama’s policies.

In his first postelection remarks, the nonauthor of *The Art of the Deal* promised the “ultimate” deal to resolve the conflict “for the sake of humanity.” Like Godot, we will wait.³

Saudi Arabia and Iran continue their proxy wars for hegemony in the Middle East. Among Sunni Arab countries, their overriding concerns are containing Iran and the jihadist movements they sponsor and ISIS. On this account, Israel is an ally. Some analysts advocate an “an outside in” approach, the flavor of the moment for Netanyahu, to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict where Arab countries would play a major role in a regional peacemaking effort, including recognition of Israel as a Jewish state, and bring the Palestinians along with them, the rationale being that their shared interest with Israel to neuter Iran would mitigate their hostility on the Palestinian issue. Shortly after Trump and Netanyahu met, word leaked of a regional initiative brokered by former secretary of state John Kerry that included a summit in Aqaba in 2016 with the Jordanian king

Abdullah and the Egyptian president Abdel Fattah al-Sisi at which Netanyahu was presented with a comprehensive peace formula. Eventually the talks stalled when Netanyahu claimed that the more right-wing partners in his governing coalition rejected it. Once word of the failed initiative broke, however, Netanyahu immediately claimed ownership, always anxious to be perceived as indefatigable in his search for peace.⁴ Of course, the Arab League outlined a “peace” plan in 2002 that Israel never responded to.⁵ And, as is not unusual in the sepulchral undercurrents of Middle East sophistry, what exists in the abstract can be transmogrified into whatever caters to the conclusion one wishes to draw.⁶

In the *Two-State Delusion: Israel and Palestine—A Tale of Two Narratives*, published in 2015, I make the case that the clock we say is close to midnight (the time bandwidth for a two-state solution) is way past midnight, that a two-state solution along the lines of the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital is an indulgence of things past, and that even the argument—to muddle Winston Churchill—that a two-state solution, imperfect though it might be, is better than any other option has itself become imperfect. Critics argued that I do not make the case for any other solution. I have argued in rebuttal that these critics missed my point: if the traditional two-state solution is highly improbable, the starting point for future negotiations should be an acknowledgment of that fact. In short, there needs to be a new paradigm for negotiations.

Why Is a Two-State Solution No Longer a Viable Option?

This article traces the case I made two years ago that the two-state solution is a delusion. Events since and the sweeping reordering of the global landscape reinforces that case. Let me start by differentiating between what may once have been desirable but is no longer feasible and if once feasible is now nonimplementable.

Do Israeli Jews and Palestinians want a two-state solution NOW by margins that in any way constitute a national consensus on both sides? The answer is undoubtedly NO. Is it possible to negotiate for a two-state solution NOW? The answer is NO. If by some miracle, a bolt of lightning struck both Israeli Jews and Palestinians resulting in an agreed-on two-state solution, would it be possible to implement it NOW? The answer is NO. Was there a time when a two-state solution was possible? The answer is PROBABLY YES, but with caveats.

The passage of time, however, has changed the facts on the ground and in the minds of Israeli Jews. The geopolitical landscape in the Middle East bears no resemblance to facts back to 1967. Even now negotiations “specialists” pay little attention to the fact that the context of negotiations has changed four times: first, after Gaza’s spin-off in 2006; second, after the Gaza war in 2014; third, because of Israel’s increasing religiosity; and fourth, because of the Syrian Civil War and the rise of ISIS. The violence in Jerusalem and the West Bank in what is called variously the leaderless intifada, personal intifadas, or the third intifada, whether it escalates or not, has deepened and hardened the layers of distrust, especially on the Israeli side, to a point where even a bunker-busting bomb would make hardly a dent. And the hatred is calcifying.⁷

While Netanyahu is prime minister, his insistence that a “no conditions” resumption of negotiations be predicated on Palestinians’ recognizing Israel as a Jewish state is an absolute obstacle. The likelihood that a center-right successor would backtrack on that predication is slim, even if it is disguised as an absolute outcome for successful negotiations. For Palestinians to accept Israel as a Jewish state would be to negate their own historical narrative, repudiating the right of return and the Nakba, the source of their identity. Such an insistence scuppered the slim chances of the Kerry-sponsored 2013–14 talks. The Palestinian Authority/Palestine Liberation

Organization (PA/PLO) insists that settlements must be frozen before negotiations start. Each cancels the other.

For more than three decades neither Israeli nor Palestinian leaders have ever fully united their constituencies behind the concept of a two-state solution. Neither side has ever taken steps to make its respective constituency part of the process; neither has educated its public about what a two-state solution actually involves. Nor have the leaders ever prepared their populations to make the most difficult compromises and concessions necessary to achieve it. As a result, both Palestinians and Jewish Israelis have at best a nebulous idea of what a two-state solution would involve. Two states means very different things to different constituencies on both sides of the divide; and two states means different things among the parties within each divide. Missing on both sides is one of the most crucial ingredients germane to all successful conflict resolution endeavors, a component especially necessary in the Israeli–Palestinian context, and that component is transformative leadership.

In *Leadership*, the seminal book on the subject, the late James McGregor Burns distinguishes between “transactional” leaders, who take a short-term approach to achieving goals through negotiations and compromise, and “transformational” leaders, who motivate the public through an appeal to conscience and morality. “Truly great and creative leaders,” Burns writes, “. . . arouse peoples’ hopes and aspirations and expectations, convert social needs into political demands, and rise to higher levels of leadership as they respond to those demands.”⁸ No Palestinian or Israeli leader remotely falls into the “transformational” characterization, or, for that matter, the “transactional.” On the contrary, leaders on both sides vilify each other and do their utmost to undermine each other. They are dishonest with their people. They sell fear. The best we may conclude from numerous opinion surveys over the years is that a slight majority of Palestinians and Jewish Israelis favors two states as long as the kind of state is amorphous, and a minority of both groups supports two states when many of the necessary concessions are spelled out. In some polls majorities of both groups believe a two-state outcome is beyond reach. In other polls majorities of both groups say peaceful coexistence is impossible. In other words, nearly everyone who advocates new talks is assuming a two-state solution that Israelis and Palestinians themselves say is unworkable. And without the population’s faith in a peace settlement, it is just a dream.

Barriers to an Agreement

When official negotiations between the two protagonists have taken place (Camp David in 2000, Annapolis Conference in 2007, and Kerry talks in 2013–14), their leaders allow expectations to rise, in part to please Western diplomats, especially the United States, which continues to think it can coax people past deeply embedded fears and get them to trust their antagonists after a series of confidence-building measures (CBMs), which invariably fail and only deepen the distrust, not alleviate it. Eventually, each round of negotiations stalls and the finger-pointing begins. The recent much-awaited Middle East Quartet report includes another dose of the same bromides, reworded CBMs that have no bearing on reality.

When talks do fail, Israel is by far the better spin master. It invariably turns to the international community and says, “See, we told you so. We do not have a partner for peace.” It’s a mantra, first deployed after the failed Camp David Summit in 2000, and one that Israel pulls out of the mantra box and redeploys every time peace talks collapse. On the PA’s side, negotiators go back to their well-paying careers and international travel. Life goes on, for them very comfortably.

On both sides, the process has come to resemble an addiction to a cyclical state of intermittent war. Each round of talks brings new hopes, which are followed by deeper disillusionment on both sides when they fail; the failure only reinforces grievances that insure there will be more war.

Since the Oslo Accords of 1993, negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israeli government have been based on the understanding agreed on in the accords that the PLO is “the sole representative of the Palestinian people” and has a mandate to negotiate on their behalf. A quarter century after Oslo, none of this is true. Neither Mahmoud Abbas nor any of his successors speaks for all of the Palestinian people; nor has Abbas spoken for them since Hamas in a vicious little war ousted Fatah and the PA from Gaza in 2007.

No election has been held in the West Bank and Gaza since 2006, calling into question the legitimacy of the Abbas presidency. In numerous opinion surveys among Palestinians, Abbas’s approval ratings have been consistently abysmal. Not only does he not represent all Palestinians but it is doubtful whether he represents the majority of Palestinians in the West Bank. Elections scheduled for last year were postponed indefinitely, much to Fatah’s relief. As the governing party in the West Bank, it feared being outperformed by Hamas, the governing party in Gaza.⁹

Abbas will be eighty-two years old this year. Large majorities of Palestinians in the West Bank want him to resign. Whether he resigns or is voted out, his shelf life is short. His main preoccupation is sidelining potential political rivals: Yassar Abed Rebbi, the former PLO director, and Salam Fayyad, the highly respected former prime minister—both of whom he ousted—and Mohammad Dahlan, the former Fatah security chief in Gaza. In recent times the name Nasser al-Kidwa, the son of Arafat’s brother, has surfaced. The PA is an autocracy of insiders who often resort to singularly nondemocratic means in the pursuit of power or in an effort to hold onto power. Would-be successors are quietly staking their claims, and unless there is a consensus, of which there is little likelihood at the moment, a transition could turn into destructive and perhaps violent confrontations.¹⁰ Polls show that a majority of people in the West Bank are afraid to speak their minds. Suspected members of Hamas are detained without due process; nepotism is rife. The PA is an autocratic statelet. Hamas is an authoritarian regime. Neither adheres to democratic norms.

Under the aging autocrat, the PA/PLO struts the world stage, calling for negotiations on the pretense that the PLO is “the sole representative of the Palestinian people.” Abbas’s being hailed as the president of Palestine is a charade willingly embraced by the international community. Israel also indulges this fantasy, refusing to have Hamas at an inclusive negotiating table on the grounds that it is a terrorist group. (In truth, the PA/PLO would not be keen on having it there either.)

But Hamas has fought three wars with Israel in seven years. Without Hamas at the table, talk of a peace process is make-believe—especially because Hamas would never buy into an Israeli–PLO brokered agreement that calls for Hamas to destroy its weapons and inventories. No Hamas at the peace table is the equivalent of no Sinn Fein at the table during decades of the Northern Ireland peace process.¹¹ Only when some formula is found acceptable to Hamas and the Israeli government can meaningful negotiations begin, and even then that formula will have to be acceptable to Israel’s right-wing parties. (The task is akin to putting the pieces of Humpty Dumpty together again.)

Hamas, however, is not representative of Gaza. The question is which Hamas are we talking about—the Hamas of the hard-line Mahmoud al-Zahir, a founder of Hamas who sees Israel as not belonging to the culture of the area, “a foreign body, that must be removed,” or the moderate Ghazi Hamas, deputy foreign minister, who would settle for two states, or the spokesperson Salah al-Bardaweel, with his vision of a binational state? There is also the question of who exercises

power—the Qassam Brigades or the political leadership? Israeli Jews overwhelmingly believe al-Zahir’s take.¹²

Not having Hamas at the negotiating table (perhaps unless it verifiably decommissions its arms) does not rule out Israel’s negotiating with Hamas separately, as it did indirectly at the end of the Gaza war in 2012 and again at the end of the Gaza war in 2014. Negotiations pose problems for Hamas. Although it may reach a ceasefire arrangement with Israel, Islamic Jihad and other jihadist groups do not feel bound by these agreements and step into the resistance vacuum, firing rockets into southern Israel, attacks for which Israel holds Hamas accountable and retaliates accordingly. Hence, Hamas finds itself having to police ceasefires or having to engage in a new round of hostilities to resolidify its position as the liberation group of standing.¹³

Shortly after Hamas evicted Fatah from Gaza following a short and brutish internecine war, efforts were undertaken, first in Saudi Arabia and later the Gulf states, to reconcile the two. Finally, a unity government between the PA and Hamas was announced to great fanfare in April 2014, driving another nail into the coffin of the Kerry talks. That unity government has never gotten off the ground. Almost three years later, in January 2017, after talks in Moscow, reconciliation was again announced to great fanfare,¹⁴ but within days, the fanfare appeared more of a whimper.¹⁵ On all accounts, the rift between Hamas and Fatah continues to be contentious and bitter; the Palestinian Authority Security Forces (PASF) routinely arrest members of Hamas in the West Bank, detain them indefinitely, and, according to allegations, inflict torture.¹⁶ Both parties are engaged in a shadow low-intensive civil war. Eyad el-Sarraj, the late Gazan psychiatrist who had extensive dealings with both Fatah and Hamas, told me during an interview in 2012: “What you have to remember is that they hate each other. This is no siblings’ rivalry. . . . To my regret, I have to say that I believe that the level of distrust between Hamas and Fatah is bigger than the level of distrust between Israelis and Palestinians.”

If perchance a two-state agreement were brokered, according to the Palestinian Basic Law, it would have to be put before the entire Palestinian people. That means before West Bankers, Gazans, and the Diaspora, especially the Diaspora in the militant and divided camps in Lebanon. It would also have to have a buy in from Islamic Jihad, other jihadist groups, and the Salafists. A “right of return” of five-thousand-plus refugees and only on humanitarian grounds (Israel’s unyielding position since 1948) would be likely to receive majority support in a referendum. Israel’s acknowledging the right of return is the inverse correlative of Palestinians’ having to recognize Israel as a Jewish state and, thus, to say the land is truly the other’s—a zero-sum equation. An agreement would also be subject to approval in a referendum in Israel. But here the potential to tear the country apart, perhaps to the point of a civil war, looms large. Israel is a country with deep cleavages on most political and social issues and on the nature of the state itself. Asking it to vote on a peace agreement envisaging two states would bring these cleavages into very sharp relief; embedded attitudes on a Palestinian state would be extraordinarily difficult to surmount.¹⁷

Settlers, Religiosity, and the Israeli Defense Forces

Besides these cleavages, there are other disturbing developments that the passage of time has eclipsed. Talks in the past twenty-five years have focused on borders, settlements, the right of return of refugees, and Jerusalem. Much is made of the fact that within a few years there will be more Palestinians than Jews “between the River and the Sea” and that in the absence of there being a Palestinian state, Israel will either have to give the franchise to Palestinians or become an apartheid state like South Africa.

The demographic changes that have received little attention but that may be of far more consequence, however, are taking place within Israel itself. Haredim (Ultra-Orthodox) and Palestinian Israeli birth rates exceed those of national religious (Orthodox) and secular Jews. Some fundamental structural changes are already taking place. One in three school children now attends a Haredim school. These schools, where no math or science is taught, graduate pupils with few skills and none of the tools necessary to live in the modern world. Twenty years ago, 40 percent of Jewish Israeli children attended religious schools; today that figure is 60 percent and the trend shows no sign of leveling off.

Israel's best demographers foresee an increasingly religious Israel. According to the 2016 survey of the Haredi community by the Israel Democracy Institute and Jerusalem Institute of Israel Studies, the Haredim will account for at least one-third of Israel's Jewish population in 2059;¹⁸ the Haredim will account for 20 percent of the population by 2030 and between 27 percent and 41 percent in 2059, according to the Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics. During the same period the Palestinian Israeli population will increase from 20 percent to 25 percent.¹⁹ *Hence, the looming possibility that in less than forty years, the majority of Israeli citizens may no longer believe in the state of Israel.* The country will enter uncharted terrain, with its social, political, and economic structures and institutions, including governance, undergoing seismic change. Moreover, latitudinal studies carried out by MACRO among youth ages eighteen to twenty-four suggest an age cohort that is increasingly right wing—far more so than their parents, less tolerant of Palestinian Israelis, and if, given a choice between an Israel that is more democratic and less Jewish or less democratic and more Jewish, it opts for the latter. Allied to the increasing propensity to religiosity among Israeli Jews are disturbing trends in the composition of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), raising questions about the reliability of the army. The IDF is increasingly a religious army, recruited from the settler community.

The rate of settler recruitment to combat units in the IDF is 80 percent higher than the rest of country; in 2011 two-thirds of draftees from West Bank settlements served in a combat unit compared with 40 percent from the rest of country. The percentage of officer cadets who are religious has grown tenfold since the early 1990s. Then Orthodox Jewish men accounted for 2.5 percent of military graduates. Today, that figure has grown to more than 25 percent. In some combat units, Orthodox men now make up 50 percent of new combat officers—quadruple their share in the population. There are now entire units of religious combat soldiers, many of them based in West Bank settlements, in which implicit alliances between some settler communities and the IDF are commonplace. These religious combat soldiers answer to hard-line rabbis who call for the establishment of a Greater Israel that includes the West Bank. These changes are paralleled by a decline in the number of combat soldiers and officers coming from secular families.

Best estimates are that about a hundred thousand settlers would have to be evacuated from the West Bank in the event of a two-state agreement miraculously emerging out of the current fog of violence and confrontation.

While there are no firm estimates of the number of armed settlers who are likely to resist evacuation, that a significant number would have to be weighed very carefully.²⁰ In a survey, 40 percent of national religious respondents said that IDF units should refuse to evacuate settlers if their rabbis order them to.

Would the army remain loyal to the state? Could the IDF be relied on to evacuate Jerusalem and West Bank settlements—as they did in Gaza in 2005—with battalion commanders who are increasingly religious? In 2010, Amos Harel, a military correspondent for *Haaretz*, the liberal English-language newspaper, asked, “Has the IDF become an army of settlers?”—noting how the

potential for mass disobedience in the face of such orders was making many Israeli politicians and senior officers have second thoughts before ordering soldiers to take action against settlers. In the succeeding seven years, with the continuing disproportionate influx of settler recruits to the IDF, the question is more pertinent. To us they may be settlers, to second- and third-generation settlers, these are their homes we are talking about—two entirely different designations (15 percent of settlers are American Jews). No matter what course an Israeli government takes, there would be a huge political, social, and economic problem with unforeseeable consequences: ordering forcible evacuation, resulting violence, streaming videos of the IDF pitted against violent Jewish extremists, social media in a frenzy, graphic images coming out of the West Bank of dead IDF or dead Israeli citizens—shifting tectonic plates opening all the fissures in Israeli society, the cement that holds Israel together cracking, holes in the cracks letting light out, not in.

Settlements and Contiguity

According to the most recent count, there are more than 389,250 Jews living in Judea and Samaria (West Bank), almost a tripling since 1993, and another 375,000 in “disputed” neighborhoods of Jerusalem over the 1949 armistice line, a near tripling since 1993.²¹ Shortly after the end of the Six-Day War in 1967, Israel annexed East Jerusalem, in violation of international law, and much of the surrounding area (some of it in the West Bank). In the years that followed, the annexed land was used to build twelve Jewish settlements.²² Four of those settlements are contiguous with East Jerusalem.²³ All settlements have no legal validity in international law under the Fourth Geneva Convention and numerous UN Resolutions.²⁴

The ring cutting off Ramallah from East Jerusalem was completed with the construction of Ramat Shlomo. Givat Hamatos does the same thing by bridging over the divide between Har Homah and Gilo. It completes the divide between Bethlehem and East Jerusalem and is a significant barrier regarding the Arab Jerusalem neighborhoods creating an urban Jewish ring around Palestinian Jerusalem.

Any discussion of settlements encompasses two that pose particular difficulties: Ma’ale Adumim and Ariel. A West Bank settlement started in 1975, Ma’ale Adumim is not even a “settlement” in the traditional sense. With a population of forty thousand Jewish residents, it is effectively a suburb four miles east of Jerusalem. It was granted city status in 1991. Its municipal boundaries stretch almost all the way to Jericho, approximately 10.9 miles away. As part of what is sometimes called the “Jerusalem envelope,” it serves as “high ground” protection for Jerusalem, creating “defensible borders.” In 1994, while in the midst of hammering out the details of the Oslo 11 Accords, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin declared that a “united Jerusalem” as the capital of Israel would include Ma’ale Adumim under Israeli sovereignty, and every prime minister since has reiterated this position. To fortify Ma’ale Adumim and put the issue to rest, the government wants to build a residential complex with thousands of homes along the expanded E1 corridor, a largely empty patch of land in the West Bank that would connect Ma’ale Adumim and Jerusalem. (Rabin himself provided Mayor Benny Kashriel with the annexation documents for the E1 corridor in 1994.) In December 2015, Peace Now reported that the Ministry of Housing had begun to “quietly” (without a tender because that would draw international ire) plan for 8,372 housing units on the twelve square kilometers of land construction in E1, which “would effectively split the West Bank into separate northern and southern parts, making the creation of a contiguous Palestinian state nearly impossible.”²⁵

There are no conceivable circumstances by which Ma’ale Adumim will ever be part of a Palestinian state. Israel has proposed an underground tunnel that would link East Jerusalem and

the West Bank. Ariel is another settlement in the center of the West Bank. Ariel is a university town and, including its conurbations, accounts for thirty-five thousand people—residents and students. It is unlikely that Ariel will be evacuated, and then only if there is a concession to Palestinians, perhaps their agreeing to withhold their claim on Ma'ale Adumim. Here, too, there is talk of an elevated road system linking Ariel to Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, but this would be highly problematical, further eroding Palestinian sovereignty and not a proposal that would be either seriously offered or seriously considered. Palestinians cannot concede Ariel. It bifurcates the West Bank in ways that would make a Palestinian state an awkward hybrid with an Israeli presence tattooed at its core.

Other Israeli demands, once on the negotiating table as recently as the 2013–14 talks, are no longer matters for which compromise will suffice. At Camp David in 2000, Israel insisted on maintaining an IDF presence in the Jordan Valley, an arrangement Palestinian negotiators would not entertain, then or since, because it would make a pretense of Palestinian sovereignty over all of its territory. At Annapolis and the Kerry talks various formulas were exchanged. These included a UN or European Union or other international military presence and a Palestinian security force presence coupled with an IDF presence that would be drawn down over a set number of years—a position that has hardened as it perceives anti-Semitism gaining momentum across Europe and the West and the impact of the Syrian refugee crisis across the region that has resulted in the worst refugee crisis since World War II. Jordan is now home to 1.4 million Syrian refugees: only 20 percent are living in the Za'atari, Marjeb al-Fahood, Cyber City, and Al-Azraq refugee camps.²⁶ Because of the prevailing wisdom regarding ISIS “sleeper” cells, “lone-wolf” attacks, and porous Jordan Valley borders, no Israeli government will ever compromise on a substantial IDF policing of the Jordan Valley.

On Gaza's border with Sinai, a similar situation exists. The Egyptian armed forces in Sinai waging war with ISIS have not gained the upper hand and vast parts of the Sinai desert are still a roving theater of conflict. Over the years, Israel has accused Hamas of smuggling weapons to the Sinai. But ISIS has promised to destroy Hamas, an apostate for not adhering to the Wahhabi-driven purism of the Islamic State's theology: another reason why the demilitarization of Hamas is wishful thinking. Salafism in Gaza has growing tentacles. Threats to Hamas come as much from Islamic extremism on its right as from Israel's IDF. For the present, Hamas's hermetically sealed border precludes ISIS's making its way into southern Israel; a Palestinian state allowing free movement between Gaza and the West Bank changes the calculus of the situation. Israel would demand a militarized buffer zone between the Gaza border and Sinai to prevent ISIS from covertly entering Gaza and hence into the West Bank and proximity to Israel.

Trust: Hamas on the Loose

Israel will never agree to a plan that would allow Hamas free rein in the West Bank. The 2014 Gaza war changed the calculus of the conflict. In retrospect it signal the demise of a two-state solution. During the war, the Israeli public called for the demilitarization of Hamas—for the IDF to destroy Hamas's military brigades and force it to decommission its arms. Such talk, however, was hot air. If the IDF had tried to do so, it would have been met with pitiless person-to-person combat and house-to-house searches, making the combat in the 2014 war look like children playing a toy war. The IDF, fully aware of its foolhardiness, vetoed the idea.

Moreover, even if the IDF had as a result of some remarkable phenomenon demilitarized Hamas, at best Israel would have bought itself a respite before it would face a rearmed Hamas, not

too difficult in a region awash in weaponry. One has only to look at the state-of-the-art military assets in the hands of ISIS, the Free Syrian Army, Jabhat Fateh al-Sham (formerly al-Nusra), a slew of Jihadist groups, and the Syrian Kurdish Party in Syria or militias in Libya to grasp the ease with which militias of every ilk can procure arms at short notice.

Hamas in a hermetically sealed Gaza is a containable problem; Hamas free to roam the West Bank a very different matter. Hamas or other Islamic Jihad may engage in a war with Israel every few years and unleash thousands of rockets into southern Lebanon or even with improvements more capable of targeting Tel Aviv or other cities in the north of Israel. Some may even find their mark, though Israel still enjoys a huge interceptor advantage with advanced versions of the Iron Dome and the soon-to-be-deployed David Sling. Israel, of course, will retaliate disproportionately, reducing rubble to rubble. It may invade, repeatedly if need be, destroying everything—not that there is much to destroy any longer—and leaving in its wake ever more desolate landscapes. Imprisoned behind the more sophisticated defenses that make commando-like incursions into Israel all but impossible, it may one day yield to the futility of its violence. Unless it can make Israel feel the pain of its onslaughts, the onslaughts are an exercise in futility. (There is no indication, however, that it is even close to inflicting such pain. In the elections following the 2014 Gaza war, the majority concerns of the Israeli electorate were bread-and-butter issues; 40 percent named falling into poverty as their main concern, and just 9 percent said the conflict was foremost in their mind.)

Hamas/Islamic Jihad free in the West Bank, which a Palestinian state would enable, is an existential problem for Israel. For the sake of argument, let's say Hamas and other militant groups announce that they are voluntarily going to demilitarize. Who would believe it? How would it get unanimity among factions within itself and bring other militant groups on board? How would inventories be taken? Since nobody other than Hamas itself would have an exact account of its inventory, how would the monitoring body know whether it was being given the exact numbers? How would demilitarization be verified? Who would ever know whether it had fully decommissioned? What would preclude it from rearming in due time? Surely Israel would insist on there being an international body monitoring the process. Or given Israel's contrarian relations with international bodies such as the UN, would Israel insist on wanting to do so itself (certainly unacceptable to all Palestinians under all circumstances)? There are no comparisons that can be dredged up—not decommissioning by the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in Northern Ireland or decommissioning protocols for FARC in Colombia. In a Middle East roiling in conflict, instability and heavily armed non-state actors—Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Iran, and Saudi Arabia—using proxies to assert their hegemony in the region, more pronounced because of the rampant Sunni/Shia divide, a non-armed Hamas/Islamic Jihad lacks credibility. Moreover, there are constraints: all militias would have to disarm simultaneously, or none would. Salafi groups affiliated with ISIS have a presence in Gaza. ISIS is committed to overthrowing Hamas; therefore Hamas cannot disarm anyway.

In a Palestinian state, with no army (which the PLO agreed to at Oslo), there is nothing that would prevent Hamas or any other militant group from rearming. Because of Israel's topography, Hamas with mobile short-range missiles could target any of Israel's population without sufficient time for Israel to deploy even the most sophisticated interceptor. It's not on. In fact, not quite tongue in cheek, you could say that the best way, perversely, for Hamas to escape Gaza and wage total war on Israel would be to agree to a two-state solution, having disarmed as part of the peace agreement and in due course. All Israeli Jews see Hamas as perverse.

Ironically, Israel and Hamas face a common threat. In Gaza, Salafists, who adhere to a literal interpretation of the Quran, are a more open presence and ISIS (Daesh) a covert and on occasion overt threat to Hamas, which views Hamas members as infidels, putting the Palestinian cause before support for the caliphate. ISIS, on occasion, has fired rockets into Israel. There have been public demonstrations in support of ISIS. ISIS vows to destroy both Hamas and Israel. Hamas has cracked down and imprisoned suspected members of ISIS. But as young Gazans remain entrapped in a Gaza that is virtually unlivable, with Hamas is powerless to change the situation, ISIS becomes a more attractive alternative. Even for some members of Hamas.²⁷

In addition there is the “We gave them Gaza” mantra, repeated so often that Israeli Jews invoke it, knee-jerk-like, without having to think about it. It is a part of Israeli’s DNA, an all-purpose response to all questions regarding Palestinian intentions. Israel points to what happened in Gaza after it withdrew in 2005. Rather than using the opportunity to build a prosperous future for themselves, free of an Israeli presence, Palestinians used it to create a military statelet that had the sole purpose of destroying Israel. Why, it asks, should it believe that ending the occupation and withdrawing from the West Bank would not result in a similar repose?

Reactions in Israel to the Iran nuclear deal provide a probable predictor of Israeli reactions to any proposed Palestinian deal. Throughout the negotiations between the P5+1 and Iran on a nuclear agreement, and especially in the run-up to Obama’s signature on the agreement, Israel went berserk, if one can use that word to describe the frenzied reactions by a people to an event. Across the political spectrum in Israel, from secular to traditional, to religious, Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox majorities decried its contents.²⁸ Iran simply could not be trusted to abide by whatever was agreed on. It would find ways to covertly manipulate the agreement; it would cheat. The Americans had been suckered. In Israel there is no more contemptible label than sucker.

One can superimpose a parallel response: the “Iran Syndrome”—all of Iran’s intentions are malign, they cannot be trusted, and they cheat—transmutes into the “Palestinian Syndrome”—all Palestinian intentions are malign . . .

Like the nuclear arms deal, a two-state solution would have to be implemented in steps. Mistrust would exist at every step—one need only look at how the CBMs the Oslo Agreement called for emasculated the accords and how the CBMs the Quartet’s most recent road map calls for is being emasculated.²⁹

Hardly surprising, then, that even among the percentages of varying sizes of Israeli Jews who would agree to a two-state solution (undefined), polls consistently show that over 60 percent believe that the real intention of the Palestinians would be to use such an agreement as a first step toward taking over Israel. Likewise on the Palestinian side. Even a Palestinian state would not deter Israel from its main objective—establishing *Eretz Yisrael*.

Ethos of Hatred

Moreover, unaddressed and rarely mentioned has been the underlying dynamic driving the conflict: the ethos of conflict has over the decades become a catalyst for an ethos of hatred.

From birth, almost all Jewish Israelis are inculcated with negative images of Palestinians and Palestinian Israelis, both of whom are perceived as enemies because in the Israeli narrative they seek only the destruction of Israel and hence the Jewish people; Jewish Israelis believe that the missiles indiscriminately launched from Gaza are expressions of Palestinians’ intentions to erase them. For their part, most Palestinians are imbued with a hatred of Israeli Jews because they witness from a very young age the humiliations, such as arbitrary arrests and detention, that they, their families, and their friends are subjected to daily; they become aware that the occupation rules every aspect of their

lives, that the proliferation of Jewish Israeli settlements is a manifestation of their impotence and loss of dignity, that the Israelis' disproportionate use of force shows their disregard for the lives of Palestinians.

The roots of the hatreds on both sides are embedded in their one-sided worldviews and mutual fear of the other. The failure of the Oslo Accords has reinforced these fears. Each side has a tool kit of ready-made explanations of how the other is the party responsible for the shambles. The "othering" of the opposing side is done in the schools of both cultures. Well before young people become adults, their brains are almost hardwired by their textbooks, the hatred, the ethos of conflict indelibly imprinted; individual attitudes are rock hard, reinforced, virtually impervious to change and strengthened by social cohesion. The landmark study from 2013 "*Victims of Our Own Narratives?*": *Portrayal of the "Other" in Israeli and Palestinian School Books* could hardly be more discouraging. Its conclusions buttress the ethos of conflict. Israel refused to participate in the study. But when "*Victims of Our Own Narratives?*" was released, the Israeli Ministry of Strategic Affairs issued a harsh, detailed response rejecting out of hand the study's findings regarding incitement in Israeli school textbooks.

One small sliver of hope: "*Victims of Our Own Narratives?*" finds that neither side uses textbooks to describe the other in terms that dehumanize or demonize, but there is an absence of information that legitimizes the presence and humanizes the other. Moreover, the architecture of how the other is portrayed uses "unilateral national narratives that present the other as enemy, chronicle negative actions by the other directed at the self-community, and present the self-community in positive terms with actions aimed at self-protection and goals of peace."

Thus, school textbooks, tailored to reflect national narratives, provide the material for generating the "truths"—or "usable pasts"—that evolve into young people's values and norms; they provide the cues for developing lifelong habits. The recurring emphasis on the justice of students' own cultural narratives results in attributes that sustain the habits and addictions they slip into, the patterns of behavior that become routine (seamlessly fitting into the societal norms of their community), and actions that become reflexive. The Yale professor who directed the study, Bruce Wexler, a Jewish American, says, "Israeli school maps feed into the Palestinian narrative that Israel wants to grab more and more land, and Palestinian school maps feed an Israeli narrative that Palestinians want to throw them into the sea."³⁰

In *Palestine in Israeli School Books*, Nurit Peled-Elhanan, a lecturer at Hebrew University, explores the content of schoolbooks in Israeli classrooms. She quotes from the findings of other studies. For example, Caroline Coffin, professor of English and linguistics at the Open University in the United Kingdom, argues that "students learn not only from the discourse of historians in their textbooks but also from the discourse of politicians, lawyers, and other manipulators of discourse. They learn to present interpretations as facts, to insert personal views into seemingly neutral representations, in short they learn the language of power." As a result of this "imposition of the official 'truth,'" Peled-Elhanan points out, not only are students "alienate[d] from disciplinary discourse" but there emerges what the late Paul Ricoeur, John Nuveen Professor of Philosophical Theology at the University of Chicago, called a "wanting not to know." This "wanting not to know," Peled-Elhanan adds, "inculcated into Israeli youth, through education, is in fact 'not wanting to teach.'" Her study concludes that "the representation of Palestinians in Israeli school books enhances ignorance"; that "the past three generations of Jewish Israelis are, for the most part, not aware of the geopolitical or social realities of their country"; that "Israeli Jewish students are drafted into the army, to carry out Israeli policy vis-à-vis Palestinians, whose life-world is unknown to them and whose very existence they have been taught to resent and fear."

And furthermore, Dan Rabinowitz, a professor at Tel Aviv University, writing in 2012, points out that the lack of contact,” enhanced by physical and mental barriers, between Israeli-Jewish and Israeli-Palestinian youth keeps these youngsters ignorant of each other’s lives,” that “the image of the Palestinians as potentially ‘blood thirsty desperados, yearning for violent revenge, pushed to act against their own interests if they can only harm as many Israelis as they can’ is still prevalent in textbooks as in the general discourse.” “Textbooks and curricula are political tools,” Peled-Elhanan writes, quoting Michalinos Zembylas of Open University, Cyprus, Nicosia, and Zvi Bekerman of Hebrew University. Surveying yet another set of studies, she finds that they conclude that “textbooks that are meant to change fixed ideas do not always succeed in doing so, but as Israeli youth’s attitudes towards Palestinians may prove, textbooks that seek to ingrain dominant ideas, biased and fraudulent as they may be, do succeed, as they are part of an all-encompassing promulgation of an anti-Arab myth.”

Palestinians are also adept at hatred; the incitement they propagate in their schools is no less insidious. David Pollock, a fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, investigated what accounts for the 84 percent negative representations of Israeli Jews in Palestinian textbooks. He published his findings in *Beyond Words: Causes, Consequences and Cures for Palestinian Authority Hate*, a comprehensive and meticulously researched documentation of incitement on the part of PA officials and in PA media outlets. The study’s cover illustration, “Bridge of Return,” is annotated with the sentence, “Palestinians will return to Israel via the barrel of a gun.” Its source is the Facebook page of Fatah, a party committed to nonviolence. Imagine what Hamas’s Facebook page would look like.

In addition to examining textbooks, Pollock’s study itemizes a litany of incitements (hate speech) emanating from every media outlet that the PA controls, either officially or unofficially, and statements of senior PA officials. The message, in essence, is that Jews must be driven from Palestine and Palestine reclaimed by the Palestinian people. There is not a word about peace, about reconciliation, about two states for two people living side by side in harmony. The Palestinians’ insistence that they would not want *any* Jewish presence in their new state stokes the undercurrents of animosity. Likewise, Israel’s insistence on being recognized as a Jewish state is designed to nurture animosity rather than rapprochement.

The Palestinian Incitement Index for 2015, a metric compiled by Israel to measure the level of Palestinian incitement annually found “a rise in incitement in the Palestinian Authority, sponsored by the leadership and religious figures, in the institutions of formal education and massive exposure of the culture of incitement to the international community.”³¹

Ministers, the press release for the index says, “were presented with examples from children’s and youth programs on the official Palestinian Authority television channel featuring—inter alia—children calling for the murder of Jews, incitement by Palestinian Authority Chairman Abu Mazen encouraging terrorism and incitement in news media.” The 2014 index, according to the Israeli Foreign Ministry, exposed “the culture of hatred in the PA.” The same themes were reiterated again and again: “Israel has no right to exist, certainly not as the state of the Jewish People, which, in any case, has no link to the holy Land”; “the disappearance of Israel is unavoidable and expected soon”; “the Jews are sub-human creatures and must be dealt with accordingly”; “in principle, all forms of struggle, including terrorism are legitimate in order to realize the final goal.”³²

If a Palestinian state were on the horizon (which it is not remotely close to), what kind of state are we talking about? On one hand you have a one-party PA statelet, which last held elections ten years ago, led by an aging, unpopular autocrat with power-hungry successors nipping at his heels, each with his own clandestine militia to back his claim, corrupt to a fault, and an entrenched elite

for whom the occupation has been a source of power and privilege; on the other hand you have a one-party Gaza statelet under the iron thumb of a global pariah, an internationally tarred terrorist movement—it, too, with entrenched elites and nouveau riche. The PA is on a life-support system provided by the international donor community; Gaza has a brain-dead economy. A two-state solution would require uniting a ward of the international community (the West Bank) with a failed statelet (Gaza) and the pivot of an impoverished urban community (East Jerusalem) into a reasonably healthy polity and economy. The prospects of a nominally unified Hamas and Fatah being capable of running a country on a day-to-day basis are problematic, if the past is a performance guide. Returning refugees would find themselves in a country alien to their previous experiences with the costs of assimilation, competition between indigenous Palestinian and returnees, many of whom would be strangers, for jobs and housing, imported militancy from the camps in Lebanon, the limited absorptive capacity of a struggling economy and weak social structures, demilitarized but with a security force requiring integrating the PASF and the Qassam Brigades, the former having relentlessly hunted down and imprisoned members of Hamas in the West Bank. Neither the PA nor Hamas adheres to democratic norms, though both pay lip service to the aspirations of democratic ideals; neither has much regard for human rights, though both give prolific expressions of its fealty to such. One is secular Islamist; the other Islamist. Fatah and Hamas are already in conflict with each other. The sum of the parts does not a nation-state make; rather, it suggests the rudiments of a failed state already in place. The hurdles implementation of a final settlement agreement (FSA) faces are virtually insurmountable. For starters, how many years would be required to reach the finality of an “end of claims” agreement, which would be signed only upon resolution of the differing interpretations of all the mistakes, inadequacies, outright evasions, and obfuscations incorporated into the FSA? That would be an incredibly complicated process—that is, it would require more rounds of complicated negotiations. Different interpretations of every clause would be given, with potential for conflict at every turn.

Reconstruction in Gaza proceeds at a snail’s pace and the IDF continues to ride roughshod over Palestinians in the West Bank. The door to the religious war that opened in Jerusalem in October 2014 remains permanently ajar. (The majority of Palestinians believe that the real agenda of Israel is to take over the Al Aqsa Mosque; the majority of Israeli Jews believe Jews should have the right to pray there.) The IDF prepares for another war in Gaza. The rift between Fatah and Hamas continues to deepen. Hamas hoards its resources. It, too, prepares for another war. Israel’s defense minister, Avidor Lieberman, vows to wipe it out.

Add to this bewildering picture the hatred that precludes finding common ground, and the conclusion is clear: there is not even a glimmer of hope for a two-state solution here. The Palestinians know it, and the Jewish Israelis are moving inexorably to this truth as well. How could we possibly expect successful negotiations when Israelis and Palestinians teach their children the value of demonization, racism, and hatred? Negotiation in such a context is a waste of time. You cannot build where there are no foundations to begin with. As a December 2013 Zogby poll succinctly sums up: “The ground today is also less fertile than it was the first time around, having been polluted during the past 20 years by the ill-will created and negative behaviors of both sides that sapped confidence and trust of both Palestinians and Israelis.”

Surveys showing that Palestinian support of a two-state solution is either underwhelming or no longer exists, that over 60 percent of Palestinians do not believe peaceful coexistence is possible, and that only 46 percent of Jewish Israelis and just one-third who describe themselves as religious think it is possible should give their leaders pause. They can spend as much time as they like at the negotiating table but, it seems, it would be in vain. And after a review of the reams of data available,

it is pertinent to ask whether they are so far out of touch with the evolving aspirations of their respective constituencies that they are trying to negotiate an outcome that no longer truly reflects what their constituencies consistently believe is in their interests.

The time has come to consider other options; none is palatable, but serious attention to all may break the stranglehold of thinking only in terms of a two-state solution. To find common ground, Israelis and Palestinians would have to address the hate so viscerally on display in the later months of 2014, that much-abused word “trust” would somehow have to emerge from the rubble of Gaza and the humiliations of the occupation of the West Bank, and Israel would have to face the ugly truths about itself. Hamas and the Islamic jihad as well as the multitudinous minor jihadist groups in the Gaza Strip would have to agree to decommission their weapons and destroy their stockpiles of arms under conditions that would ensure that rearmament was impossible, and the requisite transformative leadership on both sides would have to materialize. Each “would have to” alone is extremely unlikely; all of them occurring at once phantasmagorical. The new generations in both countries are less tolerant, not more—the Israelis hard, unforgiving, and moving inexorably to the right; the Palestinians more and more inclined to believe that violence is the only means that will bring the occupation and its accrued humiliations to an end.

Nothing is etched in infinity, as the United States learned in the past November elections. The Middle East is being reshaped,—one reshaping had there been a President Clinton; we can prepare for quite another under a President Trump. Neither Israel nor Palestine can escape indefinitely the repercussions of that reshaping. Syria and Iraq are fractured, perhaps beyond repair; the ISIS phenomenon still bewilders governments in the Middle East, North Africa, and the West. As the Islamic State shrivels territorially, Iran’s emergence as a potent regional power is inevitable; climate change is already wreaking havoc in the region, and the Middle East, according to studies of the Intergovernmental Committee on Climate Change, will be among the regions open to its most devastating effects. These are just some of the realities that now define Israelis and Palestinians alike; these are the realities that eviscerate the notion that there will ever be two states for two people. Both Israelis and Palestinians can brush them aside, if they so choose. History, however, does not indulge illusions; it is time to seek another way forward.

Notes

¹ All references to a two-state solution envisage a Palestinian state along the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital.

² Aaron David Miller, “Is the Two-State Solution Dead?” *CNN Opinion*, February 16, 2017, <http://www.cnn.com/2017/02/16/opinions/trump-israeli-palestinian-departure-miller/>.

³ “Netanyahu tells ministers Trump pressed him on his intentions regarding the peace process two days after his inauguration. “Trump believes in a deal,” the PM says, “We have to make every effort to avoid a confrontation with him.” Barak Ravid, “Netanyahu: I Told Trump Palestinians Won’t Budge, He Said They’ll Make Concessions,” *Haaretz*, February 12, 2017, <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-1.771285>.

⁴ Barak Ravid, “Kerry Offered Netanyahu Regional Peace Plan in Secret 2016 Summit with al-Sissi, King Abdullah,” *Haaretz*, February 19, 2017, <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-1.772531?andts=1487699222101>; “Herzog on Secret Peace Summit: Netanyahu Ran Away from Historic Opportunity,” *Haaretz*, February 19, 2017, <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/1.772702>; Barak Ravid, “At Secret Aqaba Summit, Netanyahu Offered Construction Freeze Outside Settlement Blocs,” *Haaretz*, February 20, 2017, http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-1.772735?utm_content=%2Fisrael-news%2F.premium-1.772735andutm_medium=emailandutm_source=smartfocusandutm_campaign=newsletter-dailyandutm_term=20170220-02%3A02.

⁵ See Padraig O’Malley, *The Two-State Delusion* (New York: Viking/Penguin Press, 2015), 105–16.

⁶ Ben Caspit “3 Alternatives to Two-State or One-State Solution for Mideast Peace,” *Al Monitor*, February 20, 2017. <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/02/israel-palestinians-jordan-egypt-avigdor-liberman.html#ixzz4ZMIQxkPx>. Following the disclosure of the Aqaba meeting, Isaac Herzog, leader of the Zionist Union, outlined his party’s peace plan. Both sides would agree on a decade of “calm,” during which time the West Bank would be a violence- and incitement-free zone; settlement construction outside blocs would be frozen, with more powers to Palestinians, and finally negotiations. Describing his plan in *Haaretz*, Herzog notes that one “truth involves the need to recognize that the attempt to reach a viable peace in one move, in one conference or with a process consisting of agreed formulas and parameters for a permanent agreement, has failed. It has failed again and again—with Ehud Barak who tried it at Camp David, with Ehud Olmert who tried it at Annapolis, and with Benjamin Netanyahu who tried it with Kerry’s outline some years ago. All those moves ended with disappointment and some even led to increased violence, hostility and suspicion among the leaders and nations.” “Isaac Herzog Details His 10-Point Plan for Israeli-Palestinian Peace,” *Haaretz*, February 23, 2017, http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-1.773312?utm_content=%2Fisrael-news%2F.premium-1.773312&utm_medium=email&utm_source=smartfocus&utm_campaign=newsletter-breaking-news&utm_term=20170223-03%3A02.

⁷ Almost two-thirds of Israeli Jews believe that the Israeli soldier currently being tried by military court for shooting dead a prone and wounded Palestinian who had attempted to attack his patrol with a knife did the right thing. Almost a majority believe that the IDF should shoot dead any Palestinian attempting to attack it –scissors or knife, even if he or she could be easily apprehended. Ben Caspit, “Why Israelis Are Defending IDF Soldier Who Shot Palestinian Attacker,” *Al Monitor*, March 28, 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/03/israel-public-idf-soldier-new-hero-hebron-palestinian-shot.html#ixzz4RiMLE8P5>.

⁸ Burns’s words, from a 1978 essay, are quoted in Matt Schudel, “James MacGregor Burns, Presidential Historian and Leadership Scholar, Dies at 95,” *Washington Post*, July 15, 2014.

⁹ “Palestinian Local Elections Aren’t Happening: Here’s Why,” *Washington Post*, September 20, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/09/20/palestinian-local-elections-were-postponed-heres-why-pa-leaders-may-feel-threatened/?utm_term=.e5a41a30da1e.

¹⁰ There are frequent reports that Abbas wants a successor who will ensure that neither he nor his family, which has amassed a sizeable fortune (the occupation has benefited some!) will be prosecuted for corruption when he leaves office. Yoni Ben Menachem, “The Businesses of Mahmoud Abbas and His Sons,” *Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs* 16, no. 15 (September 14, 2016), <http://jcpa.org/article/the-businesses-of-mahmoud-abbas-and-his-sons/>; Natasha Mozgovaya, “U.S. Lawmakers Slam Mahmoud Abbas for Alleged Corruption,” *Haaretz*, July 11, 2012, <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/u-s-lawmakers-slam-mahmoud-abbas-for-alleged-corruption-1.450279>.

¹¹ The British and Irish government believed that a power-sharing agreement with a Republic of Ireland dimension could be brokered by the moderate Social Democratic and Labour Party on the nationalist side and Ulster Unionist party on the pro-Union side. In 1994 the IRA declared a ceasefire, opening the way for Sinn Fein’s participation in peace talks, and even though the hard-right Democratic Unionist Party refused to sit with Sinn Fein at the same negotiating table, the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement was signed by all parties in 1998, bringing that conflict to a close.

¹² The Hamas Charter calls for the destruction of Israel. Most Hamas leaders I have talked with dismiss this statement as being antiquated, no longer a reflection of Hamas’s positions. On one hand, however, al-Zahar’s comment does not express this “benevolence.” On the other hand, the Likud Charter calls for a Greater Israel, and there is a rarely talk of repealing it to reflect its current views, amorphous though they may be.

¹³ There were numerous reports, coated in “plausible deniability” (the usual sugar substitute for transactions of this kind), that Israel via Turkey was interested in negotiating a separate Gaza entity that would, of course, result in what many pundits said would be a permanent rupture between the West Bank and Gaza, because it would create a border between the West Bank and Gaza. What gave some credibility to these reports was that a separate Gaza entity is part of Israel’s strategy to drive wedges between the West Bank and Gaza. A border would resolve its demographic problem, and keep Hamas out of the West Bank. Other reports abounded in 2014 of Hamas and other jihadist groups in Gaza being willing to agree to an eight- to ten-year ceasefire (a *hudna*) in exchange for the lifting of the siege, the reconstruction of Gaza, a seaport linked to Cyprus, and permission for a limited number of workers from Gaza to work in Palestine.

¹⁴ “Fatah and Hamas to Form Unity Government,” *Al Jazeera*, January 18, 2017, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/01/fatah-hamas-form-unity-government-170118031339203.html>.

¹⁵ Commenting on the agreements reached in Moscow, Alaa Tartir, program director of Al-Shabaka, the Palestinian Policy Network, writes: “The news coming from Moscow about the Palestinian unity government is puzzling for the Palestinian people. . . . A decade of failures to implement reconciliation agreements between the two main Palestinian factions, Fatah and Hamas, testifies that business (of rivalry) will remain as usual. . . . Despite the seemingly positive news and developments, Palestinians should not be under the illusion that a genuine Palestinian unity is attainable in the short run, nor that the intra-Palestinian divide will be bridged rapidly. Far from it, especially as the accountability mechanisms are lacking and the implementation will be prone to risks and obstacles similar to the ones that caused the failures over the past decade. Ensuring a meaningful unity requires a serious engagement in restructuring and reinventing the Palestinian political system, structures, and institutions. It also means an agreement on the political programme, tools and objectives that are inclusive and participatory in nature. Unless there are effective accountability mechanisms, the Palestinian people—especially with their continuous marginalisation in their political system—are excused to remain sceptical about the reconciliation déjà vu. The path for Palestinian unity is clear, but it requires strong political will and sacrifices. Last month’s series of meetings provided a golden opportunity for the Palestinian political leaders to shape a new reality. The question remains: will they really seize the opportunity this time round?” Alaa Tatir, “Palestinians Skeptical about Moscow Reconciliation Deal,” *Al Jazeera*, January 19, 2017, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/01/palestinians-sceptical-moscow-reconciliation-deal-170119061350285.html>.

¹⁶ “PA Arrests Terrorists Released from Israeli Jail,” Israeli News Online, posted January 26, 2017, <https://israelnewsonline.org/pa-arrests-hamas-terrorists-released-from-israeli-jail/>. For example, see, the comment by the political analyst Hassan Abdo after a round of talks in Doha: “Besides the groups’ political differences, the PA continues its political arrests against Islamic organizations’ members in the West Bank. Fatah is not able to stop this approach, which is its guarantee to its governance, while Hamas cannot achieve reconciliation in light of the ongoing arrests.” Rasha Abou Jalal, “Why Does Hamas, Fatah Reconciliation Keep Failing?,” *Al Monitor*, March 8, 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/03/palestinian-hamas-fatah-reconciliation-doha.html>.

¹⁷ Among the four subgroups of Israeli Jews—Haredi (Ultra-Orthodox), Dati (religious), Masorti (traditional), and Hiloni (secular)—there are huge and in many cases unbridgeable differences on major public policy and social issues, including where religious or secular laws should prevail (majority religious), whether Palestinian Israelis should be transferred to the West Bank (almost 50 percent); on settlements (majority in favor of more settlers in existing settlements, where the municipal boundaries have been expanded and interconnecting transport networks now comprises 40 percent of the West Bank and are off limits to Palestinians); on a two-state solution (slim majority supports but an undefined Palestinian state); and on annexing the West Bank (large plurality). “Israel’s Religiously Divided Society,” Pew Research, March 2016, <http://www.pewforum.org/2016/03/08/israels-religiously-divided-society/>.

¹⁸ “Haredim to Surpass Arab Population by 2050,” *Arutz Sheva*, November 11, 2016, <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/216254>.

¹⁹ Israel Central Bureau of Statistics 2012, 71–75.

²⁰ Judah Ari Gross, “Jewish Terror State Already upon Us, Ex Security Chief Warns,” *Haaretz*, August 7, 2015, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/too-late-for-effective-jewish-terror-crackdown-ex-security-chief-says/>.

²¹ Ahuva Balofsky, “Jewish Population in Judea & Samaria Growing Significantly,” *Breaking News Israel*, January 5, 2015, <https://www.breakingisraelnews.com/26966/jewish-population-in-judea-and-samaria-growing-significantly/#0cIglKS4vF3J7qiY.99>.

²² Neve Ya’aqov, Pisgat Ze’ev, French Hill, Ramat Eshkol, Ma’alot Dafna, Ramot Alon, Ramat Shlomo (Rekhes Shu’afat), the Jewish Quarter (in the Old City), East Talpiot, Giv’at Hamatos, Har Homa, and Gilo.

²³ Ramat Eshkol, Ma’alot Dafna, Ramot Alon, and East Talpiot.

²⁴ UN Resolutions 446 (1979), 452 (1979), 465 (1980), 476 (1980), and 1515 (2003).

²⁵ “Peace Now: Israel Planning 8,372 Homes in Sensitive West Bank Area,” *Times of Israel*, December 28, 2015, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-planning-construction-in-controversial-e1-area-peace-now/>.

²⁶ Rana F. Sweis, “Jordan Struggles Under a Wave of Syrian Refugees,” *New York Times*, February 13, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/14/world/middleeast/jordan-syria-refugees.html>.

²⁷ Sarah Helm, “ISIS in Gaza,” *New York Review of Books*, January 14, 2016,

<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2016/01/14/isis-in-gaza/>; Samar Batrawi, “What ISIS Talks About When It Talks about Palestine: And Why We Should Worry,” *Foreign Affairs*, October 28, 2015,

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<https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/6375/palestinians-islamic-state>; “Palestinian Salafists Pose Dangerous New

Problem for Hamas,” *Guardian*, June 10, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/10/gaza-salafists-problem-hamas-islamic-state-isis>; *ISIS Supporters Throw Down Gauntlet to Hamas in Gaza*, NBC News, July 1, 2015, <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-uncovered/isis-supporters-throw-down-gauntlet-hamas-gaza-n385006>; “Poll: ISIS Viewed Positively by 24 percent of Palestinians,” *Haaretz*, November 13, 2014, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/middle-east/1.626318>.

²⁸ A look at several Israeli public opinion polls shows a broad consensus against the deal that seems to transcend conventional political divides.” Judy Maltz, “Polls Show Israelis Strongly Oppose Iran Nuclear Deal,” *Haaretz*, August 12, 2015, <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-1.670835>.

²⁹ The Quartet called for Israel to stop construction of settlements and Palestine to stop acts of terrorism. Barak Ravid, “Quartet Releases Report on Impasse in Israeli-Palestinian Peace: ‘Two-State Solution in Danger,’” *Haaretz*, July 1, 2016, <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/1.728324>.

³⁰ Israeli textbooks, “*Victims of Our Own Narratives?*” concentrates on examples of violent attacks against Israelis: “Palestinians are the enemy at Israel’s doorstep and want to destroy rather than to dominate Israel.” Palestinian textbooks teach youngsters that Palestine was taken from them by stealth and handed over to the Jews by “international powers” and that the Jews have appropriated Palestinian land and resources. Their textbooks, however, are more likely to describe “Israelis as seeking to dominate rather than to destroy, Palestinians. Historical events, while not false or fabricated, are selectively presented to reinforce each community’s national narrative.” There is little information of any kind about the “other.” Palestinian maps are drawn to simply deny evidence of the existence of Israel, to deny the legitimacy of the other. In a study of Israeli maps, “76 percent did not indicate any borders (i.e., line, color, or other demarcation) between Israeli and Palestinian areas, although borders were indicated between Israel and neighboring countries (e.g., Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria) and the labels Palestine or Palestinian Authority did not appear anywhere on the maps. Since these maps are presented as maps of Israel, the absence of borders between Israel and Palestine and the absence of the label Palestinian Authority can be seen as implying that the Palestinian areas are part of the State of Israel.” Regarding the texts themselves, the study’s researchers found that 49 percent of text dealing with Palestinians in Israeli state-issued schoolbooks was negative. In Palestinian textbooks 84 percent of the references to Israelis were negative, a singularly significant contrast to the Israeli textbooks. Both Palestinian and Israeli state schools the books teach “‘martyrdom-sacrifice through death.’” The *Economist* notes, “Each side glorifies itself while denigrating the other.”

³¹ “Strategic Affairs and Public Diplomacy Minister Erdan Presents Palestinian Authority Incitement Index,” January 16, 2016, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/Terrorism/Palestinian/Pages/Palestinian-Authority-Incitement-Index-2015.aspx>.

³² “PA Incitement: Jews Are ‘Subhuman,’” Arutz Sheva, *Israelnationalnews.com*, May 1, 2014, <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/175949>.