

Palestine 2030

Policy Paper Compendium

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FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES
بال تينك للدراسات الاستراتيجية
مؤسسة تفكير وعمل فلسطينية

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Supplement to the 'Palestine 2030' Strategic Report

1. Introduction

This compendium includes the policy papers that were commissioned to form the basis of the 'Palestine 2030' strategic report, which in turn seeks to inform the direction of the Palestinian strategy towards a peaceful resolution to the conflict. These publications are the product of a three-year Palestine Strategy Group (PSG) project-'Building Strategic Capacity: Empowering Civil, Political and Emerging Constituencies in Palestine', co-funded by the European Union and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, involving the commissioning of twelve research papers, thirteen roundtable discussions and four international workshops. The overarching objective of the project was to create new networks of civil-political agencies; develop an inclusive forum and ultimately provide knowledge-based, strategy orientated outputs to impact decision-making processes in Palestine.

The project was envisioned in late 2016, as part of PSG's efforts since 2008, in the context of the stagnation of the 'peace process', the breakdown of negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis, the rise of the "New Right" in Israel and regional turmoil which redrew regional and international interests and alliances. As such, the research was designed to map the social, political and economic realities inside Israel, explore the shifts in regional alliances in relation to the Palestinian issue, and finally to assess the possible frameworks through which to re-engage the international community with the Palestinian cause.

These three years 2017-2019 have coincided with the systematic tearing up of the previous long-standing international consensus on how to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by the new Trump administration in the US. This culminated in the unilateral 28 January 2020 publication of the US "Peace to Prosperity" doctrine, endorsed by the current Israeli government, without Palestinian participation or consultation. As detailed in the accompanying 'Palestine 2030' report, this promotion of the extreme strategic goals of the new right in Israel compels a reciprocal Palestinian strategic response. It marks the definitive end of the idea that bilateral negotiations with Israel brokered by the US can lead to peace and necessitates exactly the kind of strategic rethinking that 'Palestine 2030' aims to initiate.

The process of providing feedback on the drafting process through expert consultations, workshops and round-table discussions was intended to augment and enrich the research and engage a wide cross-section of Palestinians in strategic thinking. 'Palestine 2030' is intended as a strategic manual and reference point for politicians, journalists, academics, researchers, civil society, grass roots activists, and regional and international stakeholders. It is hoped that 'Palestine 2030' will give shape to the long-term trajectories of relationships and strategies that provide the basis for a peaceful settlement of the conflict.

The following sections will introduce the Palestine Strategy Group (PSG) and provide an overview of their work and achievements over the last decade, summarize the underlying methodology that has driven the project to date, and introduce the policy papers that constitute this compendium.

1.1 What is the Palestine Strategy Group (PSG)?

Convened in 2008 and hosted by the Oxford Research Group (ORG), the Palestine Strategy Group (PSG) provides a vital and unique capacity to enable integrated and sustained Palestinian

strategic thinking to help guide the Palestinian national project. It is an active and influential group comprising more than 630 members. It engages a wide range of key Palestinians from different political, professional and geographic backgrounds and aims to inform and influence policy decisions, filling an important strategic gap in Palestinian discourse. It functions as a safe, systematic space beyond governmental corridors for the wider public to contribute their unique perspectives and experiences to the Palestinian decision-making process and the national dialogue at large. It has provided sustained support for inclusive Palestinian strategic thinking at the highest level, hosting meetings, convening focus groups, developing strategic analysis, and conducting scenario planning in order to facilitate an open and secure space for debate on policy formulations and ways forward.

1.2 The PSG since 2008

After building strategic capacity and pioneering new concepts in recent years, the Palestine Strategy Group (PSG) has earned a reputation for developing ahead-of-the-curve thinking and impacting decision-making processes at the highest levels. With five major strategy papers (2008, 2012, 2014, 2015, 2017) – most recently “Relations between Palestinians across the Green Line” – its thinking has both reflected and contributed to the national debate, offering options, goals, and alternative paradigms that have influenced Palestinian policy- and decision-makers.

The PSG’s first strategic report argued for the creation of parallel tracks to the negotiations and stressed the need for internationalisation. The report initiated an internal and external debate, where engagement from key decision-makers led to the evident adoption of certain recommendations, contributing to the Palestinian Authority’s (PA) strategic decision to pursue the UN/internationalisation path for recognition of a Palestinian state. Impact can be identified throughout the PSG’s reports, such as the 2015 ‘A Post-Oslo Strategy’, which argued for multilateral peace-making, encouraged the redefinition of Palestine’s relationship with Israel, and contributed to the formulation of a new PA strategy to redraw the political, economic and security relations. The PSG is well-positioned to build on the strength of its track record and capitalize on the momentum as seen in its rapid growth in participation, further investing in its work and experience to aim for a long-term vision and formulate an overarching Palestinian strategy. The publication of this compendium is intended to contribute to the dissemination of the knowledge produced to date and continue to inspire conversations and proactive engagement by all Palestinians.

1.2 Collective Strategic Thinking (CST)

The methodology utilised throughout the discussions, workshops and roundtables informing the policy papers of this compendium has been developed in tandem with the PSG’s UK-based coordinating partner, Oxford Research Group (ORG). Collective Strategic Thinking (CST) represents the first stage of ORG’s broader approach to engagement with intractable conflicts, wherein traditional conflict resolution methodologies have failed to make headway. CST is a way of encouraging purposeful dialogue from circumstances of radical disagreement in intractable and asymmetric conflicts, engaging conflicting parties where they are, rather than where third parties would like them to be.

CST accepts that the circumstances of conflict often render it difficult or impossible to facilitate effective dialogue between conflicting identity groups from the onset of conflict engagement. Instead, the methodology identifies the starting point of conflict engagement as within these identity groups and promotes internal dialogue and debate in order to identify of the underlying strategic identity, unity and objectives. Following this, CST aims to guide participating groups in discussing how to translate their strategic thinking into recommendations for positive change at the societal and political levels.

Distinct from private (or partisan) strategic planning which takes place behind closed doors, and which can be perceived as often being problematically manipulating of local stakeholders, CST is wholly underpinned by encouraging complete local ownership and legitimacy of participants' determination of where they are, where they want to be, and how to get there. It is intended as a tool rather than a dogma and is therefore informed by practice as much as theory.

When thinking strategically, as opposed to rigid thinking which constitutes intransigent positions, participants prepare for various eventualities and adopt an approach that is flexible and nimble, allowing them to maximise existing or potential opportunities, remain innovative, and draw on available assistance from identifiable strategic allies.

CST recognises that the complexity of most conflict environments requires contextual understanding, weighing up strategic alternatives, considering advantages and disadvantages, then forging a plan for effective action. The combination of the research papers and roundtables aimed to both map the context, "where we are", as well as explore different pathways to get to "where we want to be", looking at potential paths, means and alternatives, as well as possible allies and how to engage them.

1.3 The workshops

The primary objectives of the project were to significantly increase Palestinian's knowledge about the conflict and their capacity to strategise, and in turn effect an important shift in the national dialogue and expand participation in strategic thinking. The workshops and roundtables were crucial to the fulfilment of all these aims. As mentioned in the previous section, collective engagement and inclusive representation is a prerequisite to promoting the 'Collective Strategic Thinking' and subsequent national dialogue capable of converting the energy of dispersed frustration into focused determination and strategic direction.

The production of the policy papers, and in turn the strategic report, involved commissioning experts in their field to write the preliminary papers. These were then presented during one-to-one expert consultation sessions and group workshops and roundtables; individual consultations were useful in engaging additional subject-experts to provide very targeted and focused feedback on the content, arguments and recommendations of the paper, while the roundtables/workshops were pivotal in inviting wider stakeholder debate and dialogue on the particular subject of each paper and its relationship with the wider Palestine issue. The papers were re-drafted to reflect the feedback and the process repeated. This process of collecting feedback not only augmented and enriched the content of the papers themselves but ensured that a diverse breadth of Palestinians were engaged in, and contributed to, collective strategic thinking.

Between 2017 and 2019, there were 630 registered attendees at thirteen roundtables in the West Bank and Gaza, as well as four international workshops in Amman and Vienna. This was in addition to twenty-three expert consultations on the papers themselves.

The success of the PSG has resulted from the development of such safe spaces for newly structured, innovative and inclusive strategic thinking, that in turn allow for and enrich inclusive policy debates. The dissemination of previous PSG outputs to influential practitioners, academics, policy makers, heads of think tanks, business sector leaders and prominent journalists continues to further the institutionalisation of PSG's approach to strategic thinking in organisations and the academic fora across Palestine. This increasing institutionalisation and the continuation of dialogue away from the media spotlight is both catalysing and mainstreaming Palestinian stakeholder engagement with strategic thinking and is evidenced by the increasingly large number of high-profile attendees to workshops. This elevates all Palestinian constituencies to the role of stakeholders that will affect changes to the conflict in future years.

The overall aim of this effort is to empower Palestinians in order to help redress the present gross imbalance. Evidently there is no short-cut to successful collective strategic thinking and action of this kind in a situation as complex, polarised and radically asymmetric as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. But, for reasons explained in 'Palestine 2030', participants in this project remain confident that, so long as the collective national effort is continually adapted, enhanced and sustained, the justice of the Palestinian cause and the resilience and determination of the Palestinian people will eventually prevail, no matter how great the relative discrepancy in power may at the moment appear to be.

1.5 Summary of the research papers

Israel Perspectives:

'Mapping Sociological Realities: Jewish-Israeli Demographic Changes and their Political Dimensions', by Barhoom Jaraysi, seeks to map the changing demographics within Israel itself, as a result of immigration and the varied birth rates amongst different Jewish groups and the resulting shift in political alliances, interests and motivations.

'Neoliberalism and the Rise of New Forces in Israel and their Impact on Israeli Politics', by Khaled Anabtawi, explores the relationship between the neoliberal project, privatization, and the occupation and settlement enterprises; the relationship between neoliberalism in Israel and the development of right-wing groups to exert pressure from the bottom; and an analysis of the interests of a group of capitalists - whose rise resulted from large-scale economic transformations - and their interactions with politics. This helps to provide an overview of the relationship between the transformations in Israel towards neoliberalism and the rise of new forces in Israeli society, as well as the effect this has on the Palestinian issue.

In *'The Makeup of the Political and Electoral System in Israel: The Formation of a "Dominant Bloc System" in Israel'*, Mohannad Mustafa develops a five-stage framework to map the relationship between the electoral system and the impact on decision making. Accordingly, the right-wing in Israel is said to have gone through four transformations since 1948. The first is categorised as the marginalization of opposition stage (1948 – 1977), marked by the dominance of the Mapai party; the second is referred to as the governing or authority stage (1977 – 1999), heralded by the Likud victory of 1977. The political control or the absence of a political alternative stage (2001 – 2013) followed the change to the direct elections law. 2015 onwards is presented as a

stage of ideological and political domination. The study concludes that the Israeli right-wing, including secular and religious groups, has restructured its political and ideological makeup in the past two decades.

In *'Solutions and Scenarios Influencing Israeli Public Opinion'*, Antwan Shalhat touches on the developments studied in the preceding papers on the Israeli dimension, exploring the interplay and reflection of these underlying structures in the public sphere – analysing both the tone of rhetoric as well as opinion surveys on specific issue-areas. Particular focus is given to the extent to which different options for the fate of Israeli settlements, and relatedly the overall Palestinian issue, are supported by the Israeli public.

Regional Perspectives:

In *'Neighbouring States, with a focus on Egypt and Jordan'*, Oraib Rantawi delineates an overview of the historical and contemporary regional approaches to Palestine, focussing on the shifts within and between various 'blocs' of state actors in the region. Rantawi highlights the Iranian revolution as a key turning point for the Palestinian cause as it reconstrued Iran as the main regional belligerent (where previously this had been Israel), setting the course for the emergence of the Iran-Saudi rivalry for regional hegemony and the concurrent regional instability.

'ISIS and the 'New Generation' of War of Terror', by Musa Shteivi, explores the impact of the rise and fall of ISIS on regional dynamics. It particularly highlights the impact of the proliferation of ISIS on the PR image of the Palestinian cause, pointing to Israel's increasing use of the language of 'terrorism' to describe acts of Palestinian resistance, supposedly in an attempt to associate Palestinian activists with the abominable acts propagated by ISIS in the eyes of the international community.

In *'Turkey, Iran and Palestine: Policies of Interests and their implications for the Palestinians'*, Khaled Hroub situates the Palestinian issue within an overview of shifting historical contexts, with particular focus on Turkey and Iran's positions. His analysis goes beyond the discussion of these governments' official rhetoric, noting how such a reading would fail to capture the totality of their underlying attitudes, motivations and genuine positions, which in some cases appear to run counter to public rhetoric. Turkey's evident shift in approach to Israel/Palestine since the rise of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's 'Justice and Development Party' is said to have been guided by Turkey's own strive for influence in the region. Hroub explores the contemporary relationship of Iran to Palestine, which is most evident in the former's support for Palestinian Islamist movements. Whilst the centrality of this relationship was thrown into doubt with Hamas' support of Syria's Muslim Brotherhood – counter to Iranian interests – its lasting influence has returned to the fore following Iran's effective disciplinarian response. The paper calls for a sense of awareness from Palestinians, encouraging a refocus on internal issues and pointing to the major regional actors' lack of commitment to any final solution, whilst casting doubt over whether their positions are motivated by wider Palestinian interests.

'The Emerging Complicated Regional Alliances and Unilateralism', the PSG explore the legacy of unilateral regional actions in the second half of the 20th century on the question of Palestine and traces the shift from formal regional alliances during the Cold War to informal coalitions post-Cold War. Whilst providing a general and historical overview of Middle East intra-state relations, the article analyses regional dynamics that aren't addressed elsewhere in the compendium, specifically in relation to the question of Palestine. This includes the Turkey-Qatar

coalition from the perspective of their support for the Muslim Brotherhood across the region, the attempted unions and unilateral actions of four Maghrebi countries (Morocco, Libya, Tunisia and Algeria), and the reification of the Saudi-UAE-Israel axis.

International Perspectives:

In *'Re-launching the UN Campaign: Full Member State, Joining UN Bodies and Reconstructing the International Legal Track'*, Shawan Jabbarin provides a historical overview of actions taken towards recognition of Palestinian statehood as well as attempts to join the United Nations as a member state. It maps pathways towards full membership of the UN and its specialized agencies, in addition to acknowledging the potential paradoxes and pitfalls that would come with the realisation of full membership.

'Reassessing the International Geopolitical Landscape: Advancing Relations with Major Powers', by Toufic Haddad, explores the opportunities and constraints for advancing Palestinian rights in light of the existing geopolitical landscape at large and with the major global powers in particular. It assesses the historical backdrop to major power engagement with the Palestinian question and their contemporary landscape. It advocates that the most impactful means to advance Palestinian rights emerges from pro-active engagement with civil society actors in the US and EU. It also posits engagement with BRICS states at both the grassroots, civil society and governmental levels, particularly South Africa and Brazil, but suggests that the direct impact of these actions will be more marginal than engagement with the US and EU frontier.

'Engaging International Civil Society: Human Rights, Activism and Solidarity Campaigns', by Cecilia Baeza, explores the ways and extent to which international civil society can support and empower Palestinians in their struggle for freedom, justice and equality. A central case study is the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign, whose achievements and shortcomings are considered by Baeza whilst providing recommendations on how the campaign might capitalise on its forward momentum given contemporary global attitudes of both states and peoples. Baeza also maps the current rapprochement between Israel, far-right populists and religious fundamentalism.

In *'Diplomacy & Israeli Accountability: Multilateral Peace-making: The Framework, Scope and Stakeholders'*, Zaha Hassan reviews the positions taken by successive American administrations and key legislation affecting the PLO since 1985. Particularly, Hassan analyses the way these have impacted the capacity of the Palestinian negotiators and the parameters of any potential settlement. This enables the paper to assess the value of the US role toward a negotiated, two-state solution to the conflict, and to explore the possibility and opportunities for reengaging stakeholders and interested third parties in a multilateral mediation mechanism.

As noted previously, collective strategic thinking is an ongoing progress. We hope that this compendium will continue to stimulate dialogue on the Palestinian national project and pathways towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict. We welcome all feedback on this and any other past report. Please contact us via <http://www.palestinestrategygroup.ps/>, where you can find further information about this and other publications.

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Part I:

Israel Dimension

Israeli-Jewish Demographic Changes and Their Political Dimensions: 1948 – 2017

By Barhoom Jaraysi

Introduction

The demographic factor has been a central concern for Israeli leadership since its inception. Ensuring a Jewish majority in Palestine in the areas that Israel was established was the main and primary concern from the beginning. Directly after the Nakba, the leadership of the Zionist movement realized that there remained 153,000 Palestinians in their country, and there were indicators that the reproductive rates among the Palestinians were much higher than the ones among the Jews who had migrated from countries in Europe and the Americas

Concerns over the demographic balance were one of the factors that preceded the opening of the door for the migration of Jews from Arab and Islamic countries. Hundreds of thousands of people from these countries emigrated to Israel in the 1950s and 1960s, reaching the point where “Easterners” represented around 44% of the total number of Israeli Jews. In the 1980s, this percentage reached 47%, due to the higher rate of population growth of the population, when compared to Western Jews.

Eastern Jews have faced racial, institutional, and social discrimination over the years; in part owing to having arrived in the country with lower economic and social conditions. The resulting alienation following this systematic discrimination had significant political implications.

The defeat of Mapai to Likud in 1977... was preceded by the increasing disillusionment of Eastern Jews, who had faced clear injustice and discrimination from the ruling institutions, as well as Western Ashkenazi Jewish public

Nevertheless, the political salience of these issues has decreased over time, due to a series of factors that will be presented in this study. These include increased social mixing and the rapid improvement of economic conditions during the past three decades, among others.

During the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s, large waves of migration came into Israel, 80% of which came from former Soviet states. This great migration has been reflected in a series of social and economic changes, as well as its impact on the political map.

The sharp increase in the number of religious Jews within different movements, largely due to their high population growth rate, has further contributed to the demographic obsession in Israel in the 2000s. Whilst the

primary concern centers on the social and economic impact of this demographic shift, this transformation has also caused political transformations, the indicators of which can already be observed, and which will only increase in the future.

This research presents, somewhat briefly, these demographic changes, as well as their social, economic, and political implications.

Historical Background

In 1977 the Likud Party won the leadership of the Knesset for the first time, after it secured more votes than the Mapai party (currently the Israeli Labor Party), which was leading an election coalition known as the Alignment. A The defeat of Mapai to Likud in 1977, following 29 years of almost unchallenged leadership, was preceded by the increasing

disillusionment of Eastern Jews, who had faced clear injustice and discrimination from the ruling institutions, as well as Western Ashkenazi Jewish public, which had controlled the reins of power and the economy. By 1977, Eastern Jews made up around 47% of Israel Jews (Reference 2) and formed the popular base of the right-wing Likud party, then under the leadership of Menachem Begin.

Upon the announcement of the establishment of Israel in 1948, Jewish population numbered around 650,000 people, 80% of whom were Western Ashkenazi Jews, while 20% were born in Palestine or had migrated up until that year from Arab and Islamic countries. They were named the Eastern Jewish communities, among which were a large number of Jews who had migrated from the western countries of North Africa, according to the reports of the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics.¹

It should be mentioned here that discrimination among the Jews themselves is based on the country of origin, but this, in Zionist terms, is considered a sectarian division. The nature of the Jewish nations has been reflected in their traditional religious ceremonies, which has justified Zionism to name them “sects”. In another explanation, the name “sects” came from the Zionist claim that the Jews of the world are one people and not just a religion. Therefore, the term “sects” is the Zionists rejecting that they are from the nations that they left, despite not giving up their mother tongues and their traditions from their countries of origin. Between the beginning of the 1950s and the end of the 1990s, Israel witnessed large waves of migration. The number of migrants reached 900,000 people, with more than 53% of them from Arab and Islamic countries with the rest coming from Europe and the United States, who are known as Ashkenazi Jews. Following this migration, the percentage of Eastern Jews

The Eastern Jews suffered after the beginning of their migration to Palestine in the beginning of the 1950s due to the social and economic discrimination and clear political exclusion.

reached 42% of the total number of Jews, with this percentage increasing over the years. This is shown by the reports of the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, which was mentioned previously.

Until the beginning of the large waves of migration from the former Soviet states starting at the end of 1989 until the beginning of the 2000s, the Eastern Jews made up between 43% to 47% of total Israeli Jews compared to 40% of Western Ashkenazi Jews. The rest were born in Israel. After the migration in the 1990s and in the period after, the demographic balance based on country of origin changed. The migration of 1.1 million people from the end of 1989 until 2005 from the countries of the former Soviet Union made them an immediate political force. Importantly, upon arrival these migrants received full citizenship and the right to vote² (**Table No. 1**). As such they constituted up to 15% of those with the right to vote. Over the years, there has been a constant increase in “mixed marriages” between Israelis and Zionists, whereby one of the parents is an Eastern Jew while the other is a Western Jew. A study that was published in 2005 found that 25% of Israelis born in 1985 were born to couples from both groups. In 1975, the percentage was 16% (**Table No. 2**) and the research states that this percentage rose steadily.³

It can be said that the children of these marriages established families that did not have a specific nature of origin, or “sectarian” nature, according to the Zionist definition, which contributed to creating a state of social fusion and decreased the divisions between Easterners

and Westerners, despite the fact that there are still towns where a vast majority of the population are Eastern Jews, especially in the south. Examples of this include Yeruham, Dimona, and Netivot, among others. This also

includes neighborhoods in the large cities, such as the southern Tel Aviv, before migrants from the former Soviet states and Ethiopia settled in these neighborhoods, especially those from lower economic classes.

The Eastern Jews suffered after the beginning of their migration to Palestine in the beginning of the 1950s due to the social and economic discrimination and clear political exclusion. In all of this, the Jews from the countries of Northern Europe and the United States looked down on the Eastern Jews, so there was a generation of young Eastern Jews who were raised during the manifestations of this discrimination. This generation took its revenge during the second half of the 1970s, when it supported the Likud Party and brought down the party that was in power at the time, which had consolidated the racist policies and environment. This support was despite the fact that the highest-level leadership of the Likud Party was also made up of Ashkenazi Jews from the West.

This discrimination was directly reflected in the economic and social conditions of all of the classes of Eastern Jews, as the differences in the living conditions became very prominent, until they shrunk after the beginning of the 2000s. Eastern Jews experienced the highest poverty levels, not just due to the high number of children in each family, but also because of job opportunities.

For example, in the past 10 years, the average salary of Eastern Jews increased over 100% of the overall average salaries (114% in the latest report), but the average rate among Ashkenazi Jews remained 131% of the overall average salaries. It should be noted that up until a few years ago, the average salaries among Eastern Jews did not exceed 100% of the overall average salaries. With the decreasing gap, tables on economic and social conditions, which used to separate Eastern Jews from other groups of Jews, are increasingly listed as a single group and comparing them with the ultra-Orthodox Haredi Jews.

The Jewish “sectarian” aspect played a prominent role in the first four decades of Israel’s history, in different fields, including social public life, in politics, and in the agencies of the ruling institutions, as the percentage of Eastern Jews in higher-ranking positions was very low, if not negligible, compared to their demographic weight. This also applied to their political and parliamentary representation (or lack thereof). It took many years for the Eastern Jews to reach leadership positions in sensitive ministries. Even now, 69 years after the formation of Israel, there has yet to be an Eastern Jew as Prime Minister, while the first head of state who was an Eastern Jew became president in 2000. This was Moshe Katsav, who was born in Iran and had migrated after 1948. A year before Katsav became president, the first Eastern Jew to become Minister of Defense was appointed (Yitzhak Mordechai, originally born in Iraqi Kurdistan). The current Chief of General Staff of the Israel Defense Forces is Gadi Eizenkot, the first Chief of Staff of Moroccan origins. Eizenkot was born in 1960 in Tiberias, Israel, to two parents who migrated from Morocco in the 1950s. The Minister of Finance, Moshe Kahlon, was born in 1960 to parents who migrated from Libya in the 1950s, and he was the first Eastern Jew to be appointed in this position from the first day of the formation of a government, as he had been preceded by Meir Sheerit, who only had a partial term.

Over the years, a number of movements have arisen to defend the rights of Eastern Jews, demanding equality with Ashkenazi Jews, including political representation. Among the most prominent of these movements was the Israeli Black Panther Movement, which emerged in the beginning of the 1970s, before quickly fragmenting and dissolving. In 1984, the Shas movement emerged, for the ultra-Orthodox Haredi Jews, from among the Sephardi Jews, or Eastern Jews, who were of Spanish origin and had migrated from Spain to Arab countries in the Middle Ages. This movement succeeded in penetrating the

neighborhoods and municipalities with an Eastern Jewish majority population, and it still has prominent representation in the Knesset.

Until recently, there would be indicators regarding the percentage of Eastern Jews among the 120 members of the Knesset after every parliamentary election, which is something that we have not seen in the past three elections. This is due to the decreasing importance of this distinction, and its political repercussions. Among the evidence of this integration is that the current Labor Party has been headed by three Eastern Jewish leaders. Binyamin Ben-Eliezer (Iraqi origin) became the first leader in 2002, with Amir Peretz (Moroccan origin) becoming leader in 2005 and, lastly, Avi Gabay (Moroccan origin) won the leadership in 2017 after the second round against Amir Peretz.

There are still clear effects from the phenomenon of Eastern Jews voting for parties that they believe represent them, especially among the religious Haredi Jews, who we will discuss later. The biggest party beneficiary of these votes is the aforementioned Shas Party, as this party gets the vast majority of the of Haredi Jews' (the Sephardi Jews) votes, as well as those of Eastern Jews from the poor social classes, some of whom get forms of social welfare from Shas.

Similarly, the results of the 2015 elections showed that the Kulanu Party – established after Moshe Kahlon, the current Minister of Finance, broke away from the Likud Party – won two parliamentary seats that were previously controlled by Shas. It received these votes from neighborhoods and municipalities that are primarily made up of Eastern Jews, and it also received votes from other parties, made up of Eastern Jews themselves, due to Kahlon being an Eastern Jew and having been born and raised in poor neighborhoods. From there, he joined the Likud Party, through which

he got elected into the Knesset for the first time in 2003.

However, we cannot compare what has been happening in the past years, with the electoral phenomenon that we witnessed until three decades ago, with regards to the influence of Eastern Jews and the background of their affiliation, as this almost no longer has any political influence.

It should be mentioned that the somewhat division between the Ashkenazi (Western), Sephardi Jews (Eastern) and the Haredi Jews can be further broken down into further divisions within each sect. This is due to the religious practices and the interpretation of religious laws, as well as based on the extent of religious fundamentalism, the position towards Israel as a whole (recognition or not), and the form of convergence with the institution and membership in it, including the difference in positions towards compulsory military service.

Table No. 1
The Number of Jews in Israel By Origin and Place of Birth (in thousands)

Place of Birth and Origin	1948	1961	1972	1983	1995	2008	2015
Total Jewish population	716.7	1932.5	2686.4	3350	4522.3	5603	6334.5
Israel	--	106.9 5.53%	255.8 9.52%	533.9 15.93%	1143 25.27%	2098.1 37.44%	2820.3 44.52%
From Asia	--	818.3 (Includes Africa) 42.3%	655.9 24.41%	740.2 22.1%	728.9 16.11%	701.6 16.11%	672.2 10.6%
From Africa	--		617.9 23%	736.1 21.97%	835.5 18.47%	885 15.8%	897.8 14.17%
Percentage for Asia and Africa		42.3%	47.41%	44%	34.6%	28.31%	24.78%
From Europe and America	--	1007.1 52.1%	1187 44.2%	1339.7 39.99%	1814.9 40.1%	2284.6 40.77%	1944.3 30.7%

* The table is from the Statistical Yearbook released on 1 September 2016⁴

* The percentages are also from this report

* The numbers being shown in the table are relating to the Jews who are recognized as Jews by the religious institutions

* The higher number of Jews from African origins compared with those from Asian origins started in 1995, and it was due to the migration of Ethiopians

* The migration from Ethiopia in the 1990s and the 2000s contributed to increasing the percentage of those with African origins by 2%

Table No. 2

Percentage of Births to Mixed Couples During Several Periods

Marriage in the 1950s	Marriage in the 1960s	Marriage in the 1970s	Marriage in the 1980s
5%	10%	16%	25%

** The table counts the births to families where one of the parents is a Western Jew while the other is an Eastern Jew.*

** The indicators in the research confirm that this percentage is increasing over the years.*

Jewish Demographic Fluctuations

Starting from the 1990s

Israel has, since the beginning of the 1990s and until this year (2017), been going through changing demographics among Jews. These changing demographics have been focused on two main factors that also have a great deal of influence on the political balance and the nature of the ruling circle, along with expectations that this influence will increase to levels higher than what we are seeing today.

1. The entry of waves of migrants from the former Soviet Union, countries in Eastern Europe, and Ethiopia since the 1990's, which has changed the demographics based on ethnicity.
2. The balance changed due to the sharp increase in the percentage of religious people from different movements among the Jews themselves. This was consequently due to their higher population growth rates, including some of the world's highest rates, compared to the population growth rates of the secularists, which are similar to those of northern Europe.

From the end of 1989 and until 2005, around 1.1 million migrants moved to Israel.⁵ At least 80% of these migrants were from the former Soviet Union and around 110,000 were Ethiopian, while the rest were from other countries. This migration brought large numbers of people into the country compared to its population, leading to a number of

economic and social transformations, as well as changes in political behavior. The migrants that had recently arrived up until the beginning of the 2000s made up 15% of the electorate, making up an important political group and reducing the influence of traditional political balances, including groups associated by Eastern Jews.

Until the end of the first decade of the 2000s, the migrants, especially those from the former countries of the Soviet Union, voted for parties that represented them. This started with the Yisrael BaAliyah party, which was formed in preparation for the 1996 elections, until the party weakened and was merged into the Likud Party after the 2003 elections. In 1999, Avigdor Lieberman founded the Yisrael Beiteinu party, which still has a presence in the Knesset; it received six parliamentary seats during the recent elections in 2015, after getting 11 seats in 2006, 15 seats in 2009, and 11 seats in 2013 in a coalition with the Likud Party. There were attempts to establish other parties, but they were not successful in gaining seats in the Knesset.

This sharp decline in the power of the Yisrael Beiteinu party has a number of reasons, with the most prominent being decreased voting for the party by the "new migrants" from the Soviet Union, which is the name that is used for the migrants that came in the 1990s and after. This represents a political fusion of former Soviet Union voters into the general political arena, despite them continuing to preserve their ways of life that they had in their native countries, and maybe even raising their

children on them. Viacheslav Konstantinov, a statistician and demography expert who studies the voting patterns of the Russian-speaking community, found that a key factor in this trend away from Yisrael Beiteinu is age. In a study on the voting patterns of immigrants from the former Soviet Union from the '90s through 2015, Konstantinov found that younger, better-off and more-educated olim – new immigrants – tend to distance themselves from sectional parties such as Yisrael Beiteinu. Support for the parties of the center and left on one side, and for the parties to the right of Likud (Habayit Hayehudi in the 2015 election) on the other, has grown among these voters.

On the other hand, in the 2000s we started to see wide-reaching concern in the ruling institutions for the phenomenon of the increasing number of religious Jews, especially the increase in the percentage of fundamentalist religious Haredi Jews. Statistics show that the population growth rate among them is the highest, reaching 3.8% yearly, while the fertility rate (in births per woman) reaches around 7 births. It should be noted that there are groups where the number of children in a single family reaches 10 to 18 children. They are followed by the Zionist religious movement, where the population growth rate is around 2.8%, compared to 1.4% among secular Jews. The population growth rate of Palestinians inside Israel is around 2.6%.

These two trends have acted in opposite directions. While the salience of immigration on voting patterns has decreased – preceded by a similar decline in the impact on the position of Eastern Jews in politics – the increasing number of religious people, has had clear affects. These will likely continue to increase in politics and in the ruling institutions, as is shown by several studies that we have seen in the past few years.

Increasing Growth in the Number and Percentage of Religious People and Decreasing Birth Rate Among Arabs

Haredim

As was mentioned previously, in the 2000s Israeli institutions started paying careful attention to the phenomenon of the increasing percentage of the Haredi Jews, an ultraorthodox group considered by some as fundamentalist. Further to this group, attention has been increasingly paid to the rising number of religious people in the Zionist religious movement. However, the effect of the latter movement is lower on the structure of society, despite its current political influence being much stronger than the influence of the Haredim.

According to official estimates, the percentage of both religious groups is currently similar, even though official estimates might not reflect the actual reality. Currently, the official figures state that the Haredim constitute around 11.5% of the total population, meaning around 15% of the Israeli Jewish population. Whereas, other estimates show that the Haredim make up more than 13% of the total population, or 16.5% of the total number of Jews (Reference No. 12).

The percentage of the Zionist religious movement is close to the officially recognized percentage of the Haredim, but the Haredim will exceed them in the future. This can be seen from a report that was presented to the National Economic Council (a government body) in August 2017, based on data from 2015.⁶

The population growth rate among the Haredim can be said to not have changed over decades, as the fertility rate (births per woman) reaches 7 births, while the growth rate is 3.8%. This growth rate is comparable to the two countries that are ranked second and third in the world in growth rate, based on a United Nations Report until 2010.⁷

According to data from research by Professor Ruth Gavison that was published in December 2008, the percentage of Haredim from the total population went up from 3% in 1990 to

9% in 2008.⁸ These support the numbers presented by the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics recently that their percentage in 2015 was 11.4%.

In the same study, Gavison says that the birth rate for a Jewish mother went up from 2.59 births in 2001 to 2.8 births in 2008, and she believes that this sharp increase is due to the increased birth rate within the Haredim.

This increase is contrary to general global trends for population growth rates, which are decreasing in some areas. Zionism looks at this factor in two ways. From one point of view, it sees it as being positive because this population growth rate combats the population growth rate among the Palestinians inside Israel, which is constantly decreasing, and is currently 2.6%, compared to 1.9% among the Jews as a whole.

On the other hand, it is viewed with some concern, and even extreme caution, because 51% of the source of the population growth of Israeli Jews comes from the two religious groups: the Haredi Jews, who contribute around 30% of the Jewish population growth rate, and the religious Zionists, who contribute 21%. The continuing increase in these population growth rates compared to the growth rates of secularists will make the overall contribution of the religious groups as a whole, out of the growth rates of Israeli Jews as a whole, constantly increase.

This concern was expressed in a study that was issued by Haifa University in November 2010. This study was prepared by Evgenia Bystrov and Arnon Soffer. It should be noted that Soffer is one of the most famous Israeli demographics experts and is known for his right-wing positions against Arabs. In the past few years, Soffer has stated that Arabs in Israel are no longer a concern because of their

population growth rate, which is constantly decreasing, and that the concern is caused by the Haredi Jews (Study by Bystrov and Soffer in Arabic)⁹ (Arabic translation issued by MADAR).¹⁰

The study concludes that there is a sharp increase in the percentage of religious Jews as a whole in Israel. This is not just in relation to the general population, but primarily among the Jews. The research claims that the percentage of religious people of the whole population in 2030 will be 50%. The research states that the more important phenomenon, which will have an effect on the direction of Israel, is the sharp increasing percentage of the population that is made up of the Haredi Jews who are not a part of the Zionist movement. In an aspect of this study, the percentage of the Haredim

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and the Arabs are merged to show the percentage of non-Zionists from the total population in Israel, and that these two groups, together, will become a majority around 2050, if not before.

In this study, it was shown that around a third of the births in Israel in 2010 were in Haredi families, and around 20% were in the religious Zionist families. In addition to that, the birth rate of Arabs from the total births is around 24% for Arabs in Israel and 27% among the Jerusalemite Arabs. Compared to these figures, the birth rate of secular Jewish families is 23%.

The research states that a little less than 50% of the children in the first grade in 2010 were in different kinds of religious schools, and the study also discussed the continuing increase in the percentage of religious Jews in Israel, to the point of Israel becoming a religious country, while secularism is constrained to the

“state of Tel Aviv”. This is what will surround the young generation of secularists.

The study claims, in light of this trend: *“The question for which there is no answer in 2010 is: Will the young secular Jews want to continue to live in a religious country, or will they leave, even soon, especially since the religious factor is just one factor among a number of difficulties facing the youth.”* These ‘difficulties’ refer to the rising number of Arabs and the decreasing work and housing opportunities in the secular areas, especially in “the state of Tel Aviv”.

This study dealt with the religious people – the Haredim and the Zionists – as a single group, with a special focus on the Haredim.

...In short, the “threat” is no longer from the Arabs.

There were a number of studies that were published later, and their conclusions were similar to the conclusions of this study. A book titled ‘The Land is Full: Addressing Overpopulation in Israel’ (2017), published by researcher Alon Tal, included research on the dangers of increasing population growth in Israel. This book was reviewed by Haaretz in April 2017.¹¹

The Decreasing Rate of Population Growth Among Arabs and Decreasing Fears of Arabs as a Threat

In an interview with Haaretz, Professor Tal summarizes the constant transformation of the demographic makeup of Israel and the trend towards societal religiosity compared to the decreasing population growth rate among Arabs, which had worried the Zionist institutions and agencies. This will affect the Arab-Israeli conflict and its directions. In the interview, Tal said: *“As for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, I recall a newspaper headline from 1985 screaming that in another decade Arabs would be the majority here. Since then, many things have happened, including the encouragement of childbirth and the waves of immigration, which have changed the demographic dynamic between Arabs and Jews to the Jews’ benefit. Israel’s Arab*

community has been at 40,000 births a year for the past 20 years. Among Jews, the annual birthrate ranges from 100,000 to 120,000. Yet even today there are politicians who prefer to distort the picture, as if there were still a demographic threat from the Palestinians. This is why our mission in academia is to tell the truth.” In short, the “threat” is no longer from the Arabs.

In the same Haaretz report on Tal’s study, Professor Arnon Soffer backs Tal’s argument, saying *“There is something happening among the Israeli Arabs (the Palestinian citizens), as they are becoming like the Ashkenazis. They are giving birth at lower rates. If the areas are not added (that were invaded since 1967), our situation with regards to Jewish demographics would not be bad. But if they are added, then this conversation would have ended because this would mean Israel’s destruction.”* In other words, there is an importance in separation from the Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip so that the Arab demographic threat is avoided.

With regards to his opinion on how Israel has dealt with the rising birth rates among the religious groups, Soffer says: *“It saddens me that those with colored veils (he means the colored veils that are worn by the adherents of the Zionist religious movement) also pose a threat to Israel’s existence demographically, no less of a threat than that posed by the Haredim, because they give birth at rates like those in the Third World.”*

As was mentioned above, in August of 2017, a report was presented to the National Economic Council that included official demographic projections up to 2040. That session was on Israel’s preparedness to meet all aspects of living needs, specifically with regards to population.

Among the issues addressed in this report was the sharp increase in the number of ultra-orthodox religious groups, the Haredim, whose numbers will increase until 2040, at a rate of

77%, while the numbers of the secular Jewish public will increase by 35%. In comparison, the number of Arabs will increase by 56%. The report bases these conclusions on the data for 2015, which was issued by the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, which in turn came up with the percentages based on 25 years, meaning until 2040. The report also only addresses those with an Israeli citizenship or residency permit, meaning those in Israel, the settlers in the West Bank, Palestinians in occupied Jerusalem, and Syrians in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights.

Fears of the increasing percentage of the Haredim amongst the Jewish Population are linked to their way of life and relationship with the state and its culture

The rising percentage of the Haredim and the religious Zionists, is a concern for the ruling state institutions because it threatens to decrease the influence of the secular public, which is the public that is

producing and consuming based on modern standards of the concepts of a market economy. The aforementioned study by Haifa University warns that, in the coming years, there will be an increase in the migration of secularists towards what it called “*the state of Tel Aviv*”, meaning the Greater Tel Aviv area. The study warns of the increasing proclivity to migrate among the younger generations, as well as secularists as a whole.

Fears of the increasing percentage of the Haredim amongst the Jewish Population are linked to their way of life and relationship with the state and its culture. A number of concerns center on the following:

1. The Haredim live in closed communities, almost completely cut off from the outside world, and they follow strict teachings and rules in all aspects of their lives.
2. The Haredim study in private religious schools: The Haredim in general, and specifically the Ashkenazi, have their own educational system and curriculum. In this

educational system, modern topics, like mathematics, science, and languages, are not taught.

3. The relatively low participation of Haredim in the productive labor market: The Haredi men, aged between 25 to 64 years old, participate in the labor market at a rate of no more than 45%, compared to 62% among Haredi women. They prefer to remain in their religious education institutes, living on social allowances and financial assistance from their religious groups, which are usually not officially registered. The low employment rate increases the poverty rates among them. Haredis also object to military service for religious reasons.
4. They are a group that consumes and does not produce: The ruling institutions believe that the Haredim are an economic burden because of the large budgets that their institutions receive, due to their participation in a majority of Israeli governments, but also because of the nature of their austere economic lives. They are not consumers by the modern market definition, meaning that they contribute to weakening the purchasing power of the public as a whole, when purchasing power and commercial activity are important factors in calculating economic growth.

The previous government of Benjamin Netanyahu (2013 – 2015) tried to breakthrough this closed lifestyle. The two Haredim blocs were absent from their government, and they made laws to gradually require military service from Haredi youth. They also greatly decreased the budgets of Haredi institutions, and the goal from this was to force the Haredi men into the labor market.

All of these measures, which had attempted at their core, to open the doors of the Haredi communities to the outside world, were quickly removed by Netanyahu's later government, in which the two Haredi blocs formed core components. All of the budgets for their institutions were returned, along with compensation for what was deducted in the past, and the military service law for the group was repealed.

What is important in this demographic increase is that it has the potential to move the Israeli political scene to the right. The Haredi public, specifically their religious and political leadership, have seen since the beginning of the 2000s, a large political shift to the right, even the hard right. This is in contrast with the past, when the Haredim would choose to stay outside the heated political dialogue relating to the Palestinian Issue. During this period, they would go along with the policies of the successive governments, with the goal of achieving their own direct interests, especially the budgets of their institutions. This shift was partially related, inside Shas, with the change in leadership, from Aryeh Deri, who was serving a jail sentence, to Eli Yishai (a hardline right-winger).

In 1993, the Shas Movement for the Eastern Haredim (the Sephardim) supported the Oslo Accords because of their participation in the government of Yitzhak Rabin. The United Torah Judaism alliance of Western Ashkenazi Jews, which was, at the time, in the opposition, left the parliamentary voting session to ensure a majority with a clear difference for the governing alliance. In exchange, it received additional benefits for its institutions.

In the current Knesset, the 20th, there are more right-wing members of the Knesset and ministers from both alliances, including those

who have participated in coming up with discriminatory laws and others that supported settlements.

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The biggest manifestation of the shift of the Haredim to the right was on the issue of settlements. Up until the 1990s, a very small minority of Haredim who lived in settlements around

Jerusalem. This continued until they were offered their own settlements, where they could implement all of their strict rituals. The temptation of this offer was heightened due to the location of these settlements would be in the areas surrounding occupied Jerusalem. Some of the settlements became Haredi in nature.

As of now, there are 9 settlements, the largest of which is Modi'in Illit, which is between Ramallah and Northern Jerusalem. There are more than 65,000 Haredi settlers in this settlement, and it is followed by the settlement of Beitar Illit, which has more than 45,000 settlers, and then the El'ad settlement that is located on the contact lines between Ramallah and Nablus, with an incursion into the West Bank. This last settlement has fewer than 20,000 settlers.

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This spread of Haredi settlers will have an impact on the political position towards the occupation, as now the Haredi Jews have a special interest in the continuation of the occupation, as long as, geographically, the settlements help them. Based on *The Political Map in Settlements of the West Bank and Jerusalem 2013-2015*, a study released by Madar, which was prepared by Barhoom Jaraysi (the author of this report), the percentage of the Haredim from the total number of settlements, other than Jerusalem, could be around 38%, and this number is constantly rising.¹²

Religious Zionists and the Leadership of the Settlers

The Zionist religious movement, which is a movement that has accompanied the Zionist movement since its establishment at the end of the 19th century, is the movement that has given “religious legitimacy” to the Zionist movement, because the idea of establishing the “State of Israel” is in conflict with what was in the Torah. The Torah states that the “Kingdom of Israel” will be established by the Messiah when he comes to the world for the first time, and this is why we see a large number of Haredim around the world who refuse to recognize Israel. This movement with the Haredim is weak inside Israel, and their percentage is small and insignificant among the total number of Israeli Haredim. According to the estimates of people informed on these groups, in private discussions, the percentage that this group makes up of the total number of Haredim is between 4% and 5%, and it might be even less.

In 1948, the Zionist religious movement formed the Mafdal Party (the National Religious Party), which has run, in recent years, on a joint list with the National Union party, under the name National Union – NRP. The adherents of this religious movement, who wear colored woven caps, are widespread throughout almost all of the Zionist parties, and this movement has witnessed, over decades, political pluralism.

During its later stages, The Mafdal Party went through a number of important ideological transformations. In the beginning, it included movements that were more liberal, and even a peaceful political movement that broke away in the end of the 1980s and formed the Meimad Party. A representative of this party was a part of the Labor Party’s parliamentary coalition in the 1990s, and until the 2006 election, after which the party faded away.

The Zionist religious public is different from the orthodox Haredim in that they are involved in modern public life. They are also governed by religious teachings, but not at the same level as the Haredim. The socioeconomic conditions of this public are close to those of the secular Jews, but this public, according to a series of reports, is now more religiously hardline than it was before, while the liberal religious movement, which is most likely an extension of the larger movement among American Jews, remains a marginal movement among Israeli Jews. This increasing orthodox religious ideology among the Zionist movement increases the concern among the secular public about the future form and nature of the Israeli public.

Despite the fact that the percentage of the Zionist religious movement is relatively small compared to the total population, its political influence is many times larger than its size

According to a study by Ruth Gavison, who was mentioned before in this report, the percentage of the Zionist religious movement from the total population in 2008 was around 10%. It can be estimated that it currently (in 2017) makes up more

than 11.5% of the total population, meaning 15% of the recognized Jewish population. This shows a growth rate of 2.8%, compared to 1.4% among the secularists.

Despite the fact that the percentage of the Zionist religious movement is relatively small compared to the total population, its political influence is many times larger than its size, and this is because it is the most active political force among the settlers. According to *The Political Map in Settlements of the West Bank and Jerusalem 2013-2015*, which was mentioned above, religious Zionists made up more than 32% of the total number of settlers in 2015. Based on these estimates, they make up 35% of the settlers today, but their political power is greater and the results of elections in the settlements confirm this.

According to previous reports, the adherents of the Zionist religious movement in recent years make up around 40% of the graduates of army officer institutes for the different military formations.¹³ This movement also permeates the institutions of the state, with a very high percentage, if not the majority, of the advisors and staff of the Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, being from this Zionist religious movement.

Furthermore, the number of members of the Knesset from this Zionist religious movement during the 20th Knesset is 18 (15% of the members)¹⁴, including those that have entered into the Knesset after the elections due to resignations. These MKs are distributed as follows:

- Two MKs in the Zionist Union: they are in the moderate political movement.
- Three MKs in the following two coalitions: Yesh Atid in the opposition and Kulanu, which is a part of the coalition and can be described as being right-wing.
- Thirteen MKs who are on the extreme right: six of whom are in the coalition of settler political parties, The Jewish Home, which has eight MKs, and there are seven MKs in the Likud Party, which has thirty MKs.

We believe that the majority of religious people in the Likud Party are in high-ranking positions, including the Speaker of the Knesset, Yuli Edelstein, the right-wing Minister of Jerusalem Affairs, Ze'ev Elkin, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tzipi Hotovely, and two deputy ministers, Yaron Mazuz and Jackie Levy. As for The Jewish Home, among their six MKs: The head of the coalition, the Minister of Education, Naftali Bennett, the settler Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Uri Ariel, the Deputy Minister of Defense, also a settler, Eli Ben-Dahan, and the head of the Parliamentary Law and Constitution Committee, a settler, Nissan Slomiansky.

The Socioeconomic Conditions

It is important, when talking about demography, to also address the socioeconomic conditions of the Israeli Jewish public, which is the subject of this study. This is because the socioeconomic conditions explain much of the nature of societal changes and transformations, as well as the nature of the different segments in a single society.

In the middle of summer 2011, there were popular protest movements in the larger cities across Israel. These protest movements continued, with a lot of momentum, for a few weeks, then they got weaker and gradually faded. The movement initially protested house prices, housing expenses, and rent in general, especially in the middle of the country, around the Greater Tel Aviv area. The slogans progressed to rising living costs in general, with a focus on the price of food.

Later, demands from the poor and weak groups in society were added, such as raising the minimum wage and demands to stop hiring through oppressive labor companies in official institutions and large companies. These labor companies take tens of thousands of jobs in contracts and hire laborers and employees at low salaries and with poor quality contracts. These employees do not become stable in their jobs, and they are deprived from pensions and other social benefits.

The larger media organizations avoided supporting the popular protest movement during its first demands, and it quickly turned, in most cases, to attacking and opposing the campaign, especially when the protests started using slogans and making demands that serve the interests of the poor and weak groups in society. The position of the media did not come out of the blue, it was due to the media being intertwined with the capital. The large media organizations are owned by the very wealthy who had an interest in the cost of housing and food. With regards to the prices of houses, the claim was that these prices were rising due to

the high prices of real estate, and they demanded that the government free up land for housing developments for close to nothing in price. As for the food, the demand was to remove restrictions on imports in order to increase competition in the market.

The absence of the demands of the poorest groups during the first two weeks of the campaign was not a coincidence, and this was because they do not have a strong presence in the middle of the country, where the cost of living is high. What is more important is that their percentage among Israeli Jews is close to the percentage of middle and even north European Jews if we take out the Haredi public because of their austere lifestyles. This is shown by the annual reports on poverty that are issued by the national social security agency (the National Insurance Institute of Israel), as well as unemployment data.

The unemployment rate in Israel during the summer of this year (2017) went down to under 4.5%, and this rate, according to the economic definition, is considered full employment because it considers that a majority of those unemployed are in the process of moving from one job to another or because they are older in age and are entering retirement. There are some people who object to these unemployment figures because around 3% of those who are engaged in the labor market are working in part-time jobs out of necessity, because there are no suitable work opportunities. This objection is correct, but this is a worldwide phenomenon, and the official figures are an indicator of low unemployment.

This rate, however, is not equal among Arabs and Jews, and between the residents of the middle area and the distant areas, including the Jewish municipalities in the south that have majority Eastern Jewish residents. The unemployment rates in the cities in the Greater Tel Aviv area vary, between 1.5% to under 3%, while the unemployment rate in the Arab municipalities in the Negev Desert, who

make up 16% of the Palestinians living in Israel, varies between at least 14% and up to 24%. In relatively large Arab towns in the middle and the north, the unemployment rate ranges between 18% and 24%, based on a report issued by the Israeli Employment Service in July 2017.¹⁵

In unofficial calculations and estimates, it can be said that unemployment among Arabs is between 10% to 12%, and this does not take into account Arab women who are deprived from work opportunities and who have never been engaged in the labor market in their lives, because of the discriminatory policies. For this reason, they are not included in the unemployment figures, which only include those engaged in the labor market. This means that Arabs outside of Jerusalem, who make up around 15.5% of those of working age, constitute around 45% of those unemployed, and a higher percentage of the long-term unemployed (unemployed for more than a year).

The situation in the labor market does not stop at the percentage of engagement and finding suitable work opportunities, and it includes the work conditions and the salary rates, as was mentioned early, regarding the rates of the salaries of Eastern Jews. According to a report by the Adva Center for 2016, which is based on a report by the Ministry of Finance and the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, the average salaries at the end of 2015 was around 2,600 USD. It went up last year, 2016, and continued going up during the current year, 2017, reaching, in the middle of the year, around 2,800 USD. This was at an exchange rate of 3.6 Israeli shekels per USD.

The same salaries report shows that the average salaries for Ashkenazi Jews and those born in Israel ("the mixed") is 131% of the overall average salaries. This group makes up 58.5% of the total number of Israeli Jews. The average salaries of Eastern Jews is 114%, and this group makes up 24% of the total number of Israeli Jews. This gap between the two

groups has been slowly closing; until recently, the average salaries of Eastern Jews did not exceed 100% of the overall average salaries.

The average salaries of the migrants from the former states of the Soviet Union in the 1990s and the 2000s (15% of the total number of Israeli Jews) also increased, reaching 101% of the overall average salary. They are followed, after a large gap, by the migrants from Ethiopia, whose salaries are 56% of the overall average salaries, taking into account that they make up 2.5% of the total number of Israeli Jews.¹⁶

In a calculation that was conducted for this study, based on the percentage of each Jewish group from the total number of Israeli Jews, the salary rate for all Jews is 120.5% of the overall average salary, while the average Arab salary is 62% of the overall average salary, meaning that Jews make around twice the salary that an Arab makes.

This situation is directly reflected on the socioeconomic conditions, especially on poverty rates. Based on the official annual report on poverty that was issued by the national social security agency (the National Insurance Institute of Israel) at the end of 2016 for 2015,¹⁷ the poverty rates overall are 21.7%, compared to 22% in 2014. Poverty among children is 30%, compared to 31% in 2014.

We saw that poverty among Jews as a whole reached 14.1% among individuals, and 19.8% among children. Among the ultra-orthodox religious group, poverty rates saw a noticeable relative decline, compared to the year before. The poverty rates among the Haredi alone went down from 59.7% in 2014 to 55.4% in 2015. Among their children, the poverty rates went down from 66.1% to 63.1%.

According to estimates, the Haredim make up around 15.5% of the total number of Jews, and more than 18% of Jewish children. In other calculations, it can be said that the poverty rate among Jews other than the Haredim is as follows: 7.5% to 8% for individuals, more than

10% for children, and 1.7% for elderly Jews, not counting the Haredim.

As for among the Arabs, the poverty rates went up at all levels. Poverty rates in general went up, from 54% in 2014 to 54.8% in 2015, and the rate among children went up from 63.5% to 65.6%.

The irony here, which reflects the amount of discrimination in the distribution of resources, is that poverty is increasing among the Arabs, despite the sharp decrease in birth rates and the population growth rate among the Arabs, while poverty is decreasing among the Haredim, despite the continued growth in their very high birth rates, as well as the increase in their population growth rate.

These official figures paint a picture that shows that the socioeconomic conditions among the Jews, other than the Haredim, are similar to the rates in developed countries. Another view shows us that the socioeconomic conditions in the middle of the country, in the Greater Tel Aviv area and the areas surrounding it, is closer to the social conditions in northern Europe.

Rising Birth Rates and Life Expectancy, “Problem”

In all economic reports and studies that address the demographic issue, the labor market, or both, the biggest focus is on the rising birth rates and life expectancy in Israel (more than 84 years for women, and around 81 years for men). Among Arabs alone, the life expectancy for women is around 82 years, while for men it is 78 years, meaning that the life expectancy for the Jews is a few months higher than the general life expectancy.

Despite the fact that this reflects positive economic and social indicators in all societies, Israel considers the rising birth rates and life expectancy “a problem”, and there are even some who would call it “a catastrophe”. This is especially shown in the research of Professor

Alon Tal, who is mentioned above, as well as, within certain boundaries, in the research of Professor Soffer, who is also mentioned in this study.

According to projections, in 2040, 50% of citizens will be outside working age. This means that half of the population will be living on social benefits

Israel believes that the continued natural growth rate at around 2% per year, in parallel with the rising life expectancy, compared to the growth rate of 1.4% in developed countries, will increase the number of citizens who are outside working age in the future,

meaning those that are younger than 18 years old and 64 years and older. According to projections, in 2040, 50% of citizens will be outside working age. This means that half of the population will be living on social benefits for the younger and older population. There are, among these reports, those that warn that the National Insurance Institute of Israel (National social security agency) is heading towards a financial deficit that will be difficult to overcome.

Specialists believe that this issue is only getting worse in Israel, with the reluctance of the Haredi men to completely join the labor market, in parallel with the low rate of engagement of Arab women in the labor market (around 33%). Whereas the Haredi men are not engaging in the labor market out of their perspective and outlook, Arab women are facing a lack of work opportunities and closed doors because of discriminatory policies.

Conclusions

- Over the years, the demographic factor has been a great concern for the Zionist movement, on a number of levels. This concern was originally directed at the percentage of Palestinians remaining in their country after the Nakba, in the areas

where the Israeli entity was established. It can be said that the intense efforts to bring in hundreds of thousands of Jews from Arab and Islamic countries around the world were carried out with the objective of limiting increasing internal Palestinian influence, because of the low growth rate of Western Jews (Ashkenazi Jews).

- With the increasing Arab population, this fear dominated the ruling institutions and the Zionist movement, until the end of the 1980s. These fears have been partly alleviated following the large waves of migration, which have decreased the percentage that Arabs makeup of the total population. This migration took place at the same time as the relative and noticeable decrease in the population growth rate among Arabs, from 3.6% in 1990 to 2.6% in the latest figures, compared to an increased population growth rate among religious Jews from different movements, with the population growth rates of the latter groups exceeding those of the Arabs.
- The demographic concerns in the Zionist movement during the current period are focused on three issues:
 - 1- **The decreasing number of Jews around the world:** In a few years, the population growth of Israeli Jews will be less than the numbers decreasing annually among Jews around the world because of mixed marriages with spouses from other religions in different countries, and also because of the low natural growth rate in the population, in line with the rates in developed countries.
 - 2- **The percentage of Palestinians in historic Palestine:** This is a very contentious point, between those claiming "Greater Israel" and those supporting the two-state solution, whether this means having a fully sovereign Palestinian state or the

creation of a Palestinian entity under any name and any form that is imposed by Israel. This is in order to preserve a Jewish majority in Israel, and the issue of the “Jewish majority” that is envisioned is the factor standing behind the Zionist agreement on rejecting the return of the displaced to their historic homeland.

- 3- **The internal Jewish demographic transformations in Israel:** This forms both the topic of this study and is the main focus of the Zionist movement and its governing institutions. This transformation is due to the increasing percentage of religious groups, especially the Haredim, among the Jews and the population as a whole. However, it has not resulted in a decrease in the growth of the number of followers of the religious Zionist movement.

The Jewish Composition and Political Behavior

We have seen that until the 1980’s the percentage of Eastern Jews, as percentage of the total Jewish population, was high. The policies that discriminated against them because of their ethnic backgrounds, alienated the vast majority of this group, who were preoccupied with the discriminatory that it faced. With the gradual decrease in these policies and simultaneous increase in intermarriages between Eastern and Western Jews, the development of society, and the appearance of new generations-all of these effects, which had a clear impact on internal politics, receded.

Among the most prominent factors that decreased the phenomenon of Eastern Jews as an isolated population is the rate of mixed marriage. This study showed that 25% of Jews born in 1985 were born to mixed couples, and this percentage increased over the years. This

led to generations who were both Eastern and Western Jews, or, according to the Israeli term for them, “Israeli births”.

- The development of the economic and social conditions among the Eastern Jews after the collapse of the barriers put in place by the ruling authorities during the first three decades, and the narrowing social gaps between them and Western Jews, decreased their feelings of isolation and injustice. It also ended the phenomenon of grouping on an ethnic basis among Eastern Jews. This feeling, however, still has an effect, especially among the Sephardic Haredim, who clash with the Ashkenazi Haredim over religious backgrounds. Nevertheless, the two groups are united in their demands to the authorities and governments and are always coordinating their work in this regard. With the decrease in these differences, the political impact on governance and governing institutions decreased, despite what we see during every parliamentary election, and even in the local authority elections, with support based on background, like the Eastern Jews, the migrants who came to Israel in the 1990s or after that, and other groupings.
- Jewish ethnic groups, specifically those that determine their political and electoral leanings based on their origins, like the Eastern Jews, those that migrated to Israel since the 1990s, or the religious groups, are influenced by these origins, as well as their social and economic conditions. The motivation is also to ensure suitable living conditions for themselves.
- For example, among the Eastern Jews, the situation is still the same in poor neighborhoods and towns. Like any poor group anywhere in the world,

they support whoever promises to provide for their needs in their daily lives. Among these groups, like any similar groups around the world, there is an abundance of “vote brokers”.

- In the case of the migrants from the countries of the former Soviet Union, they supported, in the beginning, those that fought to decrease the effects of religiously coercive laws, especially with regards to marriage, the definition of Jewish, and also the issue of livestock shops and the limitations on transportation on Saturdays.
- These demands, for example, were a part of the programs of the Yisrael Beiteinu Party, under the leadership of Avigdor Lieberman, but it did not achieve these demands in the governments that it was a part of. At the same time, the vast majority of this secular public did not resort to the Meretz Party, which is a leftist and secular Zionist party that is extreme in this regard, to speak. This is because of Meretz’s political stances, and the migrants being careful to not be considered disloyal to the Zionist project, meaning that they see being a part of the right as an expression of them being loyal to the Zionist project.
- It is important to note here that despite the above, one cannot talk about a complete fusion of Jews at the societal level, even after decades, because Jewish groups still adhere to the social traditions of their countries of origin, including their food, clothes, and languages.

Estimates

- Based on what was presented on the reality of the situation, there is no space for any external political forces, in our case Palestinian forces and organizations, to address the Israeli public through its ethnic groups, because the segments of Israeli society whose political and electoral performance is still based on ethnic origin, are either poor segments who are focused on their urgent daily needs and not bigger-picture politics, or they are conservative and Orthodox religious groups. Both of these groups do not see anything they could need from external entities.
- Attempts to work with Jewish groups on an ethnic basis could lead to accusations that the “external” entity, whether it is Palestinian, Arab, or any other entity from anywhere in the world, is getting involved in an internal political conflict, and this will have the opposite of the intended effect, so to speak. This is because of the assumed incitement against anyone who operates in this way. In addition to that, these will be efforts within the scope of groups and boundaries created by Zionism, whereas the objective must be to address the general public.
- Especially since the various groups that are based on ethnic origin, religious differences, or others that we have seen in the past, have become weakened or their nature has changed:
 1. The Eastern Jewish community is seeing its borders dissolve because of the mixing and improvement of economic and social conditions, as well as the disappearance of

...there is no space for any external political forces, in our case Palestinian forces and organizations, to address the Israeli public through its ethnic groups

marginalization and exclusion, which had been going on for the first four decades. The marginalization and exclusion that is there is a side effect of society.

2. The group of migrants who migrated in the 1990s and 2000s are no longer as tight knit politically or under the influence of specific policies. Despite preserving all of the traditions and languages of their countries of origin, they have been relatively integrated into the existing structures.
3. The ultra-Orthodox religious people, the Haredim, are the most cohesive as a social group, and this is because this public is closed to the outside world and absolutely follows the instructions of its spiritual leaders, including political leaders. This is because of the nature of their austere lifestyles. A vast majority of them are linked to social

and educational institutions for each group of Haredim. In addition to that, the Haredi public has settled itself into the right-wing camp, and even the extreme right-wing, because the fact that the right-wing guarantees its interests, and also because the Haredim have an interests in the continuing occupation through settlement projects, which meet their population needs based on the requirements that the group has for itself.

- Political groups, if they are nationalist movements or political parties, are concerned with the conflict and ways to resolve it, and they usually bring together various Jewish ethnic groups, even if this varies from one party to another. For this reason, addressing these groups could be an entry point into the general public.

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Neoliberalism, the Rise of New Forces in Israel, and their Impact on Israeli Policies

By Khaled Anabtawi

(1) Introduction

This paper aims to analyze the shifts in the Israeli economic sector, specifically the shift towards a neoliberal economy, and the impact of this shift on the rise and development of economic, social, and political power. The paper explores how this development affects Israeli politics, specifically regarding policies towards the Palestinian issue.

The paper also analyses the current relationship between the new Israeli economic system and the development of the Israeli settlement enterprise, as well as settlement associations, what we call the “hidden support for settlement”. Additionally, it looks into the role of the settlement associations in this economic system, with some considering these associations to be the biggest beneficiaries from the establishment of the new economic system. Finally, this paper will explore the extent to which the role of these sectors is limited to just benefiting from the new Israeli neoliberal system of privatization, or whether the leadership of the settlement enterprise has transformed into an organic and core component of this economic system.

The objectives that are mentioned above form an important background and policy-based reference for decision-makers because they contribute to a deeper understanding of the relationship between the financial authorities and governing authorities. Moreover, this paper explores the role of the economy in developing the political scene and political positions, especially those relating to the Palestinian issue. This shines a light on an organic part of this scene, helping understand

... it explores the role of the economy in developing the political scene and political positions, especially those relating to the Palestinian issue

its structure and potential scenarios it could lead to in the future. The impact of new economic relations on the Israeli political arena is an aspect that has not been analyzed or researched enough, even though it is important in creating Israeli political visions.

The proposed analytical research paper is divided into five parts. The first part will present a short background on Israeli shifts over the past two decades, including their causes, features, and realities. The second part will address the new capital, comparing its interests and their differences before and after the Second Intifada. The third part will explore the relationship between the settlement enterprise, the occupation and the new economic system and new economic, social, and political classes that have been created as a result of this shift.

In the fourth part, we will attempt to look into the impact of capital on developing internal policies and taking control of Israeli public opinion. In the final section, we will present the discussion, conclusion, and recommendations.

(2) Conceptual Reference and Literature Review

Background on the Rise of the Neoliberal Economy in the World:

The changes that took place in the 1970s in the United States, Britain, and China, especially the changes that were led by President Ronald Reagan in the United States and Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom, as well as Deng Xiaoping in China (with the differences

between the two types), clearly ushered in the influence and control of a new economic system in most countries around the world. This new economic system was referred to as *'neoliberalism'*, and it can be summarized as *"liberating the market from the control of the state and its interference in it"*, or *"relying on the laws of the market in itself to achieve an economic and social renaissance"*. This includes a system of privatizing economic sectors, the gradual withdrawing of the state from the provision of social and welfare services and decreasing government spending in this field, and removing the regulations on foreign investments and foreign commissions, providing them with facilitation and incentives instead (Harvey, 2005 & Filk 2004).

This domination of the economic system necessitates an appreciation of the context in which it emerged and its political implications:

In the wake of the economic crisis in the 1930s, the economic intellectual arena underwent a sharp division based on differences in economic visions that centred around the best way out of the crisis and to ensure economic stability afterwards. The division was the sharpest, and had the greatest effect, between the two schools of political economics: the Keynesian School (named after its pioneer, the British economist, John Maynard Keynes) and Hayekian School (named after its pioneer, Austrian economist Friedrich von Hayek).

The key difference was over the size and nature of the state's interference in the economy. The Keynesian School believed that it was important for the state to be an important player in the market and the economy in order to ensure stability and welfare for the population, while the Hayek School stressed the importance of the state remaining neutral in the economic field, leaving the market to organize itself with complete independence (Arnon 2015).

Starting from the 1970s, and for reasons that cannot be addressed here, the signs of a crisis in this economic system started appearing, and

the process of shifting to an economic system closer to the Hayekian neoliberal direction, which stresses the importance of the state remaining neutral and not interfering in the economy and the market, even in social services, began (Arnon 2015).

Talking about the rise of neoliberal control of the world economy does not assume that this system has arisen in a similar form in all countries, even if they are similar in their reliance, for example, on the "free market". The aspects of the manifestation of these systems differ based on a number of different circumstances and factors (Harvey 2005).

The characteristics of the new economic stage that has become increasingly widespread since the 1970s, can be summarized as follows:

- (1) **The market economy:** its freedom and independence from interference by state agencies.
- (2) **Increasing privatization:** This means selling large public economic companies and corporations to the private sector, and even privatizing social services that are provided by the state, like privatizing education, healthcare, and other sectors.
- (3) **A new style of production, and new means of production:** the entry into the hi-tech, biotechnology, and science fields (between 1980 and 1994, the percentage of production in this sector increased from 12% to 24%) (United Nations).
- (4) **Scientific Revolution:** which has decreased the cost of production.
- (5) **Make the market more flexible:** ensuring the market is better able to accommodate investors and create profit while removing the limitations that ensured the welfare of workers (unemployment, work hours, workers' rights, and retirement), and replacing the operational agreements regulating

with resorting to contractors or agreements concerning factories or sectors.

- (6) **Removing the state's regulation of the foreign currency market:** removing limitations on transfers of capital and financial transfers. This is like the Marrakesh Agreement, and also includes strengthening the World Trade Organization, which is the biggest example of this change.
- (7) **The end of the Keynesian welfare state:** privatization of social services.
- (8) **Changing the form of political representation:** the weakness of collective workers' parties and organizations.
- (9) **Changes at the cultural level:** creating new, unified forms of concerns and consumption in recreation (for example, the level of world trade in the recreation sector went up from 67 billion USD in 1980 to 200 billion USD in 1991).
- (10) **Economic centralization:** centralizing the economy under certain controls, like a larger company that buys a smaller, weaker company, or merging corporations, which weakens or decreases the opportunities for real competition in the market (i.e., when Microsoft bought a company working in the field of televisions and phones).

The Rise of Neoliberalism in Israel

The Jewish Welfare State:

Israel has been known, since its establishment (and before) for having an economic system referred to by some as a "welfare state" for the Jewish community. Its main characteristics included the state's large-scale intervention in the market and in investment, as the state was the central and main actor in the market. It had investment funds for pensions and loans for housing, and the state also monitored the goods market and prices. It subsidized various basic consumer products, and supported and guaranteed local production. All of this was in parallel to the establishment of a trade union organization (the Histadrut), that had a lot of power and was a central and important player. The Histadrut had economic activities and owned many economic sectors, with a third of all workers belonging to it. The meeting of the political leadership and the Mapai Party (later the Israeli Labor Party) and the Histadrut formed the political and economic management of the state.

Despite this, it is important here to critically analyze this economic era and the terms that are used to describe it. The "welfare state" was started in light of a settler colonial^a reality, where the state in it was a part of nation-building, and it had the imposition of military rule on a group of its citizens, who are the Palestinians living inside Israel. In addition to that, some analysts have levelled parallel criticism from the inside, suggesting that the state has not ensured social equality even

^a As a conceptual framework for analysis, settler colonialism refers to a structure, rather than any one event, which persists in the ongoing elimination of indigenous populations. It involves settlers' assertion of state sovereignty and juridical control over indigenous lands, eliminating obstacles to this by removing indigenous peoples themselves and asserting false narratives and structures of settler belonging. For similar understandings of settler colonialism, see: *Dana and Jarbawi (2017). A Century of Settler Colonialism in Palestine: Zionism's Entangled Project, Brown Journal of World Affairs, Volume XXIV, Issue 1.*; *Wolfe, P. (1999). Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event. London: Cassell.*; *Veracini, L. (2015). The Settler Colonial Present. London: Palgrave Macmillan.*; *Veracini, L. (2010). Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview. London: Palgrave Macmillan.*

among the Jews. This era saw the complete control of the Mapai Party (later the Labor Party) of the Israeli political scene, and membership in the party was seen as providing a safe space for personal progression within this system. This provided opportunities for neoliberal forces to win over popular support, or rather that large portions of Israeli society were not upset to see the “welfare state” go; the welfare state represented, to a large portion of society, and especially those of Eastern origins, a symbol of ethnic discrimination and exclusion (Mandelkern 2015).

Due to the close relationships between the state and nation-building in Israel, the form of embedded liberalism, as Harvey calls it, took a different shape in Israel. The welfare state represented, in the past, a live example of the intersection of the state and the economy. In this view, the state, and its agencies later on, in addition to the leadership of Bank of Israel and the economic academic elite, were the main engines behind the new form of the economy that believed in the importance of the state not interfering in the economy, which took a new, more conservative form, after populist politicians, like Benjamin Netanyahu, came to power (Mandelkern 2015).

The New Economic Model

The Israeli economy was not far from the international changes that started being directed towards the new liberal model in the economy after the end of the Keynesian trend. The Israeli economy experienced a series of crises after the 1970s, in its system and institutions, as a result of international changes and the economic crisis around the world. This included the end and repeal of the Bretton Woods Agreement and the foreign exchange and foreign commissions that were in effect. The crisis started with inflation of 10% to 15% in the beginning of the 1970s, reaching large-scale inflation of 400% in the middle of the 1980s (this is what is called “the lost decade” by some). The Israeli economy

was in dire straits and had deep problems, reaching the point where banks announced their intention to declare bankruptcy (Filk 2004).

In the aftermath of this situation, and in reliance upon the economic academic elites and professionals from the Bank of Israel and the Ministry of Finance, a plan was proposed. This plan was called the “economic balance/stability plan”, and it included granting independence to the Bank of Israel in its management of economic policy through the “nonprinting law”.

This plan was an announcement of a large change of direction in the Israeli economic model, mainly under the idea of ending the economy of the “Jewish welfare state” and shifting to a neoliberal economic model. It should be noted that the plan was not just economic, and it took place during a period of a crisis in governance, and the purpose of this plan was to create policies to pressure unions and labor organizations as well (Ibid.).

This transformation in Israel can be summarized in the following points:

- (1) Ending subsidies** for local goods and production, especially basic consumer goods.
- (2) Going into a new model of foreign investment**, and removing limitations on it and on the foreign currency exchange market.
- (3) Granting independence** to the Bank of Israel in managing its affairs.
- (4) Decreasing progressive taxes on large corporations and large employers:** For example, it decreased from 61% (1986) to 36% (1996), reaching 24% (2015) which was in addition to decreasing the national insurance that employers must pay for their employees.

- (5) **Deepening the privatization of many government companies:** The most prominent examples of this are the Economic Corporation in Jerusalem, the workers bank, El Al Airlines, Miman, and others. The income from this privatization increased significantly. Also, the stocks of the central telecommunication company, Bezeq, were being offered for sale to the public, and private television companies and channels were established.
- (6) **Privatizing companies** belonging to the trade union, the Histadrut (with Koor Industries being the most prominent example).
- (7) **Decreasing government spending on services:** Housing, healthcare, and education, and investors and new players being brought into these sectors. Government spending was 16% of the GDP, but, after that, it decreased to less than 14%.
- (8) **Changing the model of the political party:** The role of the political party was not the most important social organizational institutions, as it had been previously.

These above led to large changes in the Israeli economy, not at the level of economic and social relationships, but at the level of the means and relationships of production. The Israeli economy relied, during this era, on the financial sector and production in hi-tech fields and sciences more than it did on heavy industry, as demonstrated by the below example:

During the 1990s, the telecommunications, electricity, electronics, and financial services sectors went up from 5% in 1950 to 35% in 1996. Also, the changes were accompanied by the makeup of production: 70% in the services sector (26% public services and 43% private services), 28% in industrial production, and 2%

in agricultural production. Industrial production focused mainly on hi-tech production and sciences, where the production in these two fields reached 60% of overall industrial production. There was also an increase in employment in these sectors specifically. In the advanced technology sector, employment went up by 39%, and in 2002 the exports in this field reached 46% (Filk 2006).

Socioeconomic Impacts

This process has caused great harm to the poor and the middle class, and it has led to larger economic gaps. For example, the economic equality rate in the 1970s was 0.25, compared to 0.35 in the previous decade (Mandelkern 2015). The income of the top tenth of the population has increased twelvefold compared to the lowest tenth of the population, compared to 8 times the income in the 1980s (OECD 2014).

The **rate of inequality** in incomes after taxes went up from 0.32 in the 1980s to 0.38 in recent years (Barr 2012).

The **poverty rate** went up from 12% in the middle of the 1980s to 20% in recent years (OECD 2014).

Due to these changes, the conditions of the upper class improved, and their percentage of the income went up from 6% in the 1990s to 14% in recent years (Mandelkern 2014).

What Happened in the Last Two Decades?

In the scope of the new economic system, government sectors were handed over to the investors, capital, and the private corporate class, while trade unions and organized labor were weakened. Progressive taxes were decreased, among other impacts, which led to the development of a new class of investors (which is usually based on family) instead of government and trade organizations, like the Histadrut. This led to damaging workers'

organizations and decreasing the impact of “collective labor agreements”. The sub-contractors class was introduced to employ workers in economically and socially unstable conditions.

Along with all of this, with the decreased official spending on economic and social welfare, insurance, and unemployment, the peak of this impact on workers from the lower class was known as the “Wisconsin Plan”, which is outlined further below.

Ideological Neoliberalism

A number of researchers believe that Netanyahu could be the first politician saturated with an open neoliberal ideology (Mandelkern 2015). Netanyahu started with the implementation of a policy of socioeconomic reforms for 2002 – 2003. In his famous speech, he referred to the “*the fat man and the thin man*”, meaning that there must be a balance between the public sector (the fat man) and the productive private sector (the thin man). He believed that the public sector and government spending, which is not productive, had increased to more than the economy could bear, and he recommended weakening the public sector and decreasing government spending while strengthening the productive private sector (Netanyahu 2003).

This was translated into a policy of decreasing government spending on social services. This included decreasing funding allocated for unemployment, pensions, income guarantees, and child insurance allowances. It also included changing the criteria for who was deserving of these allocations. This process was at its peak during the implementation of the “Wisconsin Plan” in 2004.

Some people believe that these policies express the reality of Netanyahu’s ideological economic thinking, and that this is the new and

conservative form of neoliberalism, which brings together right-wing and liberal economic ideas.

According to Harvey, “*the new conservatives exploit military ideas, and this is why they try to show threats—real or imagined, internal or external—to the cohesion of the state.*” (Harvey 2005, 114). We might notice this in Netanyahu’s increased use of the Iranian nuclear threat as a card to give legitimacy to his economic plans (Mandelkern 2015).

(3) Study Methodology

This paper relies on a textual and inductive analysis through reading into transformations in Israeli policies towards the Palestinian issue in the recent era, as well as trying to examine the relationship between it and the change in the Israel economic system and model in control, or the neoliberal economic model. The reading also tries to analyze the extent of the link between the Israeli privatization enterprise and increasing neoliberal policies on the growth of what many are calling “the new right”, as well as the class interests of this new right. This is done through an extrapolation of the models of political behaviour among pressure groups and influencers in this

According to Harvey, “the new conservatives exploit military ideas, and this is why they try to show threats—real or imagined, internal or external—to the cohesion of the state.”

new right on the one hand, and their economic interests on the other. It also looks into Israeli economic policy towards settlements by reading official reports that are published on this issue, as well as academic political literature that addresses these issues.

This paper will also look into recent reports that were published in international magazines, newspapers, and academic journals on the focusing of the Israeli economy in the hands of what some are calling “a clique of capitalists”, and the position that this group

has taken towards the right and specifically, Netanyahu.

This presentation focuses on three topics in the analysis. The first topic presents an analysis from top to bottom, as it analyzes the structural relationship formed in Israel between the neoliberal economy and the occupation and settlement enterprises. The second topic attempts to read into the infrastructure process, and it addresses the relationship between the neoliberal system and the development of right-wing groups to exert pressure from the bottom, analyzing this through uncovering the relationship between neoliberalism and what is called [מגזר] in Israel, or “sector creation” as a social concept. The third topic looks into the development of a group of new individuals with large amounts of capital in Israel, their directions, and their intersections with the world of politics in both of its sides: parliament and the media.

The division between the topics is not meant to imply that there is a balanced relationship between them, as much as they cross and are dialectical, and each of them impacts the other. This means that the development of one of the topics is not done in a vacuum without affecting the others, but while intersecting and interacting with them.

(4) Results and Analysis

The First Topic: On the Structural Relationship Between the Occupation and Neoliberalism

The effects that were caused by the domination of the neoliberal economy in Israel did not expand the social and economic differences within Israeli society. Nevertheless, the domination of neoliberalism impacted a number of other levels, the most important of

which was the relationship of increasing privatization with the occupation and settlement enterprise.

In recent years, there have been new groups that have appeared in Israel, and they are the “new Zionist left” (as some have called them).

These groups have tried to win over Israeli public opinion by prioritizing the economic and social discourse to the political discourse by trying to separate between these two levels. They try to achieve this by claiming that Netanyahu is scared of this discourse because it will expose his policies that are harmful to the vulnerable class. In doing

this, the Zionist left is trying to create an artificial division. There is an organic and structural relationship between the occupation and settlement enterprise and between the Israeli neoliberal project, specifically the privatization system. This is the theory that will be adopted in this study. In this regard, it could be suggested that the settlers and the settlement enterprise in general no longer have a role that is limited to being a “beneficiary” group of the Israeli economic system. Their role has become, at least since 2005, a vital component in the economic system, and they have become a structural and organic part of it.

Many researchers have looked into the relationship between the rise of neoliberalism and the increasing privatization in Israel and the settlement enterprise. Dani Gutwein, a prominent researcher who published a series of articles and studies on this topic, shows that since the fall of what he calls the “welfare state”, and with the deepening neoliberalism, the settlement enterprise has spread even further, as the lands that were invaded in 1967 became “an alternative to the welfare state”, or “a compensation to the lower classes who were affected by the policy of privatization”

the settlers and the settlement enterprise in general no longer have a role that is limited to being a “beneficiary” group of the Israeli economic system. Their role has become, at least since 2005, a vital component in the economic system

(Gutwein 2013). He agrees with what was shown by Shehadah and Gris (2013) regarding the differences in the services and projects services that the government provides to settlements in what they called the “*welfare state for settlers*” (Shehadah and Gris 2013).

the lands that were invaded in 1967 became “an alternative to the welfare state”, or “a compensation to the lower classes who were affected by the policy of privatization” (Gutwein 2013)

There is a polemical relationship between the triangle that is made up of neoliberalism, privatization, and occupation, and they have been regularly intersecting during recent years in Israel. The settlement enterprise has formed, within this triangle, a tool for compensating the vulnerable economic classes who are affected by

privatization and the neoliberal economic system. This was very clear in the discussions during the Sharon government’s insistence on recognizing Ariel College as an Israeli university against professional recommendations from the Higher Education Council and its Planning and Funding Committee. This led to increasing privatization of education in order to find alternative funding provided by professional committees and linking educational institutions, instead shifting to capital (Gutwein 2013).

The presented triangle is governed by the polemical relationship, as this triangle does not guarantee compensation for the vulnerable class, who have started to see in the settlements not just a solution for economic problems, but also linking this sector to right-wing governments and policies and ensuring that they provide total and continuing support to them (Gutwein 2004).

This close relationship between neoliberalism and occupation can be seen in a number of forms and characteristics, the most important of which are:

Transformations within religious Zionism towards a religious Zionism that is Protestant

and neoliberal: In this regard, a class of settler leaders were formed, and they have linked their interests as a class with the neoliberal system. Aviad Huminer, a researcher, describes it as “*Protestant religious Zionism*”. The economic program of the Jewish Home Party, which is an extremist settler party, along with the positions of its leaders, provide a clear expression of these ideas. Its programs support “the free market” and privatization, and its leadership make statements against the interference of the state in the economy and in support of decreasing progressive taxes.

On the political side: It is not a coincidence, in this field, that Naftali Bennett would be concerned with the economic portfolio, and he shows support for the direction of Minister Israel Katz with regards to privatizing ports, despite the fact that Bennett calls this “*increasing competition in them*” (Nakhmias 2013). The same applies to the privatization of trains, electricity, and a part of the Israel Lands Administration, in addition to breaking up what he calls “*commercial and labor organizations*” that are smothering the “*efficacy*” of the Israeli economy, in his words (Gutwein 2017).

Similarly, the Minister of Justice, Ayelet Shaked – one of the leaders of the Jewish Home Party and the head of its parliamentary bloc – showed her extremist neoliberal orientation on numerous occasions. She proposed a draft law that would curb the ability of worker’s organizations to conduct strikes (Israeli Government Website 2014), and she also expressed her economic opinions clearly in an article that she published in a right-wing magazine. The article was titled *Planning the Government’s Path*, and in it she reiterated her support for the independence and freedom of the market, calling for the state to not interfere in it at all. She also included her rejection of a series of laws that she considered “*catastrophic*” because they granted the state the ability to interfere in the economy, considering that freedom, at its core, is the “*freedom of the market*” (Shaked 2016).

On the social aspect: In recent years, according to Humanier (2017), there have been a number of religious Zionist initiatives that have attempted to gain the support of the religious Zionist public for the political and economic right wing. There was, for example, the Tikvah Fund, which, according to some, is a conservative and populist fund (by the American definition). This fund operates among the religious Zionists and settlers to spread the ideas of “nationalism, capitalist freedom, and conservatism.” The fund has a number of initiatives, among them Mida^b site, which is an opinion site that covers current affairs as well. It also supports an “academic” journal named Hashiloach^c, which is the journal where Shaked published her article in December 2016. There is also the Kohelet Forum, which plays a role in spreading economic right-wing ideas, and is known for being close to and having relations with right-wing governments. Some believe that most of the associations and entities that were established recently to push right-wing economic beliefs are very closely linked to religious Zionism and actually came up out of it (Humanier 2017). There is no surprise when finding out that all of these initiatives started working more after the Israeli protests in 2011, protests that the settlers saw as a threat to them, despite the fact that the leadership of the protests intentionally focused on economic and social discourse, not political discourse, in order to get the most agreement. The Kohelet Forum was established in 2011, Mida was launched in 2012, and Hashiloach was launched in 2016.

The transformation of the settlements into forms of compensation for the fall of the “Jewish welfare state”: Some reports and

studies show the economic trend in Israel regarding the settlements and the incentives that are provided by the government to the settlers. Shehadeh and Gris, highlight the amount of incentives that the government provides to the settlers, and the fact that these incentives are much higher than the incentives and social services that are provided to Israeli citizens in general. This is what they call the “settler welfare state”. The study mentions that much larger budgets are allocated for the local authorities and the settlement councils than those that are allocated for the rest of the local authorities, and there are also lower taxes, as well as all of the settlements designated a part of what are known as “areas of national preference”. For example, the study mentions that percentage of settlers from the total population of Israel reaches around 4.5% (this does not include the Jerusalem settlements), and they get 11% of the state budget. Also, their unemployment rates are some of the lowest (compared to the rest of the areas), reaching 6.7%. The average salaries in these areas are some of the highest in priority (after Tel Aviv, the capital, and Haifa). These realities are reflected in the approval rating among the settlers for their living conditions, which are reported as reaching 92.3%. These factors are despite the fact that a third of the settlers are religious people (which is usually the class that is very weak when it comes to economic conditions).

The study shows that the percentage of Israeli investment in the budgets and benefits for the settlements, in the fields of transportation, education, healthcare, and others is constantly increasing, and it is higher than in other municipalities. This percentage was especially

...the percentage of Israeli investment in the budgets and benefits for the settlements, in the fields of transportation, education, healthcare, and others is constantly increasing, and it is higher than in other municipalities

^b For more information, visit the official website at: <https://mida.org.il/>

^c For more information, visit the official website at: <https://hashiloach.org.il/>

raised during the most recent Netanyahu governments. For example, investment in Israeli citizens reached 40,000 shekels annually, compared to 93,000 shekels for settlers. This is in addition to the other benefits that settlers are eligible for, such as housing loans, and a percentage of the national education budget that is significantly greater than their demographic representation; settler groups receive 14% of the education budget even though they do not make up more than 5% of the population (Shehadeh and Gris 2013).

The claims of the studies mentioned above are in line with what is presented by the Adva Center's reports on what it calls "*setting neoliberal policy*" only at the green line. Its report, which was published in 2015, shows that the rates for government support for the local authorities in the settlements was 2,695 shekels (per capita), compared to 2,277, 1,684, and 1,892 shekels in the various other municipalities and areas. This is true for all years since 1992 (Sibirski & Hoffmann-Dishon 2015).

The reports also added that the rate of construction on popular initiative saw a sharp decrease in Israel because of the neoliberal policies and privatization, from 38% in 1995 to 12% in 2010. After the Israeli protests, it went up to 22%. This rate goes up to 50% from the total construction operations in the settlements, and its rate was 33% in 2014 (Ibid.).

The settlers and their leadership turning into an organic component of the Israeli neoliberal economy: This data paints a picture that is in line with what is described by Gutwein as the transformation of the occupation and the settlement enterprise into a voluntary tool used by the government to both compensate the economically vulnerable groups and segments in society for the effects caused by neoliberal policies and to increase migration to the settlements, in what he calls "*the new*

Israeli land". It also uses religion in this field to mobilize organizations like the Yesha Council, to turn it into social capital that gives it the influential political position that it has (Gutwein 2017).

Therefore, this group sees a "*class-based economic and social interest*" in the continuing occupation and advancing settlement enterprise. In this way, the settlement and occupation enterprises create a balance with the process of breaking apart Jewish workers' and organized Jewish Zionist work. It sees that any opposition for the occupation has to be based on "*left-wing Ashkenazi supremacy*" (Gutwein 2014, 2013). This belief is strengthened by the increased rate of Israeli populism and its sharp increase after Netanyahu came into power (Filk 2006).

any opposition for the occupation has to be based on "left-wing Ashkenazi supremacy" (Gutwein 2014, 2013).

The number of settlers in 1977 was not more than 5,000, and they did not have the power and influence that they have today. Since the 1980s, however, efforts to increase their power were implemented at two levels: settlement and the direction towards a neoliberal economy. With time, the occupation and settlement enterprise turned into a close alliance between the weaker classes in society and the right-wing authorities, as they believed that their interest was to ensure that they continued to dominate the government. With what Gutwein calls the "*policy of creating sectors*" that are organically developed from neoliberalism (and Harvey agrees with this), there have been a number of sectors and small parties that have linked the historical economic injustice and translated it into a political power in order to get benefits from those in power. Here, it can be noticed that the settlement enterprise and the settlers were used as a tool by the right-wing (and the Zionist left as well) to compensate for the economic disparity and large-scale effects that

neoliberalism had on certain segments of society up until 2005. The unilateral withdrawal/“separation” from Gaza led to decreased trust by the settlers in the state, and it has created a new equation in the relationship on the political side. This occurred in parallel with the growth of the “new right” and new pressure groups coming onto the scene (starting with the increasing power of the Feiglin Movement in the Likud, among other settler groups) starting in state institutions (we will address this in the second topic). The issue, however, was not limited to the political aspect. In the economic aspect as well, the settlers were transformed into actors and central powers in the Israeli neoliberal economy. The increasing power of these groups because of the “sector creation” policies, and the increasing influence that they have, leads to the government fearing to take any negative position towards the issue of settlements and evacuation, and it actually increases the annexation on the ground. This turns the settlements from a political tool of neoliberalism into one of its political and economic strengths as well (Gutwein 2013).

“The Zionist Center-Left”^d as a Partner in this Organic Relationship and Dedication to It: The insistence of forces that are a part of the “left and centrist Zionism” on the importance of separating politics and the neoliberal economy strengthens the link between them on the ground, according to Gutwein (2013). However, it fails to understand the classist basis that makes the religious Zionist public, which is the poorest, support the rule of the right. The Zionist left and centrists explain this link and support

The insistence of forces that are a part of the “left and centrist Zionism” on the importance of separating politics and the neoliberal economy strengthens the link between them on the ground

between the poor classes and the right as being due to cultural reasons, like the relationship between religion and right-wing positions, because these classes are more religious (Filk 2006). This trend was led by the former leader of the Labor Party, Shelly Yachimovich, who tried to use an economic and social agenda instead of a political agenda to face Netanyahu.

The slogans and directions that are being used by the Labor Party, in addition to removing the political differences between left-wing and right-wing Zionists, strengthen the prevailing trend among the poor economic classes on the importance of ensuring the domination of the right-wing.

This behavior leads us to the trends of the left-wing Zionist governments (Rabin and Barak) in the 1990s, to try to understand the classist dimensions of the Zionist left and center dilemma. The Zionist left and center supported the privatization policies, and did not oppose them. This increased during Rabin’s government, in line with what Rabin said during the beginning of his administration. In return, Rabin’s government went into the political settlement track with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in Oslo. Despite the fact that the government agreed to the positioning of the occupation army in the West Bank, settlements were increased and spread further. To understand this behaviour, according to Gutwein, it is important to not only understand the political reasons from a traditional understanding of them, but also that Rabin’s government realized that a partial breakthrough in the

^d This term is used as shown in the literature addressed in this topic to represent the Zionist forces that are not on the far right. It should be noted that there are many studies and research papers that use this term in a very critical manner, and they do not believe that it is possible to divide the electoral map in Israel between left and right, but between far right, right, and not right.

settlement will lead to Palestinian workers coming in as a strong source of competition, especially with the weak Histadrut and the beginning of the weakening and loss of influence among many workers' organizations. The use of settlements as compensation for this disintegration, and as a net to provide safety and protection for Jewish Zionist workers in the place of traditional organizations (Gutwein 2004).

The Second Topic: The Relationship Between Neoliberalism and the New Right, and the Development of New Political "Lobbying Sectors"

A number of researchers have identified a relationship between the domination of the neoliberal economic model and the spread of right-wing political ideology, as well as the spread of positions that rely on presenting external threats to the safety and cohesion of society to show that they are the solutions and alleviate the pain from these symptoms. Therefore, it is no surprise that those at the forefront of the neoliberal scene are those that call for and carry conservative and extremist right-wing ideas (for additional information, see Ben-Port 2005, Harvey 2005, and Mandelkern 2015).

Some studies into the Israeli context have noted the relationship between the spread and domination of the neoliberal economic model and right-wing groups being in power. Danny Filk, analyzed the relationship between neoliberalism and the rise and spread of political populism in Israel in his book. This relationship was represented by Benjamin Netanyahu, and Netanyahu's takeover of the Likud, as well as the example of Avigdor Lieberman and his increasing popularity (until the 2009 elections). In this book, Filk analyzes the drafting and terminology used in the rhetoric of using threats from "imaginary enemies" (Filk 2006).

The most prominent analysis in this regard might be in the studies of Dani Gutwein, as he links neoliberal policies to what he calls "sector creation". This concept attempts to understand the development of new, small but influential political groups that try to achieve a position in the neoliberal system, which has a philosophy that is based on "fragmentation" and "division". Gutwein links these sectors and the beginning of the rise of the new right, specifically since 2005 (for more information, see Gutwein 2004, 2013, and 2017).

Neoliberalism and the New Right:

The development of the Shas movement, and its continuing shifting towards Zionism and the Zionist right, can be seen as an example of the underlying relationship between the dominating economic system and the dominating political extremism. These two, as this paper claims, have a constantly intersecting and polemic relationship. The leadership of the Shas movement have settled on the idea that their interests totally intersect with the policy of "sector creation" that Israeli neoliberalism has led to, benefitting from the spread and control of identity politics during that stage. They are also turning historic injustices (under claims of economic and social classism) into social and cultural capital that can be translated into political power for a quota in the new neoliberal system. The biggest example of this is the privatization of education and passing the "Nahari Law" (which was approved after a number of changes and amendments), for the provision of budgets for private education. The Shas elite understood the game, and realized that their voters were shifting towards the political right for reasons that we mentioned above, and so the movement gradually conditioned its rhetoric for this public and the new map that was being created on the ground (Gutwein 2013).

We mentioned, in the first topic, that a number of researchers believe that Israel's unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip was the

beginning of a lack of confidence between large segments of the settlers and the institutions of the state, as well as the beginning of a sign of the contradiction among the parts of the triangle mentioned in the first topic (Ibid.).

After the breaking up of the Gaza settlements and the “Amouna” issue, as well as the talk about the possibility of freezing settlements (even if this talk was not honest or true), new right-wing sectors were formed (outside the parliament and occurring in parallel with changes in the parliamentary map) that were taking the role of the state, demanding that the state be scaled down, and sometimes filling “the gap” that it left behind. This includes the “price tag” phenomenon, among others, and all of this can be seen with the growing movement led by Feiglin within the Likud Party. Feiglin once said: *“Do not let the state scare you of yourselves or convince you that if you go out for your freedom everything will be destroyed. The opposite is true. Everything will be rebuilt once again, in a way that will make you proud.”* There are also the statements by Naftali Bennett, who said that if the settlements are dismantled, the response must be refusal of military service (Gutwein 2013).

The continuing rhetoric against the institutions of the state can be seen by the extreme and clear example in how the far right has dealt with the Supreme Court of Israel. This was expressed in an interview with Ayelet Shaked, the Minister of Justice, who talked about the importance of downsizing this institution so that it does not interfere in the “people’s rule” in the Parliament. There were also the

statements made by a member of the Knesset representing the same bloc, Moti Yogeve, who talked about the importance of “*breaking apart and demolishing*” this institution after its decision to demolish buildings in Beit El (Jlobos 2015).

Israel’s unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip was the beginning of a lack of confidence between large segments of the settlers and the institutions of the state

This analysis is in agreement with what is stated by a number of studies and investigations that have been published in recent years and specialized in studying the situation in Israel. It states that, since the last decade, a “right-wing domination bloc” has been formed (Mustafa 2017), and this has been called the rise of the

“new right” in Israel since 2003.^{e f} This group is made up of nationalist and religious political parties, the right-wing and extremist movement in the Likud, Haredi political parties (religiously ultra-Orthodox), nationalist movements under the umbrella of Yisrael Beiteinu, and settlements and extremists in the Israeli public. Structural and demographic changes that have affected Israeli society have led to the development and formation of this block, in addition to changes among the Israeli ruling elite, which has been affected by these transformations (Madar 2017).

In his study, researcher Barhoum Jaraysi (2015) discusses lobbying and pressure groups that have become prominent among the groups of the right. The claim of this paper is that a part of the formation of these groups is linked to the dualism and dialecticism of the idea of “sector creation” and neoliberalism together:

- (1) **The Im Tirtzu Movement (If You Wish It):** This is an extremist right-wing movement that was established in 2006, and it operates in a number of

^e For additional information on the “new right”, you can see the 47th issue of *Israeli Issues* magazine, a magazine that is published by the Madar Center, the Palestinian Forum for Israeli Studies. Available at: <https://goo.gl/bskcTZ>

^f For more information on this topic, you can review the 2015 strategic report that was published by the Madar Center, the Palestinian Forum for Israeli Studies. Available at: <https://goo.gl/tg5ets>

fields, the most important of which is education. They follow up with national student activities and teachers and departments that criticize the occupation. Among the attention-grabbing things about the institution, which shows the relationship between capitalists and this organization, is that it was one of the organizations most opposed to, and most harassing of, any voice that criticized the natural gas agreement, and it published a whole report in which it attacked the New Israel Fund (Jaraysi 2015).

- (2) **The Yisrael Sheli Movement:** This is a movement that was established in 2010 through an initiative by Ayelet Shaked, and it works to mobilize public opinion against left-wing Israeli organizations and associations (Ibid.).
- (3) **The Yesha Council:** It was established in 1980, and it plays the function of a “government council” that is made up of the settlers’ leaders and parties, as well as the heads of the settlements. It comes up with many of the settlement plans. (Ibid.)
- (4) **The Ir David Foundation, which is commonly known as the Elad Foundation:** This foundation was established in 1996, and it is short for “To the City of David” in Hebrew. The use of the city of David means the area of the Al Hilwah Valley in the village of Silwan, which is an area that the foundation is very active in. One of the most important objectives of the Foundation, as its official site states, is “to strengthen the Jewish connection to Jerusalem and to renew the Jewish community in the City of David in Silwan and the areas surrounding it.”
- (5) **The Ateret Cohanim Organization:** This is an active settlement organization, especially in the Old City

and in the Muslim Quarter. The foundation was established again with this name, which means “Crown of the Priests”. The foundation aims, as it claims, to create a Jewish majority in the Old City and to settle in Jerusalem, ensuring that it finds the homes and properties that it is looking for in the Muslim Quarter and transferring their ownership “legally” from the Arabs to Jews with the goal of moving settlers into them or renting them from the state. The budget of the foundation is mainly funded through donations, and the Jewish American billionaire Irving Moskowitz, and his wife are the main funders of the foundation.

The relationship between the aforementioned organizations and Netanyahu and the Likud Party:

From a report that was published by Haaretz, it became clear that the Falic family from Miami, which supported the aforementioned Elad Foundation, had made donations to Netanyahu as well. On the night of the primary elections for the Likud Party, the family, transferred around 300,000 shekels to various nominees in the Likud Party Elections. The biggest portion of these transfers (180,000 shekels) was for the Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. The other donations were for other ministers and nominees, including Moshe Ya'alon, Gilad Erdan, Miri Regev, Yuli Edelstein, and Ze'ev Elkin. These people are considered the most right-wing politicians in the Likud.

There are other donors to the foundation, like the “Asas Fund” and Friends of the Israeli Defense Forces, and they are known to support and donate to right-wing activities. Their objective is to strengthen Zionist dominance in Palestine (Hasoun 2016).

Relationship with government offices and the transfer of projects to the foundation: Among the issues that were brought up by some reports is the ambiguous relationship between

the foundation and a number of government offices and ministries. The foundation has received, almost exclusively, all of the work and projects in the settlements, including excavations, administering archeological sites, among other activities (Hasoun 2016A).

The Third Topic: The Impact of Capitalists on Governance and Public Opinion

The Rise of the Capitalist Class

The development of the Israeli neoliberal model and privatization, and the strengthening of this system, has caused structural changes among capitalists, and changes in the manner that this class views its political interests and relationships. These are the two things that will be addressed in this topic.

Changes in the Capitalist Class:

The Israeli economy, with the deepening neoliberal model and privatization, is becoming more and more concentrated, meaning that economic activity is focused more and more in the hands of a group of capitalists that take control of the various economic sectors for themselves. This group is known as the larger capitalists, or, as they became known after the Israeli protests of 2011, as the capitalist whales.

The Israeli economy... is becoming more and more concentrated, meaning that economic activity is focused more and more in the hands of a group of capitalists that take control of the various economic sectors for themselves.

A number of reports have shown that a small group of the capitalist whales (which are usually commercial groups based on families) are in control of Israeli economic activity, meaning that they control the main sectors and investments. A report that was published by the Research Department in the Bank of Israel, suggests the percentage of concentration in Israel is high compared to other countries. For

example, 10 large corporations control more than 30% of the size of the market of public companies and 20 large corporations control 160 public companies, representing around 26% of the total public companies or 50% of their market value. In the beginning of 2010, the amount of investments of 16 large companies (commercial groups) reached around 349 billion shekels, or around 49% of the amount of total investments in this sector. Also, 50% of the total number of companies active in financial commissions (banks, insurance, and housing loans) are under the ownership or control of the large corporations. Ten families in Israel control 30% of the economy (Ajmoun and Tsadik 2010).

The economic group that was formed in recent years, or the capitalist whales, is made up of the following:

- (1) **The Nochi Dankner Group:** Active in financial investments, insurance companies, manufacturing, telecommunications, food trade, housing, and services.
- (2) **The Ofer Group:** Active in the banking sector, chemical manufacturing, media, housing, and services.
- (3) **Arison Investments:** Owned by Shari Arison, this group is active in the banking sector, insurance, financial investments, manufacturing, and housing.
- (4) **The Tshuva Group:** Active in the field of petroleum and energy, insurance, financial investments, bio-chemical manufacturing, telecommunications, and housing.
- (5) **The Fishman group:** Active in manufacturing, media, housing, and commerce.
- (6) **The Bino Group:** Active in banking sector, manufacturing, and energy.

- (7) **The Lev Leviev Group:** Active in manufacturing, media, housing, energy, petroleum, and jewelry.
- (8) **The Eliahu Group:** Active in banking sector, insurance, media, energy, and petroleum.
- (9) **The Bronfman Group:** Active in banking sector, manufacturing, housing, and commerce.
- (10) **The Fortheim Group:** Active in banking sector, financial investments, manufacturing, media, and housing.
- (11) **The Azrieli Group:** Active in banking sector, manufacturing, housing, petroleum, and energy.
- (12) **The Fassman Perran Group:** Active in housing, energy, and commerce.
- (13) **The Hamburger Group:** Active in insurance sector and financial investments.
- (14) **The Elovitch Group:** Active in manufacturing, telecommunication, media, and housing.
- (15) **The Ilan Ben-Dov Group:** Active in telecommunications, housing, and commerce.
- (16) **The Schmeltzer Group:** Active in insurance, manufacturing, commerce, and services.

The Relationships Between the Capitalist Whales, the Authorities, and Politics

Dismantling the Duality that Security Stability Leads to Political Stability

In the past decade, the amount and intensity of discussions in Israel on the influence of large

capitalists from the Israeli economy on various levels of politics have increased. To address this question, we must return to this economic class' understanding of security issues and what has happened to change this. This paper claims that there has been a structural change in the understanding of this economic group regarding the relationship between the peace process and economic prosperity, and this is what pushed a number of the members of this group to support going into negotiations to reach a settlement. This was done in order to open new markets and trade with the Arab world, as well as to get access to cheap labour. This was clear in the economic growth indicators that were recorded during Rabin's government, reaching 6.5%, then going down to 3.65% during Netanyahu's first period. This means that economic growth rates were higher during the government of the Labor Party, and the economy started shrinking during the Second Intifada and the period directly after it, with the growth rate reaching 0.2% (for more information, see Gutwein 2004, Jaraysi 2010, and Shehadeh and Gris 2003).

This belief, however, has changed in the past decade, and it has become clear to this group that there is not necessarily an important and direct correlation between their economic interests in economic growth and in the "peace process". This belief came during the period of phenomenal growth rates between 2004 and 2007, despite the wars that were being waged by Israel, and despite the fact that there was no progress made during this period towards a political solution or any agreements. This was due to the balance that was achieved due to the high volume of Israeli exports (Jaraysi 2015). This instilled a belief among this group that economic growth is not necessarily linked to the political settlement, and they therefore

...it has become clear to this group that there is not necessarily an important and direct correlation between their economic interests in economic growth and in the "peace process"

began to see their interests as being linked primarily to political stability and the government, meaning having a strong government (Shehadeh and Gris 2013, Jaraysi 2015). Of course, this does not contradict or conflict with the claim that not having “security

... a belief among this group that economic growth is not necessarily linked to the political settlement, and they therefore began to see their interests as being linked primarily to political stability and the government, meaning having a strong government

stability” and the overall political conditions in the country will not affect the economy. They will, but the middle and lower classes are the ones who are affected the most and pay the price, not this group of capitalists. (Sibirski and Dishon 2015).

The Relationship Between the Capitalists and Power

Based on the analysis mentioned above, a number of studies have been published on the relationship between the capitalist whales and authority in Israel, in what is known in the research as capitalist authority. A special committee was formed to look into this matter, and it made recommendations in 2012. It concluded that this group is investing its economic influence to be able to influence power, and it mentioned a number of methods and levels that reflect the interference of the capitalist group in governance in Israel:

(1) **Funding election campaigns and right-wing associations:** As previously mentioned in the second topic of this paper, there is intersection between the funding of settler associations, like Ateret Cohanim and the Elad Foundation, and the funding of internal elections for Netanyahu and the more extremist wing of the Likud, like Regev, Yuli Edelstein, and others. This is due to the change in the Israeli political party system, which opened

the door for capitalists to be able to fund the internal campaigns of nominees. There are also some reports that show that the Azrieli Group is one of the biggest donors of the Im Tirtzu extremist right-wing group.

(2) **Personal relationships with the top of the chain of command:**

The series of corruption scandals that have been uncovered recently, the most recent of which is the file of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, have shown the extent of the links between the economic elite group with decision-makers. The biggest example of this is the relationship between Sheldon Adelson, a businessman, and Netanyahu. Adelson owns Israel Hayom, a right-wing newspaper that is now the most widely distributed newspaper. There was also the conversation that was uncovered between Arnon Mozes (one of the most important owners of Yedioth Ahronoth, a newspaper) on the importance of approving a law to limit the sales of Israel Hayom. There is also the phenomenon of this economic group who have interests in the telecommunications sector, like phones and mobiles, with the Minister of Communications, which shows how close this group is to decision-makers (Friedman 2012).

(3) **Activating lobbyists in the Knesset:**

Lobbyists are considered one of the most important ways of influence for these companies, as they are widespread in the Knesset and work to influence the members of the parliament regarding laws and recommendations. Data shows that there are more than sixty lobbyists working in the Knesset, and they work for a number of companies that represent more than 200 commercial firms in Israel. This is evidenced by

legislative amendments that were recommended after popular pressure to curb monopolies after the 2011 protests. The persistent work of the lobbyists, as well as the relationships between the capitalists and the authorities, which has been clarified in the point above, not only gutted the law, but meant it could not be implemented until after 30 years (Jaraysi 2015).

- (4) **Taking control of the media and shifting it to the right:** As we have mentioned in the previous point, and have seen in the mapping of capitalist groups above, there are a number of capitalists who have started to invest in journalism and the media. The American billionaire, Sheldon Adelson, for example, owns Israel Hayom, a newspaper that was established in 2007. This newspaper defends Netanyahu on a daily basis, and it is considered the mouthpiece of his policies. Adelson also bought stocks for nrg360, which belonged to the Maariv newspaper (which was recently changed into the Makor Rishon website), and the Mozes family owns the biggest shares of Yedioth Ahronoth. The family was a part of the suspected deal with Netanyahu, where they had to, as a result of the distribution of the Israel Hayom newspaper being more than theirs, win over Netanyahu by giving him a coverage platform that supported him. This was done in exchange for a decrease in the distribution rates of Israel Hayom. The family also owns a part of official broadcast channels, like Keshet and Channel 10 after they had financial problems. This group of economic elites also use their control of the largest companies in order to control the message of media channels that they do not own by spending

money on advertisements on these channels (TheMarker 2008 and Briscoe 2014).

- (5) **The use and employment of lawyers and accountants who are close to the ministries.**
- (6) **Appointing politicians, former ministers on the boards of directors of the companies that they own.**

(5) Conclusion, Assessment, and Recommendations

This paper tried to provide an analytical and in-depth reading of the relationship between the transformations in Israel towards neoliberalism and between the rise of new forces in Israeli society, as well as the effect this has on the Palestinian issue. The paper has relied, in its analysis, on three main topics, and they are: the relationship between the neoliberal project, privatization, and the occupation and settlement enterprises; the relationship between neoliberalism in Israel and the rise of the new extremist right and it taking control, and finally an analysis of the interests of capitalists who were formed as a result of the large-scale economic transformations, the interests of this group, and their interactions with politics.

In the first topic, the paper found, based on the reading and analysis of reports and studies, that there is a triangle that governs and weaves the current relationships between neoliberalism, privatization, and occupation. The increasing privatization has led to strengthening the settlement enterprise, which has led to a socioeconomic class that believes that its social and economic interests are completely linked to the right-wing being in power, which guarantees this triangle of interests, in the opinion of these groups, more than any other political group. This is without claiming that the Israeli occupation and colonial settlement enterprise is only linked to

the formation of the neoliberal economy, because the expansion project is a core idea and was in place before that the rise of neoliberalism.

In this regard, the settlement and occupation enterprise was, for Israeli governments (all of them, without exception) since the 1980s, a core and organic part of the neoliberal system. They used it (until 2005) as a tool to compensate for the claimed “welfare state” that was dismantled, and as compensation for the economic effect on the poorer classes as a result of neoliberal policies and privatization. The research finds that, after 2005, the settlement enterprise transformed from a tool into a part and became a vital component of the Israeli economy. The paper also found, in this topic, that there is an internal structural change that has happened with this, meaning among the group of settlers and the central leadership, represented by religious Zionism. This religious Zionism took a sharp turn towards the Protestant neoliberal model because of the changes, and because of this organic relationship mentioned above. It has started to adopt neoliberal tools and ideas because, in these ideas, it has found the incubator that ensures its sustainability as a political elite that plays a role representing the interests of settlers. This was translated into the rhetoric of the Jewish Home Party and its leadership, as well as in the establishment of research centers and magazines to raise awareness about this, specifically after 2011 (meaning after the Israeli social protests).

In the second topic, the study concluded that there is a direct and core relationship between the expanding neoliberal system and between the rise of new pressure groups from the extreme right as a part of the new right since 2005. The study believes that there cannot be a correct analysis of this phenomenon without

They used it (until 2005) as a tool to compensate for the claimed “welfare state” that was dismantled, and as compensation for the economic effect on the poorer classes as a result of neoliberal policies and privatization.

understanding its classist dimension, and this can be done by linking neoliberalism, the rise of “populism in Israel”, and the control that identity politics has in the discussion, along with the policy of “creating sectors”. The new economic system has not only led to the state withdrawing from the economy, it has also decreased confidence in state agencies, as a number of segments in society believe that the policy creation and implementation role of the state must be taken away from it. This means that there will be extremist right-wing organizations that will resume playing the role of state institutions, especially judicial and academic institutions, like the Im Tirtzu, Youth Supporting Settlements, settlement foundations, and others. In addition to that, there is the relationship between neoliberalism, partitioning, and the policy of creating sectors as a result of the harmful economic effects and populist political rhetoric. This could also explain the shift in a movement like Shas, for example, which represents religious and economically lower class Eastern Jewish groups who are closer to Zionism and the right. Their leaders are convinced, as elites, that they must support the new system in order to get a quota of the neoliberal system and privatization. This comes as a part of sectarian mobilization (in the Israeli definition) based on identity and populism with a right-wing spirit. These changes come in light of a structural challenge that the “Zionist left” is facing, and the left does not differ from the right on the issue of privatization, as it was one of biggest implementors of this policy. This removes the political differences between it and the right and dictates the necessity of separating the economy and politics.

As for the third topic, it showed that the economic transformations in Israel have led to

the creation of an elite group of capitalists, known as the capitalist whales. A very small group (16 companies, and in some lists 20 companies) control the most important economic sectors and concentrate around 40% of their investments in them. The study concludes, as other studies have done before it, that there is a strategic change in this group's understanding of the relationship between political settlement and economic growth. In the past, they used to link the two, but this idea ended in 2014. They no longer believe that there is an important relationship between the two, so that occupation and settlements can continue, and there be no progress towards a political settlement, while at the same time there continues to be economic growth for them. This is confirmed by the report. On the other hand, the study has shown that there is an intersecting relationship between a part of this group and the financing of election campaigns for some nominees on the right, as well as providing funding for right-wing groups, like Im Tirtzu, and others. Moreover, it demonstrated the impact that this group has on the media and its coverage, which is biased towards the right, like the Israel Hayom newspaper and others.

Finally, this paper shows that the relationship between the occupation and the Israeli neoliberal system is a dialectical, as deepening one of them is linked to the other. It also shows new players who understand the importance of this relationship and work, political and economically, based on this understanding. The paper confirms that the appearance of the new right is linked to these economic transformations, and it will have a negative impact on the continuance and penetration of the right-wing, settlements, and settler colonial policies. It also shows that what is called the "left-wing and centrist Zionists" are suffering from a problem and failure not exactly in the political aspect, but in a deeper understanding of the economic aspect and the relationship between it and politics. In doing this, the left and center Zionists are not only

failing politically, they are failing in creating an alternative to take apart the current economic system that is suitable for the occupation.

(6) Recommendations

The paper concluded that the relationship between the new neoliberal system in Israel and the occupation system is continuing not only as a relationship of integration and support, but one that is complex and organic. It has also shown that the impacts of the economic transformations are not limited only to the economic field, but also include the political and social fields.

... the impacts of the economic transformations are not limited only to the economic field, but also include the political and social fields.

Based on the analysis, the results, and the conclusion, this paper has the following recommendations:

- Developing our vision and understanding of this aspect of settler colonialism and working to conduct more in-depth research that addresses the economic and classist aspects of the settler colonial Zionist enterprise and the Occupation.
- Developing research to understand the impact of these economic changes on political and economic conditions in the occupied areas of the West Bank (1967 areas).
- Developing the popular economic boycott campaigns for the goods and products from the settlements, and working to develop a model of the boycott, divestment, and sanctions for the Israeli regime, as it has been shown that the settler colonial Israeli regime has been affected by this at all levels.

- The study above shows the importance of instilling deeper and real understanding of the role of “left-center Zionism” (as some have called it) in the settler colonial system, and its role in the economic transformation in Israel. Moreover, to understand the link between its organic political and economic interests with the privatization system, then the settlement and occupation system. This might require the Palestinian leadership to deal with this matter by not relying on the ability of this “left-center” axis to make any changes in the core and main issues relating to the conflict, compared to the group of political elites that is currently in power.
- The study above shows the importance of developing research on the relationship between the transformation in the Israeli economic system and the Zionist economic elites in the United States, as the amount of financial resources that this group of elites and large families spend on settler associations in Jerusalem and the West Bank requires further study. The results and conclusions above must be linked to research that goes into this idea in depth.

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The Makeup of the Political and Electoral System in Israel: The Formation of a “Dominant Bloc System” in Israel

By Dr. Muhannad Mustafa

Summary

This paper discusses the Israeli electoral system and the structure of the political system, as well as the impact of this on the performance of the Israeli government in general, with emphasis on the Palestinian issue specifically. After reading the most important literature addressing the makeup of political systems in modern states and records of the structure of the Israeli system, the paper concludes that Israel, after the 2015 elections, has entered a new stage regarding the structure of its political system. This paper calls this stage the “dominant bloc stage”. Although the stage has been developing over the past decade, it has been further complicated during the election in 2015. The period of the dominant bloc is unique in a number of ways:

First: A reality has developed where the right-wing has become the only side that is able to form a government, without any need for election lists with other groups. The centrist and leftist parties, as they are known in Israeli politics, are unable to form a government without going into a coalition with right-wing parties. The same approach is not applicable to the right-wing parties.

Second: Increasing alignment within the Israeli political map. During the formation of governments in the past, there was rarely absolute refusal to participate in governing coalitions with specific parties, or specific individuals. Now, however, during the period of the dominant bloc, there are parties that were previously open to various coalitions, but now refuse certain alliances with parties from outside of their political or ideological camps.

Third: The dominant bloc stage is building the foundation for the return of the dominant party stage, as it was during the first three decades of the Israeli political system, although in an amended form. This stage is preparing for the emergence of the Likud Party as the dominant party in the Israeli political arena, due to it having the following benefits: a monopoly on the formation of the government; the ability to deepen its position as the party of the people, as it has a presence and represents all segments of Israeli society; and the absence of a real political competitor and serious alternative to it as the ruling party in Israel. Another of these benefits is that the parties that are in the Likud Party’s camp will follow it because they know that, without the Likud Party in power, they are far less likely to be represented in the government. Popular belief has settled on the idea that the ruling party is the Likud Party. This has been reflected in the party’s ability to attract different individuals and sectors to the party.

The dominant bloc stage is reflected on government decisions relating to the Palestinian issue. The dominant bloc assumes that the government will be a right-wing government, and it does not need allies from the other camps in the political spectrum. Consequently, the prevalence of this assumption has been reflected in government decisions on this issue. This hegemony is particularly demonstrable in four areas:

The dominant bloc stage is reflected on government decisions relating to the Palestinian issue

the drafting of the “settlement” law to confiscate private Palestinian land in the West Bank, moving forward with the last stage of drafting the nation-state bill, increasing settlements in the West Bank, and increasing efforts for annexation or the propagation of the status quo.

Introduction

This paper aims to analyze the Israeli political structure and the Israeli electoral system with regards to the government formation process, and the impact this has on political stability and the governmental and political decision-making process within the Israeli political system. The paper will focus on the characteristics of the Israeli political system and the impact it will have on the government formation process, namely reviewing the formation of the most recent government (2015) and its ability to make decisions in general, particularly related to the Palestinian issue. In addition, the paper aims to analyze the Israeli electoral system and its impact on the above. The nature of the political and electoral system can be characterized as one that lacks political stability; governments and governing coalitions frequently change, which impacts their ability to make decisions. The settlements that are reached during the decision-making process, which in turn are a product of the nature of the electoral system and the structure of the political system, affect the performance and effectiveness of the Israeli government. The paper also addresses how this is reflected on its decisions with regards to Palestinian affairs, especially the most recent government led by Benjamin Netanyahu. Therefore, it is vital to analyze both the political and electoral systems to ascertain a better understanding of both.

The importance of studying the effect that the electoral system and the structure of the political system have on the performance of the Israeli government has increased in light of the reality that no Israeli governments since

1988 has completed a full legal term. This is the result of a number of factors relating to the nature of the political system, namely its status as a multi-party system, which is considered more extreme than other parliamentary systems, and the collective regional nature of Israeli politics. This is reflected on the decision-making capacity of the government, in addition to affecting political stability in the country as a whole.

This paper frames its analysis of government stability and decision making based on related theoretical literature on the one hand, and published research literature on the structure of the Israeli political system on the other hand. The study also takes a sample of political decisions that were made by the Israeli government that are relating to Palestinian affairs and will try to understand the impact that the political structure had on the process of making this decision.

This paper is an important policy reference for decision-makers as it maps the changes in the political dynamic (including the dominant bloc) and contributes to a better understanding of the underlying structure that impacts decision-making and government formation in Israel. Government policies and decision-making are not necessarily linked to long-term considerations or strategic visions, but are subject, in many cases, to necessities or pressure from the governing coalition and the need to respond to the political structure that is a product of the fragmenting social conditions in Israeli society, which continuously relies on identity politics.

This paper is divided into four parts. The first part will present the theoretical literature on the electoral system, its impact on political stability and decision-making, and the most important Israeli writings on this issue that discuss and provide solutions for the Israeli condition. The second part of the paper will present the formation of the current government, the transformations that have taken place in the makeup of the political

system in the recent past, and how it has affected the Palestinian issue. The third part of the paper will present a sample of decisions, or a sample of draft decisions or laws, that were made or discussed by the government and are related to the Palestinian issue and the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict. This part will attempt to understand the internal dynamics relating to the makeup of the government and the decision-making process. The fourth and final part of the paper will present the conclusion and recommendations.

The Makeup of the Israeli Political System: Reviewing Current Literature

Israel adopted a proportional representation electoral system, because it responds to the nature of Israeli society as one that is made up of different communities. The proportional electoral system can guarantee representation to different groups in the parliament, and it responds to the political and ideological pluralism that have been characteristics of the settler colonial society^a even before the establishment of the state (Rahat 2005).

The proportional electoral system relies on the principle of party lists; in essence a party list is apportioned a number of seats in the parliament that is proportionate to the votes that the party received in the elections.

The proportional system contributes to increasing the power of political parties and their representations in the system, and it ingrains political pluralism. This is because

voting is for the party lists and the platforms that they carry, as well as the slogans and visions of the parties, but also the regional interests and directions that the parties represent, as collectives or ethnic groups. The political parties, however, remain the representatives of the regional political trends, and not individuals. Political parties, and their platforms, and not individuals and their abilities, are the ones that are at the core of the decision-making process among voters in the proportional system with a parliamentary system, unlike a presidential system (Reilly 2001, 17).

The proportional system leads to a number of electoral systems. For example, there are proportionate elections that consider the state as a single electoral region, as is the case in Israel. On the other hand, there are electoral systems where the state is divided into electoral districts, and where the nominees are chosen based on the proportional system in each area (Neuberger 2004, 256). Many studies and policy papers have made recommendations and proposed alternatives towards transforming Israel from a proportional electoral system, where the whole country is seen as a single electoral district, into a regional system that uses the proportional electoral system and divides Israel into a number of electoral districts, or even adopting a presidential system. The goal of these proposals was to decrease the number of political parties and resultant political instability on the one hand, and to decrease identity politics in elections and regional representation on the other, as the country would be divided into regions and this would

^a As a conceptual framework for analysis, settler colonialism refers to a structure, rather than any one event, which persists in the ongoing elimination of indigenous populations. It involves settlers' assertion of state sovereignty and juridical control over indigenous lands, eliminating obstacles to this by removing indigenous peoples themselves and asserting false narratives and structures of settler belonging. For similar understandings of settler colonialism, see: Dana and Jarbawi (2017). *A Century of Settler Colonialism in Palestine: Zionism's Entangled Project*, *Brown Journal of World Affairs*, Volume XXIV, Issue 1.; Wolfe, P. (1999). *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event*. London: Cassell; Veracini, L. (2015). *The Settler Colonial Present*. London: Palgrave Macmillan; Veracini, L. (2010). *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

fragment the power of electoral groups (Rahat, et al. 2013).

The proportional electoral system is considered the system that most guarantees achievement of political representation, and political parties can participate in the decision-making process in a more effective manner, compared to other systems. The proportional system lays the foundation for a political system with real pluralism that is based on political interests and the political and ideological differences between the parties (Neuberger 2004).

There remains another issue in the proportional system, which is the issue of the minimum qualifying threshold, meaning the minimum number of votes that is needed by a party list to enter parliament. It is not possible to guarantee representatives in parliament for every percentage that votes for a particular party. The qualifying threshold contributes to decreasing the problem with partisan and political fragmentation in the political system, as only the parties that have overcome this qualifying threshold are represented in parliament. This leads to political party alignment on a political basis so that the smaller parties can overcome the qualifying threshold by standing together (Norris 2004). Israel adopted a low qualifying threshold when it was first established of 0.8%, then this threshold was gradually raised, especially in the 1990s, to 1%. In the first decade of the 2000s, the threshold was again raised, rising up to 2%, and in the most recent elections it went up to 3.25%, which is one of the main reasons for the establishment of the Joint List.

The proportional electoral system was specified in Article 4 of the Knesset’s Basic Law (1958). The electoral principles were defined, in detail, in the Knesset Elections Law (1969). This law determined the principles of elections by law, and they are as follows:

General: Any citizen who is over 18 years of age has the right to participate in the elections.

Country-wide: The whole country serves as a single electoral zone.

Direct: Voters vote directly for the list that they want to vote for, without there being a third entity in the middle of this process.

Equal: Each citizen has a single vote, and each vote is of equal value with all other votes.

Secret: Nobody except the voter is allowed to know who the voter voted for.

According to Israeli critics, the proportional system has led to the rise of a number of negative phenomena in Israeli politics, which have had an impact on the stability of the governing system. The most important of these are (Rahat et al. 2013):

- (1) Many political parties and the increase in the number of small lists
- (2) Difficulty in forming a government coalition
- (3) Absence of government stability
- (4) Being subject to the demands of small parties, which are usually regional demands
- (5) Difficulty making decisions in the government

The Israeli parliament (Knesset) plays a central role in the process of forming a government, from the beginning of the process and until the candidates are sworn in in the Knesset itself. After the end of the elections and when the winning lists are announced, the head of state consults with all of the Parliamentary blocs on the best nominee to form the government. Usually, there is agreement on tasking the head of the largest parliamentary bloc to form the government, and they have to, of course, be a member of the Knesset. After the head of state listens to the recommendations of the parliamentary blocs, they task the most recommended person to form a government. After the person tasked with this agrees with the blocs that want to join a coalition for a specified period, they have to get the Knesset’s approval and agreement for the new government. The government coalition is formed if it gains the confidence of at least 61 members of the Knesset. The vote of

confidence is not necessarily linked to the formation of a bloc that constitutes a majority in the Knesset, despite this being what usually happens. However, a minority government could be vulnerable to a no confidence vote that can be initiated in the Knesset. The government needs for there to be a government coalition that has a majority in order to stop votes of no confidence being taken.

The Structure of the Political System and Decision-Making Regarding the Palestinian Issue

As mentioned above, the process of forming a government is a complicated issue in the Israeli political system, especially after the end of the two-party era, which lasted until the beginning of the 1990s. The Israeli political system is today made up of small- and medium-sized parties, and this means that there needs to be a party with a larger base (which is, by itself, a medium-sized party when compared to the era of the two large parties) to lead a coalition with a number of smaller parties in the Israeli parliament (the Knesset). The process of forming the government is conducted in parallel with coalition negotiations that are hoped to lead, in the end, to signing a coalition agreement for each party and a coalition agreement for the whole government, taking into account the interests of the political parties. These interests are political, ideological, and regional.

Through a survey of the most important literature on the Israeli political system, its structure, and the formation of a government (Arian 2005, Rahat 2005, Navot and Peled 2009, Medding 1990, and Galnoor and Blander 2013), five historical trends emerge. These can be divided, based on its political structure and effect on decision-making, into five stages:

The First Stage: The Stage of the Dominant Party System

This stage continued from the founding of the state of Israel until 1977. During this period, the Mapai Party (later the Labor Party) dominated the Israeli political scene, and it did not face any competition in forming a government. This affected the development of government policies in all fields, bringing them in line with the platform of the party.

Israeli researchers have used the theoretical framework of the “dominating party”, which Maurice Duverger presented in his book, *Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State* (Duverger 1964). He used this term to describe the Mapai Party’s domination of the Israeli political system during the first three decades.

The dominating party does not mean the emergence of a party system that relies on a single party (which is a characteristic of authoritarian regimes), but that it emerges in a political system with numerous political parties. Also, the dominating party does not have to necessarily get a majority of the parliamentary seats or votes. Despite the fact that there is political pluralism, and the dominating party not getting a majority of the parliamentary seats, the party continues to dominate the political apparatus because of it having wide and sole influence on transformations in various fields of the state, and because the state is interlinked with the party. For this reason, the 1977 elections, in which the Likud Party rose to power for the very first time, were considered the end of the era of a dominating party in the Israeli political scene (Shapiro 1980).

Israeli politics, until the mid-1970s, had not gone through the absence of political stability because of the control and dynamics of the single party, the Mapai Party. The dynamics and intersection of the party with the state and its policies, in an unmatched manner, led to political stability (Arian 2005). During the reign of the Mapai Party, the state was centralized

and there was no political alternative. This decreased the margins for smaller parties to extort or make inroads and ensured the stability of politics at the governing level (Cohen and Caesar 1998, 690). It should be noted that Israel made most of its expansion gains during this period, especially its victory during the June 1967 War and its occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, as well as the annexation of Jerusalem.

The Second Stage: The Stage of the Two-Party System

The rise to power of the Likud Party after its historic victory in 1977 and the formation of its first government heralded a new stage in the Israeli political scene: that of the two large parties. This stage lasted until 1996. During this stage, there was a competition between the two main political parties (the Labor Party and the Likud Party) to form the government, which led to increased importance for the smaller parties, which were needed by the larger parties to form a government. The Israeli political system during this stage was not an absolute two-party system, as is the case in Great Britain; it was a two-party system with additional smaller parties, and the larger parties had the biggest role in decision-making. The larger parties kept control of the important ministries (Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Finance, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and they gave the smaller parties other, less important ministries. This period was unique because of the formation of national governments that were made up of a coalition of the two main parties. The national governments played a large role in internal and external politics, as Israel withdrew from Lebanon to the “safe zones” during the reign of a national government, and a national government was formed against the backdrop of the First Intifada. The two main parties divided up the important ministries amongst themselves. During Rabin’s government, which relied on a government led by the Labor Party

(with 44 seats that it gained during the 1992 elections), the Oslo Accords were reached, as the larger political party was able to make major political decisions without the acquiescence of the smaller political parties. The period of the two parties ended with the adoption of the direct election system in 1996.

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Despite the negative aspects of the proportional system of elections, this system was able to preserve relative, if not total, political stability. This was because of the continuing presence of the two large parties. Despite the high number of smaller political parties, this did not weaken or decrease, in general, the power of the two main parties that had been rotating in power since 1977, or after the political “coup” in Israel and the Likud Party leading the Israeli government for the first time in the state’s history.

The Third Stage: The Stage of Direct Elections of the Head of the Government

The law for direct elections of the prime minister first came into effect in 1996, bringing about a new stage in internal Israeli politics. This change was not just at the structural level, but also of Israeli political culture. The law was a serious preliminary attempt at reform, and this attempt ultimately failed, leaving behind a large amount of destruction at the level of the governing system and the large parties, the political culture, and the governing structure in the state (Diskin 1998).

In Article 13 of the revised Basic Law: The Government, the law states that: “The head of the government is the one who is elected by the people, who has gotten more than half of the valid votes cast, and is a member of the Knesset.”^b The law introduced direct elections, and this took Israeli voters into a new political

^b Israeli Statutes Books, Book No. 17

stage that allowed them to vote on two ballots instead of one; one ballot for the Knesset and one for the Prime Minister. This new law weakened the Knesset in general and decreased its oversight of the executive branch specifically, but it also weakened the government as well, contrary to what had been expected. It increased the dependence of the Prime Minister on the smaller political parties, which became more powerful at the expense of the larger political parties.

This new law weakened the Knesset in general and decreased its oversight of the executive branch specifically, but it also weakened the government as well, contrary to what had been expected.

Korn believes that the political apparatus that was produced by the direct elections law was similar to the political system that existed between 1949 and 1977. The multi-party political system was characterized by a dynamic political

Party-the Mapai Party. Following the adoption of the direct elections law, however, the dynamism shifted from the party to the individual politician (Korn 1998).

The direct elections law created a new political reality in Israel at the level of politics, culture, and political identity. The harm that it did to Israeli politics was such that it pushed politicians and academics to stand against this law and try to repeal it. Yossi Beilin, a former Israeli politician, considered the law to be a “car accident” in Israeli politics (Beilin 1996). None of the governments that were formed based on the direct elections law have completed their full terms. Supporters of the law believed the political behaviour of voters would remain the same after the direct elections law went into effect, and that the political party base of the elected prime minister will remain stable and strong. They did not anticipate, however, that the law would change the political game and lead to changes in the political and electoral behavior of voters as well.

The direct elections law significantly weakened the larger political parties and strengthened the smaller political parties, which increased the dependence of the prime minister and their government on the small parties. This dependence was greater than it was in the past, with the proportional electoral system that was in place before the new law.

The Fourth Stage: The Stage of the Medium-Sized and Small Political Parties

The repeal of the direct elections law did not lead to a return to the system of the dominating party or the two-party system. It created a new political reality that was unique: medium-sized parties and small political parties. This weakened the prime minister and the ability of the government to make decisions, while the smaller political parties, in this new structure, gained new influence over government policies in all fields. The medium-sized parties that alternated leadership of the Israeli government during this stage was the Kadima Party, which was founded by Ariel Sharon before his illness and which led the Israeli government until 2009, and the Likud Party. Likud governed as a medium-sized party, and it has led the Israeli government until now. The 2015 elections started a new stage in the structure of the political system in Israel; a stage that we will call the stage of the dominant party bloc.

The repeal of the direct elections law did not lead to a return to the system of the dominating party or the two-party system. It created a new political reality that was unique: medium-sized parties and small political parties.

The Fifth Stage: The Stage of the Dominant Party Bloc

In order to understand the fifth stage, we must take into account the classification and labeling used by Kharis Templeman (Templeman 2014) between three political structures relating to the type of political party, the model of the political system, and the

merits of the political party system. What we are concerned with is the third system, which is the type of political party system, and not the political parties themselves. The dominant political party, or the single party, is the description of the political party in a specific political system. The political party system, however, is the description of the political party system as a whole and its influence on the core and structure of the political system. For that reason, Templeman differentiates between systems with two political parties. The first is the single party system, which is usually the system in place in authoritarian regimes and where political opposition is not legal, is marginalized, or is unable to become an alternative to the ruling party. This is different from the dominant party system, which is present in democratic countries where the opposition is legitimate and even competes for power, but these efforts are usually not effective for a number of elections. In addition to the definitions of the dominant party system that focus on the impact of the dominant party on the state and the public sphere, there are procedural definitions that are simpler, like the definition by Du Toit and de Jager, who have defined a political party system as being a dominant party system if the same party wins at least four consecutive election cycles (Du Toit and de Jager 2014).

The dominant party system is considered the closest one to understanding the Israeli political context. The discussion here is not about the condition of the dominant party in an authoritarian system, but about the political party system with a dominant political party that has been formed in recent years, without discounting the idea that the dominant party system in Israel started in 1977. This is in addition to the policies that are being used by the new right in Israel to impose its agenda on the state and the public sphere, as well as the series of laws that it has legislated and aspires to legislate in the future. The new right has taken control of the definition of nationalism and Zionism (Pedahzur 2012). This could lead, in the end, to transforming Israel from a

system with a dominant party, the right-wing, into a dominant party system represented by the Likud Party.

If we borrowed the patterns of the rise of the dominant party as classified by Templeman in his empirical study (Templeman 2014), and they are:

1. The rise of the dominant party as a part of a democratic system and through the electoral process, without decreasing political freedoms, like the freedom of expression, or limiting political opposition and arresting political activists and the media.
2. The dominant party lays the foundation for their central role in the state and the structure of the political system, and this is the track that made the Mapai Party, under the leadership of Ben-Gurion, unique in Israel because of its central role in building the state.
3. The third track is the track of forming the dominant party in an autocratic state, which opens the political arena for political pluralism and regular elections that it always wins, as was the case with the National Democratic Party in Egypt during Mubarak’s reign.

What is claimed below is that there is a new track, a fourth track, that is being introduced by the Israeli right-wing, led by the Likud Party. It is, in a way, similar to the first track in Templeman’s classification, but it differs from it because the right-wing camp that the Likud Party is standing at the center of has become dominant, and not the Likud Party itself. On the other hand, the Likud Party has become the dominant party within this camp, and there is no one to compete with it for this role. While the Israeli right has had a monopoly of authority and been able to impose its agenda, there has been a wide-scale limiting of freedoms and

...the right-wing camp that the Likud Party is standing at the center of has become dominant, and not the Likud Party itself

disintegration of the democratic system, without it collapsing from another side. These are steps that the Likud Party initiated as the leader of the right-wing during the past six years of its rule. It did this through legislating new laws, the most important of which was the citizenship law, as well as curbing freedom of expression, moderately taking away the legitimacy of the supreme court and taking steps to weaken it, among other measures (Fuchs 2015).

The right-wing has increased, over the past few years in general and during the last election campaign specifically, its campaign to take away the legitimacy of the left as a governing movement in Israel, and not as a political movement in the opposition.

One of the characteristics of this system is that the right-wing in Israel has worked, during this whole period, to build the borders of political legitimacy, or more correctly to build the borders of the ruling political legitimacy that is governing the state.

During the first decades of the establishment of the state, David Ben-Gurion, the head of the Mapai Party, which was the leftist and socialist party, used the slogan of “Without the Herut and Maki parties” in any government coalition that he headed. The Herut Party, headed by Menachem Begin, was the hardcore of the Likud Party, while Maki is the Hebrew abbreviation for the Israeli Communist Party. The slogan was implemented; Ben-Gurion refused, during the years that he ruled Israel,

to include the Herut and Maki parties in the government coalitions that he formed, and he excluded any feature of the role of Revisionist Zionism of Jabotinsky and its military wings, like the Etzel, from the official shrine of formal Israeli historical memories (Label 2007). With these actions, Ben-Gurion worked to define the borders of the ruling political legitimacy in the state and its historical memory. During the most recent elections, the right-wing was the one who tried

to define the borders of the ruling political legitimacy in the state. The right-wing has increased, over the past few years in general and during the last election campaign specifically, its campaign to take away the legitimacy of the left as a governing movement in Israel, and not as a political movement in the opposition. Additionally, the 2015 election was the first time that the head of a party that was nominated to head the government persistently announced their refusal to form a future government with any of the left or center-left parties. This kind of persistent position was not made by the opposing camp during the election campaign.

Table No. 1: The Characteristics of the Makeup of the Israeli Political System

The Makeup of the Political System	Period	The Political Stability of the System	The Effectiveness of Its Political Decisions
The Dominating Party System	1948 – 1977	Very high level of stability	Very effective
The Two Large Party System	1977 – 1996	High level of stability	Effective to some extent
The Direct Election System	1996 – 2001	Instability	Ineffective
The Medium-Sized Parties with Small Parties System	2003 – 2013	Instability	Effective to some extent
The Dominating Political Bloc System	2015	High level of stability	Very effective

Study Methodology

This study tries to analyze the makeup of the Israeli political system and its effect on decisions relating to the Palestinian cause, and the study is based on the theory that the makeup of the political system impacts the decision-making process and is reflected on the Palestinian issue. The study relied on qualitative analysis of the Israeli political system through an analytical reading of literature on this issue as well as theoretical literature on political systems. The theoretical literature was used and developed through research for a more in-depth reading of the Israeli political system and the effect that this had on decision-making. The study also relied on an analysis of the political behavior and a sample of the decisions that were made by the Israeli government in past years that are related to the Palestinian issue in order to understand the internal dynamics that led to these decisions being made and an attempt to analyze them through the characteristics of the Israeli political system. For this reason, the study relied on the following:

First: Reviewing Israeli literature on the characteristics of the Israeli political system and its makeup.

Second: A reading of the theoretical literature that can be used to understand the structure of the current political system.

Third: Analyzing the results of the Israeli elections relating to deepening the understanding of the Israeli political system.

Fourth: Analyzing a sample of government decisions relating to the Palestinian issue.

Analysis: The Direction of the Israeli Political System and Its Impact on the Palestinian Issue

The development of the dominating political bloc contributed to the shift of the right from a period of control to a period of domination, where the right dominated the Israeli political

system. The right-wing in Israel has gone through four transformations since 1948. There was the marginalization or opposition stage (1948 – 1977), then the governing or authority stage (1977 – 1999), then the political control or the absence of a political alternative stage (2001 – 2013), then the current stage, which is the ideological and political domination stage. The study reaches the conclusion that the Israeli right-wing, including secular and religious groups (despite the fact that the difference is, in many cases, a procedural one), has restructured its political and ideological makeup in the past two decades. Its project turned into the domination of the political scene in Israel, especially with regards to the Palestinian issue.

The political domination of the right-wing over what is called the Zionist left occurred during a political and ideological crisis that made it, on the one hand, adopt many of the right's positions with regards to the Palestinian issue.

The political domination of the right-wing over what is called the Zionist left occurred during a political and ideological crisis that made it, on the one hand, adopt many of the right's positions with regards to the Palestinian issue. On the other hand, the right was able to renew itself politically and ideologically without rejecting the reality that the left had created on the ground, which is the Oslo agreement. The right is trying, during the stage of building its dominating political party block, to settle the Palestinian issue based on its ideological views. This started with the Regulation Law, progressing towards the increasing of settlements, annexation enterprises, and the Nationality Law.

The next section will address some of these issues. This paper posits that these developments are based, in large part, in the development of the dominant political bloc system.

The current government legislated the Regulation Law to expropriate Palestinian lands, especially in order to “whitewash” the Amona settlement. This was ratified despite the fact that the Prime Minister, Netanyahu had, in the past, opposed passing this law because of the harm that it posed to Israel’s position in the international community, even stating that passing the law would send Israel’s leadership to the International Criminal Court (ICC). Nevertheless, due to the nature of the government coalition, this law was adopted.

In December 2014, the Supreme Court postponed, for the seventh time, the evacuation of the Amona settlement and gave the state two years to evacuate the settlement. That period should have ended in December 2016. With the deadline for the demolition and the settlement of this issue approaching, and significant pressure imposed on the government by the settlers, there were movements from the right, especially from the Likud Party and the Jewish Home Party, to find a solution for the Amona settlement before the date of the demolition drew near. The members and ministers of the Likud Party suggested the idea of a “Regulation / Whitewashing Law”, which legitimizes the settlements in the plans and compensates the Palestinian owners of the land. Members of the Likud Party issued a press statement that was signed by 25 members of the Knesset and a minister from the Likud Party, including the speaker of the Knesset, in which they called upon the government (meaning that they were calling upon themselves) to pass the regulation/whitewashing law. This was despite the fact that the judicial advisor to the government, a judge, opposed the law on the grounds that it violated the constitution. The government advisor announced that he would not be able to defend this law in the Supreme Court. Despite this, the petition was signed by the speaker of the Knesset and most of the ministers, as if they were members of the opposition and were calling for the

government to take a position towards this issue (Berger 2016A).

The Jewish Home Party attacked the Likud Party members, accusing them of doing nothing but issuing statements, and clarifying that the Likud is responsible for the Amona crisis because they did not take a strong position on the issue during the period of the Netanyahu-Barak government in 2009. According to Israeli analysts, the members of the Likud issued this statement because they realized that whitewashing settlements was something that would not be legally possible, and that it would bring international pressure on Israel. They also realized that the Supreme Court would not agree to this law, and this would put Israel under American pressure, in addition to there being indicators that showed that passing this law will harm the settlement enterprise itself. Their goal, however, was to state the obvious and throw the ball into the court of the Supreme Court because they were convinced that it would reject the Regulation Law. This would turn the Supreme Court into the main defendant in this case, because it did not allow the legislative authority to carry out its legislative authority and pass a law that would solve a problem. This was despite the fact that the Supreme Court played a part in extending the roots of this area and turning it into a symbol of the settlements by accepting to delay the demolition and evacuation of the settlement seven times. It also gave the government, in its last decision, a period of two years to demolish the outpost and find a solution for the settlers living in it. It seems like this is what the state will ask the government to do, for the eighth time in a row.

Following a discussion on ways to legitimize the settlements, the government is thinking of demanding that the Supreme Court delay the order to evacuate and demolish the settlement for another six months so that it can find alternatives for the settlers (Berger 2016B). This decision came after a meeting between the ministers of the Jewish Home Party (Naftali Bennett and Ayelet Shaked) and the Minister

of Defense, Leiberman, with Netanyahu this month in order to reach an agreement on the proposal to delay the evacuation of the settlement for another six months.

The Jewish Home Party is trying to find a solution that would allow the settlement to remain on the hill that it now resides, but not in the same exact location of the current settlement. This proposal came from the Jewish Home Party after the ministers of the party reached the conclusion that stopping the evacuation of the settlement from its current position would be too difficult, and that the Regulation Law that aims to expropriate Palestinian lands and legitimize the settlement outpost will not last in front of the Supreme Court, and it will not be supported by the judicial advisor of the government.

The right-wing, especially the settlement supporting elements of it, which has become the political component with the most influence on the state and the Zionist project during this period, believed that this would be a historic moment and a critical juncture in the annexation enterprise. Issue No. 157 of *Israel's Land is Ours!*, a short bulletin that is distributed by and for the settlers, was published on the eve of the most recent elections. This bulletin stated that the current period, and the current political objective of religious Zionism, must be the annexation enterprise. It reiterated that making annexation a reality will be at the centre of political work in the Knesset and in the coming government. In his article in this bulletin, Boaz Hatsini says that the task of the upcoming Knesset will be to choose between Israel and Palestine. In his article, he says: *“The crucial moment is near. In the current conditions, the best situation for us will be the annexation of the areas of Area C, which make up 60% of the area, and where all of the Jewish settlements are. This is what will ensure that there will not be a sovereign Palestinian state that works to end Israel as values, religion, and*

a nationality, and at the security level” (Hatsini 2016, 2).

In his criticism with regards to the evacuation of the Amona settlement, Bennett said that everything must be done during this period to annex the West Bank, and he used a religious term, saying that *“we must...give our lives”* for annexation. What this means is that now is the time for work to implement the idea of annexation and make it a reality (Rabid and Lees 2016). After the decision by the Security Council, which condemned the settlements, the Minister of Justice made a statement on her website, saying: *“We must change direction. When we walk with our heads down, this will not help us. We must raise our heads. We must do what is good for Israel, and we must talk about annexation.”*^c

The members of the Knesset from the right-wing proposed a draft bill to annex the Ma'ale Adumim settlement into Israeli sovereignty, but Netanyahu was able to hinder this proposal in the legislative cabinet committee because of the position taken by the Obama administration. The US administration did not seem to support this idea, in addition to the fact that Netanyahu realized the political and international impact that this step would have. This was especially after he was forced to support the Regulation Law, or the law expropriating private Palestinian lands in the West Bank, after he had said that the law would send Israeli leaders to the International Criminal Court in the Hague. The pressure from the right, however, forced him to support the law. Netanyahu did not oppose the law in principle (the principle of annexation), but because he wanted this to be done in coordination with the US administration. The attempts of the members of the right to pass the annexation law was conducted in parallel with a large-scale media campaign with its lobby in the Knesset to annex Ma'ale Adumim, which included advertisements in newspapers

^c Quoted from Haaretz, 30/12/2016, see the following link: <https://www.haaretz.co.il/opinions/.premium-1.3185215> (Last accessed on 21/4/2017)

that included the statements by most of the ministers of the Likud in support of the annexation of Ma’ale Adumim.

The right-wing writer, Nadav Shragai, supports the position that was taken by Netanyahu with regards to the issue of annexing Ma’ale Adumim: that annexation does not mean anything if it is not preceded by an intensive wave of construction. He believes that intensive construction in the settlements in general, and especially in Ma’ale Adumim, is the compromise that is currently acceptable among the right, between those that want to annex Ma’ale Adumim and those that refuse this because of the lack of coordination with the US administration. Shragai believes that this compromise between the groups in the right-wing during this period must be an increase in construction in the settlements and re-linking Ma’ale Adumim and Jerusalem. The link between these areas had weakened because of the decreased construction, especially in the E1 area, as well as because of the pressure by the Obama Administration against Israel in this regard. Shragai believes that, after this, annexation must be done in coordination with a close and friendly administration, such as the current Trump administration (Shragai 2017).

Assessment and Expected Scenarios for the Israeli Political System

This paper tried to analyze the Israeli electoral system and the political structure and explore how these mechanisms affect the position of the government towards the Palestinian issue. The objective of this study was to understand the dynamics of the transformations in the Israeli political structure and how it affected Israeli decisions on Palestine, and the paper has reached the conclusion that the Israeli political system is moving towards what the paper calls “the dominating political bloc”, which is a theoretical framework of the situation of Israel based on international and Israeli literature in this field.

Based on that, and starting from the theoretical framework regarding the dominating party system that was developed by Templeman, the political and party scene in Israel are developing into a dominating political and party bloc. The new system is unique in the centralization of the electoral camps at the expense of the large political parties, but they could lead to the creation of a dominating party stage. This depends on a number of developments in the coming period, and these developments were mentioned during the theoretical study, but they are still in the more distant future.

The new system is unique in the centralization of the electoral camps at the expense of the large political parties, but they could lead to the creation of a dominating party stage.

The impact of the dominating camp stage can be seen in a number of developments in Israeli policy. The most important of which are the absence of a flow of votes between the various camps, namely voters remaining in the same camp and the announcement of the political parties nominating an individual from their specific political camp to lead the government, even before the final results of the election had been announced. Part of this behaviour is due to the first reality, which is represented in voters continuing to vote in their same camps, but this is a manifestation of the fact that the various political camps are closed in on themselves and there is difficulty in building coalitions between them and other camps. If this happens, it will have an impact at the government level, in the executive authorities, and be the end of the pragmatic stage of Israeli politics. By this, internal pragmatism is meant. The options of establishing a coalition before elections and governing coalitions is possible after the elections, which are shrinking compared to elections in the past.

At the historical level, the right, with the formation of the current government, has now governed Israel for more years than the left has.

The biggest development is the absence of real competition for the formation of a government between parties.

Since the 2013 elections, the Likud Party has had the power to form governments without any competition. Before the Likud Party, there was the Kadima Party, which was established by Sharon. This party was also a right-wing party, despite its claims to be a centrist party. At the historical level, the right, with the formation of the current government, has now governed Israel for more years than the left has. As for the fourth reality, it is that the Likud is the only party that has a popular support base in all classes of Jewish society, unlike the leftist parties, which only have a popular support base among only the middle and upper classes, despite their social propositions which are in line with the interests of the middle and lower classes.

The paper reaches the conclusion that the transformations in the structure of the Israeli political system will affect government decisions with regards to the Palestinian issue, as the dominating bloc system assumes that there will be right-wing parties in the government. This will lead to a shift in government decisions towards the ideology of the right, without any challenge from outside the right-wing camp. In this, the paper does not make an exception for internal Israeli issues, but this is not the subject of the paper. In the context of the dominating political block shifting to the right in general, and the absence of a political alternative for governance, it seems likely that the political alternatives will move towards adopting many of the ideas of the right, which has moved from the stage of control to a stage of domination.

Given the above, three expected scenarios can be listed, as is shown in the table below:

Scenario	Content	Its Effect on the Palestinian Issue
Continued strengthening of the dominating political bloc	Continued development of the current political system, where the right-wing has exclusive power, and this system depends on the Likud Party as the ruling party as well as its natural partners only from the right-wing, without there being any alternatives to the right being in power.	Continued annexation policies, with marching towards the West Bank and settlement blocs, with increased settlement in them, and the continued freezing of the political settlement process while ensuring the failure of the two-state solution on the ground.
Development of the dominating political party bloc into a moderate political party system	Development of the structure of the dominating bloc system towards a dominating political party system, where the Likud Party is the dominating political party, and with the Likud Party being able to implement its own policies without having to rely on its natural partners on the right.	Continued annexation policies, with marching towards the West Bank and settlement blocs, with increased settlement in them, and the continued freezing of the political settlement process while ensuring the failure of the two-state solution on the ground. The difference between the policies of the Likud in this system and the one above is that it will do this while also taking into account Israel’s international interests, and maybe going back to the policy of managing the conflict, and not ending it.
Going back to the system of medium-sized political parties and small parties	The disintegration of the dominant bloc system because of the changes in Israeli society, regional changes, or international changes that lead to a return to the medium-sized party system with smaller parties. This system would allow for a transfer of power between the various political camps.	This system contributes to bringing up other choices for the Palestinian issue, and it could lead to reaching a political settlement for the Palestinian issue, or preparation to take steps in this regard. This system contributes to curbing the influence of small right-wing parties and their power over government policies compared to their large influence over the dominant political party bloc.

Recommendations

First: Ending the link between the structure of the political system and the Palestinian issue by focusing on rebuilding a Palestinian resistance structure with a persevering and popular nature. This must be done so that the Palestinian political movement works on developing its popular struggle without it being affected by the transformations and dynamics of the Israeli political system. This recommendation aims to separate the Palestinian issue through an independent Palestinian administration that is not linked to the transformations and shifts in the structure of the Israeli political system.

Second: The shift towards the dominating political bloc in Israel, which is represented in the right-wing bloc being in control of power in Israel, is based, in a large part, on the Palestinian issue. The rise of the right was based on the Palestinian situation, as the right is rising and strengthening its power whenever it takes certain its positions towards the issue of Palestine. Therefore, the Palestinian issue must reconsider its role as an entity living under occupation and to resist the settlement enterprises of the right-wing and attempts to impose a reality on the ground. The power of the dominating bloc goes back to the ability of the right to market its ideology in Israeli society on the one hand, as well as the right knowing its ability to implement its plans on the other hand.

Third: Continuing to study the dynamics of the Israeli political system in the coming period, especially the dynamics relating to the Palestinian issue, in order to build a system of analysis and predication of political trends and directions for this system.

Fourth: Internationally uncovering the ideology of the dominant right-wing bloc in Israel in two aspects. The first is the democratic aspect, as this bloc has undemocratic tendencies, to the extent of being opposed to democracy and human rights. The second is

the political aspect, and it relates to this bloc’s rejection of the two-state solution, and their attempt to annex Palestinian land, or parts of it, or building a system based on racial discrimination.

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Proposed Solutions and Scenarios for Influencing Israeli Public Opinion

By Anton Shalhut

Summary

The year 2017, which is drawing to an end, marks the 50th anniversary of the June 1967 War. This was the war that redrew the borders of “the State of Israel” and the formation of Israeli society. As a result of this war, the geographic area of historically Palestinian land that came under Israeli control increased fivefold, and it seemed the danger that threatened the existence of Israel up until that point had disappeared.

According to many old and new analyses at the time of this anniversary, there were a number of Israelis that believed that the military objectives that were achieved during this war could be a suitable opportunity to bring about peace between Israel and the neighbouring Arab countries. Others, however, saw it as a sign from God and salvation for Israel, and that this military success was a message ordering them to keep control of any piece of land that they had gained, no matter the consequence. Based on this message, the settlement enterprise started on the 1967 lands and continued in order to “impose Israeli control”!¹.

In the fifty years since that war, hundreds of colonial settlements^a have been established in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, with the direct encouragement and support from the Israeli state and its various institutions and authorities.

Under the framework of the Oslo Accords (1993), some of the areas in the West Bank were transferred to the control of the Palestinian Authority, but most of these lands (60%) remained under Israeli military rule (Area C).

As for the Gaza Strip, the Jewish settlements there were evacuated as a part of what is known as the “unilateral separation plan” that was implemented in 2005. At the same time, Eastern Jerusalem was officially annexed by Israel and unified with Western Jerusalem by a special law that was passed by the Israeli Knesset in 1980.

The overarching questions are:

- Is Israel ready to address the future of the lands in the West Bank within the framework of what is known as the two-state solution?
- And if so, what are in-kind returns or concessions for this decisive resolution if it is ready for it?
- To what extent does this kind of decisive resolution form a pressing demand by the public, represented by Israeli public opinion, towards political institutions?
- Finally, what are the possible scenarios that are discussed in Israeli public opinion with regards to this decisive

^a As a conceptual framework for analysis, settler colonialism refers to a structure, rather than any one event, which persists in the ongoing elimination of indigenous populations. It involves settlers’ assertion of state sovereignty and juridical control over indigenous lands, eliminating obstacles to this by removing indigenous peoples themselves and asserting false narratives and structures of settler belonging. For similar understandings of settler colonialism, see: *Dana and Jarbawi (2017). A Century of Settler Colonialism in Palestine: Zionism's Entangled Project, Brown Journal of World Affairs, Volume XXIV, Issue 1.*; *Wolfe, P. (1999). Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event. London: Cassell*; *Veracini, L. (2015). The Settler Colonial Present. London: Palgrave Macmillan*; *Veracini, L. (2010). Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview. London: Palgrave Macmillan.*

resolution? How can this public opinion be influenced towards a resolution like this?

Introduction

This paper aims to explore and analyze the Israeli debate on the options for a settlement with the Palestinians, and the extent to which these options are supported by public opinion. Despite the seeming lack of concern on the surface, the Israeli public arena is full of wide-ranging discussions on the form and substance of the desired political settlement. Specifically, this paper will address the settlements that have been proposed in the past few years, especially in the context of the retreating idea

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of a two-state solution in official Israeli statements and increasing focus on political options by the Israeli right-wing that include annexation and legitimizing the current situation on the ground, politically and legally.

The mapping of the general trends in Israel with regards to the question and options for a political settlement is particularly salient in the context of domination of the right-wing in the Israeli political scene and the resultant shift in rhetoric in the public sphere. This paper attempts to offer a tool for Palestinian decision-makers to understand the trends and the general political and popular mood among Israelis with regards to the options for a settlement. The options that are being proposed are not separate from an attempt to deal with the general trends in Israeli society, and specifically on the issues of a permanent solution of: Jerusalem, the settlements, the border, and the larger question of what the Palestinian political entity will be, based on how it is viewed in Israel. Moreover, the importance of the paper comes from the fact that it records and analyzes recent Israeli opinions on the proposed settlement.

Understanding these indicators is important to interpret the dynamics of the political, intellectual, and ideological transformations in Israel and how they are reflected on the options for a settlement. For this reason, the paper recommends understanding these options not only for their own sake, but also in the context of the transformations taking place inside Israel itself.

This paper relies on a methodology of textual analysis of proposed initiatives, statements, and literature that emanate from Israel regarding the options for a settlement. The paper will carry out an analytical review of these texts and statements through a historical approach on the one hand, as well as their relationship and links to historical options and political transformations, along with the recent transformations in Israeli society, on the other hand.

This paper is divided into five sections. The first section addresses the proposed solutions and settlements that are ongoing in the Israeli arena; the second presents the recent debate in Israel on the issue of annexation; the third section addresses the proposed scenarios for the Israeli options for a settlement, while the fourth and final section presents the research paper's recommendations relating to its objective.

The Proposed Solutions or Settlements

As the discussion is on public opinion in Israel and the possibilities of influencing it in order to make progress towards a settlement, this section will first outline the sides and arguments of the ongoing debates regarding the future of the West Bank.

In November 2017, this was conducted by *Davar Rishon*², an Israeli newspaper (considered to be the mouthpiece of the general workers union, the New Histadrut) through interviews that it conducted with five Israeli figures concerned with the issue. The

newspaper described them as “*having developed, complete, and cohesive visions on the future of Judea and Samaria [the West Bank]*”. During these interviews, they presented four different choices regarding the future of Israel and the West Bank.

... the approach to the Palestinian issue within Israeli public opinion is not simply a historic or intellectual exercise, but represents a constantly renewing reality.

The newspaper clarified that “*the only common denominator for all of them was their real concern for the future of the state of Israel and its residents,*” while “*their opinions are very different, to the point of conflicting with one*

another.” Three of the five interviewees agreed on the importance of “*Israel changing its direction.*” This suggests that the approach to the Palestinian issue within Israeli public opinion is not simply a historic or intellectual exercise, but represents a constantly renewing reality. Moreover, this issue is not dealt with on its own and for its own sake, but is an “Israeli issue” as well.

The four options that were presented by the interviewees regarding the settlement were the following:

1. Two states for two peoples
2. A single state with Israeli sovereignty over “Judea and Samaria”
3. Remaining in the current situation
4. Two states – one nation for two peoples

The newspaper considers the first three choices to be traditional (objectionable), while the fourth choice represents “*an attempt to think outside the box*”, according to its description. It is summarized in an attempt to establish a single state that is made up of a number of groups with self-rule and equality.

It should be noted here that the group that advocates for this option held a conference in Jerusalem in November 2017, where it

announced that it supported the presence of two states in the 1967 borders, but, at the same time, suggested that the borders between them should be open borders. It added that, “*in this way, Palestine will be returned, to a great extent, to the Palestinians, without it being taken away from Israeli Jews. The partnership between the two states, and the shared border, will depend on recognizing the relationship between the two peoples and each land, without there being a need to spill blood for this shared nation.*”³

This “non-traditional” option appeared for the first time in 2002, when a group was formed that included the poet, Elias Cohen, who was a settler in “Kfar Ezion” (in the area of Bethlehem), Motti Ashkenazi, who spearheaded a protest after the October 1973 War (the Yom Kippur War), Professor Esther Alexander, and Dr. Haim Assa. This group started an intellectual movement that they named *Justice*, and its aim was a “*model with three confederal states living within the assigned borders of Israel, including Jordan, Israel, and Palestine.*” This movement participated in the 2003 Knesset elections, but only got 1,181 votes, and quickly disintegrated and disappeared after this.

Cohen told the newspaper that “*the initial idea was to establish a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders so that ‘groups’ can live in these states. For example, the Palestinians in Jordan could be Jordanian nationals and nationals of the Palestinian Confederation as well, and they would be members of a Palestinian group. As for the Israeli settlers (in the 1967 lands), they would remain in their areas, inside Palestine, but they would be members of the Israeli group.*”

In the years after, Cohen reached the conclusion that it was necessary “*to recognize the right of Palestinian refugees to return.*” He clarifies that “*it is not important to draft a final solution, because if you do not recognize the 1948 refugees, and that Israel is one nation for the two peoples, then there will not be a solution.*” Based on this belief, Cohen took the

initiative in 2009 to form an “intellectual forum” that included settlers, academics, and social activists who expressed their readiness to discuss “multiple groups sharing a single geographic area.”

Cohen says: “We say that, if we want to create something that is livable and can be sustained for numerous generations, then it is important to respect the deep ties that link both of these peoples to this area.” He said that this idea “is in conflict with the concept that the Oslo Accords were based on, which is a green line that determines the borders of Israel and the borders of Palestine. We know that both Palestinians and Israelis have links with all of this land, without divisions!” In his opinion, “one of the things that has been ingrained in people in the past few decades is that the word peace is linked to painful and horrifying concessions. We want to restore the feeling of hope to this word, and to bring about a change in the language of dialogue, which has been focusing on the losses and gains to be made from peace.”

Cohen says that “This is a movement of volunteers that have made the decision to not get any funding from any foreign government fund. It relies on popular work on the ground, and we have conducted over 400 meetings in homes. We have 300 activists who work with us, along with a few thousand supporters and donors. We are making slow progress, and the work is hard.” He believes that “the main difficulty is in the pessimism on both sides. It should be noted that hopelessness and fear are deeper among the Palestinians, because their daily lives are much harsher, and their conditions have been getting worse since the Oslo Accords.”

Cohen believes that the “choice of a single nation for two peoples” might seem today “to be closer to reality than it was five years ago” with increasing agreement, “in Israel and in most countries around the world”, that “the solution of separation is not realistic, and not feasible.” He adds: “We have succeeded in adding the term ‘confederalism’ to the public’s

vocabulary, to the point that the American Central Intelligence Agency (the CIA) has contacted us recently, asking for clarifications and explanations on our ideas because the Americans are looking into new options today. Among these options is the option that we are proposing.”⁴

At the level of Israeli political parties, much of what can be noticed is that, after 50 years of occupation from 1967, Israel has, for the first time, conducted an official ceremony in the Knesset and Gush Etzion to memorialize “the return to the lands of the historical state of the Jews in Benjamin, Judea, and Samaria, which makes 2017 the most important year with regards to these lands since 1967.”⁵

What this means is that 2017 is the most important year with regards to legitimizing settlements and settlers.

A former Israeli minister, Haim Ramon, stated that today there are, in the occupied lands of the West Bank, with the exception of Eastern Jerusalem, around 400,00 Jewish settler colonialists. He claimed that “it is clear to everyone that there will be no evacuation of the Jewish settlements in the areas of Eastern Jerusalem as a part of any settlement agreement in the future.” Based on the most recent figures, the number of these settlers is also around 400,000 settlers.

Ramon followed up by saying that, among the settlers in the West Bank, there are around 300,000 who are living in what he called “larger settlement blocs”, around which there is national agreement on the “importance of these settlements remaining under Israeli sovereignty.” In his opinion, “even the representatives of the Palestinian authorities agreed, during the previous rounds of talks, that these settlements will not be evacuated as a part of an agreement, and this would be in exchange for land swaps.”

Based on these figures and Ramon’s own statements, the remaining settlers that were not yet eligible for land swaps are the 100,000 to 110,000 settlers living outside of these blocs

that are located all over the West Bank. Based on opinion surveys that were conducted during the government of Ehud Olmert (2006 – 2009), when Ramon held the position of a high-ranking minister, around 70 to 80% of these people will be evacuated in the end, voluntarily or through an agreement, because “they do not want to live under Palestinian sovereignty.” Around 20,000 of them will remain, and they will be the extremist core of the settlers, including the ‘hilltop youth’ gangs. These settlers will remain in these areas not to live in peace under Palestinian rule, but in order to ruin the agreement.

It has been suggested that this evacuation is what swung the political debate among Israelis, regarding the lands that have been occupied since 1967, in the favour of the settlers.

For this reason, there will be daily clashes of all shapes and sizes between the remaining settlers and the Palestinians, and the Israeli army will have to intervene in order to provide security for these settlers. This will lead

to never-ending clashes with the Palestinian police forces during the sensitive first moments of implementing the agreement. In all cases, it is clear that their presence is a ticking timebomb that will blow up the agreement sooner or later.⁶

For the sake of comparison, on the eve of the signing of the Declaration of Principles Agreement (the Oslo Accord) between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1993, the number of Jewish settlers in the West Bank was 110,000 settlers, with a similar number of settlers in settlements in Eastern Jerusalem.

When discussing the intention to evacuate settlements, one must remember what is known as the “Separation Plan” that was mentioned above and was implemented in 2005. During that time, Ariel Sharon’s

government (2001 – 2006), as a part of this plan, evacuated the Israeli colonial settlements in the Gaza Strip.

It has been suggested that this evacuation is what swung the political debate among Israelis, regarding the lands that have been occupied since 1967, in the favour of the settlers. After that plan, a well-known Israeli political commentator

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wrote that, despite the fact that most Israelis were prepared to allow for the establishment of a Palestinian state next to Israel, according to a number of opinion surveys, the “state” that they meant was not that different from the current Palestinian Authority, whether with regards to its geography or with regards to its political and military capacity. The biggest indicator of this understanding of statehood is that according to public opinion surveys from that time, there was only a minority of Israelis who supported the evacuation of the 150,000 to 200,000 settlers in the West Bank, the withdrawal of the Israeli Army from its military bases in the Jordan Valley, establishing a new border in Jerusalem, and turning the occupied lands into a country that could accommodate the hundreds of thousands of refugees, especially those from the camps in Lebanon. This confirms that, even in the case that there are disputes between Israelis over the occupied lands, these debates have been decided in favour of the settlers. It seems like Sharon understood this well, which is why, by showing the great difficulty that faced the process of evacuating a few thousand settlers in the Gaza Strip, he showed the whole world the great difficulties that would be faced if there were any attempts to evacuate 20 times the number of settlers^b.

^b It should be noted that the 20 times the number of settlers that were talked about at the time were regarding the number of settlers in the West Bank 12 years before, as statistics showed that they were no more than 200,000 settlers at the time.

The Israeli Debate on the Annexation Option

While the aforementioned events were ongoing, many Israeli politicians, especially those on the right, have proposed the announcement of the annexation of areas in the West Bank and bringing them under Israeli sovereignty.

These kinds of calls have occurred and increased in frequency after the election of Donald Trump as the President of the United States of America and after UNSC Resolution 2334 (2016), which condemned the settlements and stressed the two-state solution based on the June 1967 borders.

The calls for annexation have received unprecedented support from Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and to move the American Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, a decision that was announced in December 2017. Following this announcement, right-wing voices that had been calling for an annexation of parts of the West Bank to Israeli sovereignty increased markedly, and Israeli politicians, especially those from the Likud and Jewish Home parties, initiated the first step in this process. This step was the proposal of a law to annex the Ma'ale Adumim settlement for Israel, whilst there are right-wing voices that are demanding that all of Area C be annexed by Israel.

At the end of 2017, the Likud Central Committee unanimously voted on a draft resolution to urge lawmakers to impose Israeli sovereignty over the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the Jordan Valley.

Meanwhile, progress was made on a draft law that would have brought all academic institutions in the Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the responsibility of the Council for Higher Education in Israel (headed by the Minister of Education and the leader of the Jewish Home Party, Naftali Bennett). Under this law, Ariel University, in the Ariel settlement, would have become, de facto, a

part of the state of Israel, removing all differences between universities that were established with the intention of ingraining and perpetuating the occupation, on the one hand, and between academic institutions in Israel. Israeli legal circles confirm that passing this law and implementing would mean implementing Israeli law on occupied lands directly. This echoes the law to legitimize the arbitrary settlement outposts, known as the Regulation Law.

The shift in rhetoric following Trump's election is apparent from a statement made by Bennett the day after the American election. Bennett stated that he considered Trump's victory a historic opportunity for Israel, and he believed that the era of the Palestinian state had ended. Bennett said: *"Trump's victory is an opportunity for Israel to immediately retract the notion of a Palestinian state in the center of the country, which would hurt our security and just cause."*⁷ The attempts of the right-wing to push forward the idea of annexation increased after Trump met with the Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, in the White House in February 2017. Trump stated that he supports any form of agreement that the two sides reach.

The right-wing in Israel, especially the settler right, which has become one of the groups with the most influence over the state and the Zionist project in the contemporary period, believes that the current historic moment is a critical moment for the annexation enterprise. They believe that, in the current conditions, the situation is opportune for the annexation of Area C, which makes up 60% of the area of the West Bank, and where all of the Jewish settlements are. This ensures that there will not be a sovereign Palestinian state. The political right on the whole believes in the idea of a gradual annexation, but its members differ on the borders and stages of this annexation. For example, Bennett proposes, in his plan, the annexation of Area C by Israel, and giving administrative self-rule in the rest of the areas. Uri Ariel, Bennett's ally in the Jewish Home Party, believes in the annexation of the whole

West Bank and granting the Palestinians the status of citizens. However, a member of the Knesset from the Likud Party, Miki Zohar, proposed the idea of annexing the land and giving Palestinians economic and social rights, without giving them the right to vote and run in elections.

Therefore, it is not an exaggeration to say that the debate over annexation in Israeli society, and in the Israeli political arena, has turned into a “bazaar of ideas”. Nevertheless, this remains an internal Israeli discussion where the Palestinians have become present, but absent. They are absent from the discussions, and no one takes into account their position, response, and visions.

The debate over annexation reflects the large transformations that are taking place in Israel, regardless of the ability to actually implement it, either in full or in part.

In this regard, there must be differentiation between the two types of annexation:

1. Annexation as a part of a political settlement with the Palestinians, like the proposal to annex the settlements and swapping land with the Palestinians as a part of an agreement for a final solution.
2. Annexing areas outside of any settlement or coordination with the Palestinians, as a unilateral step by the Israelis. This is the correct theoretical definition of the word annexation in political science dictionaries, like the Russian annexation of the Crimean Peninsula, or Israel’s annexation of the occupied Golan Heights.

The Israeli right-wing has been able to make the option of annexation a strong choice among the other options for a solution that Israelis have and, at the basic level, this option

has forced those with other directions to manage any discussion on this idea with this option in mind. This proposed option has been able to force others to give an implied initial agreement, even if it is contentious, by having the supporters of other options, especially those supporting the two-state solution, resort

to saying that they do not object to annexation if the right-wing is actually able to carry it out. This implicit agreement can be seen in the form of the challenge that is made to the right, with statements to the effect of: ‘Carry out annexation, and we will see how you will deal with the Palestinian population and

the international community’s position!’ or ‘You have been in power for decades, so why do you not annex these areas?’. These contentious phrases, which are meant by those saying them to embarrass the right are, deep down, ways of legitimizing the idea of annexation. The people who say these things are doing this, whether intentionally or not. This is clearly demonstrated in the increase in the number of supporters in the Jewish public for annexation. In a public opinion survey that was conducted in December 2016, around 40% of Israelis expressed their support for the annexation of all of the areas of the West Bank into Israel. The percentage of the Israeli public that supported this total annexation was 17% in 2009 and had increased to 25% in 2010.⁸

By its nature, the debate in Israel over annexation and the lands occupied in 1967 is linked to the discussion relating to Israeli demographics and demographic trends, which has been discussed at length recently. These trends show that Israel is moving in the direction where there will be a

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large increase in the population of hardcore Orthodox Jews in Israel, who have a higher reproductive rate, and thus they have a disproportionate contribution to the Jewish population growth. In addition to that, one of the biggest discussions resulting from the changes in the population and the proportional representation of the various sub-population groups, is that in Israel it is still part of the foundation of the relationship between religion and state, and the role that religion should play in Israeli public life. Further to the division in the Israeli population between the Jews and the Arab minority, an in-depth look into the makeup of the Jewish population shows gaps between the sects of the Haredim (the hardcore Orthodox Jews), the “religious Jews”, those “preserving traditions”, and the “non-religious Jews”. These gaps can be clearly observed through differences in approaches to issues of identity and values, which leads to differences in public policies towards issues like marriage and divorce, converting to other religions, separation of the genders, military service, and rulings relating to labour and public transportation.

In this regard, Professor Sami Samouhah, a sociologist at Haifa University, believes that there is an emerging movement of “Israelization” that has decreased the depth of the divisions between the various population groups. He also believes that Jewish groups, including the hardcore Orthodox Jews, are limited by the core idea of Zionism, which is “keeping Israel Jewish forever”. He says that Israeli society “is far from the brink of disintegration”, but he also recognizes that Israel must resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which is “an issue that is causing deep divisions among Israelis and

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distancing them from the international community”.

It can be said that a discussion on the number of Jews and Palestinian Arabs who live between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea (including the parts of the West Bank that are under the military control of Israel, in addition to the Gaza Strip) is the aspect of demographic discourse that is the most severe and upsetting in Israel. This is due to the indication of these

demographics with regards to the status (legal) of the land within and inside the Green Line, or what is known as the 1949 Armistice Border or the Pre-1967 Border. Specifically, the arguments that are made in support of or against official Israeli annexation of the West Bank (partially or totally) always end up at the relative balance that this annexation could create between the Jewish population and the Arab population in the area. The main premise here, by its nature, is that losing a Jewish majority from among the Israel citizens will undermine the status of Israel as a Jewish state.

In this regard, opponents of annexation claim that if Israel extends its sovereignty to the West Bank, the Jewish population between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea will quickly become a minority compared to the total number of Palestinians, which includes both the Arab Palestinians who are currently citizens of Israel and the Palestinians who are living in the West Bank. Based on this, they say that it is impossible to preserve Israel as a Jewish majority state if full political rights are granted to the millions of new Arab citizens in the West Bank. On

the other hand, a number of supporters of annexation state that there are alternative demographic indicators that predict a

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sustained Jewish majority that is being formed between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. They believe, therefore, that some or all of the West Bank can be annexed and that the right to vote and other political rights can be granted to the Arabs in the West Bank, while at the same time preserving the Jewish majority within the new borders.⁹

With regards to the Israeli ideas that have appeared in recent years for dealing with the conflict, especially those that have been proposed by high-ranking government ministers, they show the development of the following:

1. The vision held by Netanyahu himself, which he has directed the government to work in accordance with in recent years, can be summarized as being a demand for Palestinian recognition of the Jewishness of the state in exchange for establishing a limited Palestinian political entity that is nominally a state.
2. The vision and plan of Naftali Bennett, the head of the Jewish Home Party, which includes annexing Area C in the West Bank and having economic peace, or improving the economic conditions of the Palestinians.
3. The direction of unilateral separation that distinguishes the opposition (the Zionist Union and Yesh Atid). Those carrying this opinion believe that the Palestinian Authorities and President Mahmoud Abbas are not partners in the solution, and that the solution must be postponed for future generations.

Scenarios for Dealing with Israeli Public Opinion

In continuation of the above and the points presented throughout, the following points shall now be considered:

Regarding the American Administration

Not only has Israel not presented a noticeable shift in its political positions, which have remained stable, towards the settlement of the conflict, it is also receiving support from an American administration in order to impose its additional conditions.

This additional strength that Israel gained since the Trump administration started its term, is apparent in the following issues:

- **The Palestinian Issue:** Netanyahu has succeeded in achieving American disengagement, even if only in statements, from Washington's commitment to the two-state solution. Trump adopted Netanyahu's statement that the two sides must reach an agreement first, and this means ending the stage of internationalizing the solution, which has been done recently by Palestinian Authorities. This also expresses the American administration being in line with Netanyahu's opinion that any solution must be agreed upon by both sides, and not something that is imposed on Israel. Furthermore, Trump has stated that the solution that is reached by both sides will be acceptable for him, and this is a step away from the commitment of the previous Obama administration to the two-state solution.
- **Settlements:** Trump considered the settlements on occupied Palestinian lands since 1967 to not be an obstacle to peace, despite the fact that Trump asked Netanyahu to slow down settlement construction and the establishment of new settlements. The Trump administration does not seem to be diligent in monitoring Israeli violations relating to settlements, and it does not criticize Israel when these violations happen. With regards to the

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principle, not considering the settlements to be an obstacle to peace is at the core of Netanyahu's approach over the past few years with the increasing international criticism of settlement construction in the West Bank and Eastern Jerusalem. This was written in *Israel Hayom*, a newspaper that is close to Netanyahu, which described the relationship between the United States and Israel during Trump's term as showing a "new spirit". (*Israel Hayom*, 17/2/2017)

A number of ministers have also described Trump's statement as representing the start of a new era, and they have said that all of the previous American administrations have pushed for a two-state solution. For example, the Minister of Public Security, Gilad Erdan (an important member of the Likud Party), said that Trump's statement proves that we are in a new era, and the positions that it expresses show that there is an understanding that the two-state solution is not the only solution that can achieve peace. The time has come to change to change how things are done and put pressure on the Palestinian side because it is the side that is refusing. This conveys a clear message to the other side that refusing peace and raising [future generations] on hatred and violence are costly.

The Israeli Minister of Education, Naftali Bennett (the head of the Jewish Home Party) said that this was a new era, and he added that, "after 24 years, the Palestinian flag has come down from the mast and the Israeli flag has taken its place." Bennett believed that Trump's statement allowed Israel to annex the areas of the West Bank.

The difference between the Obama and Trump administrations is shown by Trump White House's statement on Israel announcing its intention to build 1,000 settler homes, after

the evacuation of the Amona outpost. The statement included the following: "While we don't believe the existence of settlements is an impediment to peace, the construction of new settlements or the expansion of existing settlements beyond their current borders may not be helpful in achieving that goal."

The Regional Conference: Trump adopted Netanyahu's idea on a regional approach to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict, and he agreed with Netanyahu on the importance of improving the regional environment for Israel and its relationship with Arab states first, and then having these steps culminate in a regional conference that focuses on reaching a settlement for the Palestinian issue.

Linked to the above, an expose by Haaretz uncovered an initiative to hold a regional conference and a meeting in Aqaba that was attended by the Egyptian President, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, the King of Jordan, King Abdullah II, and the previous American Secretary of State, John Kerry. This meeting was held with

[Trump administration:]
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the goal of resolving the conflict through a regional conference, and it became clear that Netanyahu had worked to ensure the failure of this initiative out of a fear of the government coalition and to avoid a solution. There are estimates

that the expose came to show that Netanyahu was not serious about this topic, and that President Trump did not know what he was talking about.

Regarding internal crises facing Netanyahu

Netanyahu has been facing, recently, an internal crisis with him being under investigation for two cases, and with Israeli police having recommended that he be indicted for the suspicion of receiving a bribe. These two cases are:

Case 1000- this alleges that Netanyahu received gifts from businessmen, including Jewish businessman Arnon Milchan, in violation of the law.

Case 2000- regards meetings between Netanyahu and the owner of the Yedioth Ahronoth newspaper, Arnon “Noni” Mozes. This case includes suspicions that bribes were exchanged between the two parties.

There are important political consequences from these two cases regarding Netanyahu’s political future and the future of his current government. There are some that believe that Netanyahu’s political future is at stake in light of the leaks of the results of these two cases. If he comes out of these two cases without two indictments (the final decision to submit them is in the hands of the Israeli government’s legal advisor), then this will start a new period of his political career. In this event, he will be the only Israeli leader for the coming period (and not just the prime minister), because this will confirm to his popular support base that he has been politically hounded more than any other prime minister or political leader in the history of Israel due to his political positions, as he has stated on a number of occasions. This will increase his popularity among his popular support base, voters, and the right wing, and he will remain the leader of the right for years to come, as well as the head of the government for many years, as he has promised.

In the event that he is indicated in one of or both of the cases, then this will be the end of his political career, and the door will be opened for a lot of activity in the Israeli political arena, and this does not necessarily have to be within the borders of the current political party situation.

The fall of Netanyahu might lead to the appearance of new players in the political and party scene in Israel. This can happen, for example, with the formation of a new party, or parties, headed by the former Israeli Minister of Defense, Moshe Ya’alon, or the former Chief of General Staff, Gabi Ashkenazi. These two individuals would be able to attract large numbers of voters from the base of the Likud Party.

The fall of Netanyahu might lead to the appearance of new players in the political and party scene in Israel. This can happen, for example, with the formation of a new party, or parties

It seems clear now that the right, as a whole, does not want Netanyahu to fall during this period as the current government is standing at a ‘historic’ fork in the road due to Trump winning the presidency in the United States. The fall of Netanyahu would mean chaos in the political arena as a whole and at the political party level, which would allow new actors who have been waiting for Netanyahu’s fall to make gains. These actors are an alternative to the current government, which is the most right-wing government in Israel’s history. The right believes that this is an opportunity to achieve its settlement enterprise and end the two-state option, annexing parts of the West Bank to Israel, as was mentioned above.

The right fears that Netanyahu’s fall, and the fall of the current government, could mean losing the opportunity to take advantage of this situation. Netanyahu has stated on numerous occasions that he is the only person able to manage the political, diplomatic, and security challenges of the current period. Many of the members of the Likud Party know that the party’s many repeated victories were due to Netanyahu being the leader of the party, and that the fall of Netanyahu would harm the party’s representation in the Knesset in the coming elections. Netanyahu’s fall would also start a conflict for leadership of the party between

...the current government is standing at a ‘historic’ fork in the road due to Trump winning the presidency in the United States

ministers who all believe themselves to be Netanyahu's successor, as well as leaders who left political life because of Netanyahu. With all of this, there is no doubt that the current investigations into Netanyahu will be influential on the political future of the prime minister himself, the party, and the political arena in Israel.

Netanyahu is facing another internal crisis related to the settler's anger at him for the decisions that were made by the Israeli Supreme Court against settlement outposts and homes on private Palestinian land. Netanyahu has tried to overcome these issues by moving forward by doing the following:

- Approving construction permits in bulk in the settlements in the West Bank, including those in Eastern Jerusalem.
- Escalating the policy of demolishing Palestinian homes inside the 1948 areas, justifying this by saying that these buildings did not have construction permits, while also demolishing houses in the 1967 areas for a number of reasons, the most prominent of which is to punish those that commit acts of resistance against Israeli soldiers and settlers. The Ministry of Justice and the institution of the legal advisor of the government are working to end this crisis.

Netanyahu's internal crisis is a prominent factor, if not the most prominent factor, for the Israeli opposition trying to rally public opinion to ensure that Netanyahu and his government are ousted. However, it seems like this process is being conducted in parallel with attempts to move ahead with his policy towards the Palestinian issue, especially the lands that have been occupied since 1967 and the settlement enterprise in them. This is done under the pretext that the removal of Netanyahu will not be possible without appealing to his electoral support base. Most of the opposition is doing this by adopting the statements of this political right, especially those relating to Palestinians and the occupation of the 1967 lands.

All of the developments that were mentioned above must be seen in the context of what is known as the attempts of the Israeli right to dominate all aspects of public life in Israel. These are attempts that were summarized by a new book that was published recently in Israel, titled *"Why Do You Always Vote Right and Get Left?"*. The author of the book, Erez Tadmor, one of the leaders and founders of the new right-wing Im Tirtzu Movement ("If You Will It"), says that, despite forty years having gone by since the right-wing Likud Party came into power in Israel after what was known as the "1977 coup", it continued to rule through the old elites, most of whom were allied to the "Zionist labor movement" under the leadership of the Mapai Party.

... the removal of Netanyahu will not be possible without appealing to his electoral support base. Most of the opposition is doing this by adopting the statements of this political right, especially those relating to Palestinians and the occupation of the 1967 lands.

He also confirms that it was only in recent years that the Israeli right has started to change these elites in order to carry out a "real coup" in the near future. The writer believes that the fierce campaign that is being conducted by those that he calls "the extremist left" against the Israeli army (based on the incident with the soldier Elor Azaria, the murderer of Abdel Fattah al-Sharif in Hebron), against Zionism and the Jewish identity of the state, and against "the land of Israel", national symbols, and Jewish values are the final battles for this collapsing leftist elite. He also believes that the immense power these elites still have is only due to the lack of a long-term vision, wisdom, and sound understanding of Menachem Begin (the writer uses the term traitor when talking about Begin), and many of those that continued on his path in the Israeli right, throughout the three decades since 1977 and until the period of Netanyahu's leadership.

Conclusion

An analytical reading of the Israeli debate on the options for a settlement suggest tacit support for developing a consensus on the basis specified for the political settlement, with the exception of the initiatives that are individual in nature or those that are proposed by small social movements. Israeli consensus on a political settlement is becoming more and more solid, and it includes the following points:

The Israeli position is moving towards agreement on a Palestinian political entity that does not reach, even in its theoretical definition, the level of a state

1. **The Palestinian political entity:** The Israeli position is moving towards agreement on a Palestinian political entity that does not reach, even in its theoretical definition, the level of a state, but is an entity that lacks sovereignty and is geographically dismembered.
2. **Annexation:** Most of the options that are proposed in Israel are moving towards the implementation of the annexation enterprise for parts of the lands that were occupied in 1967, and the discussion that is taking place is on the amount of land that will be annexed and its borders. These discussions vary between those that propose annexation of all of Area C and those that propose annexing areas that are larger than what are called the “settlement blocs”.
3. **Settlement:** There is basic consensus on the annexation of the settlement blocs and the importance of these areas remaining the same, and there is discussion on the level of evacuation of settlements outside of the settlement blocs. Netanyahu has stated, on a number of occasions, that the policy of evacuating settlements is no longer a policy that will be used in Israel, and this position is in line, in principle, with the position of the new head of the Israeli Labor Party, Avi Gabbay.
4. **Jerusalem:** Israeli consensus is moving towards keeping Jerusalem united under Israeli control, while discussion remains on the level of concessions made for Palestinian neighborhoods in Jerusalem. Maybe the Israeli choice will be to give up these neighborhoods, or to separate them from the definition of a unified Jerusalem. This consensus could be strengthened after Trump’s announcement of the United States recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and his intention to move the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem on the 70th Anniversary of Israel’s independence.
5. **Refugees:** Complete rejection for the principle and idea of a right of return.
6. **Borders:** Israel’s complete control of the eastern borders of the West Bank, as a part of the idea of an incomplete Palestinian political entity, with its partial sovereignty being represented in Israel’s control of borders and crossings.
7. **The Gaza Strip:** Separating it from the political settlement in the West Bank by considering it to be non-negotiable for Israel.

Recommendations

- The only space available to influence Israeli public opinion might currently be limited to the small movements, like the “two states, one land for two people” solution mentioned above, whose approach to the settlement is limited to problems that are not hidden.
- At the time when most Israeli opposition to the rule of the right is focusing most of its efforts on bringing down this rule by shining a light on the corruption of Netanyahu and the leadership of his party and his government, this opposition goes along with his most prominent opinions on Palestine. This is especially true of the position on settlements, Jerusalem, security demands, and all of the other parts of the final settlement. In effect, it is also in line with Netanyahu’s positions that there is no Palestinian partner.
- When talking about Israeli public opinion, one must look into the role of Palestinians on the inside, as this role was predicted to gain momentum with the creation of the Joint List in the

Israeli general elections in March 2015. However, the trend to delegitimize the purported role in Israeli public politics regarding the Palestinian issue has worsened since those elections, which were won by Netanyahu. This is because, among other reasons, he continued with this inherent tendency and the main leaders of opposition forces conformed with him. This was expressed, for example, by the head of the Israeli Labor Party and the Zionist Union coalition, Avi Gabbay, when he announced that, in every government that he forms, he will not go into a coalition with the Joint List. He described the Joint List as being “an anti-Israel list that is too busy with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas!”.

When talking about Israeli public opinion, one must look into the role of Palestinians on the inside, as this role was predicted to gain momentum with the creation of the Joint List

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Part II:
Regional Dimension

Palestine in a Changing Regional Environment: The Specificities of Jordan and Egypt

By Oraib Rantawi

Introduction: Brief History

Over the past 40 years (1979 – 2019), the Arab world and the “Greater Middle East” have undergone a number of transformations that have had a significant impact on the position of the Palestinian cause and the Arab-Israeli conflict in the larger map of regional and international conflicts in, and for, the region. Anyone looking carefully into the conditions surrounding the Palestinian cause today will find that they are both rooted and sustained by the aforementioned strategic transformations that have acted to form the region, rebuilt the balance of powers in it, controlled the paths of its crises and shaped its alliances.

The following section will outline key historical events, with a particular focus on the shift in regional leadership from Egypt/Syria and Iraq to the countries of the Gulf. It will also delineate the impact of the Iranian revolution and the emergence of the Iran-Saudi rivalry for regional hegemony, and the implications of this rivalry on the Palestinian cause.

The victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran was a game changer in the region. Israel (and some Arab allies of the United States) lost a powerful and trusted ally, while initially it seemed that the Palestinians had gained a tactical friend, who ostentatiously repurposed the embassy of their enemy in Tehran into an embassy for themselves. In time, it became clear that this ally would play conflicting roles in the Palestinian national scene, and its friendship would come with costs and burdens

that gradually erased the benefits of the fall of the Shah’s regime.

The victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran launched a movement that took the region by storm, with the eight-year Iran-Iraq War constituting only one of its destructive manifestations. In response to the war, the region saw the restricting of regional alliances in an effort to surround Iran and contain its attempts to “export the revolution”. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia - which had started to play a growing leadership role in the Arab and Islamic worlds through the “Oil Price Revolution” that followed the war in October 1973 - became the figurehead and decisive player in the alliance opposed to, and working to contain, Iran. These events precipitated the first attempts towards a negotiated political

solution to the Palestinian issue, describing it as the first hurdle standing in the way of building a vast coalition to address what it considered to be the growing Iranian threat.

Two years after the victory of the Islamic Revolution and the signing of the Camp David Agreement between Egypt and Israel, the Saudi Crown Prince at the time, Prince Fahd

bin Abdulaziz, launched the first Saudi initiative¹ for peace in the Middle East. This initiative was presented to *the First Session of the Arab League Summit* in Fez in 1981 where it was rejected by the Palestinians, along with Syria and a number of other Arab states. Egypt was absent from the Summit, having had its membership frozen after signing the Camp David Accords. The initiative was approved in

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¹ bearing his name

the *Second Session* in Fez in 1982, following the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the concurrent expulsion of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) forces that had been based there, as well as a series of painful military strikes against the forces of the Syrian Army, which had been stationed in Lebanon since 1976.

Not far from the Middle East and the Gulf, events were gathering speed in Afghanistan and Pakistan. These events had dangerous implications for the Middle East, and for the world as a whole, as the American strategy to face the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan depended mainly on “directing” Salafi jihadist movements against the “encroaching socialist threat”. Riyadh and a number of other Arab capitals - known as the “Arab Axis of Moderation”² - played a huge role in recruiting and financing thousands of adherents of the Salafi school of thought against the “Soviet threat”. This phenomenon was exacerbated by the coup in Pakistan, carried out by General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq, against the elected government of president Zulfikar Ali Bhutto - following which Pakistan started supporting Salafi and jihadist movements. The coup, and the execution of Bhutto not long after, played a major role in translating the aims and objectives of the American strategy in that region.

The phenomenon of “global jihad” was established at that time, and “Salafi jihadism” became an important non-state actor in a number of the countries and societies in the region. The danger of international terrorism worsened, threatening the security and stability of the world, culminated in the events on September 11th, 2001 and the radical changes in American policy that came after it (the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq). Curses, like chickens, come home to roost, and the

...the Hamas movement, an ally of Tehran, winning a vast majority of the seats in the Palestinian legislature. This completed the much-feared formation of what is known as the Shiite Crescent

severity of the criticisms increased against a number of countries for their contribution to spreading extremist Salafi thought and creating an environment that produces terrorism; the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was subject to extensive negative media and political campaigns due to the participation of a number of its nationals in the September 11th attacks on New York and Washington, D.C.

Once again, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia found itself in a position that required it to strengthen itself and renew its presence, position, and image in the region and internationally. This led to another Saudi initiative for peace in the Middle East, this time spearheaded by Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, the now Crown Prince. This initiative was presented to and approved by the Arab League Summit in Beirut in 2002, following the addition of an article concerning refugees. The Palestinian President at the time, Yasser Arafat, was surrounded in his office in Ramallah and was not allowed to speak to the Summit, even through closed circuit television. This was after Israeli forces re-invaded the West Bank once again, cancelling the fictitious borders between zones A, B, and C based on the divisions and maps of the Oslo agreement.

The administration of President George W. Bush unintentionally gifted two major boons to its declared ‘worst enemy’ in the region, Iran, by eliminating the two most important enemies on its western and eastern borders - The Baathist regime, led by Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, and the Taliban regime, led by Mullah Omar, the trusted ally of Osama Bin Laden - without Iran having to spill a single drop of blood or spend a single dollar. This provided a window of opportunity for the theocratic regime in Tehran to expand its influence to the east and west. Iraq, which had

² Constituting Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, the UAE and Kuwait.

been seen by the Arabs and the West as a dam against the “exporting of the revolution”, became a bridge for Iran to cross to the eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea, passing through Syria to Lebanon and Palestine. Afghanistan turned into another, albeit smaller, Vietnam for the United States, where President Trump’s administration, and the Obama administration before him, have been trying to withdraw on beneficial terms without success.

Iranian-Syrian relations were strengthened by their shared interest in “expelling” the American presence in Iraq. Successive Iraqi elections strengthened the positions of Iran’s friends and allies in Iraq, while the assassination of the Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri in 2005, weakened Washington and Riyadh’s allies in Lebanon, simultaneously strengthening the role and position of Hezbollah, especially following the war between Hezbollah and Israel in July 2006. The results of the 2006 elections in Palestine led to the Hamas movement, an ally of Tehran, winning a vast majority of the seats in the Palestinian legislature. This completed the much-feared formation of what is known as the Shiite Crescent³ and Iran once again became the biggest threat to the security and stability of the region from the point of view of the “Arab Axis of Moderation”, Israel and the United States. The perceived threat was heightened by Iran’s breakthroughs in developing its nuclear and missile programmes and its growing role in the internal Palestinian scene through its support (directly or through Hezbollah) of the Hamas and Islamic Jihad movements.

Israel is no longer the main threat to Arab national security, and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is no longer a priority on the joint Arab agenda. It became possible to view Israel as a “potential ally” in facing the greater threat, which is the increasing Iranian threat.

In 2010, the Arab world was subject to the most violent disruption to its modern history through the series of events known collectively as the Arab Spring Revolutions, which started in Tunisia and expanded into Egypt and Libya, before striking in Syria, Yemen, and Bahrain, and, to a lesser extent, in Jordan, Morocco, and Oman, before a second wave in Algeria and Sudan. The countries of the Gulf perceived this “revolutionary” movement as a strategic threat, while Iran initially described the Arab Spring Revolutions as an “Islamic Spring” that would complete what was started by Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran three decades before. Iran maintained this position until Syria fell into a severe crisis, at which point Iran and its allies shifted their position towards this “revolutionary wave”, suspecting a “Western conspiracy” to target it and its allies rather than it bring directed against the oppressive regimes in the Arab world.

Following the wave of revolutions, Iran increased its influence in Syria and Lebanon; militias affiliated with it played a decisive role in stabilizing the control of the regime of President Bashar Al Assad. In the Yemeni revolution, Iran found an entry point to increase its influence on Saudi Arabia’s weakest flank, and it provided political and moral support to the revolution of the Bahraini people, the majority of whom are Shiite, against the Bahraini monarchy, which is very close to Riyadh. The “Shiite Crescent” was no longer the only geopolitical framework for the spread of Iranian influence in the region, as its influence was now threatening Saudi Arabia at home in the Eastern Province and Bahrain as well as in its vital Gulf field. The Kingdom took a decisive position and started to see Iran as its most dangerous enemy and as

³ Roughly crescent shaped area of land with Shia majority populations spanning Iran, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon. Sometimes used interchangeably to indicate anywhere under the Iranian sphere of influence.

an existential threat, not just a threat to its influence and leadership.

Since that date, the whole region has emerged into new era characterized by a change in priorities and shifting of alliances. Israel is no longer the main threat to Arab national security, and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is no longer a priority on the joint Arab agenda. It became possible to view Israel as a “potential ally” in facing the greater threat, which is the increasing Iranian threat.

The Current Regional Situation

The Arab world, and the region as a whole, is full of internal and cross-border conflicts between conflicting states, regional axes, and non-state actors that are supported by opposing international axes. There are the revolutions of what is known as the “Arab Spring”, which are continuing and still spreading to different countries and reflect the change in the priorities of Arab civilians under the pressure of the dire need for freedom, dignity, and food. In relations to the internal, regional and international spheres, there also exist conflicts between the regional axes (Iran, Turkey, Israel) based on sectarian, denominational, and ethnic divisions. Finally, there are the interventions of international actors in the Middle East, the Gulf, the Red Sea, and North Africa, including the return of Russia, China’s military and economic entry, former colonial powers, and Japan. These movements occurred in the absence of an effective regional Arab system (such as the Arab League) and the deterioration and increasing powerlessness of branch regional frameworks like the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the Arab Maghreb Union. The ability of the Arab League to seriously and effectively intervene in

The Palestinian cause and Palestinian scene constitute another battleground for competition and conflict between these axes, to the detriment of the various tracks of Palestinian political work, including the internal division crisis.

the crises of the region was undermined by the ongoing domestic challenges facing the leagues’ historical leadership; Egypt was bogged down with its own internal security-related, political, economic, and social problems, Syria was forced out of the Arab League after Gulf pressure after the worsening of its nine-year crisis, while Iraq has been weakened by lengthy wars and internal divisions. The Arab League has come under the increasing influence and control of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar over the past decade. The power centers of joint decision-making in the Arab world moved to these three countries because of their immense financial resources and the media abilities that they wield, and their ability to impose their agendas on the Arab agenda and its outcomes.

This period also witnessed the successive collapse of cooperative regional experiments (sub-regional structures), like the Arab Cooperative Council (Egypt, Jordan, Yemen, and Iraq), which ended with the invasion of Iraq and the beginning of the Yemeni Revolution; the Arab Maghreb Union, which was stillborn because of the Moroccan-Algerian conflict on the Western Sahara and the Gulf Cooperation Council. Of these structures, the GCC was the most effective

in achieving its purposes and had the deepest history. The pressure from 2017 Qatar-GCC crisis and the increasing number of disputes between its member states threatens to undermine the existence and future effectiveness of the GCC.

The Arab states have exchanged a policy of economic and social blocs, which were widespread during the 1980s and 1990s, with a policy of political and security coalitions and axes that are based on facing specific threats and serve short-term and temporary interests. The conflict and competition between these

axes extend to all of the Arab countries that are going through crises - especially those that are open battlegrounds - such as Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Lebanon and Libya. The Palestinian cause and Palestinian scene constitute another battleground for competition and conflict between these axes, to the detriment of the various tracks of Palestinian political work, including the internal division crisis.

Four regional axes that are in conflict and competition can be identified, and the various Arab states that are influential on the issues of the region can be distributed amongst them. Despite the fact that a number of states insist that they are members of what was known as the "Arab Axis of Moderation", which included countries like Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain, and with Kuwait, Morocco, and the Sultanate of Oman being close to it, the disputes that have emerged in the past three years have made it difficult to deal with this axis as a single, unified axis, with shared references, objectives, and interests.

Despite what brings the states together, including shared interests and positions on a number of threats and challenges, differences remain on a number of issues, including the Palestinian cause.

The Tripartite Gulf Axis - Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)

Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates are still publicly supporting the two-state solution based on the legitimate decisions and the Arab peace initiative, but they have a clear leaning towards lowering the expectations of Palestinians, or putting pressure on them to decrease these expectations, specifically on issues like "refugees, sovereignty, complete withdrawal to the 1967 lines, and the security arrangements that might result from this." The aforementioned countries have shown that they are prepared to adapt to President Trump's initiative and work to align the

Palestinian position with the requirements of this initiative, as well as to look for a middle ground that can be built upon in a new track of negotiations to gain the support of international positions, primarily Russia and the European Union. These countries have also started increasing their public and secret relationships with Israel, in multiple fields. This "normalization" of relations between these countries and Israel is no longer based on arriving at a final solution for the occupation of Palestinian land and enabling Palestinians to practice their legitimate rights, but it is governed by what Israel can do for these countries in their faceoff with Iran, and what it can do to mobilize a firm American position to face Iranian expansion in the region and target Tehran's nuclear and missile programs.

This "normalization" of relations between these countries and Israel is no longer based on arriving at a final solution for the occupation of Palestinian land and enabling Palestinians to practice their legitimate rights

These countries carried out joint activities at the highest levels in all of the events to prepare for the announcement of President Trump's plan - the Manama Workshop - which is to be facilitated and hosted by Bahrain. They have recently started to publicly criticize the positions of Palestinian leaders and are imposing economic and financial pressure on them; harassing Palestinian activists who reside in their land. Alongside this, they have stated harshest criticism and condemnations against Hezbollah and the Hamas Movement, describing them as "aggressive forces" that are harmful to security and stability, without issuing any condemnations of the attacks that are carried out by Israel against Lebanon in violation of UNSC Resolution 1701, or against targets in Iraq, Syria, and the Gaza Strip.

These countries are leading an active state-owned and social media campaign (utilizing online trolls) in order to demonize the Palestinian position and blame the Palestinian leadership and Palestinian institutions for the

collapse of the peace process. In effect, they are virtually publicly adopting the “Israeli view” on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, not just with regard to the present moment, but also with regards to rights, beliefs, and history as well.

At the internal Palestinian level, Saudi Arabia still has formal relations with the Palestinian Authority, which it provides with varying levels of financial support. Before King Salman and his son came to power, Saudi Arabia played a role in helping Palestinians overcome their internal divisions, utilizing its good relationship with the Palestinian Authority and its having relatively strong links with the Hamas Movement, because it is a part of its parent organization, the Muslim Brotherhood. Under the reign of the new Saudi monarch, the relationship with the Palestinian Authority has cooled, while Riyadh has shown open hostility towards the Hamas movement as a part of its changed position against the Muslim Brotherhood. Saudi Arabia also made a noticeable withdrawal from the efforts to end internal Palestinian divisions and restore reconciliation and unity.

The relationship of the United Arab Emirates can be described as very cold towards the Palestinian Authority, while the former has enacted a complete boycott of the Hamas Movement. It strongly supports the efforts of Colonel Muhammad Dahlan, who broke away from the Fateh movement, in order to build a movement for himself in areas under the administration of the Palestinian Authority and the refugee camps among the Palestinian communities. Abu Dhabi has also worked to open doors for Dahlan’s movement in Cairo and Amman. Cairo responded, within limitations, and still has a good relationship with Dahlan, while Amman responded carefully and temporarily to Emirati pressure, before it went back and put relatively strict limitations on the movement of Dahlan’s supporters in Jordan.

It has been noticed that every time there are signs in the region of an escalating crisis between Washington and Tehran, these

countries quickly work to normalize their relationships with Israel, and there are some who believe that these countries strive to coordinate their positions with the positions of the right-wing government in Israel in order to pressure President Trump’s administration and to “get the US entangled”, if possible, in a faceoff with Iran that ends with Iran’s nuclear and missile capabilities being stripped. They also want this confrontation to end with Iran’s tools of influence and diffused regional power removed.

With the rise to power of the populist right in the United States, and the transformations in Israeli society towards a religious and nationalistic right, the countries in this axis have found an opportunity to conduct a counterattack against Iran in open proxy battlegrounds. The Trump administration, however, is hesitant to engage in open confrontation with Iran, and it prefers to use diplomacy and the “maximum pressure tactic” in dealing with Iran, leaving it in a state of worry and hesitation. Saudi Arabia’s failure in the war in Yemen against the Houthis (Ansar Allah) and the fallout following the assassination of Jamal Khashoggi, a Saudi journalist, in a Saudi consulate in Istanbul, all contributed to weakening of Saudi Arabia’s position in this axis. This preceded the outbreak of a dispute between its two main pillars, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, when a sort of proxy war started between the two allies in Aden and the southern governorates of Yemen.

There is no doubt that the receding role and influence of these two Gulf countries will decrease their ability to influence the Palestinian scene, whether in the short-, medium-, or long-term. Future projections map the continued deterioration of the position of the Gulf’s oil-producing countries with the continuing decline in reliance on oil (and fossil fuels) in the world energy economy, and the increasing use of and reliance on clean, alternative, and renewable sources of energy. This suggests a decrease in Gulf predominance in modern Arab history, a predominance that

has continued for at least four consecutive decades.

The rise and fall in the regional positions of Riyadh and Abu Dhabi seem to be of the utmost importance to and impact upon the future of the Palestinian national issue and movement. The American team working on the

the so-called “Deal of the Century” that is based on the assumed roles of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in creating a suitable environment to push this deal through

peace process in the area has relied mainly on what support these two countries can provide to push through, market and justify its plan, as well as the hypothesis of a “regional framework” to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict. This is an essential hypothesis for the so-called “Deal of the Century” that is based on

the assumed roles of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in creating a suitable environment to push this deal through. This differs from the approach of previous American administrations, which focused mainly on the role of Jordan and Egypt in providing Arab and regional incubators for the Middle East peace process.

Just as the new American approach on the concept of the “regional framework” has contributed to weakening the role of Jordan and Egypt in the peace process, it has also created mutual concerns between Amman and Cairo on the one hand and Riyadh and Abu Dhabi on the other side, especially between Amman and Riyadh. It has weakened the trust between these two American allies in the integrity of Trump’s administration and its seriousness in striving to reach a solution that will not have the worst possible impact on their interests and roles, especially since Jordan fears its role being taken by the new, youthful Saudi leadership. This is especially important

with the increasing Israeli leaks that show readiness to include the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the custodianship of Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem, and maybe replacing the Hashemite custodianship of these holy sites with Saudi custodianship, if necessary. There is also the concern about Jordan’s security and stability, as well as its “national identity”, which is only increasing at both the formal and popular levels.

The Bipartite Axis (Jordan and Egypt)

Despite being a part of the framework known as the Arab Axis of Moderation, these two countries have positions and policies that are different from those that distinguish the positions of the Gulf Tripartite Axis. Because of their geopolitical locations, these two countries are closely linked to the Palestinian issue. Jordan has the longest Arab border with Israel, and it has a higher number of Palestinian refugees⁴, as well as the long historical relationship between the Hashemite dynasty and the Al Aqsa Mosque. Jordan derived its regional role to a large extent from its being a pioneering country in efforts to achieve Arab-Israeli peace, in addition to it historically being a buffer zone between Israel on the one side and Iraq and the countries of the Gulf on the other side.

Even though it has a small Palestinian community, and it is not a country where the UNRWA operates,

Jordan fears its role being taken by the new, youthful Saudi leadership

Palestine has always been of key concern to Egyptian foreign policy makers. Today, the Gaza Strip, which Egypt controlled administratively and in security matters before the June 1967 War, has become an issue of national security for Egypt, along with the increasing threat of terrorism in the Sinai

⁴ There are estimated to be 4.4 million Palestinians in Jordan, a third of whom do not have a Jordanian passport and are from the West Bank, Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, and were affected by the repercussions of the Jordanian decision to disengage organizationally and administratively from the West Bank, a decision that was made by the late King Hussein bin Talal in 1988.

Peninsula. The Palestinian issue has consistently always been one of the tools for the leading regional role of Egypt since the time of Nasser.

Since the beginning of the peace process - from Madrid, through Oslo, the beginnings of the Palestinian Authority, and until the beginning of the Trump Administration with its new approaches to resolving the Palestinian issue - Jordan and Egypt have embodied the regional framework for the solution, and they have always promoted, together and individually, initiatives to overcome the hurdles, whether they are the ones hindering the Palestinian-American negotiation track, or those that are hindering ending the Palestinian division after 2007. It should be noted that the latest round of American negotiations, at the end of the Obama Administration, were conducted in Amman by a request from US Secretary of

These two countries still believe that the two-state solution based on the legitimate decrees and references of the peace process

State John Kerry and mediation from King Abdullah II of Jordan. Cairo can be seen as the most prominent mediator in Palestinian reconciliation efforts, and as the only mediator

in the past few years, after the objection of both Riyadh and Doha to conduct efforts of this kind for different reasons.

It can be inferred that Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates' heavy involvement in the American attempts to draft a new initiative for a final solution to the Palestinian issue during the Trump administration, and the tendency of both of these Gulf nations to bypass the historical roles of both Amman and Cairo, has caused worry and resentment among the two. This is especially true for Amman, which feels like it is losing one of its important strategic functions as an insulating state between the Gulf and Israel. This feeling is fueled by a feeling of marginalization as a result of the growing desire of the Israeli Right and the leaders of the Gulf states to bypass Jordan to build direct relations and strengthen

the bridges of coordination and cooperation in the economy, security, and politics.

These two countries still believe that the two-state solution based on the legitimate decrees and references of the peace process and the Arab peace initiative is the only solution that can contribute to building a just and sustainable peace that best serves their national interests is. They feel the danger and threat to their security and stability if this solution is not reached. Israel has succeeded, with absolute support from Washington, in imposing its vision of a final solution, which removes the difficult issue of the refugees (the Jordanian case), prevents the establishment of an independent and viable Palestinian state, takes Jerusalem out of the negotiation agenda, and leaves the future of large parts of the West Bank unknown, open to the looting of encroaching settlements.

Nevertheless, neither Jordan nor Egypt have a Plan B in the case that the two-state solution scenario fails, which seems to be likely, if we cannot say that it is confirmed. They do not have an alternative to the negotiations track, despite the fact that it has an open timeline and does not have an agenda or binding references. There is nothing on the horizon to suggest that they are working on an alternative plan to the two-state solution.

This is due to a number of reasons, the most important of which is that both Amman and Cairo have strategic relationships with Washington, and their relationships with international superpowers can be described as having a large degree of security, military, arms, and economic dependence. Each one of them also has a complicated and overlapping network of interests with both Riyadh and Abu Dhabi, which weakens their abilities to stop the impulses of these two

...both Amman and Cairo have strategic relationships with Washington, and their relationships with international superpowers can be described as having a large degree of security, military, arms, and economic dependence

states sticking to Trump's initiative and the efforts of the American team for peace in the region or curb their continuing disregard for the top priority of the Palestinian cause in exchange for focusing on the "existential threat" of Iran, which has taken most of the focus and resources of these countries.

Jordan and Egypt are also facing a number of internal and external challenges that have made them less able to persist in facing American and Gulf pressure and have limited their options, putting them in a difficult position with the Palestinians. Both countries are suffering from economic and financial crises, challenges with unemployment and poverty. Both countries are facing the danger of terrorism internally (Egypt) or from abroad (Jordan), and both states are facing popular movements that are explicit (Jordan) or implied (Egypt) that are demanding the opening of the political system for participation, political pluralism, transfer of power, and a democratic transition. These kinds of challenges weaken the ability of the state to persevere and sustain their positions, and they also weaken the "communal *immune system*" to face pressure and challenges alike.

These two countries have varying relationships with the Palestinian Authority, as the legitimate framework recognized for the Palestinian people, with the relationship between Ramallah and Cairo fluctuating based on developments in the reconciliation portfolio and the relationship between Egypt and Dahlan. The relationship between the Palestinian Authority and the Jordanian leadership is characterized by a high degree of coordination and cooperation on a number of issues, with a mutual feeling that the "Deal of the Century" is not just targeting the rights of Palestinians, but will affect, at the end of the road, Jordanian interests and the rights of Jordanians as well as it has completely ignored Jordanian interests and calculations on the final solution for the issue of Palestine.

Both sides have reached ambitious commercial and cultural cooperation agreements that

were signed by the Palestinian head of government in his first visit to Jordan in this position, and it was preceded by reaching an agreement on the management of the Hashemite custodianship of Al Aqsa, which was joined for the first time by members and individuals affiliated with the Authority and the Fateh Movement in the city of Jerusalem. This was done after the Jordanians reached the conclusion that the Israeli authorities were continuing in their violation of the agreements signed regarding the Hashemite custodianship, violating the historical and legal nature of the city, and that it is in their mutual interest to coordinate their positions and unite their efforts against the danger of encroachment on the city and its holy sites.

On the other hand, the relationship between Jordan and Egypt and the Hamas Movement can be characterized as cool, with there being tension and blocked relations at times. The current Egyptian government, for example, believes that the Hamas Movement is an organic part of the Muslim Brotherhood, which it is hostile towards, and Egyptian security agencies talk about there being "links" between Hamas and some "Jihadist" Salafi movements in the Sinai Peninsula. They say that these Salafi groups have a presence in the Gaza Strip, which they sometimes use as a shelter to plan and conduct their operations against Egyptian targets in the areas that border the Gaza Strip. Cairo has succeeded in applying pressure against Hamas, specifically by using the Rafah Border crossing to force some sort of cooperation with it and ensure that its concerns are addressed, and even to ensure a response to the reconciliation efforts that are conducted and managed by these agencies. It can be said that there is a level of cohabitation between the two sides that has not ended their deep-rooted conflicts, but it has succeeded in containing and organizing them.

As for Jordan, its relationship with the Hamas Movement has been characterized as being very tense and cool. One of the first decisions that was made by King Abdullah II at the

beginning of his reign was to close the Movement's office in Amman, and "forcing out" its leaders to Doha, was. Since that time, Amman has not shown any inclination of a desire to improve this relationship, with the exception of a very short honeymoon at the peak of the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood to power in Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, and Turkey, when Jordan hosted Khaled Meshaal, Hamas' politburo chief, a number of times in Amman in 2012. This relationship returned to being cool after the collapse of the short-lived Muslim Brotherhood rule in Egypt in June 2013. In any event, neither Jordan nor Egypt recognize the authority or legitimacy of Hamas, and they both deal with the group as a de facto authority. Egypt does this to manage its security concerns in Sinai, while Jordan to manage its humanitarian efforts in the Gaza Strip (the field hospital and the relief campaigns for the population of the Gaza Strip).

The Qatar, Turkey, and Muslim Brotherhood Axis

The relationship between the parties of this regional triangle date back to the beginnings of the rise of the Justice and Development Party to power in Turkey in 2002. This relationship did not become an axis, and it did not feature the current level of interdependence, until the collapse of the rule of the late President Mohamed Morsi in Egypt and the beginning of the Gulf Crisis - known as the Qatar Crisis - during which four Arab states (Egypt, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia) imposed a land, sea, and air blockade on the small Gulf state, forcing Doha to call in Turkish troops to be stationed in it and granting Ankara two military bases in Qatar.

...these two states, even if they are less "dependent" on Washington than Egypt or Jordan, still share a keenness to establish strategic relationships with Washington, each for reasons relating to their own geopolitical calculations

The two states support the Muslim Brotherhood, who use Doha and Istanbul as a base for their leadership who fled prosecution in Egypt. The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood has set up media platforms in Doha and Istanbul, and has been successful in using the media of these two countries to carry out attacks against the regime of President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi.

Qatar and Turkey share the positions of countries like Egypt and Jordan in supporting the two-state solution, based on the same references, and without having an alternative plan if the opportunities to implement this solution disappear and the difficulties facing the establishment of a viable Palestinian state increase. The two countries show clear reservations about the Trump administrations peace project, known as the "Deal of the Century".

But these two states, even if they are less "dependent" on Washington than Egypt or Jordan, still share a keenness to establish strategic relationships with Washington, each for reasons relating to their own geopolitical calculations. This weakens their ability to establish a meaningful opposition to the American position that is persistent in its support of the Israeli Right and denies the legitimate national rights of Palestinians.

Both countries maintain a close working relationship with Israel. Qatar has not stopped conducting calls with the Israeli leadership, in different fields, and it exchanges visits with them at various levels. Turkey has active economic, commercial, and tourism relations with Israel. These are maintained even when the political relations are at their coolest and accusations are exchanged between the two states, which happens from time to time. With reference to the internal Palestinian dimension, this Axis has provided various forms of political and financial support to Hamas for years, in an attempt to

keep the movement afloat and empower it in the Gaza Strip. It strives to rehabilitate it to play a leading role on the Palestinian scene, starting from the Gaza Strip and reaching the West Bank, if possible. In this context, this Axis participated in efforts to convince Hamas to adopt its new charter, in which it has come closer to the Palestine Liberation Organization and its political programs, and in which it used a language that can be understood by the international community. This charter also aims to cautiously respond to the demands of the “international quartet”, and some Arab and international states, which are: recognizing Israel, rejecting violence, and organizational separation from the Muslim Brotherhood. This Axis, especially Qatar, has engaged in rigorous efforts to maintain the truce between Hamas and Israel and to establish infrastructure for the sustainability of this truce, but it does not show a high level of concern for Palestinian reconciliation. This Axis is betting on a reproduction of the dialogue between Washington and the Taliban in Palestine, despite the difference in circumstances and contexts, and closely watched the talks between the Houthis and the Obama administration, which the Trump administration is trying to revive after the floundering Saudi and Emirati war on Yemen and its failure to achieve its objectives, with the war becoming a burden on the universal human conscience.

The special relationship that the countries in this Axis have has not pushed them to end relations, or to tense relations, with the Palestinian Authority, as Ankara and Doha maintain normal relations with the Palestinian Authority, with calls being exchanged between them at the highest level. These two states also support them in their positions in Arab and international events, but with their preference in internal Palestinian relations being directed towards and benefitting Hamas.

This Axis, however, just like the previous two axes, faces many difficulties and obstacles.

Qatar, after the blockade against it by the “Arab Quartet”, no longer has the same room to maneuver, and feels like it is being scrutinized under a microscope by the rest of the world with regards to issues of supporting terrorism and Islamist movements. It aims to win over the goodwill of the United States in its conflict with its two neighbors, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt behind them.

Turkey is facing a number of complex challenges, internally and externally. The ruling party is facing internal problems that are represented in the decreasing popular support for the party and its charismatic leader, Recep Tayyip Erdogan. It also faces the “Kurdish Issue”, which deteriorated again after the 2015

elections, the military campaign in the Southeastern Anatolia Region, and the organized campaigns to demonize the elected and legitimate representatives of the country’s Kurds. There are also features of an “Alevi Issue” that have started to appear on the surface of internal policy in the

country as a result of the increased level of Islamic and Sunni texts in the rhetoric of the ruling party, which has an Islamic reference, and also because of the continued failure of Turkish policies to resolve the Kurdish crisis and the collapsing Turkish bets and expectations regarding the revolutions of the Arab Spring, especially after the fall of Muslim Brotherhood rule in Egypt.

This Axis no longer has the same influence and ability to operate that it had around two or three years ago, but it is still able to influence the tracks of the internal Palestinian situation and the status of the deeper division between the Fateh and Hamas movements specifically.

The Iranian, Syrian, and Hezbollah Axis

The fall of the Shah’s regime and the victory of the Iranian revolution was the beginning of the honeymoon period between the Palestine

This Axis no longer has the same influence and ability to operate that it had around two or three years ago

Liberation Organization and the leadership of the new Iranian era, especially since many of these symbols and leaders, unlike its reformist and conservative references, religious and secular, had already formed close relationships with the various factions of

Palestinian national work during their long years of exile in Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq, as well as other countries in the region and around the world.

This was, however, a very short honeymoon, and the Palestinian relationship was greatly affected by the rapidly deteriorating Arab-Iranian relations, starting with the Iraq-Iran War and up until the prominence of the conflicting regional axes. Most Arab regimes and governments stood in opposition to the Iranian revolutionary whirlwind that was to be exported, which made sustaining the bilateral relations between the two sides with the same momentum that they had earlier difficult and daunting.

With the emergence of the Hamas movement in 1987, however, and later with the emergence of the Islamic Jihad Movement, the bilateral relations between the two sides were faced with a new challenge, as it became clear to the Palestinian leadership that Iran could not be relied on to have a formal state to state relationship with Arab and regional entities, usually preferring to create and support alternative parallel structures to the formal structures in its relationships. The movement of Hamas' leadership from Jordan to Syria, after a brief stop in Qatar in 1999, was a decisive moment in Iranian relations with Hamas, as it became possible for both sides to develop these relations very quickly and without any checks or oversight from Jordan or Israel.

The Iranian relationship with Hamas took on strategic military and security dimensions after the movement took control of the Gaza Strip

Iran opposes the Palestinian negotiation option, and it speaks about Jerusalem and Palestine by describing it as an "endowment" for Muslims that must be liberated from the river to the sea

after it won the 2006 elections, and after its 2007 military coup against Fateh's authority and its security agencies, less than two years after Israel's unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. Here, Iran was able to turn Hamas from an emerging resistance

movement and into a trained, organized, and armed military force with tens of thousands of fighters in its various agencies and brigades.

As a strategic approach, Iran did not put all of its eggs in one basket, and it maintained a minimal relationship with the Palestinian Authority and the Palestine Liberation Organization; opened channels of communication and support with secular leftist and nationalist Palestinian factions and provided strong support to the Islamic Jihad Movement. The latter was possibly done with the intention of creating a counterbalance to Hamas' power in the case that the Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated Hamas deviated from the principles of the relationship with Tehran, like what happened at the beginning of the Syrian crisis. Tehran is unlikely to have a problem with supporting groups who have broken away from the Islamic Jihad Movement, as a part of a strategy of diversifying choices and alliances and not relying on a single entity unless it declares and pledges its loyalty to the Supreme Leader of Iran, as is the case with Hezbollah.

Iran opposes the Palestinian negotiation option, and it speaks about Jerusalem and Palestine by describing it as an "endowment" for Muslims that must be liberated from the river to the sea. It believes that the "choice of resistance" is the only choice that will achieve this objective and the ending of Israel, which it describes as the "Little Satan", compared to its description of the United States as the "Great Satan". Tehran does not conceal its support for what it calls the "choice of resistance" in Lebanon and Palestine and the "choice of

opposition” that is represented by Syria specifically.

Damascus, the second pillar of this axis, does not maintain any good relations with the Palestine Liberation Organization, and this has been the case since the time of the late Yasser Arafat. It rejected the Oslo Accords, viewing the establishment of the Authority with suspicion and accusations. It was a strong supporter of the Hamas Movement and the factions that broke away from the Palestine Liberation Organization, as well as some leftist Palestinian factions that it provided with shelter. Even though it was strongly involved in the peace process in Madrid, and conducted talks with Israel with American mediation, it continued to refuse the Palestinian political track and provided as much as support as possible to the efforts to undermine it by Hamas and factions allied to it.

The relationship between Syria and Hamas might appear an incomprehensible paradox - how could a regime that sentences to death any Syrian who is proven to be a member of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, provide Hamas’ Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated leadership with support and facilitation that no other Palestinian faction? This includes the Palestine Liberation Organization, in its position as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, that previously received from Syria. Similarly, how can the leadership of Hamas, over the past 12 years, move around freely in all parts of Syria, maintain the closest relationships with the most senior levels of Syrian decision-makers, including Al Assad personally, and at the same time not conceal their affiliation with the Muslim Brotherhood and its Supreme Leader in Cairo?

It appears that the necessity of competing with the Palestinian leadership for the representation of the Palestinian people, and

Damascus’ desire to maintain a central role in the Palestinian issue, has tipped the balance in the calculations of the Syrian leadership, despite its ideological conflicts with Hamas. One should bear in mind the influence of the Iranian factor and the role of Hezbollah in bringing together the two sides and sustaining the relationship between Damascus and Hamas, until the Syrian crisis worsened in 2012 and Hamas decided to take a clear position, after hesitation, and stand with the Qatar-Turkey-Muslim Brotherhood Axis, announcing its alignment with the Syrian opposition and participating in military formations in it and affiliated with it (Aknaf Bait al-Maqdis) in the fighting against the forces of the regime and its allies.

All of this led to a severing of ties between Hamas and Damascus. Despite mediation and determined efforts by Tehran and Hezbollah, and the positive messages that Hamas never ceases to broadcast to Damascus, both publicly and through secret channels, Damascus is still unable to “forgive” Hamas. This remains true even after Hamas replaced its former leadership, which had been responsible for the deterioration in bilateral relations, with a new leadership that can at least claim that it intends to start on a new page with Damascus and restore some of the close relationships of the past.

The straining of the relationship between Hamas and Damascus from 2012 onwards has not automatically led to an improvement in the relationship between Damascus and Ramallah, despite the consideration that is expressed by the leadership in the position of the Palestine Liberation Organization, which is characterized as being very cautious, in dealing with the Syrian crisis, keeping communication channels with Damascus open, and refraining from taking positions supporting the opposition and against the regime, as other Arab states have. Here, it can be said that Damascus is still maintaining its historical caution in dealing

The straining of the relationship between Hamas and Damascus from 2012 onwards has not automatically led to an improvement in the relationship between Damascus and Ramallah

with the Palestine Liberation Organization and its reservations on the Authority, and the Authority cannot go far in normalizing its relationship with Syria out of fear that this normalization would have a negative effect on its relationship with Washington, Riyadh, Doha, and other capitals.

It can be said that despite the disparity in priorities and positions among the members of this axis towards the Palestinian issue, the Arab-Israeli Conflict, and the various factions of national and Islamist Palestinian movements, there are still commonalities that they share. These commonalities should be taken into account, and they are:

- It appears the members of this axis are not concerned with cooling off tensions with Israel or a national reconciliation, with all of its requirements and provisions. Rather, it purportedly aims for is a reconciliation that reproduces the relationship between Hezbollah and the state in Lebanon, with the Authority giving Hamas the cover and safe network that it needs and covering spending on a part of its institutions and members, without Hamas giving up the decision to start war or go into peace or its arms, or subjecting them to a collective national Palestinian decision.
- The members of this axis are hedging their bets on the Palestinian arena remaining an open line of contact with the Israelis, one where they can increase or decrease the tensions based on the relationship of the members of this axis with the United States and Israel.
- The members of this axis support Hamas on the whole, but this does not mean that they cannot build parallel forces to it (Islamic Jihad). They also

The members of this axis do not seem overly concerned with the initiatives to solve the Palestinian issue, and not concerned with ending this issue, as long as they are able to use it

support factions within Hamas and build direct ties with them as a backup plan and in case of any changes. The members of this axis also have ties with Jihadist forces that are prepared to cooperate with it, factions within Fateh, Hamas, the Islamic Jihad, and wherever else there is an opportunity to build a “resistance” structure made up of various components and entities.

- The members of this axis do not seem overly concerned with the initiatives to solve the Palestinian issue, and not concerned with ending this issue, as long as they are able to use it in the conflict between the axes and with the purpose of extending their influence-reaching the shores of the Mediterranean; the more challenges that Palestinians face, and the more an international initiative (like Trump’s, for example) takes away more of the legitimate national rights of Palestinians, the more additional justifications this axis has to support its mobilizing rhetoric and serve its purposes and interests in the intense conflict in and for the region.

In conclusion, the conflict and competition in the axes has given Israel the opportunity to extend its influence in many Arab capitals, and even going into some of them with the largest and most public access, and it is speeding up the “free normalization” process between Israel and a number of Arab states. In order to face Turkey, Israel is invited to be a member of the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum, and in order to face Turkey and Iran, Arab and regional coalitions are formed, like the “Arab NATO”, the “New Warsaw Pact”, and the Red Sea defense system (the Saudi Arabian initiative), which, even if Israel is not a full member of today, it might be nominated for membership in the future. There are also the opportunities available in the Neom City project on the Red Sea, which Israel seems to

have guaranteed its share in partnership in and is considered the cornerstone of the Saudi Crown Prince's Vision 2030.

Jordan and Egypt

Among the various countries in the region, it seems like Egypt and Jordan are the countries most attached to the Palestinian issue – due to the mutual affect this issue has on all parties – for reasons relating to geography, demographics, history, security, geopolitics, and “the vital area”.

In the case of Jordan, the link seems to be more complicated due to the overlapping internal and external dimensions of the Jordanian-Palestinian relationship, with more than 40% of the registered refugees residing in Jordan. This group, along with other Palestinian groups (including the displaced, Gazans, and those affected by the directions to disengage), makes up more than half of the population of Jordan. This has raised a number of questions regarding identity and integration, such as who is Jordanian, what is the status of those with Jordanian mothers, and many other issues.

Jordan is more directly linked than Egypt to various parts of the final solution to the Palestinian issue: borders, sovereignty, refugees, Jerusalem and the holy sites, water, and security. In the case of Egypt, it seems like the issue is more linked with the leadership and “regional role” role of Egypt, and a theory of the active field of Egyptian foreign policy. There is also the emerging security dimension in light of Hamas' control of the Gaza Strip after the 2006 elections, especially after the January 2011 uprising in Egypt and the fall of the Mubarak regime and the developments that came after, specifically the increasing challenge of terrorism (in Sinai specifically) and the overlap between Islamist groups, Salafi groups, and the Muslim Brotherhood in the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula.

The ability of the two countries to influence the tracks of the Palestinian issue has varied over numerous stages, and today it seems like this ability to influence is at its lowest level

The ability of the two countries to influence the tracks of the Palestinian issue has varied over numerous stages, and today it seems like this ability to influence is at its lowest level. This is due to their decreasing role and status at the regional level, as well as regional and international policies, with an ascent of other power centers in the Arab world (Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar) and in the region (Turkey, Iran, and Israel). Egypt is almost totally preoccupied with its internal problems, and it faces many challenges on its eastern and western borders. The most important of these challenges are the chaos in Libya and the increasing threat of terrorists in Sinai and in the eastern valley and desert. There is also the problem of water and the Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, as well as the unrest in Sudan before and after the fall of the regime of the deposed president, Omar Hasan Al Bashir.

Jordan has seen a strategic decrease in its status and role as a result of the emergence of the Israeli right, which does not place great weight on Jordan's calculations and sensitivities, and the presence of an American administration that completely supports the Israeli right, rather than just being biased towards Israel, as had been the case with successive American administrations. Jordan has lost its influence in Gulf politics due to its decreasing strategic security and military role there in favour of international centers

that have a strong presence in Gulf security and defense strategies, as well as losing its place as a buffer state between the oilfields and Israel. This is due to the tendency of both Israel and the countries of the Gulf to overstep Jordan and start close and direct relations, both secret and public, with each other. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have transformed into the two actors stronger than Egypt and Jordan when it comes to the regional

framework for the political solution for the Palestinian issue.

The ability of the two countries to influence internal Palestinian movements in decision-making is less than it was in the past. Jordan no longer has the ability to influence Hamas' position, and it no longer wants to build bridges with it out of fear that this would result in strengthening the position of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan itself, and Egypt does not have the ability to exercise sizeable influence on the Palestinian Authority (Jordan is more influential in Ramallah, while Egypt is more influential in Gaza due to location, crossings, historical ties, and individual and collective interests networks).

The ability of the two countries to influence the political and partisan landscape in Israel and to contribute to the formation of policies and positions in Israeli public opinion and among its elites is constantly receding. This is due to a number of reasons, including the receding position of the two countries in the region, the rise of the right and far-right in Israel and finally the shift of the weight of Israeli concern to the countries of the Gulf because Jordan and Egypt have signed peace treaties with Israel, meaning that the peace process with them is one-way and cannot be reversed or undone. There is also the fact that the limits of the responses of the two countries in the case that Israel takes major steps against Palestinians are known, and these responses range between mediation if there are clashes in Gaza, or indignation and condemnation if Israeli violations of Palestinian rights in Jerusalem, holy sites, and the West Bank increase to high levels.

Israel today is not the same as Israel at the beginning of the peace process in Madrid. With this change, its view of its neighboring countries has changed, especially Jordan (more than Egypt). There some in Jordan who argue, among them

...the presupposition that 'Jordan's security is a part of Israel's security' is changing and being replaced, if it has not already been replaced, with the changing priorities of the ruling elites in Israel

the writer of this paper, that the presupposition that 'Jordan's security is a part of Israel's security' is changing and being replaced, if it has not already been replaced, with the changing priorities of the ruling elites in Israel because of its desperate pursuit to control larger parts of the West Bank and Jerusalem with fewer numbers of native residents, even if this policy results in severe damage to Jordan's security, stability, national identity, and social fabric, and weakens the position of its Hashemite leadership. This theory has been tested numerous times during the reign of the Israeli right, and it was shown to not be the main engine and framework for Israeli policies towards Jordan specifically, as Israel today is no longer sensitive or considerate of Jordan's needs, sensitivities, or interests.

Jordan and Egypt are pushing for the two-state solution, based on the known references, while not having an alternative for it, a plan B. They realize that this solution is no longer possible without requirements that are closer to the Israeli view of the final solution: "Less than a state and more than self-government," Jerusalem is Israel's united and eternal capital, no inclusion of the refugees right to return "or compensation either", especially with the continued attempts to redefine the meaning of refugee in the Knesset and Congress.

The two countries do not see anyone other than Washington as a mediator in the peace process, and they will not gamble on anything that will harm their relationship with the United States. The strategic ties are justified in other ways and to serve other interests, and the two countries are striving to control the dispute with Washington regarding the Palestinian issue with the United States so that it does not have a negative impact on their relationship with Washington. This creates ceilings for the roles that the two countries can play in supporting

the Palestinian position on the one hand and pressuring the United States and Israel on the other hand. The increased “dependency” on the United States curbs the ability of these two countries to influence its positions.

The two countries face the challenge of dealing with the “outcomes of the Israeli solution” for the Palestinian issue. Jordan might be forced to deal with the outcomes of this solution in the West Bank, or what will remain of it outside of Israeli sovereignty, with the Palestinian population. Egypt is facing the challenge of dealing with the “Gaza time bomb” and attempts that might be required by this leading to throwing this fireball into Egypt’s lap, starting with restored Egyptian responsibility for the Strip, even if unofficially, and finally getting to the “regional land exchange” at the expense of the border parts of Egypt’s Sinai, or under any other umbrella.

In the case of Egypt, the threat seems to be containable, as Egypt is a country with a large area and large population, and it can contain the repercussions of unfavorable solutions. The threat to Jordan, however, seems to be one that can explode because of the challenges that it poses to the security, stability, and national identity of the Jordanian state and the possibilities that it brings in turning the conflict from the Palestinian-Israeli conflict to a Palestinian-Jordanian conflict.

In the cases of both Egypt and Jordan, there is no serious national discussion on what comes after the “failure of the two-state solution”, and any potential scenarios for the Palestinian issue. Discussion of this issue is “not welcome”, despite its extreme urgency in the case of Jordan, and the reason for this is due to the inability of the political systems to promote solutions or firmly address the policies of the Israeli and American right.

There is a belief that is spreading, in Jordan at least, of the inability to implement the two-state solution, and the impossibility of the one-state (bi-national state) solution. There are a number of confused questions in political circles, and there are no answers for them:

What solution remains for the Palestinians if the situation is like this? Is it realistic to talk about a “Status Quo”, and is this scenario really realistic? If “Status Quo” can be an acceptable description for the Palestinian condition, is it the same for the Israeli condition, especially since settlement, Judaization, and displacement from sensitive areas (in Jerusalem) are continuing, and at unprecedented rates? The “Status Quo” is a false expression, and it does not describe the reality of the situation in occupied Palestinian lands.

Is Israel going to take another unilateral step, with criteria imposed by the nature of the West Bank and its position in the Zionist project, that is different from the unilateral withdrawal from Gaza in 2005? What are the features of this project, and how will it affect the future of the national Palestinian project, the project to return, self-determination, and building an independent state with its capital in Eastern Jerusalem? There is no Jordanian or Egyptian discussion on matters like this, and what is even sadder is that there is no serious Palestinian discussion on future possibilities and scenarios that is more than a debate between the elites on the choices of a single state or two states.

In light of these difficulties, how will the two countries (Jordan and Egypt), deal with President Donald Trump’s initiative?

- For all of the reasons mentioned above, it is difficult to wait for the two countries to promote new policies and alternatives, and it is likely that they will continue down the same path, even if the end of this path is known in advance. In all probability, the two countries will not publicly support Trump’s initiative, but they will not work on confronting it directly. They will leave this task to the Palestinians, and the refusal of the Palestinians will be invoked to say that this initiative “cannot be implemented”.

- The best choice for both Amman and Cairo is that the initiative fails by itself, either with the defeat of Donald Trump in the 2020 US Presidential elections, because the initiative is refused by the Palestinians and influential international and regional states, or because Israel objects to the parts relating to it in this initiative, which is a very long shot, even though it is possible with the control of the extremist right and the “settlement lobby” on decision-making positions in Israel.
- There will continue to be efforts to align Trump’s initiative, as much as possible, with a solution that can be accepted by Palestinian parties, or one that can be imposed upon them as a final choice. A choice like this will clash with the position of the American administration and Trump’s peace team, which no longer sees anything other than Israel’s interests, calculations, and sensitivities.
- There will be collective Arab pressure on the Palestinian side to go back on its position to boycott the American administration and reject its role as a mediator, and to look for an entry point in Trump’s initiative for future negotiations, even if this requires going through a transitional period. This can be in the form of an “international meeting”, reviving the international quartet, or other frameworks that will maintain the United States’ upper hand and give it the final say in mediation and negotiation efforts.

What are the biggest options and alternatives that can be recommended?

It is difficult to think of alternatives focused on the policies of these two countries that do not include a recommendation of wider changes in the priorities of their foreign policy and its determinants and controls to allow for a decrease in the “dependency” on Washington and diversifies coalitions and options. This is something that is not seen as of yet.

The internal policies of both countries are what control their foreign policies to a large extent (their economic distresses, their need for support and aid, questions of legitimacy, and foreign threats from competing countries and axes), and if the two countries do not succeed in getting their internal affairs in suitable order, it will be difficult to wait for serious shifts in their foreign policies, including their position on the Palestinian issue.

A lack of a feeling of urgency of the threat caused by a collapse of opportunities to reach a just solution for the Palestinian issue pushes these countries to think about addressing short-term and direct threats and challenges. Even though, especially in Jordan’s case, the threat from the west of its border in the medium-term is an existential threat that is more dangerous than any other, as it will affect Jordan’s security, stability, national identity, and social peace and cohesion.

Seriously thinking about launching an initiative to move the region, in the case of infighting and a zero sum game, towards a regional framework for security and cooperation, based on maximizing common interests and neutralizing, managing, and organizing conflicts, is a task that is getting more pressing and has more opportunities for success in light of the exhaustion of the various axes, as was clarified above.

Thinking in the long-term does not mean not being able to recommend policies in the short-term, including:

- Supporting a reconciliation project and unifying efforts in this regard, and not just Egyptian mediation, which has been proven to have a limited effect and few opportunities for success. Palestinian reconciliation is enough to restore the Palestinian national project, no matter what its objectives and priorities are, and to improve conditions in any future solution.
- Linking the track of normalizing relations with Israel with its response to the demands of stopping settlements, Judaization and “Israelization” projects. Israel cannot enjoy full normalization with these two states, and others, specifically in strategic fields like water and energy, without showing serious preparedness to respond to these demands. Israel must not remain comfortable with the moderate limits for responses from these countries. There must also not be acceptance of Israeli efforts to separate the peace process with the Palestinians from the peace processes with Egypt, Jordan, and other Arab states.
- Including other international powers in mediation and the sponsorship of the peace process, and not leaving the whole process under the control of America as its sponsor and mediator, starting with Europe and ending with the Russian Federation. The choice to “internationalize” it, in general, must be at the top of the national Palestinian agenda, and it must get support from Amman and Cairo. This does not only mean just internationalizing mediation, but also internationalizing the references of the final solution as well.
- Supporting the resilience of Palestinians on their land, and specifically in Jerusalem, by reviving joint Arab work for this purpose. Here, the responsibility lies mainly with the Authority, in coordination with Jordan, to lead an Arab, Islamic, and international effort in this direction.
- Encouraging Palestinian refugees to organize activities relating to their national rights, removing limitations and obstacles in the way of their joining civilian structures that are able to launch initiatives, and benefiting from some of the successes that were achieved in the “UNRWA question” to develop initiatives of this kind.
- Starting a multi-track dialogue: National internal, at the Arab level, and with representatives of the Palestinian people, to reevaluate and recreate the features of the Palestinian national project, and study if it is possible to continue demanding a two-state solution, as well as what are the opportunities to implement and translate this, or shifting to the controversial and divisive one-state solution, and creating a strategy to deal with the possibility of Israel implementing a unilateral solution that it uses to create the conditions for a final solution that it imposes as a reality on Palestinians, as is being clearly seen in the election campaigns of the 21st Knesset.

Challenges After the Military Defeat of ISIS

By Dr. Musa Shteivi

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1. Introduction

The roots of the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, otherwise known by its acronym ISIS, hark back to 2004. After the American invasion of Iraq in 2003, Abu Musab Al Zarqawi established a group that split from Al Qaeda. The group targeted the American forces in Iraq, in addition to Shiite civilians and Shiite Islamist groups, who were the political authority in Iraq after Saddam Hussein.

From the start of the armed conflict that erupted in Syria, ISIS expanded into the country to participate in the fight against the Syrian regime. It completely severed its organizational ties with Al Qaeda in 2013.

In 2014, ISIS reached a turning point. The group took control of large and important areas of territory in both Iraq and Syria, namely Fallujah, Mosul, and Tikrit in Iraq and Raqqa in Syria. ISIS announced, in June 2014, the establishment of an Islamic caliphate state and loyalty was pledged to Abu Bakr Al Baghdadi, the head of the group, as the caliph of all Muslims. This step was a shock to observers, as it reflected the large amount of power and level of organization they possessed.

In parallel with the increase in the group's military power, and its control of areas in both Syria and Iraq, groups supporting ISIS appeared in Libya, Yemen, Somalia, and the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt. These groups adopted the official takfiri ideology of ISIS, pledged loyalty to the group's leader, and carried out terrorist attacks that were as heinous as those carried out by the so-called caliphate.

Many factors have contributed to the rise and geographic expansion of ISIS, with the political situation in Iraq after the rise of the Shiite groups and their domination of politics in Iraq at the forefront of these factors. Consequently, areas in Iraq with a Sunni majority were disproportionately affected, where inequality was prevalent and a feeling that these areas were being oppressed by the central government in Baghdad. ISIS took advantage of

this, presenting itself as the defender of Sunni Arabs and their identity. Similarly, the same perception of the group was perpetuated in Syria. In both cases, the conflicts in Iraq and Syria took on a sectarian dimension, making them a fertile ground for the ideology of ISIS. What also enabled ISIS to gain a foothold was the deterioration, and in some instances collapse, of control of the central government in Syria and power vacuum that arose. Taking advantage of the factors presented above, among a plethora of other enablers, the group managed to capture vast swathes of land and enact control over the populations living in those areas.

In order to confront the increasingly dire situation, increasing power and danger posed by ISIS, as well as the proliferation of foreign fighters entering, and in some cases returning to their countries of origin, a Global Coalition was formed to fight and destroy it. The Global Coalition was formed under the leadership of the United States in September 2014 and it operated on a number of different fronts. It aimed to degrade and dismantle the terrorist group's networks and to stifle, and eventually annul, their global ambitions. In addition to the military operations conducted by the Coalition in Syria and Iraq, they also committed to destroying the infrastructure, eliminating ISIS' financial and economic foundation, stopping the flow of foreign terrorist fighters into their areas of control and movement outside of them, support stability in liberated areas, including restoration of basic public services, and effectively deal with the group's media propaganda.

Upon the initiation of the international military operation, ISIS sustained successive military defeats and endured heavy losses. For instance, it lost control of Mosul in June 2017 after operations conducted by Iraqi forces,

The Global Coalition was formed under the leadership of the United States in September 2014 and it operated on a number of different fronts.

with support from the Coalition, including airstrikes and artillery support. Once the operations were concluded, Baghdad announced that they had ended the so-called Islamic State caliphate. In 2019, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) surrounded the last enclave of ISIS controlled areas on the Euphrates River, in the town of Bāghūz, as well as the city of Raqqa, the de facto capital of ISIS since 2014. The areas on the Euphrates River were captured by SDF fighters in March 2019, whilst Raqqa's capture was confirmed in October 2019, subsequently announcing the military defeat of the group.

Further to the Global Coalition's operations, we must take into consideration the impact of the Russian intervention in Syria. A fierce campaign was carried out by the Syrian regime and its Russian and Iranian allies against the strongholds of ISIS across Syria, which resulted in many losses for the group.

The primary international strategy was to undermine ISIS from a distance, opting to support and utilize local forces, in the form of both state and non-state actors.

The primary international strategy was to undermine ISIS from a distance, opting to support and utilize local forces, in the form of both state and non-state actors. They provided these local forces in both Syria and Iraq with special operations forces and intelligence capacities, as well as with air and artillery support. This is the strategy that was adopted by members of the Global Coalition, including the United States of America. Primary modus operandi was to isolate, surround and eventually capture their main strongholds in Iraq and Syria, whilst simultaneously removing any bases of support from more rural areas. Moreover, the same strategy has been, and continues to be, utilized against the groups that have sworn allegiance to ISIS in other countries, such as Libya, Nigeria, and Afghanistan.

2. The Challenges Caused by the Military Defeat of ISIS

The announcement of ISIS' military defeat, and the fall of the defacto capital of the caliphate, was a critical strike against the group, but does not constitute final defeat, whether militarily, politically, or ideologically. The world is confronted with three main challenges that face not only Iraq and Syria, but the region as a whole. Most important of these challenges is security, followed by ideology, and then fighters returning to their countries along with their families and their children.

a. The Concept of Defeat

The concept of "defeating ISIS", because of the nature of the structure, core, and ideology of extremist groups, manifests in the group losing control of land and territory. The concept does not, however, mean a defeat of the extremist ideology and belief, which would constitute the largest part of ending the phenomenon of ISIS and similar extremist groups. These groups have shown a high capacity to adapt their strategies and take on different forms in different areas, as well as an ability to operate in a decentralized manner. This is what happened in the past to Al Qaeda in Afghanistan after the American invasion in 2001, when Al Qaeda fragmented into multiple groups in several of the surrounding countries, taking on new names and shapes. ISIS was one of the results of this extremist thought and strategy. Moreover, it was the case with the Al Nusra Front and other extremist political Islamist movements. Structural fragmentation or decentralization is one of the tools of their development, not total defeat.

b. The Security Challenge

Despite the decisive military defeat of ISIS, it does not signal the end of the security threat still posed by the group. There is evidence and indicators that the group has changed its strategy, which remains a challenge nationally, regionally and internationally.

Generally, terrorist groups depend on these mechanisms for the following purposes:¹

- A. Once these entities have sustained military defeats on the ground, a strategy of decentralization comes to the fore, with members carrying out lone wolf attacks on their own, without organizing matters with the leadership of the group inside or outside the country. The strategy assists the group to operate in countries where it would be difficult to have a public and overt presence.
- B. Utilizing these subdivisions to conduct operations as a reaction, and what they would deem an appropriate response, towards countries that take certain positions in dealing with global terrorism.

i. The Challenge of Regional and International Expansion

The challenges of the local situation in Syria and Iraq remain the main reasons for ISIS increasing its attacks in other countries such as Yemen, Libya, and Egypt. The group has accepted pledges of loyalty from other entities and has sent high-ranking members to finalize agreements. Some of these are new followers, like Ansar Bait al-Maqdis in the Sinai Peninsula, who see their affiliation with ISIS as a means to obtain influence and resources. As for the other groups, like Ansar al-Sharia in Libya, they have older links to ISIS that go back to the first year of the Syrian conflict, when Libyan revolutionaries coordinated with their counterparts in Syria to establish the Muhajireen Brigade. This group started from the Syrian coast and then moved to Raqqa. Since then, a number of Libyan commanders have become prominent in ISIS, subsequently bringing models and methods back to Libya.

In this context, there are indicators that ISIS has started to distribute its members, especially the foreign fighters, to other

battlefields, the most prominent of which are the Sinai Peninsula, Yemen, Sub-Saharan Africa, Afghanistan, among others. Expansion of their activities seems to be a result of a desire to achieve psychological and tactical goals in order to raise morale among its followers by emphasizing and demonstrating that the group has global reach and influence. It is also to buy time and organize its ranks in the areas that were under its control in Iraq and Syria.

Outward expansion, however, raises other issues to the surface. If more groups and individuals pledge loyalty to the Islamic State to try to gain influence, fame, or resources, and if the group welcomes more, it will be forced to transform from an organization that is centrally controlled to one that has multiple branches, like Al Qaeda. With there being smaller models of ISIS in the Middle East and Northern Africa, the organization will transform into one with semi-autonomous branches that are active globally. The more decentralized ISIS becomes, the less able it will be to control and direct its global operations.²

there are indicators that ISIS has started to distribute its members, especially the foreign fighters, to other battlefields

The international management structure might change so that it can better manage recent developments. So, instead of depending on a hierarchical method and structure of management conducted in the Levant, it could use the looser organization of independent cells that are not linked. The cell system is in addition to the utilization of lone wolves, including individuals who have not met any of the actual members of the group, but are receiving instructions through its statements on the internet and are carrying out attacks in the name of the group.

ISIS relies on this organizational method, among other modalities, to ensure that the group can, at the end of the day, maintain a greater degree of secrecy when planning and implementing its strategies. It is so the group does not end at the death of its leader or

prominent commanders. Ultimately, these measures are to enable operational functionality and flexibility, enabling them to produce alternative leaders with methods that can be innovative and avoid the mistakes of the past.³

ii. Terrorist Enclaves

The second prominent issue is the remaining members of the group in areas where ISIS fighters were present and who were not killed or evaded capture. It is likely that these will become sleeper cells. Moreover, if the group restores its strength in these locations, or if the problems are not solved, these cells will restart their activities in the form of smaller groups.

These are the scattered remains of terrorist groups, which could form into cells to carry out terrorist operations, especially if the group is able to reform and during the continued absence of state institutions.

Above developments signify the transformation into guerilla warfare, which ISIS has gained substantial experience in, namely in Iraq. This is the choice that those who cannot return to their countries might resort to, or if they are unable to join groups in other countries, and shall be issues for the countries where they reside.

iii. Lone Wolves

Lone wolves are individuals who carry out attacks individually without having a clear relationship with a group, who might be ideological followers of ISIS. The term is used to describe attacks conducted by a maximum of two or three individuals and is a new strategy that is used by jihadist groups, especially ISIS.

The emergence of lone wolf tactics has become a feature of individual terrorism instead of collective terrorism. Increasingly, terrorist groups use this tactic to contribute to developing and defending their image through propaganda mediums. After the collapse of its so-called caliphate, the group's propaganda

has contributed to speeding up the implementation of several operations by lone wolves. The vital role in this process is played by the media cells on the internet who sponsor and direct individuals, but this process is not more than a retaliation.

The leader of ISIS, Abu Bakr Al Baghdadi, used the term lone wolves in mid-November 2014 during his call to target Shiite civilians in Saudi Arabia and when in July 2016 ISIS promised through Dabiq, its media magazine, a new kind of war. The statement was made in an article titled '*Lone Wolves*', and it included a statement by Abu Muhammad Al Adnani, the spokesperson of ISIS, during which he encouraged more attacks against Western interests around the world.

The danger and the associated challenges presented by lone wolves are due to the difficulty of predicting such cases. Therefore, these attacks might require new methods in countering extremism and terrorism.

c. The Ideological or Belief Challenge

There is no doubt that the next phase of the fight against ISIS will be based on winning over hearts and minds, as the extremist ideological and belief system of ISIS depends on providing evidence to its supporters to justify the killings, displacement, enslavement of women, and other practices that are against all codes and laws. This is done by providing the references required to ensure the sustainability of terrorist ideology.

As previously stated, the military defeat inflicted on ISIS is not enough and there must be proactive efforts to counter them ideologically. ISIS gains justifications for its presence as long as its ideas remain, are spread among its supporters and those that believe reflect their existential philosophy. Therefore, a total defeat requires both a military and ideological victory in parallel. Due to their adherence to its own foundational beliefs and the proliferation of its ideas through suitable environments, ISIS will continue to exist,

until these ideas are adequately challenged and addressed.

It can be said that defeating ISIS ideologically is possible considering the contradiction of its jurisprudence and belief systems. However, substantiating these and providing thoroughly researched and evidenced based arguments will not be quick or easy because it requires a new rhetoric.

The Palestinian political environment is framed in its resistance to the Israeli occupation, while ISIS focuses on tyranny, authoritarianism, and sectarian religious conflicts.

Defeating the rise of any such ideology in Palestine is uniquely difficult. This is due to the frantic conflict between extremist groups, along with moderate groups, to gain a monopoly over the use of religion in Palestine. This is especially visible between the Hamas (Islamic Resistance Movement) and ISIS in Palestine. Increasingly important in this context is that ISIS is transnational and does not recognize borders or national causes. The Palestinian political environment is framed in its resistance to the Israeli occupation, while ISIS focuses on tyranny, authoritarianism, and sectarian religious conflicts.

Fighting against brutal ideologies such as that of ISIS and similar organizations is one of the most important parts of combating terrorism. These groups utilize their set of beliefs and ideologies in order to spread their own concepts and increase their prevalence in society, regardless of whether they are under their direct control or not. Consequently, there must be serious and organized work to ensure that societies not only eliminate the ideas of ISIS, but are instead replaced by constructive ideologies that promote and facilitate dialogue on peaceful coexistence and enable confidence building between different groups. In this vain, there must be concerted efforts to spread the values of community tolerance and embolden a spirit of collective action.

There is no doubt that this challenge is the most difficult and will need to be strategized for the long-term, for the following reasons:

1. The ideological or belief structure of ISIS is fed by sectarian or denominational conflicts, which have been the type of conflicts that have occurred in the region in the past and are still occur today.
2. ISIS has been able to attract a large number of Arabs and Muslims from around the world, and it is not likely that this support will end easily, despite its decrease recently. This is because the causes that have led to this support, from their point of view, have not been resolved.
3. The people of the Middle East region still believe that some American policies, and Western policies in general, are against Muslims with regards to the issue of Palestine.

i. Online Recruitment

ISIS as a military system has collapsed and its political project has ended. What remains are pockets of armed groups that are searching for a safe haven and funding for themselves in order to remain. In response, the challenge of ending the group ideologically remains a very important issue.

In an American study published in 2018 by Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens, Seamus Hughes and Bennett Clifford, researchers in the Programme on Extremism at the George Washington University, out of at least 38 attacks, 8 were planned for or carried out in the United States since 2014. These attacks were planned, prepared for, or implemented by individuals who were trained by an ISIS virtual trainer. These virtual trainers operated independently without the supervision of the ISIS leadership, utilizing social media platforms and encrypted messaging apps.⁴

The challenges that are mentioned above overlap. To confront, mitigate and counter

these issues, coordinated national and international plans must be developed and enacted. Instead of focusing solely on the military solution, there must be parallel efforts to deal effectively with the other prevalent problems, starting with the ideological factor. This factor motivates their operations, influences their strategy and their inhumane and terrorist ideas, as has been outlined previously.

Among the tools and methods that can be used to fight against the ideology of the group, which need to be reviewed on a regular basis and require participation of specialists, are the following:

ii. Legitimate Intellectual Dialogue (Counseling)

This method depends on reviewing the jurisprudence and takfiri beliefs, how they are implemented, and then analyzing the ideological origins of terrorist organizations, whilst concurrently critiquing them. Although already used in many countries, but it needs to be constantly and regularly reviewed.

The counseling programmes must focus on a number of issues, the most important of which are:⁵

- A. **Anticipation of the Threat:** With the goal of stopping the transformation of extremist ideologies into acts of violence and terrorist operations, as well as to anticipate the targeted youth joining takfiri groups.
- B. **Accuracy of Targeting:** Studying the groups that have the potential to be recruited by terrorist groups, the social and environmental contexts surrounding them, and then focusing the awareness-raising campaigns on specific geographic areas or individuals that the security agencies believe are likely to join terror groups.
- C. **Categorizing Returnees:** Categorizing the returnees based on how deeply the extremist beliefs are ingrained in each, their responsiveness to counseling, their acceptance of being

integrated back into society, and the potential threats they pose, especially the potential formation of terrorist sleeper cells.

- D. **Virtual Containment:** Virtual containment can be achieved by closing the virtual media platforms of terror organizations, constricting the channels used to propagate ideas to the youth by shutting down the websites of organizations that sympathize and support terrorism, in addition to monitoring social media sites. This must be done in parallel with targeting extremists who spread takfiri beliefs.⁶

d. Returnees and Their Families

ISIS 'returnees' is a term that has undergone extensive change since the defeat of the group in Syria and Iraq. In the beginning, before the group's defeat, it was used for individuals who had joined ISIS because they had been fooled by its propaganda and then discovered, after joining, that the situation on the ground was completely different from what the group's propaganda led them to believe. Therefore, they decided to leave the group and go back to their countries. After the defeat, however, the term now has a completely different meaning as it is not possible to assess if the returning individuals still hold ISIS beliefs or not. Many governments in the region and around the world have expressed their fear of the return of extremists to their countries.

The danger from these returnees lies in the increased risk of terrorism and fear of the terrorist and extremist beliefs that they may still hold, especially since these individuals have received combat training. ISIS might resort to carrying out terror attacks globally, taking advantage of the returnees who hold its criminal beliefs and with the objective of moving the battle to different geographic locations, especially the West.

The issue of the returnees is a thorny security issue for many Arab and European countries

specifically. Since Raqqa fell and ISIS control of the city ended, there have been procedural problems relating to the processing of these returnees and their families. Primary among these is the issue of the children and women returnees. Regarding the returning children of terrorists, they face the problem of proving their identities because they usually do not have any official identification documents. This only further complicates the situation and makes it difficult to create solutions.

i. The Options in Dealing with Returnees

There are various choices that face countries in how they can deal with this complicated phenomenon. To tackle this, countries have resorted to certain actions, including:

The First Option: Return to their countries of origin, where they will stand trial. Some countries, including Germany, have selected this option.

The Second Option: Remain in the countries where they were arrested and are tried in accordance with local laws. The countries that are nominated to carry out most of the trials are Iraq and Syria respectively.

The Third Option: Mostly applicable to the returnee ISIS families. It involves the creation of a team of experts and establishing a psychological support hotline for former terrorists. This is the option that was selected by Sweden.

ii. The Countries Supporting the Return of Fighters Who Fought in ISIS' Terrorist Ranks, and Those That Reject It

Different countries have taken differing positions in allowing fighters to return, where some have supported taking them back while others have rejected in principle. Moreover, there has not been a consensus over the type of returnees they are willing to take back, whether it would just be the women and children or to also include the fighters themselves. Other countries have remained neutral, announced their reservations and have yet to state any clear decisions.

Some have refused to allow the return of terrorist fighters, like the United Kingdom, and completely refused the return of foreign fighters who fought in ISIS' ranks. The UK has insisted on the importance of foreign fighters being brought to justice in accordance with the appropriate legal procedures in the jurisdiction where their crimes were committed, alongside other ISIS members being tried in these areas. Several European countries have refused to take back returning terrorists from the battlefields, including Belgium and other countries. On the other hand, there are some that have not taken a strict position towards returnees and their families, like France, Sweden, and others. For example, when France announced its position on the return of ISIS members, the French Minister of Justice, Nicole Belloubet, said that France will not take any decisions at the current time and will instead take back fighters on a case-by-case basis. Whereas, Sweden is attempting to reintegrate the ISIS fighters, while the Norwegian Prime Minister, Erna Solberg, said that the Norwegian jihadists are free to return to Norway and face trials there. Solberg confirmed that Oslo will not take any proactive steps in returning anyone to Norway, but she stressed that Norwegian citizens in Syria have the right to return to their homes.

In addition to the countries that support and reject the return of the terrorist fighters, there are countries that have only expressed their reservations on this issue, including Belgium and Australia.⁷

3. ISIS and the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict

Firstly, it is crucial to note what this paper does not address: Israeli success in using "Islamist terrorism" to justify aggression and crimes against the Palestinian people, including three successive aggressions against the Gaza Strip (2008, 2012 and 2014); demonstration and propagation of Israel's advanced capacity to tackle terrorism; success in linking Palestinian

resistance movements and extremist jihad; and creating a state of international understanding of Israel's security needs. Instead, the paper shall consider other issues that have arisen from the rise of ISIS and the impact on the Israel/Palestine issue and conflict.

The impact of ISIS' defeat on the Palestinian issue and especially on the four elements of Jerusalem, Gaza Strip, the "Knife Intifada" and internal Palestinians politics require deeper research and reading. Of these, one of the most important is the Gaza Strip. It is suffering from the war between the Egyptian Army and the Islamic State in the Sinai Province. All parts of daily life in Gaza will continue to be affected as long as accusations are leveled against it, such as providing shelter or supplies to the jihadists in Sinai. Here, we can refer to the study that was conducted by Samar Batrawi, 'Understanding ISIS's Palestine Propaganda', which discusses ISIS' attempts to appropriate the Palestinian narrative and use the Palestinian cause in a manner that has negatively affected Palestinian rights.⁸

The appearance of extremist groups, specifically ISIS, in addition to the conflict taking a more sectarian and denominational character, has led to an impact on the Palestinian cause during and after the conflict, namely in the following aspects:

a. Conflating the Concept of Terrorism with the Palestinian Resistance

Even though the principles and provisions of international law have clearly differentiated between international terrorism and armed resistance for self-determination, ISIS has provided an excellent opportunity to Israel to take advantage of the extremism and terrorism that took the area by storm. Namely, extending the conflation of legitimate resistance and terrorism has been the focus, painting

resistance as terrorism, thereby treating both the same. Historically, and especially since 9/11 and the Second Intifada, Palestinian resistance movements were described as terrorist organizations, in part to smear their reputation and curb support for them⁹. Such a narrative has been rejuvenated since the rise of ISIS, with Palestinian resistance, especially Hamas, This had a negative effect on the legitimacy of the Palestinian resistance locally and internationally and it will lead to the weakening of the programmes supported by the international community relating to the Palestinian resistance strategy in its efforts

against the Occupation. Furthermore, it defames the resistance and tries to show it as being equal to the terrorist movements that are widespread in the region. For example, Israel tried to categorize Palestinian

resistance movements, especially the Islamic movements, as terrorist groups and extremists and link them to ISIS.¹⁰

The Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, started since the appearance of ISIS, an intensive campaign to defame Palestine by spreading the idea that Hamas and ISIS are "two sides of the same coin", as he said in statements given at the United Nations, the US Congress, and the AIPAC Conference¹¹. Despite Israel's efforts to link the Palestinian Resistance to international terrorism by stating they are similar or organizationally connected not being a new concept or effort, what is remarkable is the expanding scope of this Israeli marketing at the formal and media levels after the emergence of ISIS, including among both Arabs and non-Arabs. This might be a clear attempt to take advantage of the international, Arab, and

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...what is remarkable is the expanding scope of this Israeli marketing at the formal and media levels after the emergence of ISIS, including among both Arabs and non-Arabs.

Islamic repulsion towards ISIS, their extremist religious rhetoric and their vicious behaviour in torturing victims.¹²

b. The Threats from ISIS in the Sinai Peninsula to the Gaza Strip

The continuing deterioration of the security situation in Egypt, namely the Sinai Peninsula, has raised concerns over not only Egyptian national security and threat of armed extremist groups, but of the creation of links in interests between such groups and others in the Gaza Strip. There have been many questions regarding this link and the exact nature of these relations, examined especially in the Egyptian media. This issue has caused tensions in relations between Hamas, which rules the Gaza Strip, and Egypt.

It can be argued that the risk of ISIS remaining in the Sinai Peninsula has played a role in increasing the humanitarian suffering of Palestinians. The poor security conditions in the Sinai Peninsula and the widespread presence of jihadists has led to a tightening of Egyptian security procedures in the territory, which is the doorway from the Gaza Strip to the rest of the world. These measures, including Egypt's hastened construction of a border wall¹³, can be attributed to the difficult conditions that the Egyptian armed forces are facing in dealing with ISIS there.

In all cases, the expansion of ISIS in the Sinai Peninsula and the lack of stability, has become another factor to increase the suffering of the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, implementing policies that relate to terrorism.

c. The Danger of ISIS to the Palestinian National Project

ISIS does not believe in nationalistic projects because their ideology is a transnational one. Jihad, according to them, is the way to impose the word of Allah and change the "godless" forms of government that are, from their point

of view, illegitimate. As an overarching ideology, it drives their reasons why they should liberate occupied lands and impose Sharia. The most radical version of political religion is utilized as a shocking ideology that does not simply seek to restore the historical Islamic political system, but attempts to carry jihad globally. Set on challenging what they believe and term as false gods and ignorance anywhere in the world, they are set on establishing a global caliphate.

From these ideological ideas, it becomes clear that ISIS is against any national project, with the project of a Palestinian state considered among them. This was confirmed by the statement of the "Al Mujahideen Shura Council" that was issued after operations to assassinate three of its members in Hebron by the Israeli Occupation in November 2014, a statement that was titled 'The Permissibility of Conducting Jihad Against the False Gods and the Criminal Authorities'. They claimed that this was the case because these tyrants have reached

agreements with the infidels of the world, who are made up of the Jews and Christians, among others, to fight against the jihad and hand over mujahideen to the enemy. They have, however, not been successful, and the Salafi methodology, they continued, expanded into the West Bank and gained a foothold there even after everyone had been working to ensure that any of its seeds that were planted in the area would fail. The statement continues to say: "We are at the beginning of an open war against Muslims in the West Bank, where killing, stealing of lands, destruction of homes, and the desecration of holy places, among other such actions, leads for us to call upon everyone who is loyal to the cause to reject the so-called negotiations that have only led to betrayal of the cause and of those involved being agents for other entities."¹⁴ Despite the retreat of the jihadist group after the efforts of the Coalition forces, and their military defeat

It can be argued that the risk of ISIS remaining in the Sinai Peninsula has played a role in increasing the humanitarian suffering of Palestinians.

Certain Israeli media outlets started, after the operation in Hebron, to carry out a large-scale operation to try to link the danger in the West Bank to the regional instability created by ISIS

on the ground, they still have a presence through their ideology and are restructuring themselves once again. It is clear from the phenomenon of armed jihadist groups that they can regenerate, and whenever an attempt fails, another manifests itself

elsewhere. After the previous generation has completed its purposes or lost its ability to continue to face its opponents, a new generation appears after it with a slightly amended strategy. The phenomenon continues and the specific end remains elusive and hard to predict. However, the same cycle of inter-generational strategic shifts within armed groups, as well as the change in the methods of their armed operations and recruitment.

This could affect the rebuilding of their form, their sustainability, and their expansion into different parts of the West Bank and Gaza. Combined, these could represent a new reason to ensure the failure of any peace process or national Palestinian project in the future, as well as to drag out the Palestinian issue.

Certain Israeli media outlets started, after the operation in Hebron, to carry out a large-scale operation to try to link the danger in the West Bank to the regional instability created by ISIS, especially in Syria and the Sinai Peninsula. Some have stated that these groups have a presence deep in the West Bank and their operations will increase, according to a detailed report on the operations of Salafi jihadist groups on *Walla!*, an Israeli news site. According to them, the participation of these groups, and their involvement in the military operations of Palestinian resistance groups, most prominently the Hamas movement and the Islamic Jihad, is only a matter of time due to the ongoing regional events, especially in Egypt, Syria, and Iraq. The site says that there

are thousands of supporters of Salafi thought in the areas of the West Bank.¹⁵ A military analyst, Amos Harel, says: "The link between the increased popularity of Salafists in the West Bank is seemingly due to the loss of hope in the Palestinian Administration, as well as the difficulties that are faced by Hamas. It can be assumed that the increased activity of groups with a similar ideological direction, in the Sinai Peninsula, and especially in the brutal civil war in Syria, increases their support in the West Bank."¹⁶

The expansion of these groups and the fears that are aroused by them allow Israel to decrease international pressure demanding that Israel adhere to the Oslo Accords with the Palestinian Authority and to adhere, as an occupying state, to international law. To save face in international public opinion, Israel always prefers that the Palestinians take on new forms that do not have credibility and acceptance in the international community. Israel always strives to spread the idea that there is no Palestinian partner in the peace process, and it might find this objective in jihadist groups. The point is especially true since Israel has always been able to deal with any of the dangers surrounding it, especially Islamic jihadi groups. In an interview with the German Radio Deutsche Welle, a journalist from Israeli radio said that Israel is not concerned by the presence of jihadis on Israeli borders because Israel has the ability to coexist with jihadist groups. They have, in the past, lived with Hamas at its borders, but the journalist stated that Israel is worried about the strength of the Egyptian Army. This means that it fears regular armies more than it fears jihadists.¹⁷

The expansion of these groups and the fears that are aroused by them allow Israel to decrease international pressure demanding that Israel adhere to the Oslo Accords with the Palestinian Authority

For that purpose, Israel is working hard to link ISIS with groups in Gaza and the West Bank, and to market the idea that the ideas and

behaviours of these groups will gain a strong foothold in Gaza and the West Bank. Israeli reports showed that it estimates the number of volunteers that went to fight in Syria from the Gaza Strip to be around 30, most of whom are members of Salafi jihadist groups in Gaza and some of whom are members of Hamas who left the group and do not have any organizational affiliations.¹⁸ There were also a handful of Palestinians from the West Bank, and several dozen Palestinians residents of the refugee camps in Lebanon (the most prominent of which is the Ein al-Hilweh near Sidon), as well as Palestinian residents of Syrian and Jordan.¹⁹ This phenomenon involves possible risks for Israel because most of the volunteers were expected to join, while in Syria, groups that were affiliated with ISIS and the Global Jihad, gaining military experience and undergoing the process of expanding their jihadist views. It is expected that they will, while they are in those areas, make connections with members from Gaza and the West Bank who might be tasked with carrying out operations after they return to their original places of residence.

d. Dealing with the Returnees in the Case of Palestine

With regards to the case of Palestine, the specificities of the issue of dealing with any Palestinian who joined ISIS has become clear. Figures show that there are dozens of Palestinians who served in ISIS, in addition to those who are affected by or sympathetic towards ISIS and its ideology. When dealing with these individuals, it requires specific approaches that take into consideration the Palestinian conditions, ability of Palestinian society, forces, political parties and civil society to effectively deal with this issue. Palestinians should be aware that this, in addition to Palestinian attempts to curb their activities in Palestine, could be used by Israel to argue for association between the Palestinian people and ISIS.

However, in general, the number of Palestinians inside Palestine who joined ISIS

are very limited. Given the logistical difficulties they will face, it is not likely that they would return to Palestine. The largest risk with regards to ISIS and the Palestinian issue, are the people who are sympathetic to ISIS, including some of the Islamist leaders. These individuals can be active in a limited manner inside Palestine or used by the Israeli occupation to continue conflating issues and smearing Palestinian resistance.

4. Conclusion

The military defeat of ISIS is not the end of the group for a plethora of reasons, as has been detailed throughout this paper. Most important of which is the continued fragility of the political situation in Iraq and Syria, the absence of political solutions and continuing forms of inequality. These are the same conditions that contributed to this group gaining prominence and acceptance in the first place, yet still remain unaddressed. Furthermore, the ideology that has been adopted and developed by ISIS is ever-present, alongside its capacity to be spread among many marginalized groups. In order to continue to counter ISIS and hasten its total downfall, these efforts must take into account transformations in ISIS' future strategy as a consequence of its military defeat. To fully achieve the above, a multidimensional and integrated strategy needs to be produced and implemented. Recommendations are detailed below:

1. Confronting this group in the military and security fields must remain a priority to combat extremism in general, and ISIS specifically. Developments and changes to the group's military strategy must be acknowledged, requiring joint regional and international efforts to adapt to the increasing scope in which it operates.
2. The political conditions that have contributed to making this group, and

other extremist groups, prominent must be dealt with, especially with regards to countries that have experienced armed conflicts. This is important so as not to create the conditions that will lead to the emergence of these types of groups in the future.

3. The economic, social, and humanitarian conditions must become a priority, particularly targeting youth. Issues like unemployment and economic marginalization must be dealt with, as well as the general lack of opportunities, because these are all factors that can create a fertile environment for recruitment and targeting by ISIS.
4. In order to counter extremism, there must be plans to deal with the propaganda of ISIS and the social media platforms it uses. These efforts must not only focus on the group itself,

but also the entities and individuals who disseminate ideas and positions that serve ISIS directly or indirectly.

5. Education at all levels must be reviewed. This concern must not only be limited to curriculums, but also to teachers and other staff due to their historical importance in contributing to the spread of the culture of extremism in societies.
6. Rehabilitation of the returnees and their families must occur, whilst concurrently reviewing the lessons learned from experiences of other countries. Crucial to this is the consideration of the different conditions of each country and their history with this phenomenon and types of groups.

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Turkey, Iran, and Politics of Interest with Regards to Palestine

By Khaled Hroub

Introduction

This paper comes as an attempt to read and analyze Turkish and Iranian policies towards the Palestinian issue, in addition to the motives and impact of such policies on the Palestinian political landscape. The approach that is presented here aims to contribute to the discussion on whether Turkish and Iranian influence and interference has led to the strengthening or weakening of the collective ability of Palestinians to face Israel.

The analysis in this paper is divided into three sections. The first section presents a short historical background on Turkish and Iranian policies towards Palestine/Israel, positioning these within the wider regional and international context. This help us understand and frame the directions and steps that are adopted by the two sides during different stages. Such an approach acts as a key analytical tool for understanding the policies, positions, and directions of these two countries with regards to the Palestinian issue. This goes beyond the focus on each country's ideological rhetoric, which, despite its importance in gaining influence and mobilizing support, is too narrow to inform a comprehensive understanding of Turkey and Iran's positions.

The second section analyzes the current regional scene, the shifts that it is experiencing, and the possibility of it developing in a number of directions from the point of view of the expected scenarios. It identifies a "potential regional trade-off" to which Turkey and Iran may be essential parties to. Moreover, analysis continues by discussing how these tradeoffs will affect the positions and policies of these two countries, together or individually, towards the Palestinian issue.

Finally, the third section will address some conclusions and results that will open the discussion further and attempt to enrich the debate on the impact of Turkish and Iranian policies and positions on Palestinian leaders, elites, and civil society from the point of view of strengthening or weakening Palestinian ability to achieve the Palestinian national project.

First: The Historical Backgrounds and Regional Context

The debate surrounding discussions on the positions and policies of Turkey and Iran towards Palestine focuses on two issues. The first concerns the level of influence that each country's national interest holds in the formulation of their respective approaches to Palestine, in addition to the extent to which such interests are themselves defined by ideological dimensions. Relatedly, the second debate centers on identifying the functional relationship through which the ideology enables the achievement of these interests. It is then certain that reasonable answers to such questions – answers that apply to all stages and governments in ahistorical fashion – are not possible since. Instead, answers must be linked to the time frame and historical eras in which positions and policies were formed and in accordance with the current, and indeed changing, form of ruling regime in both countries. It is therefore useful to keep abreast of the process and the relevant change or continuity in the policies towards Palestine and Israel, ranging temporally from the establishment of Israel until the present day. Following this process will provide us with an overall picture that demonstrates the aspects of continuity and interruption of such policies and positions along with the relevant timeline.

1. Turkish Policies towards Israel and Palestine: Change and Continuity

We shall begin with Turkey, as it was the first Muslim-majority country to recognize Israel in March 1949, less than a year after the date of establishment of the Hebrew state. Iran then came as the second Muslim-majority country to recognize Israel, and this was in 1950. From a very early stage, the strategies of the three countries have converged with one another and the relationships that have served them have deepened, and such a situation has served all in conformity with their respective political vision. Israel has, starting from the beginning of the 1950s, immediately after its establishment, adopted a policy of allying with the periphery, in which it aimed at creating strategic alliances with the Muslim states (or non-state entities), those with a Muslim majority, or those with a large Muslim presence, especially those surrounding the Arab world, such as Iran, Turkey, Ethiopia, Eritrea, the Kurds, and some rebel groups in South Sudan.¹ The goal of these alliances was to confront the “Arab powers,” at the head of which were Egypt, Syria, and Iraq, countries who rejected the existence of Israel, and to put them under siege and deplete their power through the peripherals. During the intense period of the Cold War, during the 1950s and 1960s, Turkey and Iran realized early on that an alliance with Israel will represent an additional guarantee of US support for and reliance on both of their states, with concurrent protection against the Soviet Union. This alliance would also guarantee a blind eye to their policies, whether these are their belligerent regional policies, which applies especially to the Shah’s Iran, or their internal

...during the 1950s and 1960s, Turkey and Iran realized early on that an alliance with Israel will represent an additional guarantee of US support for and reliance on both of their states, with concurrent protection against the Soviet Union.

policies that suppress public freedoms and oppress political opposition.^a

Turkish-Israeli relations continued to be strong and solid for more than half a century with the development and reinforcement of mutual cooperation in many sectors, including the military, intelligence, and training sectors, in addition to large-scale economic cooperation. While Turkey opened its air space and territory to the Israeli Air Force to carry out their regular trainings, Israel in return provided Turkey with military development, and related technology to manufacture Turkish weapons and develop the Turkish arms industry. In addition to the cooperation in military fields, there was also cooperation in other non-military sectors. The relationships between these countries in economy, tourism, and education were also deepened. Turkey, as well as Iran, were the

most important regional allies of Israel. Later on, Turkey adopted a slightly changed position, with more criticism of Israeli policies, especially during the Second Palestinian Intifada. In March 2002, the Turkish Prime Minister, Bülent Ecevit, criticized the Israeli army’s

siege that was imposed in Ramallah on Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian President at the time. However, the era in which the nature and pattern of the relationship between Turkey and Israel experienced a distinct shift occurred upon the arrival of the Justice and Development Party, led by Recep Tayyip Erdogan, to power in Turkey as a result of the November 2002 parliamentary elections. That can be described as the occurrence of a “real” change, even if it was not a total or radical change. It could be better described as “change with continuity”. This type of change refers to a gradual and calculated shift from

^a One of these bullying policies that the United States turned a blind eye to was Iran’s invasion of the UAE islands in 1971 and Iran’s violations and interventions on the Iraqi borders and Shatt al-Arab, which ended with an agreement that was unfair to Iraq in 1975. One of the Turkish bullying policies that the United States turned a blind eye to the suppression of the Kurdish demands and other minorities in Turkey for decades.

one stage to another. It guaranteed the avoidance of the risks involved in a complete transition from the former route, whilst ensuring the containment of any potential consequences resulting from the introduced change. In the end, a high level of continuity was maintained and protected, becoming a bridge between the new era and the previous eras. That is different from the total “change” such as the revolutionary or rebellious “change” which takes politics from a certain era to a completely new era that has no links to the former. This latter type of change does not provide a precise description of what happened in Turkish-Israeli relations. In spite of the fact that this relationship witnessed significant and important change in the era of the Justice and Development Party, the relationship continued to be featured with continuity from the previous era and was not a complete or radical shift.

Taking the above into account, the perception and policy of Turkey towards Israel and Palestine witnessed a gradual change since the arrival of the Justice and Development Party to

...the “new” Turkish administration adopted and that is oriented around the idea of a “strategic depth”.

power in Turkey and its continuity in power until today. This can be interpreted and understood as part of the foreign policy framework that the “new” Turkish administration adopted and that is oriented around the idea of a “strategic depth”. This includes a direction towards the Middle East and Arab states, enhancement of political and economic relationships with neighbouring countries, and the creation of an Arab dimension that balances Turkish foreign affairs concentrated on the European and American dimensions. According to the theory of “strategic depth” developed by Ahmet Davutoğlu, the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs from 2009 to 2014 and its Prime Minister from 2014 to 2016, the Middle East is “the key to economic, political and strategic equilibrium”.² Palestine assumed an important position in this strategy, and that was

especially the case due to the fact that the Turkish (Erdogan’s) position towards Palestine serves the new Turkish strategy and foreign policy at three different levels, at least. The first of these was that the political, diplomatic, and development solidarity with Palestine creates a grassroots Arab environment that embraces the Turkish direction towards the Arab region and more warmly receives Turkish “soft power”. The second was that solidarity with Palestine and increasing diplomatic attention to it shall reinforce the leadership role of the Turkish administration and the aspirations of formal regional influence of the same administration, or what is termed “Neo-Ottomanism”.³ The third is that solidarity with Palestine translates the desires and expectations of the popular base of Justice and Development Party, who are supporters of religious Islamic tendencies, which were demonstrated in various surveys showing their support of Palestine and criticism of Israel. Therefore, the Justice and Development Party would be able to maintain the popular support base it has. It is important to note here that the policies of using soft power and settling problems with neighbouring countries turned into policies of hard power after the Arab Spring. Turkey perceived the shifts and transitions witnessed in the Arab Spring - and the concurrent rise of the Islamists in most of the countries where the uprisings had taken place - as a strategic opportunity to deepen their regional influence through alliance with the rise of the Islamists. That later led to provocation of some Arab countries, especially Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, against Turkish politics. Things were further aggravated after the Turkish intervention in Syria. All of this has led to the transformation of the “zero conflicts” policy, as is evident by Turkey’s heavy involvement in conflicts in the neighbouring countries, especially in Syria.⁴

... that solidarity with Palestine translates the desires and expectations of the popular base of Justice and Development Party, who are supporters of religious Islamic tendencies

However, generally speaking, the solidarity with Palestine and the “change” in Turkish policy, as has been mentioned before, was not a radical change but rather a pragmatic move that struck a balance between the mottos and ideological orientations of the Justice and Development Party, the unchanging national interests of Turkey, and its relationship with Israel. For example, despite the new Turkish solidarity rhetoric towards Palestine since 2002, the core of which is religious and Islamic, Erdogan, along with leaders of the ruling party, media personnel, and others paid a visit to Israel in May 2005. This visit included talks with the Israeli Prime Minister at the time, Ariel Sharon, and the Israeli President Moshe Katsav. A year after this visit, Erdogan received Khaled Mashal, the Head of the Political Office of Hamas. This shows that whilst Turkey increasingly opened its doors to Palestinians, especially Palestinian Islamists, it was simultaneously maintaining its relations and interests with Israel to keep them strong and effective.

The relationship between both countries was exposed to increasing tensions since the war Israel waged on Gaza in September 2008, with Turkish criticism of Israel increasing during this period. These tensions violently culminated after the raid in which the Israeli army targeted the Turkish vessel carrying humanitarian aid, the *Mavi Marmara*, which was headed to Gaza in May 2010. This Israeli raid resulted in the killing of six Turkish nationals and in the freezing of the relations between the two countries. Then the verbal clashes between the two sides, namely between Erdogan and Israeli leaders, continued. An example is the Davos Meeting in January 2009 where Erdogan angrily left the panel in which he and Israeli President Shimon Peres were participating. Despite all of these events, the economic exchange between the two countries was not affected, but on the contrary reached its highest levels in the period from 2011 to 2013.⁵ After that, all the diplomatic relations between the two countries returned to normal following

Netanyahu's public apology to Turkey in March 2013.

With regard to the regional relations, interests, agendas, and concerns Turkey has in the region, it can be said that there are a number of issues and concerns that come on top of Turkey's list of priorities, and such issues need to be taken into account in any attempt to read Turkey's role in the region and in Palestine. The most prominent of these concerns is the issue of the Kurds in southern Turkey, its ramifications in Syria, and the security risks that it may cause. This issue is followed by the internal situation in Turkey and the control of the situation to avoid any security problems, such as the attempted coup in 2016. The situation of the Turkish economy and the Turkish currency come next in their priorities.

2. Iranian Policy towards Israel and Palestine: Maneuvers of Change and Their Implications

With regards to Iran, the relations between Iran and Israel were deepened immediately after Israel was recognized by Iran in the early 1950s, as mentioned above.⁶ Both countries became part of the American Alliance against the Soviet Union during the Cold War, and the regional interests of both countries converged as they felt that they were on a common minority side against a sweeping Arab majority in the region. The Israeli-Iranian relations, especially in the fields of military, security, and oil, remained strong and multi-faceted until 1979, when the Islamic Revolution in Iran removed the Shah from power. The revolution resulted in Iran cutting off ties with Israel and giving the headquarters of the Israeli Embassy in Tehran to the Palestinian Liberation Organization. This could be described as a large-scale change. However, it can be said that even after the establishment of the Khomeini-led Islamic Republic and the incidence of this great change, a significant part of Iranian policies remained as pragmatic maneuvers. This is shown in Israel's reading of what was happening in Iran and that it had not completely lost hope towards Iran, especially

since the war between Iraq and Iran started. Israel's desire to destroy Iraq and its military capabilities was translated and reflected in that it considered Iran an "indirect ally" in making possible and carrying out this mission. The aforementioned was further demonstrated through the opening of secret channels to help arm Iran during the 1980s, which became known as the Iran-Contra scandal. In a statement that refers to this secret and indirect alliance, in the mid-1980s and at the peak of the war between Iraq and Iran, Yitzhak Rabin said, "Iran is a geo-strategic ally of Israel"⁷. The pragmatic and secretive relationship between Iran and Israel in that era exemplifies the priority and control that national interests have over the public ideology and the rhetoric adopted by the two countries, who were then still exchanging the severest accusations and threats, reaching the level of threatening to exterminate the other country.

Even though the relationship between post-revolutionary Iran and Israel fluctuated between the state of complete closure and partial opening in accordance with the various conditions, leaders, and contexts, it still can be said that the most important and prominent chapter in the relationship between the Khomeini-led Iran and the Palestinian issue was the accelerated development in the relationship between Iran and the Palestinian Islamist movements, especially Hamas and the Islamic Jihad Movement. Since the beginning of the 1990s, and only a few years after the emergence of both of these Islamist movements, Tehran had granted both organizations official headquarters and opened channels of initial financial support, followed by military support. With the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993 and at the same time as the deterioration of relations between the US and Iran, Tehran increased support to a range of Palestinian entities which opposed Oslo, and the Islamist movements in particular,

Iran's strategic view is that any political solution between Israel and the Palestinians must come after, not prior to, a political solution to the conflict between Iran and the United States

in order to assert and strengthen Iran's regional presence. From an American and Israeli perspective, this support from Iran was interpreted as part of an Iranian strategy aimed at thwarting any political settlement between Israel and the Palestinians, because the success of any settlement means that Israel, the United States, and their regional allies will have more space to confront Iran. In their view, that is why Iran wanted, and still wants, to keep the Palestinian issue open, and therefore it continues its support for its allies in Palestine, which means that it will continue to be able to use it as a leverage in its conflict with the United States. Thus, Iran's strategic view is that any political solution between Israel and the Palestinians must come after, not prior to, a

political solution to the conflict between Iran and the United States – and Israel – because such a resolution will strengthen Iran's position and the concessions it receives from the United States in return for the leverage it uses, including the Palestinian issue. Meanwhile, the American and Israeli approach has been the exact opposite since they believe that a resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict must precede any resolution with Iran because such a resolution would weaken Iran's position and strip it of one of its most important issues for leverage in the region. Such a sequence of resolutions will put Tehran in a weaker position and the resolution between Iran and the United States would be in conformity with American conditions. This approach may have been made clear in an important statement by Martin Indyk, the US Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs in the Clinton administration, on the "dual containment" strategy pursued by the United States. The statement said,

"What the Iranians did was to outsmart us by taking on the peace process. And they became very aggressive supporters of Palestinian terrorism. Our strategy [of dual containment]

was to, on one hand, use the engine of peacemaking to transform the region and on the other hand contain the [Iranians] through sanctions and isolation. The two were symbiotic. The more we succeeded in making peace, the more isolated they would become. The more we succeeded in containing them, the more possible it would be to make peace. So, they had an incentive to do us in on the peace process in order to defeat our policy of containment and isolation.”⁸

In general, Iran adopted an extreme rhetoric against Israel and in favour of the Palestinians and the Islamist resistance movements while, at the same time, remaining in a pragmatic grey space regarding its vision of the final resolution to the conflict between the two sides. When the Iran extreme rhetoric against Israel was at its peak, during the presidency of former Iranian President Ahmadinejad who directly or indirectly called for Israel to be taken off the map, Iran's official position was that Tehran agreed to what the Palestinians collectively accepted. Even Ahmadinejad himself expressed this position in the same speech in the United Nations in which he called for the removal of Israel from the map, when he called for a free referendum in Palestine through which to determine the kind of state that Palestinians want in all of the Palestinian territories⁹. The official position of Iran that approves the two-state solution, namely the establishment of a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital, was reiterated on more than one occasion, the latest of which was Tehran's endorsement of the decisions of the Islamic Summit of Cooperation held in Istanbul in December 2017. During this

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summit, the member states reiterated the demand and approval of a Palestinian state within the aforementioned borders, and this was included in the concluding statement of the summit in the presence of the Iranian President Hassan Rowhani and Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Jawad Zarif.^b

Another dimension has developed rapidly and has been linked to regional polarization and the Iranian leadership of the Axis of Resistance, which also includes Syria, Hezbollah, and the Hamas and Islamic Jihad movements in Palestine. On the other hand, there was also the formation of the so-called moderation axis, led by Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, and most of the Gulf states, along with the Palestinian Authority. This polarization accelerated more

sharply after the American war on Iraq in 2003 and along with the gradual and accelerated Iranian takeover of Iraq. This Iranian influence over Iraq reached a level in which Iraq was considered Iran's backyard of influence in the region (also Syria,

Lebanon, and, at a later time, Yemen), and that Iraq is part of Iran's national security, according to statements by a number of Iranian officials.¹⁰ The point related to this paper's discussion is that this regional entrenchment and polarization has resulted in harsh conditions for the Palestinian parties receiving support from Iran since Iranian expectations were that these parties should stand with Tehran in its various regional policies, whatever they may be. Over the years, Hamas has tried to maintain a distance and its independence in order to not be seen as being submissive to Iranian decisions and policies. It has generally succeeded in maintaining a reasonable degree of independence, but it has

^b 'Istanbul Declaration' stated that 'We emphasize that it will never be possible to give up on the aspiration to a sovereign and independent State of Palestine on the basis of the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital; which we regard as a prerequisite for peace and security in the region. See full text on <https://www.oic-oci.org/docdown/?docID=1698&refID=1073>

paid a high price for this after the outbreak of the Syrian Revolution, when Hamas took the side of the Revolution against the position of Tehran, which supported the Syrian regime. In the bigger picture, what is important to note here is the positioning of the Palestinian Authority and Palestinian President Abbas alongside the “moderation axis”, while Hamas and the Islamic Jihad are in the Axis of Resistance, and the distraction and fragmentation that this has meant for the Palestinian political and resistance landscape.

Second: Regional Scenarios and Trade-Offs... and Palestine!

In thinking about the possible avenues the region might be headed towards in the coming few years that will affect the positions and roles of regional players, especially Iran and Turkey, and how this is reflected on Palestine in different aspects, there are four main, but not exclusive, possibilities. These possibilities or scenarios are the following: 1) The development and escalation of the current regional confrontations and conflicts to comprehensive and destructive regional wars; 2) The continuity of the current confrontations and conflicts at their current level, which means the continuity of the mutual attrition and exhaustion of all parties; 3) Gradual and mutual containment of conflict parties and reduction of conflict to lower than the current level; and 4) The resolution of conflicts and moving towards comprehensive collective cooperation within a regional security system. The degree of involvement of Iran and Turkey in the current conflicts vary, and the likelihood of their degree of engagement, influence, and impact varies in each one of these four scenarios, whilst Iran remains more central in the region in terms of tension, location, influence and impact. In the foreseeable future, the chances of the first two possibilities are higher, with conflicts

Each of these four possibilities depends on the willingness and ability of different political parties to prioritize political pragmatism over ideological and expansionist tendencies and temptations.

perpetuating either at their current or at an increasing level. However, this does not mean that there are no chances for other possibilities, which include de-escalating conflicts, even if in the medium- and long-term. Each of these four possibilities depends on the willingness and ability of different political parties to prioritize political pragmatism over ideological and expansionist tendencies and temptations. It also depends on the emergence of an international, mainly Western but especially American, political discourse and practice based on negotiations and betting on future cooperation, the conditions of which are that everyone provides concessions in exchange for gains from regional cooperation.

The Arab region continues to suffer from regional deterioration and increasing disintegration, especially as a number of its main countries are at the heart of the regional turmoil that has not subsided. Iran and Turkey have been involved in one form or another, at least since the US war in Iraq in 2003 and the fierce wars that followed reached advanced levels of

destruction in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen. Since then, the two countries have played, to varying degrees, influential roles in the crises and wars in the Arab world, and these are wars that Arab countries and societies pay the price for. In the midst of this matrix of crises, alliances, proxy wars, ambiguous prospects, the shifting balance of power, and the changing presence and withdrawal of global powers, the future of the Middle East and the region are open to many possibilities. The majority of these prospects portray further deterioration, especially in light of Arab disintegration and the absence of coherent and unified positions even within the Global Cooperation Council (GCC), the only system in the Arab region that has maintained a reasonable degree of cohesion and internal solidarity. The basic idea

that this paper presents is presupposed on the fact that regional geography cannot be changed. In other words, whilst Iran, Turkey, and the Arab world's proximity cannot be changed, their relational history and politics can be changed and influenced. Therefore, it could be argued that the interest of all regional national actors – Arab nations, Iran and Turkey – lies in ending the conflict and moving towards a phase of cooperation and regional security. The persistence of conflicts will only mean more exhaustion and more destruction for all parties.

Israel: From Alliance with the Periphery to Alliance with the Center

Where are Israel and Palestine located in the four regional scenarios presented above, and how will they be affected? The starting point in trying to answer this question may be to understand the nature of the shift in regional alliances currently under way and Israel's relationship with these alliances. It can be said that the most important alliance under formation is the Israeli, Egyptian, and Saudi tripartite alliance that is backed by the United States and was formed to confront what these parties see as an Iranian threat. This alliance at the heart of determining which scenario take precedence, and in what form. This alliance, if it becomes public, and becomes the most important framework governing the relations between these three countries, will represent a radical change in the shape of regional politics. From an Israeli point of view, Israel's obsession and concerns have shifted from focusing on Arab nationalism and Arab countries as a source of threat over the past decades toward Islamists, their countries, and their formations.¹¹ It was noted in the introduction to this paper that Israel's alliances in the fifties and sixties of the 20th century relied on alliances with non-Arab periphery states such as Iran, Turkey, Ethiopia, the Kurds, and the rebels of Southern Sudan, in order to pressure the Arab "center" of nationalist politics which rejected Israel. The heart of these alliances was the tripartite alliance

between Israel, Iran and Turkey, which was practically ended with Egypt's signing of the 1979 peace agreement with Israel. Now, nearly half a century later, the tripartite alliance with the periphery states has become a tripartite alliance with the most important countries of the central Arab countries, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, to confront the periphery states of Iran in particular, and Turkey to a lesser degree.

Regional Trade-offs

It can be argued that the region and its most important countries, with those that interest us being Turkey and Iran, have a higher probability to engage in one or more particular regional trade-offs or transitions in the near future. The discussion below is an attempt to illustrate the outlines of such potential trade-offs without going into additional details. The aim here is to simply refer to them in order to highlight the most important question: How will these trade-offs affect the positions of Turkey and Iran towards Palestine and the Palestinians, and will the leverage of supporting the Palestinians be used as a concession in negotiations between the various parties? This is the strategic question that the different Palestinians parties must think of, especially those benefiting from Iranian or Turkish support, and they must prepare for the consequences of such concessions.

Iran and the Nuclear Issue

The first possible trade-off, with its possible occurrence of high importance, is related to Iran and concerns American (under the Trump administration) and Israeli escalation against Iran, especially after the cancellation of the nuclear deal signed by the administration of former US President Barack Obama with Tehran in 2015. This trade-off may move towards one of the following two directions: escalating tensions that might lead to a new military confrontation in the region, or pacifist negotiations that are based on redrafting the nuclear deal but on new terms. In both scenarios, the questions that need to be

discussed is in the midst of any new agreement or tensions: how will this impact Iranian support to Palestinian parties, and what position will Palestine adopt? To what extent will Iran use their support to Palestine as leverage to either increase the escalation or negotiate in the talks, and how will that reflect on the Palestinian political landscape? In the case of escalation and increased tensions, it can be predicted that Iranian support for Hamas and the Islamic Jihad will continue to be used as leverage by Tehran to pressure both the United States and Israel. The continuance or increase of this Iranian support may contribute to hardening the positions of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad in internal Palestinian politics, especially in their dialogue with Fatah and the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank. In the scenario of more peace and pacifist negotiations, the terms of any new regional nuclear deal may include a requirement to limit the Iranian regional influence, including Tehran's support for Palestinian movements such as Hamas and the Islamic Jihad. In this case, it may be expected that the positions of the two movements may become more responsive and less rigid towards the internal issues in Palestine and towards the ideas of dialogue, and they might reach some form of consensus with Fatah and its authority in the West Bank.

The continuance or increase of this Iranian support may contribute to hardening the positions of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad in internal Palestinian politics

Turkey, the US, and northern Syria

There is another trade-off that appears to be underway and it is related to Turkey this time. The agenda of this trade-off might include sensitive issues, such as acknowledging the long-term presence of the Turkish Army in Kurdish areas in northern Syria, handing over prominent Turkish opposition activist Fethullah Gülen, putting an end to the investigation of the killing of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, decreasing and limiting Turkish support for Palestine in general and Hamas in particular, and decreasing the

severity of Turkish rhetoric against Israel. This trade-off essentially involves allowing Turkish control in the Kurdish areas in northern Syria in order to prevent any semi-autonomous or independent Kurdish territory from the central authority in Damascus. This fear represents one of the most important strategic security concerns for Turkey because of the future consequences that this might have on Kurds in Turkey, the return of the activity of the PKK, and creating a launching pad that will promote and encourage the political aspirations of the PKK and other groups opposing Turkey and its military activities. Even if things in Northern Syria do not develop towards the formation of any Syrian Kurdish entity, the mere geographical contact with the Kurdish region in

Turkey remains a major security concern, especially as Syria may leave the border open with the aim of preoccupying and inconveniencing Turkey and perhaps as a form of retaliation for its role during the Syrian revolution. The important point in this

discussion is that letting Turkey control the north of Syria comes with American approval, which includes the withdrawal of US forces from the region, as has been announced. This announcement was a surprise to observers because it meant leaving the area to the control of the Turkish armed forces and also raised questions about the price that Turkey had paid or pledged so that Ankara would be allowed to extend its control over the Kurdish region. The trade-off may also include handing over or limiting the activities of Turkish opposition activist Fethullah Gülen whom Ankara accuses of being behind the failed coup attempt in 2016. Meanwhile, it may be reasonable to wonder whether the price Turkey will pay in return be in the form of new Turkish positions in the regional issues of interest to Washington, such as the relationship with Israel, the political and diplomatic support of Hamas in particular, and to turning a blind eye to the Khashoggi file and

ceasing from pursuing Saudi Arabia with it, something that the Trump administration really desires.

Israel and the "Process" of Normalization with the Gulf

The other trade-off that can occur on the ground at the moment is an Israeli produced and implemented trade-off and its essence is related to what is known as the "peace process". This requires special reflection, especially since the peace process no longer exists and we knew this after the first five years of this "process," between 1994 and 1999, or the transitional period, without achieving any "peace" or transition towards a permanent phase, and the whole game turned into sponsoring the "process" rather than the "peace". The objective then was shifted from achieving the theoretically desired "peace" to continuing the "process" that has created a general diplomatic and media situation that has spanned for over 20 years, featuring rounds of negotiations, meetings, delegations, press conferences, and TV statements.¹² The "peace process" has become Israel's offensive strategy at both regional and international levels to achieve additional interests, and this "process" provided a comfortable cover for Israel to internally create new realities and settlements on the ground, particularly in the West Bank and Jerusalem, and to externally create international and regional diplomatic relations with previous parties with whom it was difficult to create relations due to its occupation of the Palestinian and Arab land since 1967. In this context, Israel managed to rearrange its political discourse and its diplomatic relations with many countries with the pretext and promise that the conflict with the Palestinians is about to be solved, providing evidence that the negotiations with

them are ongoing, thus there is no need to continue any positions rejecting Israel's occupation policies which are also claimed to be on their way to an end. From Israel's perspective, the "process" practically succeeded on the ground and Israel has managed to keep the Palestinian file on shelves for more than a quarter of a century of no longer meaningful negotiations. We are therefore looking at a classic example of a horse chasing a carrot that it will never get. The "peace" is the carrot used with the Palestinians, while the horse keeps moving and pulling the cart behind it, which is the peace process, in the direction that the rider wants it to go.

Now the "peace process" is progressing towards another stage, in which the Palestinian track is left behind, and it will

Now the "peace process" is progressing towards another stage, in which the Palestinian track is left behind, and it will instead make its results effective on the Arab track in general, and the Gulf track in particular

instead make its results effective on the Arab track in general, and the Gulf track in particular, by using a new formula and new promise. Israel promises to confront Iran. In return for this promise, the GCC's approach helps to advance Israeli interests in the region, so that Israel can achieve what it

wants and create new realities based on its own interests and no one else's. In light of this trade-off and the activation of this new "process", we can understand the development of Israel's non-public relations with a number of Gulf countries in recent years as operating through Israel playing on their fears of the "Iranian threat". The development of such relations was culminated last year in visits by Israeli officials and ministers to the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Oman.¹³ There have been numerous reports of meetings between Saudi security officials and politicians with Israeli officials, with the relationship between the two sides supposed to be in an unprecedented state of warmth. The fruit of which exemplified when Israel and the US Jewish lobby supported the Saudi

Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman to secure his political future from threats following the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in October 2018 and accusations that the Crown Prince was involved.¹⁴

Iran is therefore the most important element upon which Israel, Saudi Arabia and a number of other Gulf states maintain consensus upon in this new trade-off. The Gulf states hope that their alliance with Israel will first provide them with protection from Iranian threats and, more importantly, push Israel towards a

The question that the Palestinians must ask is: how and in what direction will this trade-off affect the regional, and especially the Gulf, positions towards Palestine and its political, diplomatic and financial support?

confrontation with Iran, limiting Iran's military influence and power. Many doubt that Saudi Arabia and its Gulf allies will achieve the goal of pushing Israel into a military confrontation with Iran to achieve the Gulf agenda because of the fact that Israeli strategic

considerations, including waging war or being reluctant to do so, are based on understanding and achieving Israeli interests rather than the interests of others.¹⁵ In spite of that, Israel is now engaged in the "process" of luring the Gulf using the carrot of an alliance against Iran, and the possibility of attacking it. In this way, the Gulf will continue to chase this carrot for many years, with Israeli interests benefiting from the Gulf's approach. The question that the Palestinians must ask is: how and in what direction will this trade-off affect the regional, and especially the Gulf, positions towards Palestine and its political, diplomatic and financial support?

Third: Reflections and Remarks for Further Lessons and Discussion

Referring to the above discussions regarding the important role of the regional players of Turkey and Iran in the Israel/Palestine context, we can reflect on some of the lessons and open

conclusions that need to be discussed and brainstormed. These are without assumptions that they are final and closed conclusions and with the understanding that they are presented here for consideration and to stimulate further debate:

First: The Palestinians must realize that the decisive compass that guides Iran and Turkey in determining their regional policies, including their policy towards Palestine and Israel, is their individual national interests, rather than Palestinian interests. Despite the high tone of the ideological rhetoric from Tehran and Ankara in many cases, and at different degrees on numerous occasions, the main and most effective driver remains the national political interests of each one of these countries. The significance of this is that any major political or strategic shift in the region that would significantly serve the interests of either country and most likely require either of them to sacrifice the Palestinian issue.

Second: The support that regional parties - whether they are countries including Iran and Turkey, organizations, or other formations - provide to certain Palestinian parties rather than the Palestinians as a whole and at a national level does not only strengthen the supported parties, but also divides the Palestinians and increases the level of internal polarization. Regional support would more effectively bolster the Palestinians' ability to establish a single united Palestinian entity with a unified political agenda and direction.

Third: The region is beset by a number of interrelated conflicts and crises that vary in severity, scale and brutality (from Syria to Iraq, Yemen and Palestine and further to a potential breakout of new popular risings in one or more countries just like the current events in Sudan, Algeria, Iraq, Lebanon and more. Turkey and Iran are engaged in a number of these conflicts, either as a primary or secondary player, namely in Syria. Additionally, there is the continuing US escalation against Iran after the Trump administration's withdrawal from

the Nuclear Deal and the growing likelihood of a US and Israeli war against Iran. Crises overlap, and the roles of the players overlap, which means that the possibilities are open for a number of scenarios. These could manifest in an increase in intensity of current conflicts and may lead to additional wars, or a reduction that may lead to settlements. These settlements will be based on large "trade-offs" in which the various parties will relinquish the leverage they use, and therein lies the risk of sacrificing the Palestine issue on the negotiating table if any of these trade-offs happen as discussed above in this paper. This requires additional Palestinian awareness regarding the extent of reliance on the support of regional parties within the regional game of pressure and trade-offs.

Fourth: For more than two decades, Iran has provided significant financial, military, and charitable support to Hamas and the Islamic Jihad, and that support has certainly contributed to strengthening the status and power of these two movements in the Palestinian landscape. However, this support has also contributed to the Hamas movement specifically targeting its adversaries in Palestine and to hardening its positions towards them, and thus deepening the Palestinian division that took place with the Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip in 2007. That means that the Iranian support was contradictory. On one hand, Iran strengthened and positioned the existence and influence of Palestinian resistance movements that had, and still have, a significant role in confronting Israel. While, on the other hand, this support has increased and crystalized the environment that incubates and generates division among Palestinians. The Iranian role in supporting Hamas excluded Tehran from being a potential mediator to sponsor any dialogue between Hamas and Fatah, and it prevented it from playing a unifying role, assuming that Iran wants there to be unification in the first place.

Fifth: Turkey's support for Hamas took different forms from the Iranian provision of

direct military and financial support. In contrast, Turkey focused on providing the political and diplomatic support that Hamas needed most, especially after the failure of its bets in allying with certain factions in the Arab Spring in Egypt and Syria. Hamas found itself in a confined position and no longer had any real political resort in the region other than Qatar and Turkey. At the same time, Turkey maintains strong and reasonable relations with the Palestinian Authority, leaving Ankara with the space to play a potential role in future Palestinian dialogue. It can be said that this is a role which Turkey has not fully used, and that the Turkish role is still in the process of being activated. Here, it is possible to recommend using this space and thinking about the way and mechanism of activating the Turkish role, considering of course the constant Egyptian desire to take over the Palestinian dialogue file and keep it in under the control of Cairo.

Sixth: One of the immediate lessons learned, following the deterioration of the Palestinian situation, the deepening of the division, and the failure of the bet on regional support, is the necessity for the Palestinian leadership to return attention to internal issues. This includes the building and reaching of consensus amongst various national entities. Regional support for the two authorities in Palestine - PA in the West Bank and Hamas in the Gaza Strip - consolidated and deepened division. This is because such support was, and continues to be, in the context of regional polarization and the mobilization of loyalties. This regional support was not granted to Palestine as a nation, nor did it encourage Palestinians to keep their joint peoplehood. While Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan support the authority in the West Bank, Iran and Turkey support the authority in Gaza.

Seventh: Once again on the internal level, the long and bitter experience of using regional support against local national rivals under the pretext of maintaining a higher political ceiling raises an important question for the Palestinian leadership to discuss. It centers

around which option is of more priority, be it the achievement of national unity with a lower political ceiling, or maintaining a high political ceiling and paying the high costs of division? In more detail and clarity, the options can be paraphrased as follows. The first is the unity of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip under one authority of a low and non-sovereign ceiling in order to get closer to a final resolution. The second is the possibility of separating part of the Palestinian territory, the Gaza Strip, with the view to semi-completely liberating it in the medium term. The key question must ask which of these options is of more priority? This question becomes more pressing since there are leaks of the so-called "Deal of the Century", wherein the geopolitical focus moves from the West Bank to the Gaza Strip, considering the latter as the center of Palestinian demographic and economic strength and trying to push it towards Egypt, thus weakening its link with the West Bank.

Eighth: Drawing on the above, the Palestinians at this moment must draw up the possible scenarios related to a partial or complete implementation of the "Deal of the Century," with or without the approval of the Palestinian people. One of the most pivotal scenarios to discuss and prepare for is the partial implementation of the "Deal of the Century", especially with regards to the separation of the Gaza Strip from the West Bank through economic and development projects that will link it to North Sinai and Egypt, opening it to the world, and perhaps lifting the siege that it is under. Concurrently, what the position of Turkey and Iran might be in such scenarios must be examined and analyzed.

Ninth: It is important to emphasize that the importance of the roles played by the regional parties in the Palestinian landscape and highlighting their impact on this landscape does not equate to a portrayal of Palestinian leaders and organizations as completely

helpless and incapable of action. The discussion above may be incorrectly interpreted to directly or indirectly suggest that the Palestinians cannot do anything but remain in the position of reaction, both to Israel and to other regional powers. In order to dismiss any such suggestion, it is necessary to reiterate that there is a wide space for action and for substantial Palestinian influence so long as the basic requirements are achieved, the first and foremost of which is a unified agenda and the political consensus.

Tenth: The relationship between Palestinian actors and regional support, as exhibited by the case of Iran, has evolved wherein countries have instrumentalised the Palestinian issue to use as leverage in extending their regional influence. Thus, the Palestinian issue both contributes to and suffers from regional polarization. It is destructive due to the assumption that Palestinian movements and parties that receive support from one country or another are always aligned in the "camp" of the country supporting them. This of course means weakening, ending, or greatly restricting the independence of the political decision-making of these entities receiving support. In sensitive cases in which the direction of the country providing support is in conflict with the vision of the Palestinian parties receiving support, we find that the supporting country reduces its support to the minimum level, thereby endangering the Palestinian side's gains. The best example of this is the difference in position between Hamas and Iran with regards to the Syrian revolution and the regime in Damascus, with Tehran reducing its financial support to Hamas to a minimum to punish it for taking a different position. This was because the Iranians saw that Hamas' position was in conflict with what Tehran wanted and its regional strategy. This is just one example of this regional dynamic playing out.

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Regional Coalitions, Unilateral Initiatives, and the Question of Palestine

By the Palestine Strategy Group

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Overview

This paper traces two clear patterns of inter-state relations within the Middle East. The first is the shift from the pre-eminence of formal alliances during the Cold War to relations typified by informal coalitions^a in the post-Cold War era. The second, paradoxically, is that during the former era, it was acts of state unilateralism which had the most transformative impact on the question of Palestine. This was despite the predominance of "Arabism" and the proclamation of numerous formal alliances amongst the regional states. The post-Cold War geopolitical context has diminished the scope for transformative unilateral action to effect change in the region, leading to trend towards interest based informal regional coalitions.

The post-Cold War geopolitical context has diminished the scope for transformative unilateral action to effect change in the region, leading to trend towards interest based informal regional coalitions.

Following an analysis of the theoretical structures of regional alliances and informal coalitions, this paper will provide a general and historical overview of Middle East intra-state relations, with a focus on facets of inter-state affiliations which are not as substantially

addressed in the other PSG policy papers of this compendium. It addresses: 1) KSA, UAE and Israel; 2) Turkey, Qatar, and the Muslim Brotherhood; and 3) the nations of the Maghreb. The first two have emerged as informal strategic axes, often in opposition with one another, that have a significant impact on the region and Palestine. The focus on the Maghreb provides an opportunity to explore the historical contributions of these nations to the question of Palestine. More pertinently, it analyses how such contributions have diminished as each nation has become increasingly integrated in globally disperse,

informal coalitions. The contemporary composition of such coalitions are seen to have influenced the evolution of the first two axes in varying ways and serve to nullify Maghrebi nations' tangible support to Palestine.

Theorising a framework for analysing intra-state relations

Regional alliances are formalised in treaties, unions and institutions, with some degree of legalisation that involve 'obligation' (implying that actors are bound by a rule or commitment) and 'precision' (implying that rules are detailed and precise).¹ They constitute a conventional way of raising the credibility of promises by staking national reputation on adherence, which in turn adds to the actor's reputation for reliability over time. Commonly, formal regional alliances revolve around long-term promises or ambitions. When state actors perform longer-term cost-benefit calculations, even distant benefits are considered valuable in the present. However, when calculations account for short-term outcomes, these future benefits are worth little, while the gains from breaking an agreement are likely to be more immediate and tangible. Thus, under pressing circumstances that heighten the prevalence of short-term outcomes – such as the looming prospect of war or economic crisis – the long-term value of a reputation for reliability will be sharply discounted. In turn, a given state will perceive its adherence to agreements as less profitable, rendering the state's commitment to the agreement as less reliable.² This points to a striking paradox of regional alliances: they are often used to seal partnerships for vital actions, such as war or economic integration, but they are weakest at precisely that moment because the present looms larger and the future is more heavily discounted.³ Such

^a The terms 'alliance' and 'coalition' are sometimes used interchangeably, this paper will treat as

distinct formal regional alliances and informal coalitions.

instances reveal the sustained preponderance of national interests over its commitments to formal regional alliances, a fact that has historically served to undermine the integrity and implementation of many alliances.

Whilst regional alliances are often based upon long-term aspirations such as unity, in contrast, informal coalitions tend to be based more narrowly and brazenly upon national interests. Consequently, informal coalitions are neither clear cut nor mutually exclusive, meaning that different coalitions may emerge in response to different challenges and developments. The surrounding political environment is often characterised by polarisation and fragmentation. Informal coalitions comprise explicit rules, norms, and decision-making procedures (written or unwritten) that arise outside officially authorized channels, and are deliberately created and maintained by actors for the purpose of achieving joint political and economic objectives.⁴ Insofar as states rely on informal cooperation to supersede or bypass official frameworks, thereby diminishing formal constraints on policy making, we can speak of informalisation of cooperation.⁵ Informality is best understood as a device for minimizing the impediments to cooperation, at both the domestic and international levels. To achieve this, they are generally less public and prominent, even when they are not secret. This lower profile has important consequences for democratic oversight, bureaucratic control, and diplomatic precedent. Informal agreements can escape the public controversies of a ratification debate in the legislature.⁶ The lower profile and absence of formal national commitment also mean that these agreements are less diplomatically constraining. They do not stand as visible and general policy commitments, as regional alliances so often do. In all these ways, the most sensitive implications of an agreement

...informal coalitions are neither clear cut nor mutually exclusive, meaning that different coalitions may emerge in response to different challenges and developments.

can remain nebulous or unstated for both domestic and international audiences, or even hidden from them.

Although a state's participation in a regional alliance or informal coalition constitutes multilateralism, the third aspect of state relations analysed here is that of unilateralism. Unilateralism is a particular method by which a state or political actor interacts with the international environment. It is more than an orientation that maximizes self-interest, it is a principle for action aimed at limiting commitments while maintaining autonomy of action.⁷ This paper focuses on transformative unilateralism. Failed unilateral initiatives are as likely to influence international politics as successful ones, the use of 'transformative unilateralism' here refers specifically to the latter, wherein a state's unilateralism helped to achieve its own purposed ambitions.

Historical background

It is difficult to overstate the extent of structural changes the Middle East has experienced over the last century or so, both in terms of the structure and institutions of individual states, as well as the wider geopolitical context in which they are located. Events that shaped the region are numerous, and include, but are not limited to: the overthrow of some of the post-Ottoman monarchies and the emergence of the Socialist Arab Republics; the establishment of Israel; the 1973 Oil Crisis; the Iranian Revolution and the overthrow of the Shah; 2003 occupation of Iraq; the cascade of revolutions collectively known as the "Arab Spring" and the 'winter' of counterrevolutions that followed, and finally the rise and fall of the ISIS caliphate. Despite the scale and scope of the changes that have taken place, it is possible to map an overarching shift in the regional political dynamics, from the predominance of unilateral action in the last century, to a trend towards

states working in concert through informal coalitions towards shared strategic regional objectives.

When reviewing these particular structures, it is difficult to identify a formal regional alliance in the 20th century that was successful in achieving a sustained transformative impact on the region. Although Arabism and its associated rhetoric dominated efforts to influence and shape the region's political landscape, the effectiveness and overall impact of the resulting alliances can certainly be questioned. Initiatives from the Baghdad Pact and the United Arab Republic (UAR) of the 1950s, the Israeli-Turkish-Iranian-Ethiopian coalition of the 1960s, the Steadfastness and Confrontation Front of the 1970s, the Arab Cooperation Council (ACC) and Maghreb Union of the 1980s, to the "6+2" Damascus Declaration of the 1990s, all failed to secure their own existence, much less their strategic objectives. The exceptions to this pattern, most notably the Organisation of Arab Petroleum Exporting States (OAPEC) and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), were either focused primarily on economic coordination, or sustained on the basis of strong backing from outside the region. Additionally, their impact on the question of Palestine was at best ephemeral.

Conversely, unilateral initiatives repeatedly changed the region's landscape over the same time period. For instance, the 1956 Suez Crisis, Israel's 1967 War against Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's 1977 visit to Israel, the latter's 1982 invasion of Lebanon, Iraq's 1980 invasion of Iran and 1990 occupation of Kuwait all constitute examples of unilateral transformative action. The region's configuration before and after these developments is clearly differentiated. Moreover, each of these events had a more significant impact on the Israeli-Palestinian

conflict than the regional alliances mentioned above.

If we compare the available evidence from the current century to the last, what clearly stands out is that informal coalitions today appear to have much greater resonance, whilst unilateral initiatives emerging from within the region seem to have less influence than before. The Qatari-Turkish alliance, for example, has made its presence felt not only in Palestine, but also from Syria to Libya. As for unilateral initiatives, the second Palestinian declaration of statehood, the Saudi-led war on Yemen, and for that matter the various Israeli offensives on the Gaza Strip, have had a limited transformative impact on the regional balance of power.

...informal coalitions today appear to have much greater resonance, whilst unilateral initiatives emerging from within the region seem to have less influence than before.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and development of a new unipolar world order marks a turning point in the shift towards acting in concert within strategic regional coalitions, rather than initiating or pursuing unilateral actions. On the one hand the United States and Soviet Union placed certain restraints on their

clients, lest the adventurism of the latter drag the superpowers into direct confrontation. Concurrently, the Cold War considerably raised the stakes of regional conflicts, transforming them into proxy wars between Washington and Moscow with global strategic significance. It is, for example, highly doubtful Israel would have been able to successfully wage the 1967 and 1982 wars, and more importantly translate its military achievements into new and lasting political realities, without the solid military and political backing provided by the United States. While the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) never enjoyed a similar level of Soviet support, it is unlikely the Palestinians could have achieved international prominence during the 1970s without the patronage of Moscow. The exception is Iraq, which during its war against Iran enjoyed the support of

both superpowers, and in its invasion of Kuwait the backing of neither.

Another feature of the Cold War is that it limited the ability of either superpower to intervene directly within the region. Countervailing Soviet power sheltered the Arab world to some extent from direct Western intervention or its full consequences. Not only did this leave the initiative with local actors, but client states were often actively encouraged to pursue actions that could transform the regional strategic equation, within certain limits. The Cold War did not artificially create these regional conflicts and rivalries, but often exacerbated and/or prolonged them. It would be similarly simplistic to suggest that the policies of regional states were dictated by Washington and Moscow. Rather, the superpowers placed a premium on unilateral action by local parties in situations where they were unable to act themselves. The consequences of these proxy conflicts were felt most acutely in the Arab-Israeli context, particularly the Israeli-Palestinian arenas. More to the point, this era redrew the parameters of conflict and negotiation, the legacy of which continues to shape the conflict to this day.

Within the above context, the 1990-1991 Kuwait Crisis represents a turning point in fundamental respects. With the Soviet Union rapidly deteriorating, the United States was in a position to manage the crisis directly, going so far as to deploy half a million troops throughout the GCC region and establishing basing rights that remain to this day. The 2003 Anglo-American invasion and occupation of Iraq can be seen as the logical culmination of this changed environment. Over time other powers adopted a similar template of direct action, as witnessed by the Franco-British-led NATO intervention in Libya in 2011-2012 and the Russian deployment to Syria in 2015. Henceforth, the significance of initiatives by local actors would pale by comparison. It is not that regional states were no longer able to pursue their own policies, but rather that they would need to act in greater concert to have a

meaningful policy impact, particularly if their agendas diverged from that of powerful foreign actors.

Further regional drivers of current realities and associated dynamics were driven by the regional upheavals that commenced in Tunisia in late 2010 and quickly spread throughout the Arab world (referred to as the 'Arab Spring').

It is worth noting that contemporary coalitions in the MENA region differ from those in the latter half of the 20th century in a number of ways. One of the most important differences is their centre of gravity is based in the Gulf, rather than the Levant or Egypt. Given the latter's traditional investment in the question of Palestine, this can be considered a significant change. Secondly, these coalitions often incorporate non-Arab states and non-state actors to a greater extent than their predecessors. Thirdly, these are increasingly based narrowly on national interests, even as they pursue regional agendas. Partly as a result, these are neither entirely clear cut nor mutually exclusive, meaning that different coalitions may emerge in response to different challenges and developments. The increasing polarisation and fragmentation of the wider regional environment has exacerbated this divergence.

Over the last decade, regional dynamics and engagement have increasingly been shaped by two overlapping rivalries. The first is the split within the Gulf pitting Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt against Qatar and Turkey, while the second is the competition between Saudi Arabia and Iran.⁸ The following sections will explore the emergence and consolidation of two of the significant regional axes – Saudi/UAE/Israel and Turkey/Qatar – and the implications of these for the Question of Palestine. Following this, an analysis of the Maghreb region and its nations allows for a more expansive understanding how the contemporary evolution of informal coalitions has had variegated effects on the Middle East, with Maghrebi nations' historical capacity and

...these coalitions often incorporate non-Arab states and non-state actors to a greater extent than their predecessors..

willingness to transform the question of Palestine undermined.

KSA-UAE-Israel

Overview of changing relations

Although neither Saudi Arabia (KSA) nor the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have diplomatic relations with Israel, the existence of an informal coalition is increasingly treated as a given by journalists, analysts and commentators across a range of political persuasions. This alliance is usually framed in terms of mutual opposition to a perceived Iranian threat, as well as an outgrowth of the interdependent relationship all three states have with the United States (US)^b. Commentary on the existence and parameters of this axis is supported by the increasing number of cross border official visits, as well statements from the Israeli and Saudi leadership. For instance, when asked about Iran in an interview in 2017, General Eizenkot – then the Chief of Staff of the Israel Defence Forces – suggested that the Israeli and Saudi leadership were in total congruity in terms of their positions towards Iran, and that Israel was ready to share intelligence with Saudi

^b In an article on the response to the Trump Mideast Peace Plan, Hubbard and Walsh comment that “Persian Gulf nations such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, have come to see Iran as the region’s greatest threat, and Israel as a potential ally against it.” Similarly, Gazansky and Shine of the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) at Tel Aviv university highlight that “Israel saw its shared interest with Gulf states vis-à-vis Iran as a basis for cooperation – even if away from the public eye – and as part of the improvement of ties with Sunni Arab countries”. They go on to cite a mutual interest in “the fight against ISIS and opposition to the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas, as well as preservation of special relations with the United States”.

See Hubbard, B., & Walsh, D. (2020). *A Muted Arab Response to Trump’s Mideast Peace Plan*. Retrieved from The New York Times:

Arabia where necessary⁹. Mohamed bin Salman went further in recognising the shared interests between Saudi Arabia and Israel. When asked whether he could imagine a situation in which Saudi Arabia would share common interests with Israel without Iran, he responded “Israel is a big economy compared to their size and it’s a growing economy, and of course there are a lot of interests we share with Israel and if there is peace, there would be a lot of interest between Israel and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries and countries like Egypt and Jordan.”¹⁰

...a history of domestic opposition to ‘normalisation’ with Israel within Saudi Arabia and the UAE has encouraged a culture of secrecy around all inter-state dealings

Although there is evidence of the existence of a Saudi-UAE-Israel axis^c, mapping the nature and extent of this relationship is far from straightforward. The lack of diplomatic relations precludes the possibility of a formal military alliance, while a history of domestic opposition to ‘normalisation’ with Israel within Saudi Arabia and the UAE has encouraged a culture of secrecy around all inter-state dealings^d. Nevertheless, there is a body of

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/28/world/middleeast/arabs-reaction-trump-mideast-peace-plan.html> & Guzansky, Y., & Shine, S. (2019). *A Possible Thaw in Iranian-Saudi Tensions*

^c This paper will refer to this axis in terms of the relationships between the Saudi Arabia-Israel, the UAE-Israel and all three states together. It will not explore the wider relationship between Saudi Arabia and the UAE beyond the context of Israel/Palestine.

^d The extent of secrecy shrouding business dealings between the Saudi/UAE and Israel is well captured by a recent Haaretz investigative article that identified the Israeli businessman, Matanya “Mati” Kochavi, as the facilitator behind the sale of two ‘spy planes’ to the UAE armed forces. In the thousands of papers describing the passage of the \$846 million decade long transaction to upgrade two executive jets with surveillance technology, Israel is mentioned only once. This is in a

intelligence to suggest significant commercial trade^e and intelligence sharing between all three countries (separately and together) at both an intergovernmental level, as well as between private entities. There has also been a movement towards increasing social and cultural rapprochement between Israel, the UAE and Saudi Arabia^f. Perhaps more significantly, the scale and scope of Saudi and UAE security ties with the US have been rapidly

document that describes the structure of AGT, the company that purchased the two jets for upgrading and provided a substantial amount of the systems installed in the upgrade. It mentions only that the founder and CEO of ATG is an Israeli citizen. Kochavi is known to have contacts within Israel's military establishment and for employing dozens of former Israel Defence Force officers, as well as former Mossad and Shin Bet security service officials across his numerous technology companies.

See Blau, U., & Scharf, A. (2019). *Mysterious Israeli Businessman Behind Mega-deal to Supply Spy Planes to UAE*. Retrieved from Haaretz: <https://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/.premium-israel-businessman-uae-spy-planes-iran-saudi-arabia-1.7696711> & Melman, Y. (2008). *Should Retired IDF Officers Do Business in Arab States or Not?* Retrieved from Haaretz: <https://www.haaretz.com/1.5034022>

^e According to a report on 'Israel's trade with its Arab neighbours', Israeli exports of goods and services to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) bloc in 2016 were estimated to be \$1 billion [USD]. These were all facilitated via third countries, mainly through European and non-MENA countries, as well as Jordan and Turkey. Tony Blair Institute for Global Change (2018). *Assessing Israel's Trade With Its Arab Neighbours*. Retrieved from <http://institute.global/insight/middle-east/assessing-israels-trade-its-arabneighbours>

^f Zaga, M. (2019). *Israel-UAE Cooperation in 2019: Warming Relations*. Retrieved from Mitvim. Zaga provides a more detailed overview of this changing relationship. The trend towards cultural civil rapprochement is further evidenced in the airing of two Ramadan TV drama programmes on MBC, a Saudi controlled satellite channel, that appear to highlight normalisation with Israel, one of which allegedly suggests that "Israel may not be an enemy and that Palestinians have been ungrateful for Saudi Arabia's support."

Chulov, M., & Safi, M. (2020). *Ramadan TV dramas signal shift in Arab-Israeli relations*. Retrieved from

expanding over the last decade. This has direct and indirect implications on the question of Palestine, as it has coincided with the expanded role of the Gulf states in Israeli-Palestinian peace making, with the Trump administration and Israel "counting on them to pressure the Palestinian leadership into compromise."^g Although all Arab states remain overtly committed to the principles of the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative^h, there is concern that

The Guardian:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/28/ramadan-tv-dramas-signal-shift-in-arab-israeli-relations>

^g Zalzburg, O. (2020). *The Regional Stakes of Soured Israeli-Jordanian Relations*. Retrieved from International Crisis Group:

<https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/eastern-mediterranean/jordan/regional-stakes-soured-israeli-jordanian-relations>.

Zanotti, J. (2018). *Israel: Background and U.S. Relations*. Retrieved from Congressional Research Service:

<https://fas.org/spp/crs/mideast/RL33476.pdf>, p23.

Jim Zanotti also makes this point, stating that "there are also signs that the shared goal of countering Iranian influence in the region is leading some of them to interact more overtly with Israeli counterparts and to dissuade the Palestinians from abandoning U.S.-backed diplomacy."

Farrouk, Y. (2019). *The Middle East Strategic Alliance Has a Long Way To Go*. Retrieved from Carnegie Endowment for International Peace: <https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/02/08/middle-east-strategic-alliance-has-long-way-to-go-pub-78317>.

In discussing the proposed Middle East Strategic Alliance (MESA), Farrouk also highlights that there has been concern that the increasing coordination between Saudi-Arabia, the UAE and Israel, via the US, will expand beyond military coordination into the economic and political realm. Already, it is perceived that "the United States also counts on MESA's coordinated action to support its "deal of the century" in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict".

^h This offers the establishment of normal relations in the context of comprehensive peace with Israel, on the condition of "full Israeli withdrawal from all the Arab territories occupied since June 1967 [...] implementation of Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 [...] and Israel's acceptance of an independent Palestinian state, with East Jerusalem as its capital". This was adopted at the 14th session of The Council of the League and Arab

the increasing rapprochement between Israel, Saudi Arabia and the UAE threatens to marginalise and undermine Palestinian interests.

Before delineating the Saudi-UAE-Israel axis in more detail, and its potential impact on the question of Palestine, it is worth noting that despite conceptions to the contrary, neither Saudi Arabia nor the UAE have engaged in open hostilities with Israel. In the aforementioned interview, General Eisenkot was explicit in highlighting that “there was no animosity between us [Israel and Saudi Arabia] at any time, we neither had any warfare against them nor they had been in any hostility towards us”¹¹. The UAE was itself only founded in 1971, after two of the major Arab-Israeli wars in 1948-1949 and 1967. Beyond the lack of open hostilities, Saudi Arabia in particular has often shared common interests with Israel in terms of countering regional threats, including Nasserism, Saddam Hussein and finally Iran. In his 2018 paper on ‘*Saudi Arabia and Israel: From Secret to Public Engagement, 1948–2018*’, Podesh outlines Israeli-Saudi engagement in ‘quiet diplomacy’ and maps the evidence of tacit collaboration between the two states dating back to 1967¹². Nevertheless, the scale and scope of the network of alliances that have built up under the auspicious of coordinated containment of Iran, and their occurrence in the public domain, suggests a potentially permanent reorganisation of regional priorities.

Intelligence sharing and multi-party arms deals

In a Wall Street Journal article published in 2019, it reported that Israel and the UAE attended secret meetings arranged by the US “to share information and coordinate efforts to counter what they see as the increasing threat posed by Iran”¹³. The meetings were reported to be an outgrowth of the February 2019 US-brokered conference on Middle East Security held in Warsaw, which in turn was initially

States in 2002. Full text of the agreement available at The Guardian. (2002) *Arab peace initiative: full text*. Retrieved from The Guardian:

touted to “focus on Iran as a destabilizing influence in the region”¹⁴. Despite limited participation from the US’ traditional allies – the UK foreign minister left early, France sent a civil servant and Germany its junior foreign minister – the meeting was attended by Netanyahu and all of the GCC countries except Qatar, lending credence to the suggestion that the meeting had “a second objective for the US: to join Gulf Arab states and Israel in a public forum”¹⁵. The more recent follow-up discussions among US, Israeli and Emirati officials “appear to indicate those contacts have gone beyond being symbolic and exploratory to mapping coordination on specific issues. They were intended to increase diplomatic, military and intelligence cooperation in dealing with Iran”¹⁶, according to US officials.

Parallel indicators of a ‘change in relations’ between Israel, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates over the last decade include the involvement of all three in a \$10 billion arms deal with the US Defence Department that would enable each country to purchase missiles, warplanes and troop transporters from American contractors from 2013¹⁷. Moreover, the lack of opposition from either the Israeli lobby in the United States, or in Israel itself, to the sale of more than \$76 billion worth of US arms to Saudi Arabia between 2007-2017¹⁸ is a significant departure from the Israeli threat to attack a Saudi site if it proceeded with a plan to purchase missiles from China in the 1980s¹⁹, and implicitly suggests that Israel no longer perceives Saudi Arabia as a potential enemy²⁰. This shift is also evident when comparing the response to the 2013 deal to the reaction to a \$20 billion US-GCC deal under discussion in 2007, during which a bipartisan group of 114 members of

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/mar/28/israel7>

“...those contacts have gone beyond being symbolic and exploratory to mapping coordination on specific issues”.

the House of Representatives wrote a letter to then President George W. Bush, questioning whether “Saudi Arabia was a true U.S. ally”²¹. Nevertheless, even then Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert acknowledged that Israel understood “the need of the United States to support the Arab moderate states” and the need for a united front between the U.S. and Israel regarding Iran.²²

The role of the US: from arms to interoperability

The passage of the various arms deals is a significant indicator of warming relations between Israel, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. These deals also represent a development of US policy in the region and a push for ‘interoperability’, defined as “operational concepts, modular force elements, communications, information sharing, and equipment that accelerate foreign partner modernization and ability to integrate with U.S. forces.”²³ In commenting on the aforementioned 2013 arms deal, a senior US administration official noted the deal would not only boost Israel and their Gulf partners’ ability to address the Iranian threat, but “also provide a greater network of coordinated assets around the region to handle a range of contingencies”²⁴. The language of interoperability has been widely used in the defence

of increasing arms sales to all three countries and is the primary premise for push towards the creation of a Middle East Strategic Alliance (MESA), envisaged to include all Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states – Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE – as well as Egypt, Jordan, and the United States. Announced during Trump’s visit to Saudi Arabia in 2017, MESA was initially framed as a means to “build Gulf states’ capabilities to counter Iran without intervention by the United States, or Russian or Chinese intervention”²⁵. With US training and systems, MESA would allow members to rely

MESA would allow members to rely on each other to fill national defence gaps, as well as secure the US as the primary source for the purchasing of arms

on each other to fill national defence gaps, as well as secure the US as the primary source for the purchasing of arms within the block and act as the reference point for compatible technology (ibid). Although MESA is still very much at a conceptual stage and does not currently include Israel, Israel’s existing security interdependence with the US and its stated regional priorities locate it well within the purposes of the framework, leading to allegations within the Arab press that MESA is “another U.S. project to push Arab states into an alliance with Israel”²⁶. The participation of the Israelis and UAE forces in joint military exercises in both the US and in Greece from 2016 onwards suggests that progress towards such coordination has been building²⁷.

Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Israel already maintain close security ties to the US. A Congressional Research Service report on the UAE-US relationship describes the UAE as a significant security partner for the US, highlighting that “the UAE’s ability to project power in the region is a product of many years of U.S.-UAE defence cooperation that includes U.S. arms sales and training, strategic planning, and joint exercises and operations”²⁸. A parallel report on the US-Saudi relations highlights that the Al-Saud monarchy has historically sought “protection, advice, technology, and armaments

from the United States”, while the US congress has in turn backed continued arms sales to Saudi Arabia “as a means of improving interoperability, reducing the need for U.S. deployments, deterring Iran, and supporting U.S. industry”²⁹. Not only does Saudi Arabia rely extensive on the US for arms, training and maintenance support for their armed forces, the US is also involved in advising and training the Saudi Ministry of Interior security forces, under the auspices of the ‘Office of the Program Manager-Ministry of Interior (OPM-MOI)’, which is touted to facilitate “the transfer of technical knowledge, advice, skills,

and resources from the United States to Saudi Arabia in the areas of critical infrastructure protection and public security”³⁰. As for Israel, successive American administrations have demonstrated a commitment to Israel’s security and close US-Israel cooperation. Israel is currently the biggest recipient of US Foreign Military Financing (FMF)ⁱ. In addition to direct financing, Israel benefits from a range of financial mechanisms intended to facilitate the purchasing of high cost US weapon systems, including cash flow financing, the early transfer of the total annual FMF into an interest bearing account, reciprocal purchases of equipment from Israeli defence companies, as well as the

There has been concern that by engaging with Israel on security and trade, the Gulf states are reneging on the principle of the Arab Peace Initiative that set a comprehensive peace deal as a precondition for ‘normalisation’ with Israel

co-financing of joint US-Israeli missile defence projects, in which Israel and the United States “each contribute financially to several weapons systems and engage in co-development, co-production, and/or technology sharing in connection with them”³¹.

Implications for the Question of Palestine

The dependence of Saudi Arabia and the UAE on the US for their internal and regional security limits the ability of both countries to resist changes in the direction of US policy towards the question of Palestine. Although agreements have been in place for decades, it has become more pertinent in the context of the swing to the right in both the US and Israeli political scenes. The culmination of these new developments can be perceived in the content of the recently unveiled ‘Trump Plan’, as well as the drafting process and the launch, which did not feature any Palestinian representation.

ⁱ Under the 2019-2028 US-Israel Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on military aid, Israel is set to receive \$38 billion in military aid, constituting

While the expansion of the Saudi-UAE-Israel axis is indubitable, the implications of this developing axis on the question of Palestine are not clear cut. There has been concern that by engaging with Israel on security and trade, the Gulf states are reneging on the principle of the Arab Peace Initiative that set a comprehensive peace deal as a precondition for ‘normalisation’ with Israel, in effect undermining the Palestinian position. As one Emirati analyst highlighted, “we have common interests with them [Israel] – and it’s about Iran, about interests, not emotions.”³² Equally, the occurrence of this change in relations, at a time when Israel is simultaneously challenging traditional positions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, has given rise to a sense of competing dynamics between the Gulf States, Egypt and Jordan as the intermediaries in the conflict, and to the impression that, “by shifting toward the Gulf, Israel is also tilting toward an approach on the Palestinian question that ignores – or, worse, undermines – Jordanian interests”³³. If implemented, these new approaches to the question of Palestine have the potential to undermine the legitimacy of the Jordanian regime, which is both a key historical ally to the Palestinians, as well as a security partner to the Israelis.

As demonstrated above, the scope of the Axis has certainly expanded. However, most commentators agree that a resolution of the question of Palestine

If implemented, these new approaches to the question of Palestine have the potential to undermine the legitimacy of the Jordanian regime

is a prerequisite to the full realisation of Israel and the Gulf States’ potential. As Black concludes in his article on Israel and the Gulf states, many Israelis, including the ex-Mossad Director Pardo, argue that “the cosiest clandestine connections are no substitute for public engagement, reiterating that without significant concessions to the Palestinians,

approximately 18% of Israel’s annual defence budget. (Sharp, 2019, p. 8)

Israel's relations with Arab states will continue to be limited, security-focused and largely secret³⁴. Moreover, MK Yair Lapid also suggested that "a breakthrough on the Iranian issue depends on the Palestinian issue", highlighting that a "broad regional coalition is needed to exert persistent economic, diplomatic and military pressure on Iran"³⁵. Lapid argues that the current Israeli position towards Palestine precludes, or at least limits, the scope of cooperation between Israel and the EU, the US Democratic Party and other international institutions. As such, while the consolidation of the relationship between Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Israel is indicative of a change in regional priorities and is worth monitoring, its continued development, and the its implications on the question of Palestine, is by no means a given.

Turkey, Qatar, and the Muslim Brotherhood

In almost every respect, Turkey and Qatar would appear to have little in common and differ significantly in terms of their culture, history and politics. Despite this, they have developed one of the most effective relationships in the region. The scope of this relationship expanded in line with the general rapprochement of relations between Turkey and the GCC following the victory of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey in

2002, which saw a significant expansion of political and economic ties between Turkey and the block^j, and then increased exponentially in the aftermath of the Arab Spring.

The Arab Spring created fissures in the cohesion of this block, pitting Turkey and Qatar, in their support of the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas, against the other countries in the GCC, who perceived the "upswing in Islamist movements gaining control by democratic means over revolutionary countries as a model posing an existential threat to their own monarchical regimes"³⁶. In 2014 Turkey and Qatar signed a comprehensive military and defence agreement, under which both countries would be able to use each other's ports, airports, airspace, military facilities, and to deploy forces on each other's territory. The two countries also agreed to exchange operational training experiences, cooperate in the defence industry, carry out joint military exercises, and share intelligence. This relationship was cemented in the aftermath of the 2017 GCC crisis, during which Turkey pledged military support and sent sea and air shipments of food and other resources to Qatar. Qatar, for its part, supported Turkey in the aftermath of the July 15 coup attempt^k,

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^j According to a report on Turkey-GCC relations produced by the Oxford Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Studies Forum, Turkey has never had a more proactive Middle Eastern policy than under the AKP rule since the founding of the republic. "Since the AKP came to power in 2002, Ankara's foreign policy has been characterized by pro-activism and an orientation towards its regional neighbours. By lifting visa restrictions, establishing strategic cooperation councils and signing free trade agreements with countries in the Middle East, the AKP strengthened the basis for cooperation with its Arab neighbours". See Al-Atiqi, S., Caliskan, E., Long, C., & Sadriu, B. (2015). *Turkey-GCC Relations: trends and outlook*. Oxford:

Oxford Gulf & Arabian Peninsula Studies Forum & the International Cooperation Platform.

^k Following the 4th meeting of Turkey-Qatar High Strategic Committee in Istanbul in 2018, Erdogan ^{stated} that Turkey and Qatar have supported one another in hard times, and proved to be a true friend many times, adding that "Doha was the strongest international supporter of Turkey after the July 15, 2016 defeated coup attempt by Fetullah Terrorist Organization (FETO)"^k. His counterpart, Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, expressed his will to boost cooperation in every field. Following the meeting Turkish and Qatari ministers signed a strategic cooperation

the 2018 Turkish currency crisis, in which Qatar pledged \$15bn in investment³⁷, as well as backing Turkey's military operations in the region, namely Turkey's recent military intervention in Libya in support of Prime Minister Faiez Serraj's UN-backed Tripoli government, against the offensive coalition headed by Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar³⁸.

In light of this, Turkey and Qatar are often characterised as sharing an "affinity for Islamism that shapes their regional engagement". They also share a 'realpolitik' interest in trying to limit the influence of their shared regional rivals, namely Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt and Israel, whilst sharing the concerns of aforementioned states regarding the expansion of Iranian influence in the region. The following sections will give a brief overview of the emergence of Turkey and Qatar's respective regional positions, the intersection of their interests and the implications of these on the question of Palestine.

...share a 'realpolitik' interest in trying to limit the influence of their shared regional rivals, namely Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt and Israel

Emergence of Turkey and Qatar as regional players

During the Cold War, Turkey factored marginally in the region's politics, and largely limited its involvement to pursuing its narrow national security interests and those of the NATO alliance, of which it is a prominent member. This began to change during the late 1980s. First, the eruption of Kurdish insurgency in Turkey, and specifically the ability of the PKK to establish bases in Iraqi Kurdistan during the Iran-Iraq War, and Syrian sponsorship of the PKK, naturally drew Turkish attention to its immediate neighbours¹. Second, the collapse of

protocol across multiple industries including transportation, culture, trade and economy.

¹ See Thomas, C., & Zanotti, J. (2019). *Turkey, the PKK, and U.S. Involvement: A Chronology*. Retrieved from Congressional Research Service: <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF11380>

the Soviet Union and independence of Central Asian republics presented Ankara with substantial political and economic opportunities. Third, the gradual erosion of the Iraqi state after 1991 and establishment of Kurdish autonomy in that country's north under US auspices required Turkey to engage with its neighbours' politics in a more substantial manner. Fourth, the 1993 Oslo agreements formed for Ankara a basis to establish formal relations with the Palestinians, as well as to upgrade and substantially expand its longstanding relationship with Israel. By the late 1990s, the Turkish-Israeli relationship developed into a multi-faceted strategic alliance. (See the following policy paper for more details on the Turkey and Israel relationship: 'Turkey, Iran, and Politics of Interest with Regards to Palestine' by Khaled Hroub, Palestine Strategy Group).

The 2002 assumption of power by Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the Islamist Justice and Development Party (AKP) formed another turning point. While often accused of pursuing a neo-Ottoman project in the Middle East, Erdogan's policy was in many ways a natural progression of existing trends, bolstered by a conviction that Turkey could and should play a leadership role to stabilise an increasingly fraught region, and utilise its position to strengthen its economy. Turkey thus sought to position itself as a mediator between Israel, the Palestinians, and Syria, as a model for democratic Islamist governance that responded to the challenges of the post 9/11 world, and less formally as the natural interlocutor between Europe and the Middle East (and to a lesser extent between the West and Iran)^m.

Accordingly, "During the Iran-Iraq war, Iran persuades Iraqi Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) leader Masoud Barzani to allow the PKK to establish camps in northern Iraq. PKK also establishes camps in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley with the support of Syria."

^m See Al-Atiqi, S., Caliskan, E., Long, C., & Sadriu, B. (2015). *Turkey-GCC Relations: trends and outlook*. Oxford: Oxford Gulf & Arabian Peninsula Studies

While Ankara formally pursued a policy of “zero problems with neighbours”³⁹, and did so with significant success during Erdogan’s first decade, the upheaval that erupted in the Arab world in 2010/2011 led to a situation that could be characterized as ‘zero neighbours with no problems’. Ankara capitalised on the regional upheaval as an opportune moment to assert its regional influence, if not leadership, primarily by promoting the various branches of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) and electoral democracy, as well as through direct military intervention to support Turkey’s regional interests.

Qatar’s regional ambitions, on the other hand, date from the mid-1990s, in the context of the modernisation campaign embarked upon by Shaikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani after he deposed his father in 1995. Funded by Qatar’s emergence during this period as the world’s largest exporter of natural gas, it primarily took the form of soft power, through initiatives such as the establishment of the pan-Arab Al-Jazeera media conglomerate, sporting events, investment strategies, and development assistance⁴⁰. These financial resources, combined with a highly personalised decision making structure, supported Qatar’s efforts to establish itself as a conflict mediator, “while its hard power was bolstered by hosting the largest US Air Force base in the region.

For Doha, emerging from Saudi Arabia’s shadow and Riyadh’s domination of its policies by means of the GCC was a key consideration,

Forum & the International Cooperation Platform and Küçükaşçı, E. Ş. (2019). *Entente Cordiale: Exploring Turkey- Qatar Relations*. TRT World Research Centre for an exploration of Turkey’s changing relationship with the GCC. for examples of Turkey’s changing regional role.

ⁿ The financial resources enabled it to “transport and host large delegations for extended periods of time, and build credibility through extensive humanitarian work and pledges of investment to support eventual peace agreements”, while the

particularly in light of Riyadh’s opposition to Shaikh Hamad’s seizure of power and its attempts to reinstate his father. Although a Wahhabi monarchy like Saudi Arabia, Qatar continued to host the MB and support it in various ways after Riyadh broke with the organisation during the 1990s. Given the regional nature of the MB, it provided Qatar with influence throughout the Arab world, and this expanded exponentially after 2010. If Turkey could legitimately claim to support like-minded movements, Qatar was neither a republic nor a constitutional monarchy that allowed for political participation. For Doha, it was primarily a game of influence, abetted by a belief that it could shape events far beyond its borders and in doing so benefit politically as well as economically.

Given the regional nature of the MB, it provided Qatar with influence throughout the Arab world, and this expanded exponentially after 2010.

A recent International Crisis Group analysis of Turkey’s military involvement in Libya highlights Turkey and Qatar’s overlapping regional foreign policy priorities, and the extent of this relationship. According to the report, Libya intersects two axes hostile to Ankara: that of the UAE, Egypt, and to a lesser extent Saudi Arabia, which seeks to contain Turkish influence across the Middle East and North Africa; and a second axis constituted by Greece and Cyprus (and, by extension, the EU), as well as Israel, to limit Turkey’s access to the Mediterranean Sea and thus exclude it from hydrocarbon projects that could also be geopolitically and economically significant⁴¹. In an effort to counter these, Turkey signed two Memorandums of Understanding with the UN-backed government in Tripoli on the same day. The

decision making structure “allowed a small number of key individuals, especially the former emir and former foreign minister/prime minister, to initiate mediation efforts and leverage their personal contacts and charisma to secure agreements.” . See Barakat, S. (2014). *Qatari Mediation: Between Ambition and Achievement. Brookings Doha Center Analysis Paper*(12). P1-2. In 2008, the Arab League designated Qatar as mediator in Sudan’s Darfur conflict, culminating in the 2011 signing of the Doha Agreements.

first was a memorandum on security cooperation, which set the basis for sending Turkish armed forces to Libya in support of the internationally recognised government, while the second memorandum focused “on the delimitation of the maritime jurisdiction areas in the Mediterranean” which established an 18.6 nautical mile (35km) maritime boundary between Turkey and Libya⁴², with Economic Exclusive Zones (EEZ’s) for each state on either side of the boundary line. Although the legality of the delimitation scheme has not been recognised by any other countries, it has the potential to frustrate the development of the 1,900km (1,180 mile) eastern Mediterranean natural gas pipeline that Greece, Israel and Cyprus want to develop, while also laying the foundation for Egypt and Israel to backtrack on their EEZ agreements with Greece. Despite Turkey being the most visible player in Libya, senior Turkish and Qatari officials have commented that Doha shoulders part of the bill for Turkish military support in Libya. Speaking prior to Turkey’s intervention, a senior Qatari official said that Doha would help Ankara do whatever it takes to “save Tripoli”⁴³.

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Convergence of Interests – Muslim Brotherhood (MB)

Both Qatar and Turkey overtly provide region-wide support for the Muslim Brotherhood (MB). For Qatar, it has sought to instrumentalise the Muslim Brotherhood’s web of networks in the region to project its own influence internationally vis-a-vis other regional players. Similarly, Turkey has supported the MB to cultivate influence throughout the region, but with the different stated principles of Turkey’s ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) of both democracy and Islam, an approach reflected by the MB in the past decade. This has been particularly escalated and hastened since the AKP’s substantial 2007 electoral victory, where Erdogan’s party has tried to increase this influence. It should be noted that during the GCC crisis, Qatar’s support for the MB was cited by the

other Gulf states as a key reason for the imposed blockade, with Turkey’s subsequent support of Qatar implicitly condoning, and even encouraging, the maintenance of ties to the MB.

The Muslim Brotherhood, a regional Islamist movement established in Egypt during the late 1920s, has since established national chapters in most states, not unlike the communist movement of the twentieth century. As it became increasingly independent of its conservative state, the MB not only placed a greater emphasis on popular mobilisation and electoral participation, but in many Arab states was the only remaining organised opposition movement when the Arab upheavals commenced at the beginning of this decade. Consequently, it was the main beneficiary of these leaderless rebellions and the quick transition to elections, seizing high office in Tunisia and Egypt.

While initially appearing to pay rich dividends as the MB gained influence in Tunisia, Egypt, the Syrian opposition, and elsewhere, it created a furious backlash from conservative Arab monarchies, namely the Syrian government and Sisi-led government in Egypt, among others. This backlash saw the movement not only deposed, but effectively destroyed in Egypt and repressed, or forced on the back foot, throughout the region, with the exception of Tunisia, Palestine, and Morocco. Moreover, Turkey’s leadership ambitions were quickly eclipsed by its role as an active protagonist in many of the region’s political developments and conflicts. Importantly, it suffered a severe blow with the 2013 Egyptian coup that deposed the MB led by Mohamed Morsi, and the subsequent failure of the Syrian insurgency, combined with MB’s inability to retain a leadership role within the opposition. Indeed,

Turkey’s leadership ambitions were quickly eclipsed by its role as an active protagonist in many of the region’s political developments and conflicts.

the Syrian conflict in which Turkey intervened with such confidence and zeal in its early phases, has produced far-reaching challenges for Turkey that are in some respects unprecedented.

Implications on the Question of Palestine

Palestine is in many ways emblematic of the MB's successes and failures. Hamas, the Palestinian chapter of the MB, represents the first instance of a democratically elected Islamist government in the Arab world (2006)⁴⁴. It was also refused the prize of governance, leading to the schism within the Palestinian body politic that persists to this day. While it rules the Gaza Strip, it is physically blockaded and politically besieged. If Turkey and Qatar can claim to have prevented it from collapsing, survival is their only real achievement, and Hamas has repeatedly flirted with rival coalitions to obtain legitimacy and resources. Ankara and Doha are unable to offer. While it is true the Palestinian case is unique in various respects when compared to other Arab states, the challenges faced by Hamas in Palestine and the MB in Egypt and Syria, for instance, have more in common than might be assumed. This is one reason why Turkey and Qatar have placed only some of their eggs in the MB basket, and routinely resort to more traditional forms of power projection.

The Maghreb

Maghreb Union

The Maghreb Union was established on 17 February 1989 when the treaty was signed by the member states of Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia. However, the idea and support for this regional alliance had picked up momentum over thirty-five years prior to its formal establishment. The notion of the 'Greater Maghreb' draws upon cultural and historical affinities in a region where the precolonial borders were vague.

While the concept emphasizes the benefits of regional economic cooperation, it also has diplomatic and political significance.⁴⁵ When both Morocco and Tunisia gained independence in 1956, their political and moral support for Algeria's struggle against France stimulated their leader's efforts in planning for unity.⁴⁶ One year before Algerian independence in 1962, King Mohammed V of Morocco and President Habib Bourguiba of Tunisia called for a Maghreb union that had the full support of Algeria's victorious National Liberation Front (FLN). During the years dominated by the left-nationalist FLN leader Houari Boumediene (1965-1978), Algeria talked of the 'Maghreb des peuples', a radical version that implied that the peoples of Tunisia and Morocco might someday overthrow their conservative governments and combine with Algeria to create a socialist North Africa. Boumediene's successor Benjedid dropped this populist version of regional unity in favour of the more pragmatic and statist Greater Maghreb theme.⁴⁷

Despite the various driving ideologies behind this regional alliance, the centrality of the question of Palestine was consistent throughout. The Maghrebi unity promoted during Boumediene's reign ran parallel to Libya's ambition under Qaddafi to drive pan-Arab integration. Both leaders consistently championed the Palestinian struggle as a pan-Arab cause, affirming the duty of all Arab states to resist the "imperialism and Zionism" of Israel and its supporters.⁴⁸ Palestine remained at the forefront of the Maghrebi unity discussion, and was even a driver of talks leading to the establishment of the Maghreb Union. On October 1 1985, using the pretext of Palestinian terrorism, the Israelis attacked the PLO headquarters in Tunis. The effect that this raid had on

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the Maghrebi populations can hardly be underestimated. The attack brought the Arab-Israeli conflict directly into the Maghreb, reinforcing the solidarity between Maghrebis and the Palestinians.⁴⁹ Algeria's attempts in December 1986 to lure Libya into the network of the Algeria-Mauritania-Tunisia treaty were underpinned by discussions on how the nations could cooperate to help address factional rivalry among the Palestinians.⁵⁰

Similarly, renewed relations between Algeria and Morocco in May 1988 were confirmed by King Hassan II's attendance of a pan-Arab summit on Palestine in Algiers, paving the way for the precedent-setting summit regarding the creation of the Maghreb Union in June 1988.⁵¹

Morocco and Tunisia have maintained their historical resistance to a perceived pan-Arab threat to their national sovereignty.

However, despite initial unity around certain regional objectives, the Maghreb Union has unequivocally failed. In over thirty years since its formal inception, it has convened for only six summits, the last in June 2008. In recent years, King Mohammed IV of Morocco has publicly branded the Union as "dead" and "non-existent".⁵² Key to this failure has been the economic competition and military conflict between Morocco and Algeria, the latter relating to the Polisario Front in the Western Sahara. Yet from its outset the Union was plagued with discrepancies between member states' various ideologies. Algeria's vision ran up against Qaddafi's desire for full-scale political union – including a joint presidency, a ministerial council, and a parliament – rather than membership in a friendship treaty.⁵³

At the opposite end of the spectrum, Morocco and Tunisia have maintained their historical resistance to a perceived pan-Arab threat to their national sovereignty. The fragile Union brought to fore fundamental disagreements between Morocco and Libya, pertinently on the issue of Israel-Palestine. Previously, the 1984 Ouida treaty – described at the time as a move toward the eventual union of the two

North African countries – was cancelled following a dispute over King Hassan II's meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Peres. A Libyan communique denounced the Peres visit to Morocco on July 22 and 23 as "an act of treason" by Morocco and a "violation of the Arab consensus in defiance of the feelings of the Arab nation".⁵⁴ Such sentiment remained in the early 1990s, with Morocco's growing diplomatic relations with Israel and its support for UN Security Council sanctions against Libya contributing toward Qaddafi's disillusionment with the pan-Arab ideals that motivated his original decision to join the Maghreb Union, stating that "we must turn to our own interests."⁵⁵

The Maghreb Union followed the fate of many regional alliances that took root in the Middle East during the second half of the 20th century, with its ineffectual or obsolete operations having a negligible effect on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Although its impact and presence is questionable, it is still an important alliance and worth researching further. To identify the historical trajectory of Maghrebi influence over the question of Palestine, but given the ineffectual nature of the Union, it is necessary to highlight the most significant unilateral actions that each Maghrebi nation undertook independently (past to present). The focus will be on Libya, Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. It should be noted that Mauritania is excluded due to its relative absence of economic, political and diplomatic capabilities.

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Libya

Colonel Muammar Qaddafi's ascent to power through a military coup d'état in 1969 followed Arab nations' defeat by Israel in the 1967 Six Day War. Libya's role, or lack thereof, in this conflict contributed to Qaddafi's opposition to King Muhammad Idris al-Sanusi. He regarded

the Libyan regime as flagrantly failing to support Egypt, concurrently considering Egypt's Nasser as a hero for freeing Egypt from 'western imperialism' and spearheading pan-Arabism.⁵⁶ The Palestinian issue, Qaddafi repeatedly claimed, was "the issue of all Arabs because Zionist imperialism intends to sweep away the Arab presence and because the Palestinians alone cannot face the battle".⁵⁷

Therefore, he urged the Arab world to mobilise its forces and make them fully available to the Palestinians: "We must support the Palestinian revolution, but this would not be enough because the enemy is not threatening only the Palestinians; it threatens the very existence of the Arabs".⁵⁸

He went on to define the conflict with Israel as "a fateful battle about the existence or the liquidation of Arab civilisation and its contribution to humanity".⁵⁹ Following Nasser's sudden death in September 1970, a power vacuum emerged in the pan-Arab leadership. Qaddafi, who regarded himself as the true heir to Nasser⁶⁰, found himself in a growing political and ideological struggle with Nasser's successor, Anwar al-Sadat. This intra-movement rivalry ultimately undermined Qaddafi's position as a leader of the Arab cause against Israel, when Egypt and Syria concealed from him their plans for the October 1973 war.⁶¹ This was an affront to Libya and Qaddafi, given the three nations' attempted unification under the Federation of Arab Republics in January 1972. Limitations were exposed of the regional alliance of pan-Arabism, with the 1973 defeat to Israel confirming its ineffectiveness.

Despite Egypt's subsequent capitulation to Israel at the 1978 Camp David Accords, the sustained prevalence of Arab peoples' unity around a pro-Palestinian agenda encouraged Qaddafi to ramp up his support further. His renewed ambition was not just "to take back the territories conquered by Israel in 1967 but [rather] to free the Palestinians from the Zionist yoke".⁶² Qaddafi sought out alternative

formal Arab alliances, including the 1974 Arab Islamic Republic, a proposed unification of Tunisia and Libya, with Algeria and Morocco's future inclusion envisaged. The commitment exemplified Qaddafi's sustained belief in the prospect of mobilising Arabs around a regional alliance to extinguish Israel, notwithstanding formal alliances failures.

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This constituted an attack on Yasser Arafat, as it empowered the splinter factions within Fatah that rivalled him.

In spite of these overtures for coordinated regional action, it can be argued that Libya's transformative impact on the Israel-Palestinian conflict is found in its unilateral actions. In 1978, while the Egyptian-Israeli peace process and Israeli attacks against the Palestinians in Lebanon were taking place, Qaddafi's administration amalgamated the various offices

of Palestinian organisations within Libya under the name of the PLO office.⁶³ This constituted an attack on Yasser Arafat, as it empowered the splinter factions within Fatah that rivalled him. Qaddafi urged the Palestinian factions to form a united front against Israel, promising them monetary grants and arms supplies.⁶⁴ In mid-June 1979, leaders of the PLO factions accepted Qaddafi's invitation and convened for a special emergency conference in Tripoli.⁶⁵ Nonetheless, the Qaddafi and Arafat dispute

continued, with the former accusing the latter of adopting a conciliatory approach to Israel.⁶⁶ Qaddafi even took punitive measures against Arafat from late 1979 to early 1980. For instance, Qaddafi took steps to weaken Arafat's leadership by refusing to channel Libyan payments to Palestinian organizations through the central PLO treasury run by Arafat. Instead, Qaddafi remitted funds directly to

some of the more radical PLO factions, thereby enabling them to maintain a measure of independence vis-à-vis Arafat's Fatah.⁶⁷ This rivalry ebbed and flowed until the First intifada, which erupted throughout the West Bank and Gaza in December 1987. The resistance movement aligned with Qaddafi's belligerent position, declaring his vehement support "with all Libya's resources" for the

“tremendous Palestinian revolution” which “restores Arab dignity”.⁶⁸ Libya reportedly allocated \$4 million monthly aid to the uprising and in the summer of 1988, he announced that the Libyan Jamahiriyya would pay the \$1 million monthly salaries of the striking Palestinian employees within the Israel Civil Administration in the West Bank and Gaza.⁶⁹

Libya’s increasing isolation from its Arab neighbours and the international community as a whole led Qaddafi to change tact in the late 1990s. His domestic policy focused on

political and socio-economic pressures.⁷⁰ Regarding foreign policy, Qaddafi’s need to reverse UN-imposed sanctions led Tripoli relegating the Palestinian cause. Libyan craving for respectability in the West, particularly in the US, urged Qaddafi to

soften his bellicose position vis-à-vis the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, or at least to lower his public profile on that matter. There was a stark contrast between Libya’s committed support to Palestinians in the First intifada, compared to its limited intervention in the Second intifada. It took over a year from the initial outburst of the latter for Libya to grant \$5.5 million to Palestinians, with this aid limited solely to humanitarian objectives.⁷¹ The absence of financial assistance to those directly engaged in the fighting itself is indicative of Qaddafi’s reluctance to provoke Israel.

The relegation of the question of Palestine has continued into the 21st century. Significantly, the issue was once again pushed further from the Libyan national agenda due to outbreak of the Libyan Civil War in 2011. Intervention of Western external powers in this war – namely Britain and France, with the US consenting – exemplifies the extent to which Libya’s fate is now totally guided by foreign powers. Due to the ongoing nature of this crisis, Libyan actors have been obscured from making any noteworthy interventions in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, it is worth noting

the trajectory of Libya’s Justice and Construction Party (JCP). As the political wing of the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood (LMB), JCP maintains pan-Islamic views, espousing ambitions around regional transformation, rather than the national-focus of many contemporary Arab nations. This includes calls to mobilise around Palestine and against Israel’s occupation. There have been reports of Hamas conducting operations in Libya, such as the procurement of weapons, through the LMB network. The United Nations’ Panel of Experts on Libya even noted “the presence of Palestinian military experts in Tripoli”.⁷² The ongoing civil war between rival factions sees two parliamentary bodies in military opposition, with the JCP’s influence limited to the Government of National Accord (GNA). Therefore, Hamas’ prospects for gaining a powerful, strategic ally in the Libyan government are slim as the JCP’s best prospects for consolidating power may lie in distancing itself from the ideology that ties it to the Palestinian homeland.

The United Nations’ Panel of Experts on Libya even noted “the presence of Palestinian military experts in Tripoli”

Algeria

Algeria played a critical role in the establishment of the Palestinian state. In 1974, at a time when the PLO’s designation as a terrorist group had contributed to its dwindling external support, President Bouteflika of Algeria opened a Palestinian embassy in Algiers. More still, in that same year Bouteflika utilised his one-year term as President of the United Nations General Assembly to grant the PLO observer-status. No Palestinian official had made a speech at the UN since the partition plan in 1947. Algeria’s transformative unilateralism enabled Yasser Arafat – as the first representative of a non-governmental organisation – to address a plenary session of the UN General Assembly. The resultant increase in international sympathy and support for the Palestinian cause paved the way for statehood. On the same day as the Palestinian Declaration of Independence on 15 November 1988 in Algiers, Algeria became the

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first country in the world to recognise the new State of Palestine. Its government also encouraged the PLO to initiate talks with Israel in 1988⁷³, leading ultimately to the former's official return to the Palestinian homeland. In facilitating pivotal diplomatic support to the PLO and the Palestinian cause, Algeria often jeopardised relations with other Arab nations, including Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Egypt.⁷⁴ Close Algerian-Egyptian relations that stemmed from Algerian indebtedness to Nasser's assistance during their anti-colonial struggle were completely severed following the Camp David Accords. It is clear that Algeria's unilateral, inalienable support to Palestinians was transformative during the revolutionary phase of the Palestinian struggle.

Since the 1990s, however, there has been a noted shift in Algerian support to Palestine, with less transformative unilateralism enacted in support of the Palestinian cause. As seen above, similar shifts in other Maghrebi-Palestine relations are partially accounted for by the United States' emergence as global hegemon. However, this factor holds less explanatory value in

the case of Algeria-Palestine relations. The relationship between Algeria and Palestine was very strong until the Oslo agreements were signed in 1993, fundamentally altering Palestine's political trajectory and the support that Palestinians required. The Algerians continue to be supportive, and they still have a very close relationship with the Palestinians, but it is not the same as it was during the revolutionary phase.⁷⁵ Algeria could offer more to Palestine in that regard because of its own revolutionary history, and due to the important diplomatic initiatives that helped secure the PLO leadership's return to Palestine. Since supporting the Oslo Accords, successive Algerian presidents have adopted a more balanced and moderate support of the Palestinian cause, while working with the

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United States and other world powers for a negotiated peace in the Middle East. Algerian condemnation of Israeli actions has sustained into the contemporary era, yet this has been unable to achieve a transformative impact similar to their historical support of the PLO.

Nonetheless, the Maghrebi response to the Trump Plan may signify a contemporary evolution in relations. Algeria has provided vehement criticism of the plan. The Algerian presidency reiterated in a statement responding to the Plan its "strong and permanent support to the Palestinian cause and the inalienable right of its people to establish an independent and sovereign state with East Jerusalem as a capital."⁷⁶ Whilst other Maghrebi leaders have carefully avoided

or discouraged conversations on Palestine for fear of backlash, from public resentment to normalisation with Israel, newly elected Algerian President Tebboune used his inauguration speech to affirm "[w]e will remain a support for Palestine and its people who are fighting against a brute colonial force until the achievement of its independent state."⁷⁷ Algeria's

fierce resistance to the US-Israeli axis on the question of Palestine signifies the regime's confidence in surviving any resultant economic condemnation from the US. This has led to speculation as to Algeria's position in the contemporary era, with some commentators noting a rapidly increasing pivot toward China, both economically and diplomatically. It can be argued that Algeria's growing economic independence from the US may enable it to maintain vehement support for the Palestinian cause. As China increasingly challenges US economic hegemony around the globe, such a trend may prove to hold transformative potential concerning regional countries' approach to the question of Palestine.

Morocco

Morocco's approach to the question of Palestine follows the regional trend of having distinct pre- and post-Cold War patterns. Morocco's actions during the second half of the twentieth century constitute a prime example of the scope for, and effectiveness of, regional states' unilateral actions regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. King Hassan II aspired to strengthen Morocco's position as a mediator in the conflict, as well as in the wider Israeli-Arab conflict.⁷⁸ In the years following the October 1973 war, Morocco hosted a secret meeting between the Foreign Minister of Israel and Deputy Prime Minister of Egypt in 1977, which paved the way for Sadat's historic visit to Israel.⁷⁹ Establishing Morocco's role as a mediator was a unique opportunity to increase the country's standing in a region dominated by the pan-Arabism that it sought to resist, with Hassan II in favour of preserving the Arab states as separate sovereign entities.⁸⁰ Morocco concurrently attempted to portray itself to Arab states as a genuine champion of the Palestinian cause, through advocating a pragmatic approach. It argued that the Arab states' military defeat in 1973 exemplified how this cause can be realised only through peacemaking and negotiation with Israel.⁸¹

The rise of King Muhammad VI to power in 1999 followed the shift in international dynamics from the Cold War to a unipolar context dominated by the United States, prioritising the need to maintain its perception of Morocco as a discreet friend to Israel. Morocco's attitude toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of avoidance and caution. The decision-makers in Morocco do not publicly comment about the conflict unless they are forced to do so.⁸² With the domestic rise of political Islam, the King understood that from a political point of view, any public discourse on the subject could strengthen the

Establishing Morocco's role as a mediator was a unique opportunity to increase the country's standing in a region dominated by the pan-Arabism that it sought to resist

Islamist camp and erode his authority.⁸³ Moreover, the instability in the Middle East since the outbreak of the Arab Spring contributed to Muhammed VI's perception that the Middle East and the inter-Arab camp cannot satisfy Morocco's domestic interests. Morocco's foreign policy objectives are to improve relations with the EU and to enlist the Jewish lobby in the US to safeguard the Moroccan interests in the Western Sahara region.⁸⁴ This trend further distances it from the Palestinian cause.⁸⁵

Despite the above, however, domestic rebukes of Moroccan-Israeli relations took centre stage in 2013, centring on a Moroccan parliamentary proposal to ban the monarchy's normalisation of relations with Israel. The bill was originally sponsored by a broad coalition that included monarchist factions such as the Party of Authenticity and Modernity (PAM), generally recognised as the party of the "King's men."⁸⁶ It has been contended that the fact that PAM's founder Fouad Ali el-Himma – one of the King's closest confidants – was among the original signatories, suggests that the measure had Muhammad VI's personal imprimatur. Whilst the bill progressed further than first imagined, due to its opposition to royalist overtures to Israel, PAM soon withdrew support for the bill, which ultimately failed to pass. The anti-normalization bill appears to be a manifestation of the populism-meets-foreign policy that has characterized Morocco's ebbing relationship with Israel in the contemporary era. It can be argued that Rabat wants it both ways; for Washington to view it as a discreet friend of Israel, and for the Moroccan street to view it as a stalwart champion of Arabism. Proposing a bill but not letting it pass may be a way of achieving both

Rabat wants it both ways; for Washington to view it as a discreet friend of Israel, and for the Moroccan street to view it as a stalwart champion of Arabism.

goals: the anti-Israel legislation gives party politicians a chance to show constituents that they have not been "sold" to Western interests, even as decision-makers proceed with the foreign policy best suited for Morocco's international strategy.⁸⁷

Capitulation to the US, and in turn Israel, is again evident in Morocco's response to the Trump 'Peace to Prosperity' plan. Whilst a statement from Morocco's foreign ministry encouraged the need for all parties' acceptance, the glibness of the response was revealed by an affirmation that "Morocco appreciates the constructive peace efforts deployed by the current U.S. administration to achieve a just, lasting and equitable solution".⁸⁸ The same week that Trump announced his plan, three Israeli-made spy drones arrived in Morocco as part of a \$48 million arms deal.⁸⁹ Such ties are kept behind closed doors for apparent fear of public opposition. The Moroccan head of foreign trade insisted to parliament in 2016 that "Morocco has no commercial relations with [Israel]."⁹⁰

Tunisia

The Tunisian government's relations with Israel and its approach to the question of Palestine has been consistently grounded in realpolitik, espousing both moderation and balance since independence in 1956. The pursuit of such a path began with Habib Bourguiba – Tunisia's inaugural President – whose political compass always pointed in the direction of the West, looking toward Europe with aspirations of emulating the modern Westphalian state.⁹¹ This emphasis on the sovereignty of the "Tunisian nation" positioned Bourguiba in opposition to Gamal Abdel Nasser's pan-Arab ambitions for unification. Bourguiba had little reason to encourage hostility toward Israel, who he regarded as a positive factor in seeking to challenge Nasser's domination of the Arab region.⁹² In 1965, from his personal and unilateral initiative, Bourguiba became the first ever Arab leader to propose an approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict that called to recognise

Israel and engage in negotiations. The stated logic was that Arab intransigence in their "whole or nothing" approach on Palestine to date had provided the Israeli's with a considerable propaganda advantage, allowing Israel to portray itself as eager for reasonable settlement which its opponents refused to consider.⁹³ However, the overture toward recognition of Israel triggered a diplomatic storm between Tunisia and the other members of the Arab league.⁹⁴ Bourguiba's proposals were rejected by Israelis and Arabs alike. Whilst failing to achieve the intended transformation of the conflict, the proposal intensified intra-Arab division, coming at a time when the Arab states for the first time in years were close to reaching consensus over their attitude towards Israel's utilisation of the waters of the Jordan River.⁹⁵ In 1966, Tunisian-Egyptian diplomatic ties were severed. Bourguiba's unilateral action, whether intended or otherwise, served as a spoiler in undermining the unity of the Arab front on Palestine.

The June 1967 war constituted an incongruity of Bourguiba's interests – between showing leadership in support of Palestine and maintaining good relations with the US – which could not be overcome through moderation or avoidance of the issue. It helped end the breach between Tunisia and the rest of the Arab world, as Tunisia expressed its support for the Arab cause. Tunisia offered to send troops to the front and allowed Algerian military forces to pass through its territory.⁹⁶ However, this pro-Palestinian stance was not sustained, as seen in the immediate wake of the defeat. Bourguiba boycotted the 1967 Arab League summit in Khartoum, criticising the Khartoum Resolution whereby Arab states would not negotiate peace with Israel, recognize it, or make peace with it. Tunisia subsequently recognised the state of Israel and accepted UN Resolution 242 in November 1967.⁹⁷

Bourguiba boycotted the 1967 Arab League summit in Khartoum, criticising the Khartoum Resolution

Following the Israeli victory in the 1982 Lebanon War, Bourguiba offered the PLO asylum in Tunis. Yet the hospitality which

Bourguiba provided the PLO was not as natural and whole-hearted as it seemed at that time. It followed heavy pressure from the US to accept the Palestinians, confirmed by George Schultz, former US Republican Cabinet member, in a 1985 interview to the New York Times.⁹⁸ Pressure also came from Tunisian Prime Minister Mohamed Mzali, who sought to bring Tunisia's foreign policy more in line with the rest of the Arab countries and therefore tended to be more pro-Palestinian than Bourguiba. The Israeli bombing of the PLO headquarters in Tunisia on October 1 1985 killed at least 13 Tunisian civilians. It placed a heavy strain on Tunisian relations with both Israel and the US, the latter of whom was accused of endorsing an Israeli attack on one of the staunchest pro-Western nations in the Arab world.⁹⁹ Nonetheless, Tunisia did not break diplomatic ties with the US, and if anything weakened its support toward the PLO. Following Prime Minister Mzali's dismissal in 1986, the regime began to show clear signs of seeking to terminate the PLO's presence.¹⁰⁰ The Tunisian authorities refused to renew the passports of many Palestinian officials and citizens, obstructing a large number from returning to Tunisia.¹⁰¹ Both Bourguiba and his successor President Ben Ali wished to avoid the internalisation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with some domestic Islamists levelling severe criticism at the regime when the conflict was spotlighted.

Certain principles of Bourguiba's realpolitik can be seen to sustain in the Tunisian government's contemporary approach to the question of Palestine. Incumbent President Kais Saied has espoused anti-Israeli rhetoric since his election to office in December 2019, earning praise amongst Arab nationalists. On the night of his election in December 2019, whilst draped in a Palestinian flag, Saied spoke of Tunisian-Israeli relations that "[n]ormalization is the wrong word to use, we should be talking about high treason," continuing that Tunisia is in a state of war with Israel.¹⁰² Following the publication of the Trump Plan, it initially appeared that Saied's government would maintain such a stance. Moncef Baati, the Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations, called Trump's proposal the "injustice of the century

and high treason" during an interview broadcast on national television.¹⁰³ As the sole representative of an Arab nation at the current UN Security Council, Baati was tasked with working on a resolution against the Trump Plan. However, before the resolution was submitted, veteran diplomat Baati was dismissed from his role with a foreign ministry statement noting "his weak performance and lack of coordination with the ministry on important matters under discussion at the UN."¹⁰⁴ Multiple foreign sources have reported that the extent of Baati's criticism of the Trump administration had gone beyond Saied's authorisations, with his expressions of support for the Palestinians perceived as potentially damaging Tunisia's relations with the US.¹⁰⁵ Herein, Tunisia's ostensibly pro-Palestinian stance is undermined. As the only Arab nation on the Security Council, there was little room for manoeuvre as to whether they submitted the resolution. The power attached to Saied administration's pro-Palestinian rhetoric has been diminished by an apparent unwillingness to inalienably support Palestinian when faced with the risk of losing a major, external strategic ally in the US. It is too early to write off any long-term potential for the Palestinians to gain a credible strategic ally in President Saied. Nonetheless, it is clear that at his first diplomatic hurdle, Saied has reverted to the Tunisian approach to the question of Palestine that can be traced back to Bourguiba: a rejection of maximalist, pro-Palestine support in order to defend Tunisia's essential economic interests and relations with Western nations and international organisations.

...the extent of Baati's criticism of the Trump administration had gone beyond Saied's authorisations, with his expressions of support for the Palestinians perceived as potentially damaging Tunisia's relations with the US

Implications for the Question of Palestine

The notable dearth of scholarly articles on Maghrebi-Palestinian relations is significant in and of itself, necessitating that advocates of the Palestinian cause reinvigorate their study of these historically strategic Maghrebi neighbours. Any Palestinian engagement would unlikely take a pan-Maghrebi form, due to the disunity and instability in the region. This does not belie the potential for national-level analysis to identify strategic allies that fervently support the Palestinian cause. Notwithstanding, as demonstrated across the contemporary analyses, the scope for pro-Palestinian actors to translate their rhetoric into transformative action has been limited by

the Maghrebi nations' integration into informal coalitions with the United States. Yet beneath the realpolitik adopted by the predominant state elites across the region, the majority of the wider Maghrebi public maintain a pro-Palestinian stance, and pressure their political representatives on this issue when it is brought into focus. In contrast to many of the incumbent political systems in the Mashreq and elsewhere in the Middle East, the relative prevalence of participatory democracy in the Maghreb ensures that its leaders are more susceptible to the scrutiny of public opinion when formulating their policies toward the Israel-Palestine issue.

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Part III:

International Dimension

Re-launching the UN Campaign: Full Member State, Joining UN Bodies and Reconstructing the International Legal Track

By Shawan Jabbarin

1. Background

Palestine's efforts to join the United Nations or its specialized agencies started since the 1970s. The process started in 1974 when Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was invited by the United Nations General Assembly to participate in deliberations on the Palestine Question in plenary meetings.¹ The invite came after the PLO had officially been recognized by the Arab League as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people in the Seventh Arab Summit, which took place in Rabat in October 1974.² In November of the same year the PLO was accorded a non-state entity observer status in the United Nations by the UN General Assembly.³

On 15 November 1988 the Palestine National Council⁴, in its 19th extraordinary session held in Algiers, declared the 'establishment of the State of Palestine' on the Palestinian land 'with the Holy City of Jerusalem as its capital.'⁵ After the declaration, Yasser Arafat was invited to address the UN General Assembly. On the same day the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution acknowledging the proclamation of the State of Palestine⁶ and changing its designation in the UN system into 'Palestine' instead of 'PLO'.⁷

On 23 September 2011 Mahmoud Abbas, in his capacity as the President of the State of Palestine, submitted an application to the United Nations Security Council requesting member states to consider the admission of Palestine as full member state in the United Nations.⁸ Membership application was based on 'the natural, legitimate and historical rights of the Palestinian people, the United Nations General Assembly resolution 181 (II) of 22 November 1947, the Declaration of Independence of Palestine on 15 November

1988 and the recognition by the United Nations General Assembly of the Declaration under resolution number 43/177 of 15 December 1988.' The bid was submitted in spite of the US threats to veto the resolution in the Security Council. In his address to the UN, President Abbas announced:

'I would like to inform you that, before delivering this statement, I, in my capacity as President of the State of Palestine and Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, submitted to H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations, an application for the admission of Palestine on the basis of the 4 June 1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, as a full member of the United Nations'⁹

On 11 November 2011 the United Nations Security Council Admissions Committee forwarded its report on the Palestinians' request for membership in the United Nations.¹⁰ On the same day it was declared that the UN Admission Committee failed to reach consensus over the Palestinians' application for full membership in the United Nations.

On 31 October 2011, Palestine was admitted as a member state to the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).¹¹ The United States reacted by stopping its funding to UNESCO under the reasoning that U.S. law prohibits funding UN agencies that grant membership to entities that are not recognized internationally as states.¹²

On 29 November 2012 the United Nations General Assembly accorded Palestine 'nonmember observer state status in the United Nations.'¹³ In one of its clauses the relevant resolution expresses hope that the Security Council 'consider favorably the favorably the application submitted on 23 September 2011 by the State of Palestine for admission to full membership in the United Nations.'¹⁴

Granting Palestine the status of a non-member observer state in the UN ended, to a large extent, the controversy around Palestine's statehood and opened the door for Palestine to accede to many international treaties, including core human rights treaties, and join international bodies such as the International Criminal Court.

Towards the end of 2018, Palestine launched a campaign to revive endeavors for full membership in the United Nations. According to Riyad Al-Malki, the Palestinian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Palestine will proceed with its application in spite of the US threats to hinder the endeavor through the use of veto.¹⁵

Turning to the United Nations by Palestine came after Palestinians had exhausted all political attempts to reach a solution to the conflict through direct and indirect negotiations with Israel, the occupying power, under the 'patronage' of the United States and after the later has proved to be completely biased to Israel.

This policy paper is intended to shed light on Palestine's effort to join the United Nations and its specialized agencies with the goal of evaluating the pros and cons of Palestine's potential full membership. The paper will examine if membership will have any practical political and/or legal implications.

2. Eligibility for Membership

Under article 4 of the Charter of the United Nations, membership of the organization is 'open to all other peace-loving states.' In the membership application, that was submitted to the UN in 2001 President Abbas 'solemnly declare[d] that the State of Palestine is a peace-loving nation and that it accepts the obligations contained in the Charter of the United Nations and solemnly undertakes to fulfill them.' The application was not accepted on grounds related to statehood. There was no consensus regarding Palestine's statehood under the reasoning that Palestine does not exercise 'effective control' over its territory.¹⁶

the relevant resolution expresses hope that the Security Council 'consider favorably the application submitted on 23 September 2011 by the State of Palestine for admission to full membership in the United Nations

It is recognized under international law that statehood is a matter of fact rather than a matter of law.¹⁷ In order to be a state under the declaratory theory of statehood four criteria have to be met.¹⁸ Effective control over the territory is one of the conditions. Palestine is now recognized as state and has been accorded a non-member state status in the United Nations in spite of the fact that it does not exercise effective control over its territory due to the ongoing Israeli military occupation. Palestine has already entered into international diplomatic relations with dozens of states, acceded to many international treaties and joined international organizations that are open to states only. Considering Palestine's current status as non-member state in the United Nations and other international organizations whose membership is open to states only, Palestine's application for full membership should not in theory be rejected. If the application is rejected again, it is only because of political considerations of the United States. In this case, other options may be considered by Palestine to gain membership.

3. Access to the International Criminal Court

3.1. Background:

Efforts to join the International Criminal Court by Palestine started in 2009 when the Palestinian Authority lodged an article 12(3) declaration in the Office of the ICC Prosecutor stating that ‘the Government of Palestine hereby recognizes the jurisdiction of the Court for the purpose of identifying, prosecuting and judging the authors and accomplices of acts committed on the territory of Palestine since 1 July 2002.’¹⁹ The office responded to this declaration by informing Palestine that it would ‘carefully examine all relevant issues related to the jurisdiction of the Court, including whether the declaration by the Palestinian National Authority accepting the exercise of jurisdiction by the ICC meets statutory requirements.’²⁰

On 3 April 2012, the Office of the Prosecutor declined Palestine’s application under the reasoning that the Rome Statute is open for accession by states and that the legal status of Palestine is controversial.²¹ Therefore, ‘it is for the relevant bodies at the United Nations or the Assembly of States Parties to make the legal determination whether Palestine qualifies as a State for the purpose of acceding to the Rome Statute and thereby enabling the exercise of jurisdiction by the Court under article 12(1).’²² The document added that the Office of the Prosecutor may consider allegations of crimes committed in Palestine once a competent organ of the United Nations or the Assembly of States Parties decides over the legal issue of statehood of Palestine or the Security Council refers the situation in Palestine to the Court under article 13(b) of the ICC Statute.²³ This issue was resolved when Palestine was accorded the status of non-member observer state status in the United Nations on 29 November 2012.

On 1 January 2015, the Government of Palestine renewed its attempt to join the ICC by lodging another declaration under article

12(3) of the Rome Statute in accordance with which it accepted the jurisdiction of the Court over alleged crimes committed ‘in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, since June 13, 2014.’ One day later, on 2 January 2015, Palestine deposited an instrument of accession to the Rome Statute with the UN Secretary-General. Palestine’s application was accepted and the Statute entered into force for Palestine on 1 April 2015.²⁴

On 16 January 2015, the ICC Prosecutor initiated preliminary examination into the situation in Palestine *proprio motto* based on the above-mentioned article 12 (3) declaration.²⁵ The preliminary examination is still ongoing. Full investigation is yet to be hopefully opened when the examination is concluded.

On 22 May 2018, Palestine referred the situation to the Prosecutor of the Court pursuant to articles 13 (a) and 14 of the Statute. The referral covers as temporal jurisdiction the period since 13 June 2016 onwards. This step reflected Palestine political will and its support to the Court.

On 13 July 2018 the ICC’s Pre-Trial Chamber I ordered the Registry of the Court to build a system of outreach activities with the victims and affected people.²⁶ On 24 May 2018 the Presidency of the Court assigned the situation in Palestine to Pre-Trial Chamber I.

3.2. Relation to full membership

As is well-known, the ICC is an independent judicial body that is not part of the United Nations, although there is a link between the two bodies. Under article 2 of the ICC Statute, the Court enters into relationship with the United Nations ‘through an agreement to be approved by the Assembly of States Parties to this Statute.’ Besides, under article 13 (b) of the Statute the Court may exercise jurisdiction when a situation ‘is referred to the Prosecutor by the Security Council acting under Chapter

VII of the Charter of the United Nations.’ Further, the Security Council has the authority to postpone or stop investigations for a period of time. Article 16 of the Statute states that ‘[N]o investigation or prosecution may be commenced or proceeded with under this Statute for a period of 12 months after the Security Council, in a resolution adopted under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, has requested the Court to that effect; that request may be renewed by the Council under the same conditions.’ In addition to this, the Security Council may refer cases of aggression to the Court. Article 15 (7) of the Statute states that ‘[W]here the Security Council has made such a determination, the Prosecutor may proceed with the investigation in respect of a crime of aggression.’

Membership in United Nations is not a condition for states to join the International Criminal Court.

The only condition that is required in this respect is statehood and state’s consent to join the court.²⁷ Recognition of Palestine as a state and giving it a nonmember state observer status in the UN was instrumental in enabling Palestine to accede to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and consequently join the International Criminal Court. Accession procedure is the same whether the applying state is a member in the UN or not. Palestine’s full membership in the UN may not change anything with respect to the progress of the accountability process in the ICC. While Palestine’s current status as non-member observer state in the United Nations gives her the same margin of movement from a legal perspective, being a full member in the United Nations may give her wider space to advocate for accountability from political angle, especially when it comes to possible deferral of investigation. The rest of the issues that relate to the legal technicalities of preliminary examination and any possible future

...being a full member in the United Nations may give her wider space to advocate for accountability from political angle, especially when it comes to possible deferral of investigation.

investigation are the same irrespective of membership in the United Nations.

The Court has recently been facing many challenges including threats directed against it by the United States. On 10 September 2018 John Bolton, the US National Security Advisor, stated that ‘[T]he United States will use any means necessary to protect our citizens and those of our allies from unjust prosecution by this illegitimate court.’²⁸ He added that the Trump Administration would ‘fight back’²⁹ through the imposition of sanctions and criminally prosecute ICC officials should the court initiates formal investigation against Israeli or American officials accused of committing war crimes. These threats have might have had slowed down the process of preliminary examinations and may consequently affect a potential investigation.

4. Membership in the UN Bodies

4.1. Membership in the International Court of Justice

The Statute of the International Court of Justice is annexed to the Charter of the United Nations and is an integral part of it. Under article 93 (1) of the Charter ‘[A]ll Members of the United Nations are ipso facto parties to the Statute of the International Court of Justice.’ Under article 93 (2) of the Charter states that are not members of the United Nations may, in principle, become parties to the Statute of the International Court of Justice on the conditions that are determined on a case by case basis by the UN General Assembly upon a recommendation by the Security Council. This was the case for states such as Switzerland, Japan and others. These conditions were set fourth for the first time in the UN General Assembly resolution 91 (1) of 1946 which was issued after a request by the Swiss Federal Republic to be a member of the United Nations.³⁰ Conditions include: ‘acceptance of

the provisions of the Statute of the International Court of Justice, acceptance of all the obligations of a Member of the United Nations under Article 94 of the Charter³¹, [and] an undertaking to contribute to the expenses of the Court such equitable amount as the General Assembly shall assess from time to time after consultation with the [government of the applying state].’ The same conditions apply to other cases.

Under UN General Assembly resolution 264 (III) of 8 October 1948,³² states that are not members of the United Nations but members in the Statute if the Court may participate in the election of members of the Court. UN General Assembly resolution 2520 (XXIV) of 4 December 1969,³³ provides that these states may participate in procedures related to the amendment of the Statute.

The Court may exercise jurisdiction in contentious cases to settle disputes of legal nature when states submit cases to it in accordance with international law. A legal dispute includes disagreement on issues related to law or fact, or a conflict or conflicting legal views or interests. This jurisdiction is open to states that are parties to the Statute and states that are not parties thereto. Under article 35 (2) of the Statute states which are not parties to the Statute may access the court upon conditions defined by the Security Council and ‘subject to the special provisions contained in treaties in force.’ Required condition are contained in Security Council resolution 9 of 15 October 1946. Article 1 of the said resolution outlines these conditions as follows: ‘such State shall previously have deposited with the Registrar of the Court a declaration by which it accepts the jurisdiction of the Court, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and with the terms and subject to the conditions of the Statute and Rules of the Court, and undertakes to comply in good faith with the decision or decisions of the Court and to accept all the obligations of a Member of the United Nations under Article 94 of the Charter.’

As a state that is not party to the Statute of the Court, Palestine has already made use of this type of jurisdiction in an issue of law related to the United States’ violation of its legal obligations under Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations Concerning the Compulsory Settlement of Disputes of 1961 to which both Palestine and the US are states parties. On 4 July 2018 Palestine lodged a declaration in the Registry of the Court in which it stated the following:

‘Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 9 (1946) of 15 October 1946, which provides the conditions under which the Court shall be open to States not parties to the Statute of the International Court of Justice, adopted by virtue of its powers under Article 35 (2) of the Statute of International Court of Justice, the State of Palestine hereby declares that it accepts with immediate effect the competence of the International Court of Justice for the settlement of all disputes that may arise or that have already arisen covered by Article I of the Optional Protocol to the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations Concerning the Compulsory Settlement of Disputes (1961), to which the State of Palestine acceded on 22 March 2018. In doing so, the State of Palestine declares that it accepts all the obligations of a Member of the United Nations under Article 94 of the Charter of the United Nations.’³⁴

Palestine had utilized this jurisdiction even before it was accorded to the non-member observer state in the United Nations. In the Advisory Opinion regarding the Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Palestine was able to have access to the court through a request by the United Nations General Assembly addressed to the Court.³⁵

This would leave Palestine with limited options when it comes to its active participation in matters related to the Court including election of judges and amendment of the Constitution of the Court.

If Palestine's membership application is successful this time, it will become a member of the Court ipso facto. However, it is doubtful that the application will be successful considering a potential US veto in the Security Council. The explanation above shows that membership of the United Nations is not the

only mechanism through which Palestine can have access to the Court and participate in electing its judges. While Palestine can in theory utilize the provision of article 93 (2) of the United Nations Charter to become a member of the Court, in practical terms its efforts may be hindered by a US veto in the Security Council whose recommendation to the General Assembly is necessary in this respect for political considerations. This would leave Palestine with limited options when it comes to its active participation in matters related to the Court including election of judges and amendment of the Constitution of the Court. Therefore, it is clear that political considerations continue to block Palestine's full participation in the United Nations and the Court. The only option before Palestine to have access to the court is contentious jurisdiction through the United Nations General Assembly or through a provision of a treaty that Palestine has acceded to and give jurisdiction to the Court over certain issues. It is important to mention that this mechanism enables Palestine to have the Court consider disputes with other states and does not give her the right to participate in other matters of the Court.

4.2. Membership in the United Nations Specialized Agencies

There are 15 specialized agencies which work under the United Nations. These agencies are international intergovernmental organizations that have their own constitutions and rules.³⁶ While membership of the some of these

agencies is open to states that are not members of the United Nations membership of other agencies put this as a condition. Membership in some of these organizations is important in the Palestinian context for variety of reasons. Some of these reasons relate to enhancing Palestine's political and legal status as a state on the international level. Other reasons relate to the protection of the rights of the Palestinian civilians under Israel's military occupation as well as strengthening the sovereign rights of the Palestinian people over their territory.

4.2.1. Membership in the World Health Organizations

In 1989 the PLO applied for the World Health Organization (WHO) membership. The application was not successful. The United States reacted by threatening to stop its funding of the organization if Palestine is admitted to the organization.³⁷ The PLO was then asked to withdraw its application as part of a compromise in accordance with which consideration of PLO's application is postponed. It was the statehood argument that crippled the effort of the PLO to join WHO. Admission to WHO requires simple majority vote of its Assembly.³⁸

It is sometimes acceptable to recognize a state for certain purposes such as:

Under article 1 of the Organization Constitution '[T]he objective of the World Health Organization shall be the attainment by all peoples of the highest possible level of health' which is a basic human rights under international human rights law.

4.2.2. Membership in United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization:

On 31 October 2011 Palestine admitted to full membership of the UNESCO by a vote of 107 states in favor, 14 against and 52 abstentions. Under the Constitution of the Organization

only states may be admitted to full membership. Entities other than states may be admitted as associate members. Under article 2 (3) of the Constitution “Territories or groups of territories which are not responsible for the conduct of their international relations may be admitted as Associate Members.” Palestine, however, was admitted as full member of the organization, which makes it clear that the rejection of Palestine’s full membership application in the UN is driven by political considerations. This holds especially true if we know that the American Veto is always ready to block any resolution that relates to Palestinians’ rights.

Some existing states that enjoy full membership in the United Nations are not recognized by some states.

4.2.3. Membership in the International Civil Aviation Organization:

This organization was created by the Convention on International Civil Aviation known as the Chicago Convention of 1944. Accession to this convention is open to states that are members ‘members of the United Nations and States associated with them, and States which remained neutral during the present world conflict.’³⁹ Notification to adhere to the Convention is addressed to the Government of the United States of America.⁴⁰ States other than the signatory states as provided for in article 91 and categories of states mentioned above and who wish to sign up to the Convention can do so by means of a four-fifths vote of the Assembly of the International Civil Aviation Organization subject to the approval of ‘any general international organization set up by the nations of the world to preserve peace.’⁴¹ Based on this provision Palestine can join this organization even without full membership in the United Nations.

Based on membership criteria provided for in the Chicago Convention Palestine can become a member of the International Civil Aviation Organization if it becomes a member of the

United Nations or if it passes a four-fifth vote in the Assembly of Civil Aviation Organization upon approval by a general organization whose role is to maintain peace. It is probably possible for Palestine to pass the vote and get the approval of the United General Assembly for this. This may mean that Palestine may become a member of this organization without being a member of the United Nations.

If Palestine succeeds joining this Organization it will, in theory, be able to control its air space that is part of its sovereign territory. This would enable Palestine to control stems from the fact that international airplanes have been flying over the territory of Palestine since the start of Israel’s occupation in 1967 in violation Palestine’s sovereignty. If Palestine joins this Organization, it will in principle be able to prevent flying that is not authorized by it. This is an additional manifestation of Palestinian people’s severing rights over their territory.

5. Practical Implications of Membership in the United Nations

Membership of the United Nations would give Palestine the right to fully participate in the Organization including by voting on resolutions. Becoming a member of the United Nations would mean that Palestine would become an *ipso facto* member of the International Court of Justice. This would allow Palestine to have direct access to the Court without the intervention of the United Nations General Assembly as explained above. Also, it would make Palestine’s access to United Nations specialized agencies easier as membership of some of these agencies requires membership in the United Nations.

Over most of the period since the commencement of peace negotiations between the PLO and Israel in the early 1990s, the Palestinian Authority gave greater weight to politics over law as a means to end Israel’s military occupation of the Palestinian territory.

The past few years witnessed a shift in the Palestinian Authority's approach to the conflict. The Palestinian Authority has started to give more attention to international law as a mechanism to find a solution to the conflict including by stressing the legal status of Palestine as state and securing full membership in the United Nations. Appealing to international law and international organizations after over 20 years of barren peace talks is a good choice. Juxtaposition between this approach and diplomacy that is based on international legal norms should, in theory, be more fruitful than pure political approach that ignores international law.

The Palestinian Authority has started to give more attention to international law as a mechanism to find a solution to the conflict including by stressing the legal status of Palestine as state and securing full membership in the United Nations.

The legal approach will free the Palestinians, to a large extent, from the political blackmailing that is exercised over them by the United States and its allies. This will provide the Palestinians with a wider margin to express their political will with respect to issues related to national interests and rights.

However important membership of the United Nations might be it may not per se enable Palestine to achieve its goals. Considering Palestine's status as non-member observer state in the United Nations and the fact that Palestine has already joined some international organizations (including the International Criminal Court) and acceded to dozens of international treaties, its potential full membership in the United Nations may help little in efforts related to accountability and end of occupation. This is not to say that membership is of no value. Rather it is to say that Palestine's status enables her to act with

states individually to pressure them to uphold their legal obligations. Besides, it is the political will of states individually and collectively that will make the change rather than membership *per se*.

Full membership is not without dues. If Palestine is accorded full membership in the United Nations, it would sometimes be forced to take stands that are not in line with the values of justice for political considerations. For example, Palestine would find itself sometimes obliged to vote against resolutions that relate to just causes of nations that have traditionally supported Palestine's cause in order to maintain its political interests with some powers that are influential. This way Palestine would compromise the values of justice for political support of influential powers. At the same time, Palestine would risk losing the support it had received from these nations and put herself in an embarrassing situation with them.

To be more effective, this approach should be complemented with other necessary steps that the Palestinian Authority must take internally to give meaning to its efforts at the international level. On top of these steps stands the need to immunize Palestinians and unite them in the face of Israel's continuing policies that target their very existence as people on the land of Palestine. These steps include the following:

If Palestine is accorded full membership in the United Nations, it would sometimes be forced to take stands that are not in line with the values of justice for political considerations.

- Enforce the decision of PLO's Central Council with respect to ending security coordination with Israel⁴² and suspend Palestine's recognition in it until it recognizes Palestine as state.⁴³
- Act promptly to end the internal political split and its complications including arbitrary arrests, assaults

on Palestinians right to freedom of expression and assembly and provide remedy for victims of violations by ensuring accountability.

- Hold free and fair presidential and legislative elections at the earliest time possible in all of the occupied Palestinian territory and accept the result.
- Empower state institutions and give special attention to educational and health institutions. Conciliation must be based on a national agenda

and strategy that guarantee the individual and collective rights of the Palestinians.

- Fight corruption and hold corrupt people accountable.
- Start working on a Palestinian nationality law.

If these steps, amongst many others, are taken, Palestinians will start to restore faith in the Palestinian political leadership and will be more hopeful in a better future whereby their rights are protected in a democratic society

¹ UN General Assembly resolution 3210 (XXIX) of 14 October 1974.

² See Resolution on Palestine by the Seventh Arab Summit Conference, available at: <https://unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/unispal.nsf/0/63D9A930E2B428DF852572C0006D06B8> , last accessed on 11 July 2019.

³ UN General Assembly resolution 3237 (XXIX) Of 22 November 1974.

⁴ PNC is the legislative body of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

⁵ See Palestinian Declaration of Independence, available at: <https://fmep.org/resource/palestinian-declaration-of-independence/> , last accessed on 11 July 2019.

⁶ UN General Assembly Resolution 43/177 of 15 December 1988.

⁷ Ibid

⁸ States are admitted to the United Nations as full members by the UN General Assembly upon a recommendation by the Security Council after a vote in favor by 9 members including the five permanent members. This is not the first time that Palestine attempts to seek full membership.

⁹ See Palestine and the United Nations: 70 years on, available at: https://www.nad.ps/en/media-room/media-brief/palestine-and-united-nations-70-years#_ftn10 , last accessed on 11 July 2019.

¹⁰ The Guardian, " UN vote on Palestinian State put off amid lack of support", available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/nov/11/united-nations-delays-palestinian-statehood-vote>. Accessed on 27 March 2019.

¹¹ See Press Release, UNESCO, General Conference Admits Palestine as UNESCO Member State, UNESCO Press (Oct. 31, 2011), available at:

¹² See Luisa Blanchfield and Marjorie Ann Browne, 'Membership in the United Nations and Its Specialized Agencies', Congressional Research Services, 19 June 2014, available at: <https://fas.org/sqp/crs/row/R43614.pdf> , last accessed on 11 July 2019.

¹³ See General Assembly Votes Overwhelmingly to Accord Palestine 'Non-Member Observer State' Status in United Nations, Sixty-seventh Assembly, General Assembly Plenary, 44th & 45th Meetings, 29 November 2012, available at: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2012/ga11317.doc.htm> , last accessed on 11 July 2019.

¹⁴ United Nations General Assembly resolution 67/19, A/RES/67/19, 4 December 2012, available at: <https://unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/UNISPAL.NSF/5ba47a5c6cef541b802563e000493b8c/19862d03c564fa2c85257acb004ee69b?OpenDocument> , last accessed on 11 July 2019.

¹⁵ Al-Jazeera, "Palestine launches a bid for full UN membership despite US Veto" 15 January 2019, available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/01/palestine-launches-bid-full-membership-veto-190115204411449.html> , accessed 27 March 2019.

¹⁶ See Report of the Commission on Admission of New Members, UN. Doc. S/2011/705, 11 November 2011, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4ec618b52.html> , last accessed on 11 July 2019.

¹⁷ Oppenheim, cited in James Crawford, *The Creation of States in International Law* (2nd edn), Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1996, p 4.

¹⁸ Under article 1 of the Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States '[T]he State as a person of International law should possess the following qualifications: a. a permanent populations; b. a defined territory; c. a government; and d. capacity to enter into relations with other states.'

¹⁹ On 22 January 2009 Mr. Ali Khashan, the Minister of Justice of the government of Palestine lodged this declaration. See 'Situation in Palestine', available at: <https://www.icc-cpi.int/nr/rdonlyres/c6162bbf-feb9-4faf-afa9-836106d2694a/284387/situationinpalestine030412eng.pdf> , last accessed on 10 July 2019.

²⁰ Cited in John Quigley, 'The Palestine Declaration to the International Criminal Court', available at: https://iccforum.com/media/background/gaza/2009-05-19_Quigley_Memo_on_Palestine_Declaration.pdf , last accessed 10 July 2019.

²¹ Situation in Palestine, Office of the Prosecutor, available at: <https://unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/unispal.nsf/0/206D43BAF726DD22852579D50050138B> , accessed on 29 March 2019.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ See preliminary examination of the Situation in Palestine, available at: <https://www.icc-cpi.int/palestine> , last accessed on 10 July 2019.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ See Decision on Information and Outreach for the Victims of the Situation, ICC-01/18-2 13 July 2018, Pre-Trial Chamber I, available at: <https://www.icc-cpi.int/Pages/record.aspx?docNo=ICC-01/18-2> , last accessed on 10 July 2019.

²⁷ Article 125 of the Statute states that the Statute is open to accession by 'all States'.

²⁸ John Bolton threatens war crimes court with sanctions in virulent attack, *The Guardian*, 10 September 2018, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/sep/10/john-bolton-castigate-icc-washington-speech>, last accessed on 9 July 2019.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ See United Nations General Assembly resolution number 91 (1) of 11 December 1948, Conditions on which Switzerland may become a party to the International Court of Justice, available at: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/033/42/IMG/NR003342.pdf?OpenElement>, last accessed on 10 July 2019.

³¹ Article 94 of the Charter states:

1. Each Member of the United Nations undertakes to comply with the decision of the International Court of Justice in any case to which it is a party.
2. If any party to a case fails to perform the obligations incumbent upon it under a judgment rendered by the Court, the other party may have recourse to the Security Council, which may, if it deems necessary, make recommendations or decide upon measures to be taken to give effect to the judgment.

³² See United Nations General Assembly resolution number 264 (III) of 8 October 1948, Conditions under which a State, a party to the International Court of Justice but not a member of the United Nations, may participate in the elections of members of the Court, available at: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/044/35/IMG/NR004435.pdf?OpenElement> , last accessed on 10 July 2019.

³³ See United Nations General Assembly resolution number 2520 (XXIV) of 4 December 1969, Participation of States which are parties to the Statute of the International Court of Justice, but are not members of the United Nations, in the procedure for affecting amendments to the Statute, available at: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/256/54/IMG/NR025654.pdf?OpenElement> , last accessed on 10 July 2019.

³⁴ See States not parties to the Statute to which the Court may be open, available on the website of the International Court of Justice: <https://www.icj-cij.org/en/states-not-parties> , last accessed on 11 July 2019.

³⁵ United Nations General Assembly resolution, ES-10/14, A/RES/ES-10/14, 12 December 2003.

³⁶ Further information about these agencies is available here:

<https://www.unsystem.org/members/specialized-agencies>

³⁷ Frederic L. Kirgis, 'Admission of "Palestine" as a Member of a Specialized Agency and Withholding Payment of Assessments in Response' American Journal of International Law, 1990, available at: <https://scholarlycommons.law.wlu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1384&context=wlufac> , last accessed on 11 July 2019.

³⁸ Article 6 of the Constitution of the World Health Organization reads as follows: 'Subject to the conditions of any agreement between the United Nations and the Organization, approved pursuant to Chapter XVI, States which do not become Members in accordance with Articles 4 and 5 may apply to become Members and shall be admitted as Members when their application has been approved by a simple majority vote of the Health Assembly.'

³⁹ See article 92 (a) of the Convention on International Civil Aviation of 1944.

⁴⁰ Ibid, article 92 (b)

⁴¹ Ibid, article 93.

⁴² On 5 March 2015 the PLO's Central Council decided to stop all forms of security coordination with Israel in light of its incompliance with agreements concluded with PLO. See Maan News Agency, available at: <http://www.maannews.net/Content.aspx?id=764953%20%20> . Last accessed on 6 July 2019.

⁴³ In its 28th session held in Ramallah on 29 October 2018, PLO's Central Council decided to suspend recognition of Israel until it recognizes Palestine as a state on the pre 1967 borders. See Al-Jazeera in Arabic, available at:

<https://www.aljazeera.net/news/arabic/2018/1/15/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B1%D9%83%D8%B2%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%B7%D9%8A%D9%86%D9%8A-%D9%8A%D9%82%D8%B1%D8%B1-%D8%AA%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%82-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%81-%D8%A8%D8%A5%D8%B3%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A6%D9%8A%D9%84>

Opportunities and Constraints for Advancing Palestinian Rights by Engaging the Major Power Blocs (the US, EU, and BRICS States)

By Toufic Haddad

Abstract

This paper broadly explores the opportunities and constraints for advancing Palestinian rights in light of the existing geopolitical landscape at large and with the major global powers in particular. It assesses the historical backdrop to major power engagement with the Palestinian question and their contemporary landscape. It advocates that the most impactful means to advance Palestinian rights emerges from pro-active engagement with civil society actors in the US and EU. Institutions and networks that embody the mis-direction of national tax assets funding activity that results in human rights abuses of Palestinians, and the continued occupation and settler colonialism of their land, must be strategically mapped and targeted. Progressive movements, political parties, politicians and groups and causes from student and universities, to unions, religious communities, and media groups must also be pro-actively engaged and cultivated to formulate forms of collective action around strategic campaigns. Different forms of engagement with BRICS states can also be cultivated on both the grassroots, civil society and governmental levels, particularly South Africa and Brazil, albeit the direct impact of these actions will be more marginal to the engagement with the US and EU frontier, given the latter's direct engagement in the Palestinian arena. Productive engagement with these powers is nonetheless possible as well, given the existence of powerful social movement actors therein and the potential regional and global political and moral weight these actors hold.

Introduction

Attempts to explore the opportunities and constraints of advancing Palestinian rights in light of the existing state of global politics vis-à-vis the major powers is a large and complicated undertaking. The study of these topics entails a careful reading of each actor

and their interests, the historical evolution of these over time, an in depth analysis of political economic features both international and domestic, as well as even cultural and ideological dimensions. While this paper supports such an undertaking – and will indeed recommend elements of such an approach – it is far too limited by space considerations to offer anything close to a comprehensive review of these questions in its current form.

...the most impactful means to advance Palestinian rights emerges from pro-active engagement with civil society actors in the US and EU

Moreover, it is worth acknowledging from the start that even if such studies were undertaken, analysis is hardly an objective science, while various ideological ‘schools’ of thought shape the basis of assumptions of approach, the methodologies engaged in, the conclusions reached, the policy recommendations drawn up, and the priorities and sequencing of their implementation. Results can be widely divergent in light of how these questions are answered and by who.

For the purposes of disclosure, clarity and efficiency, this paper:

- Aims to broadly understand the main strategic and historical features of major powers (chiefly the US, EU, and BRICS states) and their relations with Palestinian movement;
- Explore opportunities for how these relations might be deepened on the ‘interstate’, ‘civil society’ and grassroots levels;
- Defines ‘Palestinian rights’ as the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people as acknowledged in international legal conventions, resolutions, norms and historical precedents. This includes the

realization of the long-standing objective of national self-determination for the Palestinian people in their homeland, in what may be a state, and the realization of the Palestinian refugee right to return. It also necessarily entails the end to military occupation, settler colonialism^a, apartheid, structured inequality, displacement, as well as restitution and compensation.

Methodology

Given the inability of this paper to provide a comprehensive analysis of each major power state, and its relations with the Palestinian question, this paper should be considered an informed outline to a larger discussion and research. While its aim is framed by the impetus to produce actionable policy orientation recommendations for self-consciously organized political actors on all levels of society, it can at best provide loosely drawn lines for political orientation and action, basing this on a political reading of the global and regional landscape. It nonetheless attempts to identify the basic tactical and strategic approach that should be engaged with to result in effective action, basing this on an informed reading of the details of this and history of this political landscape and its dynamics, as read from a historical political economy and Gramscian perspective.

Relevant Background Factors

International engagement in Israel-Palestine, and especially that of the major powers emerges from a variety of historical,

geostrategic, and political economic interests that are worth outlining to better appreciate why this region invites interest of these power to begin with. 'Great powers' after all were instrumental in creating and sustaining the state of Israel since its inception until today (UK, US, Russia, France, EU) with many of these factors remaining salient into the present. A brief outline of some of these factors speaks to the enormity of the challenge at hand, while offering an explanation in part for the intractability of conflict for the past seven decades and counting. Consider in that regard:

- the geostrategic significance of this region located on the eastern rim of the Mediterranean basin, at a continental gateway between South West Asia and Africa;
- the territory's proximity to a key global 'choke point' in the Suez canal indispensable to global trade.
- Pan-Arab nationalism, Pan-Islamism and the Palestinian question's direct, symbolic and political importance to these political movements and ideas, which has further shaped imperial concerns and engagement with the Israel-Palestine conflict, particularly the US, EU and Soviet Union in the post-WWII era and during the Cold War.
- These concerns are further compounded by the Palestinian connection to major oil producing states in the Arab world and OPEC, as well as the new oil and gas reserves discovered in the Eastern Mediterranean, together with the pipelines transporting and terminals processing these reserves.
- The "Holy land" also has a unique disposition regarding the centrality of

^a As a conceptual framework for analysis, settler colonialism refers to a structure, rather than any one event, which persists in the ongoing elimination of indigenous populations. It involves settlers' assertion of state sovereignty and juridical control over indigenous lands, eliminating obstacles to this by removing indigenous peoples themselves and asserting false narratives and structures of settler belonging. For similar understandings of settler colonialism, see: *Dana and Jarbawi (2017). A Century of Settler Colonialism in Palestine: Zionism's Entangled Project, Brown Journal of World Affairs, Volume XXIV, Issue 1.*; *Wolfe, P. (1999). Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event. London: Cassell*; *Veracini, L. (2015). The Settler Colonial Present. London: Palgrave Macmillan*; *Veracini, L. (2010). Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview. London: Palgrave Macmillan.*

the territory to the world's major monotheistic religions, which retain powerful institutional, moral, political and economic weight.

- On top of the significant legacies of these factors are no subtler significant issues incorporated in the legacy of WWII and the Holocaust; the symbolic potency of the Palestinian cause to anticolonial movements, the 'Global South' and the 'Non Aligned Movement' (NAM), and the interest of rising powers to this region, particularly China and India.

When seen in this light, it is not a wonder how or why the territory between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea retains such significance, and will continue to do so for all major global powers regardless of their political orientation.

Nonetheless, while there may be geostrategic, historic and political factors framing the approach of these actors in their engagement toward Israel-Palestine, it is equally important to recall that the interpretations and application of these interests is far from immutable. That is to say, every state government inherits the legacy of what came before it, while interpreting this legacy as seen fit for its contemporary and future agenda and the given resources available. States and governments are also hardly monolithic actors, and tend to represent a coalition of actors who have forged kinds of common understandings between contending political elites enabling them to govern within an accepted framework rather than fight one another.

The historical political economy tradition provides a robust theoretical framework for understanding this "political settlement" which Mushtaq Khan defines as "the balance or distribution of power between contending social groups and social classes, on which any state is based." Understanding states as incorporating a political settlement "focuses attention on intra-elite contention and bargaining (political versus economic elites; landed and nonlanded elites, regional elites, rural and urban, religious and secular, etc), on

contention and bargaining between elites and non-elites (either within groups or across them, as between classes), inter-group contention and bargaining (gender, regional, ethnic/linguistic, religious) and on contention and bargaining between those who occupy the state and society more widely" (See Khan, 2010; 1995 and DiJohn and Putzel 2008).

Retaining this understanding within one's approach is helpful in so far as it allows us to see state policy and society as more fluid and composite, while creating the possibility for imagining different possible ruling coalitions, political constellations and orientations. Because coalitions may change over time, and may also be influenced by both domestic and international actors, ideas, and resources, one must be cautious in weighing one's analysis with respect to one particular political constellation within a given state, which may in fact only be a temporal reading of matters. The volatility of world politics in recent years, the decline of social democracy and the parties which sustained it, and the ascendance of Right and Left wing populism post-2007 further demands caution in approach, appreciating temporal, locational and 'coalitional' dynamics.

Finally, there needs to appreciate the political system within each state, and the nature of the state's policy formulation system/mechanisms. The question as to whether states can nominally be held accountable to democratic constituencies, versus those states where civil society is considered weak and states more authoritarian, thus also deserves consideration if we are to truly examine the existing possibilities and constraints of influencing policy, and policy effectiveness overall.

The volatility of world politics in recent years, the decline of social democracy and the parties which sustained it, and the ascendance of Right and Left wing populism post-2007 further demands caution in approach, appreciating temporal, locational and 'coalitional' dynamics.

Non-Comprehensive Overview of Significant Historical and Contemporary Major Power engagement with Israel/Palestine

The Israel-Palestine conflict currently exists within the exclusive political domain of the US with no other major power directly or even indirectly threatening US primacy there as arbiter of this region's affairs. This hitherto uncontested US positioning emerged as a subset of US global ascendance as a world superpower, and included important precedential turning points including the US' early recognition of the state of Israel in 1948; the decline of Britain and France as competing regional imperial powers; and the articulation of the Arab-Israeli conflict into Cold War dynamics, after 1967 and especially 1973.

In particular, the post-1989 ascendance of a hegemonic US unipolar world and the attempt to consolidate that dominance in general, and regionally through the Oslo process post-1993, has also meant very clear US support and allegiance to Israel; tolerance for its settler colonialism; tolerance for para-state Zionist activity (including that which operates out of its territory); and generous military and technological transfers which ensure Israeli military superiority against its rivals, and the space and ability to act as a regional hegemon.

Bear in mind that Israel was a by-product of European political, economic and social dynamics whether this be read in terms of the provision of British support to Zionist settler colonization (via the Balfour declaration); UK approaches to Zionism during the mandatory period) or in so far as Zionism itself was largely a product of the Jewish experience in Europe,

the ascent of nationalism, and its European-Jewish variant, Zionism.

Post-WWII Atlanticism has meant that Western Europe and now the EU, adheres to Europe's submissive position to the US regarding affairs in Israel-Palestine. The EU willingly provides all forms of political, economic, diplomatic and military support to its ally Israel, while failing to ever challenge in principle or practice its "Jewish democratic" nature.

BRICS states have demonstrated significant engagement and support towards the Palestinians historically

Russia is the only global power to potentially have challenged US and EU projection of power regionally since WWII. However being the weaker

of the super powers, Russia at most has focused historically on supporting Arab regimes with military support to counterbalance the US-European-Israeli axis. It currently respects US territorialism over the peace process, while nonetheless maintaining forms of soft influence within the Israeli polity through former Soviet Jews, and in more subtle terms, through the Russian Orthodox Church across historical Palestine.

BRICS states have demonstrated significant engagement and support towards the Palestinians historically, be this via the Non-Aligned Movement's (NAM) support for the Palestinian cause at the Bandung conference; historical Indian support for the PLO, particularly at the UN; Chinese military support to the PLO in the 1960s and 70s; and PLO support

and training of the ANC in South Africa. Nonetheless, these actors were not in a position - and remain not in a position - to challenge US dominance in this part of the eastern Mediterranean.

China, India, Brazil and South Africa have generally been too weak, peripheral or otherwise to project much influence regionally, though clearly China, India, and Russia have become more active in the past

Nonetheless, these actors were not in a position - and remain not in a position - to challenge US dominance in this part of the eastern Mediterranean.

two decades. The former two have developed substantial trade relations with Israel since 1992, and actively pursue forms of technological transfer (China and India) and weapons sales (India). (Major Chinese-Israeli weapons deals have been red-flagged by Israel's US ally post AWACS and Harpy controversies, and remain a concern with the current Trump administration.

Support for the question of Palestine used to play a role in inter-communist rivalry (Russian-Chinese) and third world leadership rivalries (China-India). While the ideological dimensions of these rivalries have largely subsided, such historical rivalries remain rooted in deeper geopolitical and geostrategic aspects, and hence are not easily resolvable. (Note, these rivalries had military/territorial dimensions to them in the past). Continuation of inter-BRICS rivalries can thus be expected, despite the nominal attempts on behalf of this bloc to formulate common positions and understandings regarding global affairs, development etc, and their common resentment of the US-Western axis (and which itself is not fixed). Such factors make it unlikely that BRICS states could offer a unified position with determined political weight that could challenge the US position in Israel Palestine itself.

While non-Western powers have tended to consistently politically side with the Palestinians at the UN when it comes to pertinent resolutions, be this historically and contemporarily (excepting apartheid South Africa of course and the years of the Brazilian military junta), none have actually sought to significantly transform their position into something more meaningful or significant – politically, financially, militarily etc. In fact we witness a reverse trend – namely, while once Israel suffered from pariah status with much of NAM and the global South, together with the Eastern bloc post- 1967, today the great majority of these powers have de-linked their support for a successful peace process from their bi-lateral relations with Israel. These processes were accelerated by the 1993 Oslo accords between the protagonists themselves; the ending of the primary and secondary boycott of Israel thereafter; the prevalence of

neoliberal / globalization dynamics post-Iron curtain collapse, and the niche provision of particular security technologies which Israel has developed, and which are seen as valuable to *any* agenda of domination, coercion or projection – especially those of rising powers, as the BRICS states.

What does this mean?

In a final accounting, the US 'runs the show', through the peace process, with the Western bloc, and will continue to run it as long as this bloc remains the dominant world power, and is not usurped by another be this regional or international.

BRICS states may support the Palestinian position nominally, but have delinked their own relations with Israel from any conflict resolution agenda, and fail to fundamentally challenge the US approach in not pushing Israel to implement international law and UN resolutions. Their nominal support, and where relevant, financial support to the Palestinians, is collectively marginal to the weight and influence of the Western bloc (or 'Triad' – the US, EU and Japan) which collectively has provided roughly 70 percent of donor aid.

As a non-sovereign power, the Palestinian leadership also lacks means in and of itself to resist, leverage or undermine the pro-Israel US position, not to mention Israel's formidable military superiority itself, which grew in large part due to Western research and development investments and military procurement programs. Thus, despite UN resolutions in its favor, the Palestinians lack an effective implementation mechanism to realize their rights, while the PLO through the Palestinian Authority (PA) is tied politically and financially to the Oslo framework. The latter has fragmented Palestinian communities, accelerated de-development tendencies, increased dependency on external actors, and brought the Palestinians no closer to

...despite UN resolutions in its favor, the Palestinians lack an effective implementation mechanism to realize their rights

realizing their main goals. The commanding heights Israel and donors occupy above the Palestinians - geostrategically, politically, and financially, while being hemmed in to the political parameters of the peace process, thus severely restrict Palestinian policy space, while threatening their very presence on their land and access to the world and each other.

In light of this, do avenues exist to make Palestinian policy more effective towards its stated ends?

It seems wise to separate this question into the two main groupings of major powers, namely, the definitively 'pro-Israel' camp (US and EU) as well as the nominally pro-Palestine camp (BRICS).

It is then important to parse this analysis into state-governmental level relations, followed by the civil society/ grassroots level interactions.

The Pro-Israel camp

As Israel's chief backer, there is little the Palestinian leadership can do to change US positioning directly, at least on the bilateral governmental level. The power and political asymmetry is too diametrically opposed. Both major political parties in the US are also adamant supporters of Israel, and have consistently proven themselves as such. While dynamics here might be changing, and are important to pay attention to, it is important to be sober in one's analysis in so far as to recognize that while there may be nominal differences regarding what 'pro-Israel' means, these differences are tactical rather than strategic, and mirror similar debates within Israel and Zionist circles, regarding the scope of the occupation of the 1967 territories. Nonetheless, their commonalities over the existence and "security" of a Jewish democratic pro-Western state, thus far outweighs their tactical differences about how best to preserve and secure this state for the long term, or the extent of rights and entitlements the indigenous Palestinian

population is deserving of. In this light, exerting resources on direct lobbying to change US positioning vis-à-vis the conflict is likely to be a waste of time, without forms of significant, alternative, and active leverage, or significant changes of power balance globally or within the US.

While the EU is more politically sensitive to international legal norms than the US, it has also been a longstanding supporter of Israel; despite also vocalizing criticism of various dimensions related to the 1967 occupation. More important than its particular position vis-à-vis Israel, is its subservience to US agenda, and which itself is contingent on the larger architecture of post WWII atlanticism. The EU's complex structure and diversity also makes it much more difficult to extract a collective position from, while intra-EU rivalries also exist. Israeli links with Eastern bloc states (new members of the EU) is particularly considerable and often used to scuttle the best of more progressive Western European humanist tendencies towards Palestine and at large.

Bi-lateral relations with EU member states would seem the arena where intergovernmental relations could be pursued, given at least the nominal acknowledgment

Donors are essentially subsidizing the management and externality costs generated by Israel's occupation and apartheid.

that the EU has vaguely supported the creation of a Palestinian state through a "two state solution". It has also footed the bill for much of the establishment of the Palestinian Authority for the past quarter century. However another way to read this role is that the US and Israel have used EU funds to pay for the governance apparatus that functionally must administer to the new apartheid like reality of the OPT – a permanently divided West Bank from Jerusalem and Gaza; a Gaza Strip in draconian lock down, and a West Bank split into 200 islands. Donors are essentially subsidizing the management and externality costs generated by Israel's occupation and apartheid. The situation can go on indefinitely as such without some form of significant breakdown in the

existing balance of powers. And currently the US and Israel are setting the terms for any political process to go forward on their terms alone.

How realistically can Palestinians challenge or displace pro-Israel favoritism on the governmental level, and what lies behind this favoritism in terms of real politik benefits and services that these countries reap from their alliance with Israel?

Answering these questions begs a new set of questions enquiring as to a theory of political change, which would be important to define in order to realize more effective Palestinian policy approaches.

With dominant power constellations in the US and EU maintaining interests in pro-Israeli policies for the basket of strategic, military, intelligence, economic and political services this alliance brings to the existing political settlements within these states, the need to reconsider how to challenge the situation becomes incumbent. Civil society and grassroots actors have proven themselves capable of organizing important moral, political and economic challenges to unjust orders in the past, attempting to align foreign and domestic policies to principles of human rights and justice. The Palestinian cause has been heavily reliant on this activity in the past, and will need to double down on this dimension in the future, given its ability to educate wider layers of social and political actors that can organize and weaken existing power structure support and facilitation of Zionist settler colonialism. What needs to take place now, is a more informed, precise reading of each state and the particular opportunities and constraints available for organizing, within the existing resources and balance of power. This is particularly relevant in cases of democratic states, whereby it is citizens who are empowered to elect government representatives, to dispense with tax dollars, and the contentious political and ideological

manner this is often extracted from and dispensed to different social groups or not.

Thus, an objective contradiction would seem to exist whereby the interests of average tax payers in the US and EU member states are not served by the support of Israeli occupation and apartheid in Palestine. This contradiction acts as a strategic fault line of Palestinian – major power relations, but is not sufficiently exploited by the Palestinian movement.

The two dominant Palestinian political blocs – Fateh and Hamas - operate political strategies that for one reason or another, overlook or deliberately marginalize this strategic contradiction. Fateh's weddedness to the peace process; its non-ideological approach to politics (including its approach of non-interference in inter- or intra state political or class struggles) has effectively led to elitist forms of inter-state politics and jockeying. Hamas on its behalf, is beholden to an Islamo-nationalist worldview and agenda, that inherently limits its appeal beyond certain circles in Western civil society groups, most of which are either secular or Christian, and where plenty of Islamophobia or ignorance about the Middle East and Islam still prevails.

What needs to take place now, is a more informed, precise reading of each state and the particular opportunities and constraints available for organizing, within the existing resources and balance of power.

The failure to capitalise on this strategic contradiction between elite and civil society / grassroots interests, has left the Palestinian movement beholden to the respective political programs and strategies of Fateh and Hamas, whether this be Fateh's US-shepherded peace process, or Hamas' 'resistance'-oriented project, albeit as the asymmetrically weaker party. Moreover, it has left a vacuum in political leadership and representation within Palestinian society, particularly the diaspora, at a historical moment when great political, social and ideological shifts and questions are taking place. Namely, the US-EU axis and its impetus towards global hegemony has been weakened in recent years, accelerated by the 9/11 attacks, the debacle of the Iraq and Afghanistan campaigns, and in particular the

great financial collapse of 2007. The latter crisis has done great damage to the post-WWII compromise between labor and capital, which stabilized the Western bloc for the past seven decades. Moreover, it has created an extreme crisis in the traditional political formations in the US and EU member states which had espoused this political tack from the beginning. This has manifest itself within both the democratic and Republican parties in the US, as well as within the German SPD, the British Labour party, the French SP, and the Italian PD.

... undermining Western pro-Israel policy, via engagement with Western civil society actors would thus seem to be the most effective of Palestinian strategies to weaken and restrain Israeli settler colonialism and make advances towards achieving Palestinian goals.

On top of these dynamics exists broader global phenomenon whereby certain technological communicational advances have somewhat democratized informational resources and the possibility to virtually organize and network with constituencies and individuals which formerly were kept apart by borders or other boundaries.

In so far as the crises gripping Western political institutions remains an ongoing process of questioning between social and political constituencies and classes, opportunities for raising consciousness and organizing for the advancement of Palestinian rights would seem to have arisen within the contradictions and schisms to emerge within each political and social state formation. Namely, these crises have thrown up large sets of questions regarding the nature of state-society relations and expenditures both domestic and foreign, as well as the nature of the social contract within states, including dimensions of equality and inclusion/exclusion, racism, and securitization. All these question have direct and indirect ideological, political, moral economic and gendered points of intersection with the Palestinian struggle, in so far as the Palestine case study represents a case of 21st century settler colonialism, based on racialized and militarized exclusionary systems supported by Western tax dollars and diplomatic protection.

In a nutshell, the greater the advances of progressive social and political actors and movements within these struggles, the wider the potential sphere of Palestine allies. Such constituencies indeed form wider and deeper bases for the launching of 'wars of position' and 'wars of movement' in an effort to advance understanding and organizing for Palestinian rights. Such constituencies, movements and actors can serve to work towards reducing pro-Israel bias and privilege within their states, by running high profile campaigns targeting and exposing egregious

examples of Israeli-Zionist chauvinism and racism, tying where possible these with debates and struggles within domestic politics and the mis-direction therein of domestic tax monies. These efforts can also serve to strengthen domestic political actors and movements organizing for a more just social contract – one that prioritizes human rights over profit and oppression.

Focusing on undermining Western pro-Israel policy, via engagement with Western civil society actors would thus seem to be the most effective of Palestinian strategies to weaken and restrain Israeli settler colonialism and make advances towards achieving Palestinian goals.

BRICS

While the BRICS bloc indeed represents a set of rising major powers who have historically been more pro-Palestinian, and harbor antipathies toward the Western axis, their relative weakness and peripheralization to the US and EU remains. Moreover, all of these actors have witnessed complex political and social transformations during their respective ascents – transformations that have implications on the ability of these states to take up or embrace a more robust pro-Palestinian positioning

Chinese interest in Israeli technology; its management and development of Haifa and Ashdod ports respectively; its interdependence upon the US economically; its treatment of Muslim minorities and minorities in general, and; its aspirations to expand westward via its 'One Belt One Road' project, all temper any immediate pro-Palestinian posturing. Moreover influencing Chinese statist tendencies would seem a difficult task for any particular political interests or actor, given the nature of the regime.

India's rise has tended to pronounce Hindu nationalism, and the courting of Israel as a strategic ally in light of both power's interests to assert regional hegemony. A new generation has also grown up in India, which did not experience the phase of colonialism and national liberation. Contemporary generations of Indians are naturally concerned with and embroiled in political and economic struggles around control of the state, its identity and character. Finding points of intersection between Palestinian actors and India's struggles may indeed be possible if they are to be seen as resonating with these, however, one must be realistic about the fact that the ascent of Hindutvist political and cultural formations - which strongly identify with Zionist political ideology and have well established roots, and histories dating back to even pre-state days - suggests that the promotion of Palestinians interests via-India would in any case take place in coordination with Arab states and particularly the Gulf, in light of Indian dependency on these states for oil, and the remittances of its workers. Under current conditions at least, such an alignment would seem to only strengthen the role of the US and its peace process agenda, given the high reliance of the Gulf upon US protection and political support.

Post-Soviet Russian policy has hardly showed any warming toward Palestinian positioning, while seeming fixated upon reasserting Russian power globally and even regionally, after its early 1990s demise. Moreover, the strengthened authoritarianism of Russia under Putin, together with domestic fears of political

Islam would equally seem to dampen any impetus towards being more pro-Palestinian. While Russia does not need Israeli weapons and technology in the same way as India and China per se, the legacy of the Cold War would appear to have created more strict boundaries to Russian 'interference' in the Middle East. We thus witness Russia's regional interests focused more on attempting to assert and prop up its regional ally (Syria), rather than attempting to expand influence – a strategy that should be read as a 'defensive' in character, in so far as it aims not to 'lose' a 'chip' on the regional board. Nonetheless, the brutality of Russia's intervention in Syria equally demonstrates that the Russian state has no problems with active hostility toward regional democratic aspirations – a feature which is problematic from a Palestinian perspective in so far as such an approach entrenches the regional sclerotic undemocratic order, which has hardly served Palestinians in achieving their aims, let alone served the overwhelming majority of these populations overall. On the contrary, unleashing regional democratic aspirations – both political and economic - would unleash social, political and economic forces with wide sympathies towards the Palestinian struggle, creating far wider and deeper layers of pro-Palestinian solidarity activity than the current state-dominated 'pro-Palestine' activity.

Left/Right vacillations in Brazil's political orientation over recent years have tended to bring with them reciprocally oscillating winds of pro/anti Palestinian policies and governments. Realistically speaking, the great geographic distance between Brazil and Israel-Palestine, together with the embroilment of Brazil in largely domestic and regional (Latin American) affairs makes it unlikely to expect Brazil to act as a fount of pro-Palestine

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advocacy. With this said, Brazil is a regional leader with large and significant domestic, progressive movements and actors. It is seen as an important voice in articulating new forms of progressive political action regionally and globally, as witnessed in the MST movement, and the Porto Alegre experiments in particular.

South Africa's unique colonial past and emergence from apartheid, makes SA-Palestine relations deserving of special status amongst other BRICS actors, particularly in light of the moral and political resonance and similarities of each other's struggles with settler colonialism to one another. While geographic distance and financial constraints relative to other BRICS states may curtail any serious international engagement for SA in the Middle East, its moral and political embodiment of anti-apartheid and anti-racist struggles would appear to offer important moral and political weight to the strategic Palestinian interest to challenge Israeli settler colonialism and Jewish exclusivity therein. Elements of this have already begun to be seen as articulated in SA's hosting of the 2000 Durban conference against Racism and Xenophobia, and which played a major role in launching Palestinian claims and eventually, the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement (BDS). Such positionality could be considerably widened, deepened, and leveraged, building upon an already active pro-Palestine social movements sphere.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendation

This paper has broadly assessed some of the main historical and political features of Palestinian relations with the major powers.

It has also identified and delineated that engagement with US and EU civil society actors represents a key strategic field of engagement for Palestinian-rights oriented political actors, especially in light of the current political era. In that light, it recommends:

- Establishing a think tank to generate reliable information and analysis that maps the existing institutional political arena relevant Israel-Palestine within each of the US, and EU states. The think tank should produce targeted studies of Zionist institutions and networks, to identify the most egregious offenders who would be the most exposed if faced by a well organized campaign focusing on complicity in human and civil rights abuses, racism, settler colonialism etc.
 - be this military sales, racist settler groups and militias, profiteering companies, racists establishments etc.
- The think tank should also work to develop an outreach arm whereby domestic grassroots and civil society actors can be mobilized to engage in these campaigns in a more targeted, efficient and consolidated manner, leveraging possible intersectional linkages across Palestinian and domestic struggles.

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Engaging International Civil Society: human rights, Activism and Solidarity Campaigns

By Cecilia Baeza

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this policy paper is to assess in which ways and to what extent international civil society can support and empower Palestinians in their struggle for freedom, justice and equality. The concept of “international civil society” is the focus of numerous studies and academic debates. The definition that will be used in this paper encompasses local and transnational social movements, small community and grassroots organizations, trade unions, human rights NGOs, diaspora associations, faith-based organizations, artists, parliamentarians, and other big or small activist groups engaged in the defense of Palestinian rights and the advocacy of an end to the Israeli occupation. This heterogeneous assemblage of groups and individuals operate across borders and beyond the reach of governments.

With the peace process at a deadlock and a fierce repression against all kinds of movements coming from the occupied Palestinian territories (OPT), Palestinians have realized the need to enhance their work with transnational solidarity movements as an alternative and nonviolent way of resistance against the continuing Israeli occupation. Their struggle is characterized by a huge asymmetry of power. It is this stark imbalance of power that makes the role of the international civil society so critical. Throughout the second Intifada and increasingly in the post-Intifada years, international solidarity activists and volunteers have thus joined or launched a variety of initiatives, from global campaigns such as the Free Gaza Movement flotillas, the annual Israeli Apartheid Week, and the Boycott,

Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) campaign, to participation in actions organized by Palestinian grassroots groups within the West Bank and Gaza and which include protective presence missions, documenting and reporting human rights abuses, and direct and/or symbolic actions, such as those carried out by the Palestinian Grassroots Anti-Apartheid Wall

Campaign (also known as Stop the Wall) or the Welcome to Palestine campaign. These actions have enjoyed some tangible successes that will be discussed later in this paper.

Engaging international civil society is all the more important today that Palestinians have lost enormous diplomatic influence and state support over the last couple of years. Trump administration's open hostility against Palestinians have plunged United States-Palestinian relations to their lowest since the Oslo Accords. Despite violating a worldwide consensus, Trump's decision to relocate the US embassy to Jerusalem has been followed by the governments of Guatemala, Brazil, and Australia, albeit with some reservations. The Presidents of Venezuela and Nicaragua, among Palestinians' most vocal supporters in the Global South, face unprecedented political

crisis and have largely lost their legitimacy and status on the international stage. Finally, the European Union (EU) is currently not in a position to counterbalance the United States: with the rise of various nationalist and populist governments and parties in Europe, many of whom are pro-

Israeli and anti-Muslim, the EU's commitment and capability to help resolve the conflict is far less than it has been and will probably continue to be way below Palestinian expectations. Therefore, pressuring Israel “from below” remains in the short or medium term the most promising option.

However, for Palestinian local activists, reaching out and engaging solidarity networks, which are extremely diverse both in terms of motivational and structural factors, is a true challenge. It requires to develop frames that resonate across diverse segments of society and in various parts of the world. Breadth and scope are essential features in the process of mobilization. At the same time, Palestinians need to maintain a unifying narrative and define a global strategy that is best suited for them. Furthermore, building solidarity from below does not mean that transnational

It is this stark imbalance of power that makes the role of the international civil society so critical.

activists can rid themselves of the constraints imposed by States. Pro-Palestinian support groups operate in competition with other actors – including the state of Israel, the Christian Zionist movement, and pro-Israeli Jewish diaspora organizations – who push everywhere for the creation of legal tools that repress solidarity with Palestinians by equating it with antisemitism. Individuals speaking out against Israeli human rights violations are increasingly facing legal bullying, censorship and punishment. With the ascent of friendly governments to Israel, this legal assault on Palestinian rights activism is likely to be reinforced. The criminalization of Palestinian solidarity activism is of very serious concern.

This policy paper will try to devise a strategy for boosting human rights activism and solidarity campaigns for Palestinian rights in the specific context of a global surge of far-right governments and parties. First, it examines the literature on transnational action for Palestinian rights since the second Intifada and explains the emergence of the BDS campaign. After identifying what are the main challenges ahead for the Palestinian solidarity movement, it outlines the methodology which draws upon social movement research by emphasizing frame analysis and political opportunity structures. The analysis that follows is intended to highlight how the current rapprochement between Israel and far-right populists could provide new arguments for eroding Israel's international untouchability and mobilizing the human rights community for the defense of Palestinian rights around common values. The last section suggests a series of recommendations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Except from a few exceptions, most of recent literature on transnational Palestinian solidarity tends to focus on the global boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) campaign against Israel, a movement launched in 2005 by a coalition of Palestinian civil society

organizations and activists, and which marked a turning point in Palestinian solidarity politics since the 1990s. Its core demands include the end of Israel's occupation of Arab land, recognition of the rights of the Palestinian citizens of Israel, and acknowledgement of the right of the Palestinians to return according to UN resolution 194 (Bakan and Abu-Laban 2009:40). The BDS campaign is, therefore, clearly "a long-term strategy of resistance" (Hussein, 2015). It is based on nonviolent resistance and on the principle of accountability; its premise is simple: "Israel must pay a price for its continued occupation, its disregard for international humanitarian law, and its refusal to implement UN resolutions" (Darweish and Rigby, 2018). The

authors explain the emphasis put on BDS by the diverse ways in which the campaign has reignited transnational Palestinian solidarity. In fact, today no other strategy is as effectively used and advanced, and BDS dominates the scene.

...building solidarity from below does not mean that transnational activists can rid themselves of the constraints imposed by States.

The pitfalls of armed resistance and the weaknesses of the international human rights system

Hazem Jamjoush (2011) and Maia Carter Hallward (2013) have both described the political and social context in which it has emerged. At the beginning of the 2000s, there was frustration and disillusionment among the Palestinian population, as several years of peace talks had led to neither a Palestinian state nor a decrease of the Israeli occupation on the ground (Jamjoush, 2011). Palestinians were subjected to ever-tightening restrictions on movement with hundreds of checkpoints in the West Bank separating Palestinian communities from each other.

With the outbreak of the second intifada in September 2000, the outward calm of the Oslo era was brutally disrupted and the false promise of bilateral negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority began to be vigorously challenged (Hallward, 2013). The spark that ignited the fire was a series of Palestinian demonstrations that Israeli soldiers

fired on. Palestinian militants subsequently escalated to broader violence, including suicide bombings, rocket attacks, and sniper fire, that Israel met with even deadlier force. This situation provoked heated debates over goals and methods within the Palestinian national movement. The strategic gains of armed resistance were heavily discussed across the Palestinian political spectrum. The Palestinian civil society decided to step in with nonarmed resistance initiatives, as an attempt “to revive the grassroots, popular nature of the first intifada” (Jamjoum, 2011). As a new generation of international solidarity activists was emerging – such as the International Solidarity Movement (ISM), the Christian Peacemaker Teams, and the International Women’s Peace Service, among others – engaging the international civil society became a strategic component of Palestinian nonviolent resistance. The forms that this solidarity took ranged from hosting international activists who were directly witnessing and taking part in popular resistance activities, to twinning on the municipal or local institutional levels (Jamjoum, 2011).

...in the absence of effective accountability mechanisms and the presence of dysfunctional global governance institutions, the “expose and embarrass” methods of human rights advocacy have not compelled the Israeli decision-makers to change any of their policies towards Palestinians

Lori Allen (2018) argues that this period also marked the high point and the beginning of a decline in trust in the international human rights system. Using the “naming and shaming” strategy, international and Palestinian organizations issued countless human rights reports documenting Israeli abuses. However, in the absence of effective accountability mechanisms and the presence of dysfunctional

global governance institutions, the “expose and embarrass” methods of human rights advocacy have not compelled the Israeli decision-makers to change any of their policies towards Palestinians. As Allen puts it, “a quarter of a century after the first Palestinian human rights organization was established, the Israeli occupation is only more entrenched” (Allen, 2018).

Looking for new effective and inclusive collective action repertoires: the role of the BDS campaign

Against this background, the BDS campaign aimed at counteracting a growing sense of powerlessness by breaking with former methods. The call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions has put unprecedented material and symbolic pressure on Israel, something that most states, especially in the West, have been incapable/unwilling to do. As Nathan Thrall puts it: “in an era of corporate social responsibility, BDS has given bad publicity to major businesses tied up in Israel’s occupation (Airbnb, Re/Max, HP) and helped push other large firms out of the West Bank. It has disrupted film festivals, concerts and exhibitions around the world. It has riled academic and sports organizations by politicizing them, demanding that they take a stand on the highly divisive conflict.”^a Hence, BDS seeks to challenge the interests of “those who enjoy the status quo and who are motivated – economically, politically, ideologically – to maintain the occupation” (Allen, 2018). While it is true that the BDS movement has not had a major economic impact on Israel yet, compared to the decades-long campaign in South Africa, its strength and potential lie in the fact BDS activism offers a direct-action and participatory repertoire of collective action (Chalcraft, 2019): people do not need to wait for their own governments to act before taking action themselves, and getting some tangible results.

^a

<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/aug/14>

[/bds-boycott-divestment-sanctions-movement-transformed-israeli-palestinian-debate](#)

... Israeli authorities see the international boycott campaign as an existential threat to the Jewish state.

Individuals, churches, student organizations, trade unions, municipalities, and social movements: nearly everyone can participate. The BDS movement also provided momentum for other campaigns: the Israeli Apartheid Week, that now takes place in over 200 cities across the world, as well as the Free Gaza Movement, which was launched in 2006 and organized from 2008 several Flotillas to the Gaza Strip for denouncing Israel's siege, are both autonomous yet satellite initiatives of BDS. As Huwaida Arraf and Adam Shapiro put it: "what the Free Gaza movement is doing in general, is pushing open greater political space for groups, organizations, performing artists, or pension funds to join the BDS movement" (Arraf and Shapiro, 2012:154). This pressure from below, from the grassroots and civil society, is taken seriously by Israel. This is evidenced by the fact that Israeli authorities see the international boycott campaign as an existential threat to the Jewish state.

Second, BDS has rearticulated transnational Palestinian solidarity through an "intersectional approach" (Allen, 2018) that highlights the connections and similarities between the Israeli system of oppression affecting Palestinians – the unfulfilled right of return, military occupation, and discrimination against Palestinian citizens of Israel (Morrison 2015) – and other settler-colonial and racist regimes and practices. While the human rights framework used to appeal to a "universal and politically neutral language", the BDS movement reframes solidarity^b as stances and actions that refer to "a sense of unity between two political actors on the basis of shared interests, understandings, or aspirations, and

^b Monique Jo Beerli (2013) and Linda Tabar (2017) have both challenged this conception of solidarity as "political altruism". Tabar warns against First World activists coming to Palestine for participating in grassroots resistance actions and "walking away from these encounters with the paternalistic self-gratification of having 'helped', or with the voyeuristic excitement of political tourism, or of having consumed radicalism and revolutionary struggle". This

sometimes on the basis of a common enemy" (Khalili 2007). The example of the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa is paradigmatic (Darweish and Rigby, 2018), but BDS has far more scope. The Palestinian struggle can be linked to all struggles against militarism, the prison industrial complex, policing, and racist structures. For example, Noura Erakat has described 2014 as a generative moment of renewal of Black-Palestinian solidarity in the United States, anchored by the concurrent bombardment of Gaza and occupation of Ferguson^c. Linda Tabar also stresses that "similarly connections are being made about Israeli arms and technologies of repression, which have been developed on native Palestinian bodies, and the exporting of this state violence to other regions such as Latin America, where Israel has a long and sordid history of training and arming right-wing regimes and groups, including during the genocide in Guatemala" (Tabar, 2017). By rooting the movement in decolonial principles, it reconnects transnational Palestinian activism with its long history of South-South revolutionary solidarity (Khalili, 2007; Chamberlin, 2011; Jamjoum, 2011; Tabar, 2017).

BDS's third major feature is its capacity to provide a unifying narrative for Palestinians. The call for BDS was endorsed in 2005 by over 170

Palestinian organizations within the Occupied Territories of West Bank and Gaza, the national territory of Israel, and the Diaspora. As Abigail Bakan and Yasmeen Abu-Laban put it: "After decades of disappointment and fragmentation in the aftermath of the failed Oslo accords, the

The Palestinian struggle can be linked to all struggles against militarism, the prison industrial complex, policing, and racist structures.

commodification of the Palestinian struggle has reached its peak with the Walled Off Hotel, a hotel wedged up against the Israeli security wall that wraps around Bethlehem and where artists such as Banksy, Sami Musa and Dominique Petrin have customized guest rooms.

^c <https://www.ohio-forum.com/2018/11/global-solidarities-lecture-series-noura-erakat-on-palestine-on-tuesday-nov-27/>

BDS movement has united Palestinians across borders, political factions and generations". However, with the proliferation of semi-autonomous BDS groups worldwide, retaining an overall sense of Palestinian unified narrative and leadership is a constant challenge. With the disarray of the Palestinian national movement and the lack of consensus around political goals – including the “one-state or two-states” debate (Hijab, 2018) –, Palestinian activists have observed a tendency among non-Palestinian solidarity activists to act as if they could substitute themselves for the lack of Palestinian leadership (Hannieh, Jamjoum, Ziadah, 2006). A crucial step for Palestinian civil society was the creation of a reference body that could represent the signatories to the BDS call, and to work to help coordinate and support BDS campaigners around the world. In November 2007, those signatories to the call that were based in, or had representation within, the Mandate territory of Palestine met in Ramallah and formed the Palestinian BDS National Committee (BNC), made up of the 19 main coalitions and networks that brought about the 2005 BDS Call. Since its formation, the BNC has worked to connect Palestinian civil society with its global counterparts, facilitating the sharing of information, coordinating international campaigns, providing guidance and positions on political demands, and pushing for BDS within Palestine itself.

What are the challenges ahead?

The BDS campaign is not without its own weaknesses and challenges. In addition to internal questions related to the structuring of the movement – a subject that the author of this policy paper, as a non-Palestinian, considers it preferable to sidestep –, some other issues have implications not only for the BDS movement but for transnational Palestinian solidarity politics at large. Among the main challenges ahead is the massive legislative and legal assault that targets the BDS movement worldwide. Whether at the national (France) or sub-national (United States, UK, Germany, Chile) levels, Israel and pro-Israeli lobbies are vigorously campaigning for banning any kind of boycott of Israel by accusing BDS of antisemitism. While the charge

is nothing new, those attacks are escalating and putting activists at legal and professional risks. The second challenge lies in the difficulties to translate BDS campaign successes into political achievements. As Yusef Munayyer puts it, “while the B & D, boycotts and divestment, have been achievable goals, the S, sanctions, has been elusive. [This] requires a state-level engagement, and this is an arena the BDS movement is currently not well equipped to compete” (Munayyer, 2016). A case in point is Gaza, for which the BNC advocates in favor of a military embargo against Israel, sanctions that necessarily involve government decision-making. Besides, as Nadia Hijab (2018) signals, “care should be taken to present BDS as one of many strategies that the Palestinians must use, including legal and diplomatic ones. Culture and the arts also play a key role in the quest for Palestinian rights, and they are thriving.” The question of how to ensure consistency and synergy between these diverse tools remains largely untapped. Most of the literature insists on the differences between BDS and other strategies – including human rights legal advocacy, “flytillas” and flotillas, etc. – but omits to identify what should be done to make them converge instead of competing, as sometimes happens.

METHODOLOGY

Thus, enhancing the Palestinian solidarity movement presents mainly two challenges ahead:

- Further expanding, especially in the Global South, while resisting the spread of the legal offensive against its tools;
- Gaining access to governments to step up the pressure on Israel

The role of framing and the importance of producing context-sensitive analysis

Addressing these challenges is all the more complex that one-size-fits-all answers do not exist. Developing relationships with social movement organizations, navigating the legal system, and approaching state actors: all of this involves making an assessment of the

potential and limitations of the mobilization vis-à-vis local contexts. BDS founders and endorsers are very aware of the fact that tactics and actions “are of necessity context-sensitive”. Palestinian solidarity activists and partner groups in any given context decide and apply measures that best fit their own reality and particular circumstances.

Different factors must be accounted for: the social movement landscape – which can include the local Palestinian diaspora; international alliances – which can be developed both at the national (the country’s foreign policy) and the sub-national levels (“city diplomacy”, i.e. the way cities, or local governments in general, engage in international relations); and the Israeli local interests that can be effectively targeted (companies, festivals, university partnerships, etc.).

The resonance of Palestine solidarity campaigns amongst the local populace is crucial to the transition from passive to active support. In this sense, framing, which, within the context of social movements, “refers to the signifying work or meaning construction engaged in by movement adherents (e.g., leaders, activists, and rank-and-file participants) and other actors (e.g., adversaries, institutional elites, media, social control agents, counter-movements)” (Snow, 2007), is closely tied to context sensitivity.

Transnational support requires campaigns to be tailored to different environments, using a narrative that is appropriate for the diverse situations. Are movement framings congruent or resonant with the personal, everyday experiences of the people that the solidarity movement wants to mobilize? To what extent are the proffered framings culturally resonant? Islamic solidarity, the question of indigenous peoples’ rights, and racism are examples of how the Palestinian cause can echo issues that

are culturally embedded in their own countries.

Political opportunity structures are another issue at stake. The question of how to articulate a stronger partnership with civil society actors and an access to the state should be handled with great care. Gaining access to the state is closely tied to contingent aspects of the political environment. Certainly, activists do not just respond to political opportunities; they can at times succeed in changing them, especially in democratic societies.

For example, social movement organizations (SMOs) can lobby elites to try to recruit allies in the hope of creating new openings to access state institutions. This in part depends on the interests, strategies and frames of the SMOs.

However, strategically adapting to the existing state environment is not always an achievable goal nor a desirable decision for SMOs. The Palestinian solidarity movement cannot both develop a friendly approach to certain governments and engage with social movements that fiercely oppose these

same administrations, without putting its political message at risk. In other cases, the pro-Israeli bias of the government is just too strong to be reversed.

Methodologically speaking, this means that the Palestinian solidarity movement should rely on field-based reports that consider all these factors at the local, national, and regional levels. The BDS movement has started to produce such reports^d; this initiative should probably be expanded and supported by Palestinian think tanks.

Transnational support requires campaigns to be tailored to different environments, using a narrative that is appropriate for the diverse situations.

^d See for example: “Israeli Militarism in Latin America”, BDS Latin America, November 2018, <https://bdscolumbia.org/wp->

[content/uploads/2018/11/Israeli-Militarism-in-Latin-America.pdf](https://bdscolumbia.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Israeli-Militarism-in-Latin-America.pdf)

From local to global and from global to local

However, the purpose of this policy paper is not to provide a series of case studies, country-by-country, but an overview on how the Palestinian movement could extract relevant elements from local realities for updating its global strategy of advancing the role of the transnational solidarity movement.

Connecting the local and the global is crucial for avoiding the fragmentation of the Palestinian narrative: the greatest challenge of framing is that it must be both context-sensitive and unified. So far, this has been achieved by the BDS movement using two main frames: the comparison with the South African Apartheid, and the universal human rights as the foundational basis of the movement. This paper proposes to complement these two master frames with strategic additional elements related to global changes that overlap with local problems.

Connecting the local and the global is crucial for avoiding the fragmentation of the Palestinian narrative

Since Donald Trump's election, the Palestinian transnational solidarity movement probably faces one of its most adverse international political contexts ever. We suggest some insights about how the Palestinian solidarity movement could use this global political situation as a leverage for 1) expanding and strengthening its ties with other grassroots social movements, and 2) better articulating with the human rights community (human rights defenders, lawyers, and international NGOs).

^e <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/the-visegrad-groups-policy-towards-israel/>

^f

<https://edition.cnn.com/2019/02/18/middleeast/i>

ANALYSIS

Israel, the global far-right, and the resonance with the Palestinian issue

We are witnessing over the past years the global rise of new far-right leaders and parties, albeit with features varying across regions. Jair Bolsonaro's electoral victory in Brazil in October 2018 was the latest episode of a phenomenon that include Viktor Orban in Hungary, the PiS (Law and Justice Party) leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski in Poland, Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines, Donald Trump in the United States, the BJP leader Narendra Modi in India, and far-right parties in government in Italy and Austria, among others. Notably, only hours after Jair Bolsonaro was elected president of Brazil, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called the extreme-right president-elect and invited him to Israel, after the latter declared his intention to follow Trump's decision to relocate his country's embassy to Jerusalem. This episode reflects the fact that far-right governments have pro-Israeli foreign policies, a position that the Jewish state has responded with a reciprocal warm embrace.

Another illustration of it is the growing rapprochement between Israel and the Visegrád Group (V4) - namely Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia. Since 2017, the V4 states and Israel are increasingly developing shared views and values on international politics and show a greater willingness to cooperate economically^e. This process, which is leading to growing internal divergences between EU members concerning Europe's Israel policy, was supposed to culminate at the end of February 2019 with a meeting in Jerusalem; the summit was eventually canceled over Israel-Poland Holocaust spat, but this falling out is temporary^f. Several of the European leaders have hinted they would like to follow the lead of the United States and move their embassies from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

[srael-visegrad-summit-canceled-poland-intl/index.html](https://www.mfa.gov.il/press-releases/2019/2/20190218-israel-visegrad-summit-canceled-poland-intl/index.html)

While this trend is worrisome for Palestinians, it could also be used by the Palestinian solidarity movement to expose the nature of Israel's relationship to Palestinians. As Eli Bitan puts it, "it is doubtful whether there is anything that proves the irrelevance of all kinds of 'liberal' justifications for the settlement enterprise and the occupation quite like the support of right-wing authoritarians. The world now sees who vouches for Israel".^g This alliance is much more than a matter of realpolitik and a defense of political interests: Israel and this new far-right share common values and interests.

Zeev Sternell describes them as "a hostility to the values of the Enlightenment, to human rights, to the concept of a nation as a community of citizens, to the principle of equality, and, generally speaking, to foreigners"^h. While this hostility is already clear to all those who have opposed the rise of ultra-nationalists, their alliance with Israel is a strong argument for Palestinians and activists who for decades have tried to convince the international community that Israel's denial of Palestinian people's rights needs both racism and regressive ideas to exist, and that there is no connection between the occupation and the Holocaust or Israel's security. As Zeev Sternell puts it: "not only does Israel collaborate willingly with this Trojan horse, (...) but it also sees itself as an integral part of this anti-liberal bloc led by nativist xenophobes who traffic in anti-Semitic conspiracy theories such as Hungary's Viktor Orbán and Poland's Jarosław Kaczyński".

To be fair, this ideological convergence draws upon and reinforces a movement initiated by liberal democracies in the early 2000s, in the context of the "Global War on Terror"; two areas exemplify this process:

Security-obsessed agendas

In the post-9/11 era of the "War on Terror", surveillance and security discourses have become a common mantra of a large number of governments – both liberal and authoritarian –, but the new-far Right is taking it to the next level. Whereas several studies have lifted the veil on the illiberal practices of liberal regimes based on the association of migration to crime and terrorism, far-right leaders have made of this assumption a pillar of their political platforms. Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has called migration "a Trojan horse for terrorism" while US President Donald Trump stated that the West is "importing radical Islamic terrorism through a failed immigration system." Notably, both have promoted the idea of building walls to block the passage of would-be refugees – a policy implemented by Israel against Palestinian "terrorists" since 2004 and declared illegal by the International Court of Justice (ICJ). It is no surprise that in January 2017 Benjamin Netanyahu tweeted: "President Trump is right. I built a wall along Israel's southern border. It stopped all illegal immigration. Great success. Great idea"ⁱ.

In the same vein, far-right leaders advocate for increasing the militarization of the police, one of the most significant trends of law enforcement worldwide in recent years. This trend is also encouraged by Israeli officials both for ideological reasons as for business interests – the Israeli security industry exporting its methods worldwide. For example, Avi Dichter – the former head of Shin Bet who in 2002 ordered that a one-ton bomb be dropped on a Gaza City apartment building as part of an extrajudicial assassination – has coined the concept of "crimterrorists" for stressing the commonalities between the "war on terror" and the US "war on drugs". In practice, the militarization of the police leads to intensifying police brutality against a variety of groups that depending on the political conjuncture, include criminals, young people,

^g <https://972mag.com/rise-global-far-right-energize-anti-occupation-movement/138470/>

^h <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/02/24/why-benjamin-netanyahu-loves-the-european-far-right->

[orban-kaczynski-pis-fidesz-visegrad-likud-antisemitism-hungary-poland-illiberalism](https://forward.com/fast-forward/405161/netanyahus-most-retweeted-tweet-ever-praised-trumps-wall/)

ⁱ <https://forward.com/fast-forward/405161/netanyahus-most-retweeted-tweet-ever-praised-trumps-wall/>

poor minorities, the homeless, immigrants, and Black people or Muslims^j. While this is a direct cause for a rise in police killings, far-rights leaders make of it an electoral slogan. The defense of extrajudicial violence was the cornerstone of Rodrigo Duterte presidential campaign in Philippine. According to human rights Watch, since taking office on June 30, 2016, Duterte's "war on drugs" has led to the deaths of over 12,000 Filipinos to date, mostly urban poor. At least 2,555 of the killings have been attributed to the Philippine National Police. Similarly, Jair Bolsonaro have stated on his campaign trail that a "good criminal is a dead criminal". According to the new Brazilian president, police officers who gun down armed criminals with "10 or 30 shots need to be decorated, not prosecuted." This attitude strikingly echoes the way Israeli soldiers who have killed Palestinians during operations are often greeted as heroes^k.

Religious fundamentalism

The new global far-right, despite being led by secular political parties, has developed steady connections with religious fundamentalisms – from the Hindu BJP in India to all kinds of Christian fundamentalists in the Americas, Russia, and Europe. Notably, all of them have strong affinities with Israel, a country where radical religious parties have also prospered over the last decade. Benjamin Netanyahu recently encouraged the violent right-wing extremist party Otzma Yehudit – which include Rabbi Meir Kahane's followers - to join hands with his frequent coalition partner Jewish Home – another Orthodox Jewish and religious Zionist political party. The reasons for these affinities vary from one region to another, but the bottom line is that all converge to articulate social ultraconservatism, exclusive nationalism, and religious bigotry^l.

One central point of this convergence is Islamophobia. The War on Terror has spurred

the scapegoating of Muslim individuals, groups, and even nations accused of supporting terrorism, a phenomenon that has been exploited by the far-right. Western far-right leaders use Christianity as an identity marker between "us" and "them". Poland and Hungary's leaders, Jarosław Kaczyński and Viktor Orbán, claim to defend Poland's status as a "bulwark of Christianity", and the soul of "Christian Europe" respectively. In this religious crusade, Israel appears as a key ally: "The Jews are our brothers in arms in the war against Islam," stated Filip Dewinter, leader of a far-right Flemish party in Belgium. Similarly, in the United States, Trump's so-called "Muslim ban" has also been achieved thanks to the support of evangelicals, especially white evangelicals - about 80 percent of them voted for Trump in the 2016 presidential election. Since then, his administration has prioritized, and delivered, on numerous campaign's promises to evangelicals, like appointing conservative Supreme Court judges and moving the US embassy in Israel to Jerusalem. Ties that bind the Evangelical Right and Israel are all the more powerful that they are based on an apocalyptic theology that views an ingathering of "the Jews" in Jerusalem as an essential part of its eschatology: it is a predicate to the Jews converting to Christianity before the messiah Jesus returns for the final judgement. Christian Zionism, which began as an Anglo-American movement, is now a global movement with strong roots in countries like Brazil, Nigeria, and South Korea. Brazilian newly elected President has been backed by a major association of evangelical pastors and other church leaders. While the main reason why evangelicals aligned with Bolsonaro was his program against "abortion, the deconstruction of traditional family, and the sexual indoctrination of children in schools", Brazil's relationship to Israel is another top tier issue. Evangelical lobbies have been the main

^j Israeli experience of controlling, dispossessing, and occupying an indigenous population, local police forces have adapted them to monitor Muslim and immigrant neighborhoods in US cities.

^k

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/mid>

[dle-east/elor-azaria-released-israel-defence-forces-soldier-convicted-manslaughter-palestinian-a8341581.html](https://www.newstatesman.com/2018/05/defenders-faith-0)

^l

<https://www.newstatesman.com/2018/05/defenders-faith-0>

driver behind Bolsonaro's decision to move the Brazilian embassy in Israel to Jerusalem.

A significant consequence of this ideological convergence is that while the wave of Arab uprisings and the international tensions over Iran's nuclear program seemed to have sidelined the Palestinian issue, far-right leaders are the ones who are putting it back. This new politicization over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as well as the concrete affinities between Israel's practices and those of its far-rights counterparts should be used to energize the Palestinian transnational solidarity movement and consolidate its network with all the victims of these governments, including women, communities of color, LGBTQ people, native communities, immigrants and refugees.

The role of the human rights community

As it has been described earlier, human rights constitute a reference frame for the BDS movement. However, while it is extensively used discursively, the Palestinian solidarity movement sometimes seems to lack a coherent strategy for working with the human rights community (NGOs, lawyers, scholars, etc.). As Lori Allen has showed, there is in Palestine and among certain solidarity activists a "critical awareness of the ways in which the human rights system has failed to foster a just society and liberated state in Palestine, or elsewhere, and has become a superficial label to legitimize ineffective activities." (Allen, 2013: 104). As a result, there has been a tendency to overlook the legal dimension of Palestinian solidarity activities. The low number of articles or studies on the legal foundations of BDS - from a Palestinian viewpoint - is a sign of it.

Yet, there is a crucial need of a greater involvement of the legal community. The first reason is that the Palestinian solidarity movement needs to be defended against measures adopted by certain governments to outlaw its actions. This makes all the more necessary that this judiciary offensive appropriates the anti-discrimination discourse - a core value of the Palestinian struggle for justice, freedom, and equality. Part of the legal

backlash against BDS is tied to political efforts to confront Europe's growing anti-Semitism problem. Despite BDS leaders' insistence that they oppose Jew-hatred, the argument that "BDS has become a vehicle for anti-Semitism" is gaining ground. The Palestinian solidarity movement needs the support of human rights lawyers, NGOs, and scholars to demonstrate that tying the fight against Jew-hatred to Israel's impunity goes against States' international obligations and commitments regarding human rights and international law principles. The way Israel seals an alliance with far-right populists, many of whom have well-known connections with anti-Semitic movements and ideas, should persuade everyone that it is not the defender of Jewish communities around the world. The second reason for working more closely with the human rights community is that despite obstacles, the international human rights instruments are evolving, and the Palestinian solidarity movement could do better to accompany and anticipate these changes. The 2014 UN Arms Trade Treaty or the establishment of an intergovernmental working group on a Convention on transnational companies and other business enterprises and human rights are examples of ever-evolving instruments that should draw the attention of the Palestinian solidarity movement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Embody Palestinian narrative's values - Justice, Equality, Freedom - in the context of the rise of the global far-right by supporting

- Struggle against police brutality and militarization
- Migrants and refugees' rights
- Anti-discrimination

Engage a closer and stronger cooperation between the human rights community (lawyers, NGOs, multilateral institutions) and the BDS campaign for identifying in which ways they can reinforce each other. Topics of mutual interest include:

- Anti-BDS legislation
- Business Corporate Responsibility / Ethics and Compliance
- Arms Trade

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Diplomacy & Israeli Accountability: Multilateral Peace-making: The Framework, Scope and Stakeholders (Assessing US-Led Efforts & Monopoly & Reengaging a Multilateral Track)

By Zaha Hassan

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Executive Summary

The history of US mediation between Palestinians and Israelis is one in which Palestinians have had to first negotiate their agency, representation and peoplehood. When political recognition finally came from Israel and the US, opening the door to peace talks, it was at a considerable cost to the Palestinian national cause. The US has used its influence as lone peace broker and superpower to alter the terms of reference for an agreement while providing political cover for Israel's expansionist tendencies. In US policy parlance, settlements went from "illegal" under Carter to being on the cusp of official US recognition as Israeli sovereign territory today under Trump. The removal of the refugee issue from the negotiating table did not begin with Trump; it began with Clinton.

Both political parties in the US, whether in control of the White House or Congress, have consistently worked to constrain Palestinians in their ability to operate in the US, to advocate for their rights in international fora, and to receive economic support while negotiating for an end to occupation. The US has done this both acting alone and through its participation in the multilateral mechanism, the Middle East Quartet. Though support for Israeli policies are on the wane among the base of the Democratic Party, the political polarization within the US on Israel/Palestine means that there will not be a significant change in US policy in the near term.

The Middle East Quartet, the only true multilateral effort to mediate between Israelis and Palestinians, sought to bring the collective energy of the principal influencers on Israel/Palestine peace together to correct the deficiencies of the Oslo peace process framework. The Quartet's Roadmap for Middle East Peace largely mirrored international

parameters and consensus on a negotiated two-state solution to the conflict, with parallel obligations for both parties. However, the US redirected the Quartet's efforts away from compliance and monitoring and an Israeli settlement freeze, to micromanaging internal Palestinian affairs, thus giving Israel a free hand to create new, prejudicial realities on the ground. The other principals within the Quartet were unable or unwilling to act as a counterbalance to the US. Thus, the EU became the financier of US policy while the UN became complicit in undermining international law and sanctioning the siege on Gaza.

Given US domestic political constraints and geopolitical realities, any new multilateral mediation mechanism supporting Israel/Palestine peace must be reconceived with a more limited objective of putting up guardrails around the conflict so that the legitimacy of international norms and institutions are not permanently impacted and so that a political solution that recognizes the

The US has used its influence as lone peace broker and superpower to alter the terms of reference for an agreement while providing political cover for Israel's expansionist tendencies.

rights of Palestinians collectively and individually is preserved. This new objective will not be served by US involvement in the short term in light of the past role the US has played in mediation efforts and given the likelihood that the US will recognize Israel's looming annexation of at least part of the West Bank. Similarly, the UN should be excluded from the mechanism to prevent any attempt to compromise its normative authority.

Members of the mechanism should be institutional or regional groups, or subsets thereof, with a proven commitment to upholding international law with regard to the Israel/Palestine conflict. This paper recommends that the four permanent

members of the Security Council join as a group along with the EU (or an alliance of member states) and the Arab League. In addition, the paper recommends that the Swiss convene the High Contracting Parties of the Fourth Geneva Convention for the purpose of created a group from among the state parties (“the HCP Group”) as a taskforce to prevent the normalization of Israeli occupation.

As a fourth principal in the multilateral mechanism, the HCP Group would help steer the work priorities and provide compliance and monitoring on the looming annexation of the West Bank while interfacing with the UN, ICJ and ICC. The Swiss should be a part of the group so as to continue in its role as mediator between both Hamas and the PA. Given the financial stress that Palestinians will be subjected to in the near term, the paper also recommends that the mechanism create a new donor pool from the contributions of the principals that may be directed to Palestinian resiliency and community initiatives to support Palestinian presence on the land.

I. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to review the US role in Israel/Palestine peacemaking, to assess its value toward a negotiated, two-state solution to the conflict, and to explore the possibility and opportunities for reengaging stakeholders and interested third parties in a multilateral mediation mechanism. This begs the question of whether there has ever been such a mechanism constructed and constituted toward ending the 1967 occupation of Palestinian land. Therefore, this paper intends to answer that question as well and to begin a discussion on what a new multilateral mediation mechanism ought to look like and what its objective ought to be.

The paper will provide an overview of the recent scholarship on the history of the US role in Israel/Palestine peacemaking and identify periods where the US has been actively engaged in mediating between the parties. It

will also examine the domestic political constraints that hindered various US administrations and whether Congress has acted and reacted in a way that supported the administration’s policy for good or ill. The paper will then briefly summarize the principles, structure, and objectives of effective multilateral peacemaking and outline critiques of multilateral efforts in the context of Israel/Palestine. Specific attention will be given to the role the US has played during such peacemaking efforts.

The paper will then provide recommendations on structuring an effective multilateral mediation mechanism. It will outline criteria for identifying potential principals in the mechanism from among stakeholders and interested third parties while also suggesting whom to consider for inclusion or exclusion from the mechanism. It will then discuss what the mandate and goals of the mechanism might be in light of the current geo-political environment and constraints in the US.

This paper is meant to begin a discussion on how effective peacemaking must be reconceived in a post-Oslo world where the US has moved away from international law and consensus for resolving the conflict and has now acquiesced to Israeli unilateralism that seeks to legalize and make permanent the status quo. In light of recent actions by the US, most notable among them the relocation of the US embassy to Jerusalem and US recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the occupied Syrian Golan Heights, the paper argues that a multilateral framework must primarily be focused on raising guardrails around further US action that violates norms and consensus so that the effects on international legality and the rule of law may be limited and not serve to further normalize Israel’s occupation, perpetual

... so that the effects on international legality and the rule of law may be limited and not serve to further normalize Israel’s occupation, perpetual Palestinian refugeehood and the discriminatory treatment of Palestinian citizens of Israel.

Palestinian refugeehood and the discriminatory treatment of Palestinian citizens of Israel.

II. Review of US peacemaking efforts in Israel/Palestine

A. Overview

For the first two decades after the Nakba, the US viewed Palestinians as a refugee problem, collateral damage of the first Arab-Israeli war in 1948. After the 1967 Israeli military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, the US came to see Palestinians as stakeholders. This realization, however, did not translate into American readiness to bring Palestinians to the table at the various US-led Mideast peacemaking initiatives that followed subsequent Arab-Israeli hostilities.

Effective US peacemaking between Israelis and Palestinians has been impeded by three concerns: (1) whether to open an official dialogue with Palestinians; (2) whether to recognize the legitimacy of the PLO; and (3) whether to acknowledge Palestinians as a people with certain legal claims and national rights, entitling them to a seat opposite Israel at the negotiating table. At the same time successive administrations grappled with these issues, Congress sought to tie the hands of policymakers by regulating the prerequisites for US engagement with the PLO and by limiting the political space within which peacemaking could take place.

Despite the limitations of US mediation, Palestinians were keen to have American engagement because they believed only the US could deliver Israel. Israelis also favored the US because they were confident US policy would never push further than Israel would be willing to go. History proved the Palestinians wrong: the US delivered the PLO to Israel. The Israelis were proven right: with one notable exception, the US has consistently refused to use its considerable leverage to shepherd Israel toward a resolution based on international law and consensus. In fact, time and again, the US has undermined Palestinian legal rights and claims and

exacerbated the asymmetry between the parties.

Successive administrations have protected the US monopoly over Israeli-Palestinian mediation. The result has been that US-proposed peace parameters have not strayed far from negotiating positions and incrementalism favored by Israel. The prevailing wisdom now is that complete Israeli withdrawal to the 1949 armistice line is not required for Mideast peace and that the Palestinian question ought to be dealt with after Israel has achieved peace with its Arab neighbors.

The US policy trajectory that began in 2002 with President George W. Bush's endorsement of Palestinian statehood has been disrupted and is in the process of systematic reversal under the current US administration. In line with the White House, Congress is passing legislation aimed at treating the PLO as a terrorist entity not entitled to diplomatic personality or relations with the US. For the near term, at best the US will be an unreliable and non-credible mediator. At worst, it will obstruct efforts to compel Israel's respect for international law and encourage other countries to normalize Israel's de facto and looming de jure annexation of the occupied territories including East Jerusalem.¹

Polling over the last decade suggests that Israel/Palestine policy is becoming a partisan issue in the US. The energized, progressive base of the Democratic Party is now calling for a new, more human rights-centered approach to US foreign policy in the Middle East and around the world. Any recalibration affecting the Democratic Party platform on Israel/Palestine will take time to translate into implementable policy prescriptions. In any case, the vagaries of elections and the polarization that exists between the Democratic and Republican bases means that wildly inconsistent policy decisions may be taken from one administration to the next. The same is true to a lesser degree in Congress.

B. The Nixon, Ford and Carter Years (1973 to 1980): No Contact/No Recognition/Limited Autonomy 1.0

The Nixon, Ford and Carter administrations were exemplified by on-again-off-again American back channel dialogue with the PLO. During this time, the US was either unable, because of domestic political concerns, or unwilling, because of geo-political calculations, to bring the PLO to the table with Israeli counterparts.

The Nixon administration's attempt at Mideast mediation came in 1973 when the US and the Soviet Union co-chaired the Geneva Conference ("Geneva I") which brought together Egypt, Jordan and Israel for peace talks. Though Secretary of State Henry Kissinger had been the one to authorize the first high-level contacts with the PLO, he excluded Palestinians from the international conference to ensure that they could not play the spoiler.² Kissinger promised that the US would consider recognizing the PLO or supporting Palestinian statehood following the conference though he had no intention of doing either.³ In Kissinger's view, an Arab-Israeli deadlock was in the US interest.⁴

President Ford also considered bringing the PLO into the peace process along with the Arab states. Ultimately, he determined that Palestinians had "legitimate interests," but stopped short of recognizing any cognizable rights or claims.⁵ American mediation between Arab states and Israel came at a cost to Palestinians under Ford. To obtain Israeli withdrawals from the Sinai in September 1975, Kissinger put in writing a US commitment to have no official dialogue with the PLO until it recognized Israel's right to exist, accepted UN Security council resolutions 242 and 338, and then only after first consulting with Israel.⁶

The Carter administration took over the mantle of Mideast peacemaking just as the international community was coming to view the Palestinians as having agency and legitimate rights. President Carter was well-placed to lead on peace between

Palestinians and Israelis. His approach was to favor multilateralism over a US monopoly. He elevated international law and human rights in foreign policy, asserting the illegality of Israeli settlement construction. Perhaps most critical of all, he recognized the importance of bringing Palestinians to the table, speaking early on in his tenure of a "Palestinian homeland" though he would be compelled by the domestic backlash to retreat from this statement.⁷ Carter attempted to include Palestinians in a Geneva II peace conference, but because of Kissinger's no-contact commitment with Israel, his administration refused to either recognize the PLO ahead of the talks, allow PLO officials to participate, or clarify the US position on Palestinian statehood.⁸

The Egyptian-Israeli peace track became the vehicle for Carter's attempt to secure Palestinian interests as opposed to rights. Egypt's need to secure a deal with Israel prevailed over its advocacy in support of Palestinian self-determination and sovereignty. What was achieved in the Camp David Accords was a prequel to Oslo: limited autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza over the people, but no sovereignty over the land. Israeli Prime Minister Begin's intention all along had been to prevent Palestinian statehood and obtain US tacit agreement for unrestricted settlement expansion in the occupied territories.⁹

C. The Reagan Years (1981 to 1989): Official Dialogue without Recognition

The Administration

Under the Reagan administration, the PLO struggled to gain recognition as the representative of the Palestinian people, something the rest of the international community had accepted by the mid-1970s. The conflict in Lebanon, however, forced the US into the role of mediator between Israel and the PLO while the massacre of Palestinian refugees in Sabra and Shatila underscored how

dangerous an Israeli free hand could be in the region.¹⁰

President Reagan's plan for Mideast peace echoed Begin's proposal during Camp David for limited autonomy for Palestinians but with explicit exclusion of statehood. Reagan called for an Israeli settlement freeze but downgraded the associated opprobrium of settlements from an illegality to "an obstacle to peace."

With the start of the first intifada in early 1988, the US renewed efforts to convene an international conference on Mideast peace. The proposal for talks called for bilateral negotiations between Israelis and a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation interlocked with multi-lateral negotiations to hammer out an autonomy arrangement in the occupied Palestinian territories. When Jordan severed its legal and administrative ties to the West Bank in 1988 and Arafat accepted Kissinger's 1975 conditions and renounced violence during his UN speech in Geneva, Reagan was compelled to open a dialogue with the PLO. Reagan refused, however to recognize the PLO as the representative of Palestinians and did not agree to it having an official role in the peace process.

Congress

By 1984, the pro-Israel lobby's influence in congressional races had become formidable. Just as an international conference for Mideast peace was being considered, AIPAC secured congressional support for the codification of the 1975 Kissinger memorandum of understanding calling for no contact with the PLO. The legislation included a third condition for dialogue: the PLO's renunciation of terrorism.

Congress also passed the Anti-Terrorism Act of 1987 which included a finding that "the PLO and its affiliates are a terrorist organization and a threat to the interests of

the United States, its allies, and to international law." The law prevented the PLO from operating in the United States. A provision was included to permit the president to terminate the terrorism determination if he found that the PLO no longer "support[s] terrorist actions anywhere in the world." No president has ever chosen to un-designate the PLO, however.

D. The Bush I Years (1989 to 1993): A Seat at the Negotiating Table

The Administration

The Bush administration broke new ground in Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking by convening an international conference in Madrid sponsored by the US and the Soviet Union that brought Palestinians to the negotiating table, even if only as members of a joint delegation with Jordan. Though the US excluded official PLO representation, Secretary Baker secured Palestinian acquiescence to participate in the talks by providing certain assurances including on the status of East Jerusalem and on non-recognition of Israel's extension of sovereignty there.¹¹ A multilateral track dealt with issues of regional concern though it operated more as a way to normalize Israeli relations with the Arab states than as a mechanism for resolving the substance of final status issues.

Congress

President Bush, made stronger by the US military campaign in Iraq, showed willingness to use US economic leverage to rein in Israeli settlement activity and bring Israelis to negotiations. Secretary of State James Baker managed to garner the necessary congressional support to suspend Israeli loan guarantees for the resettlement of Soviet Jews, putting teeth behind US threats. Baker took on AIPAC to do this, expending considerable political capital. The momentum on US peacemaking was lost, however, when

Baker left to head Bush's unsuccessful reelection campaign.

E. The Clinton Years (1993 to 2001): Limited Autonomy 2.0 under Oslo

The Administration

The Clinton administration was the first to both openly deal with the PLO and recognize it as a peace partner. It came to this position only *after* the back channel negotiations in Oslo between Israel and the PLO resulted in Israel's recognition of the PLO.

During the course of the Oslo peace process, US policy toward settlements softened. Illegal colonization of the West Bank became known as "a complicating factor" rather than illegal (as it had been under Carter) or an "obstacle to peace" (as it had been under Reagan). Clinton further legitimized settlements by extending the US-Israel Free Trade Agreement into the occupied territories and tacitly allowing settlement products to obtain preferential treatment while failing to prevent Israeli movement and access restrictions that inhibited Palestinian exports.

Moreover, the administration refrained from using its leverage to offset the asymmetrical negotiating position between occupier and occupied. Instead, President Clinton's peace parameters called for Palestinians to accept limited refugee return dubbed "family reunification," while successfully discontinuing the annual practice in the UN of reaffirming Resolution 194 and its call for refugee return. Palestinians were also called on to make further territorial concessions under the rubric of "what is Jewish should remain Jewish" in Jerusalem. When the Security Council sought to condemn Israeli settlement expansion as it did when Israel announced plans for an especially problematic settlement of Har Homa, the Clinton administration took action to veto the

resolution. By the end of Clinton's two-terms, the settler population increased substantially from 270,000 to 370,000, three times the growth rate in Israel proper.

At the failed Camp David talks between Arafat and Ehud Barak, President Clinton blamed Palestinians giving currency to the Israeli narrative that Palestinians had rejected "the best offer" or the "most generous offer." Contrary to the claims of a "best offer," subsequent negotiations in Taba, Egypt, unmediated by the US, came closer to an agreement—and with more favorable terms for Palestinians.

Congress

Rather than repeal the legislation determining that the PLO was a terrorist organization so that US-brokered talks could move forward unimpeded by antiquated legislation, Congress enacted time-limited presidential waiver provisions to allow PLO officials to enter the country and establish an official PLO office in Washington.¹² The threat of a denial of a presidential waiver gave the US considerable leverage over the PLO during negotiations and when negotiations went offline.

At the height of negotiations, Congress passed legislation preventing transfer of aid to Palestinians unless the president certified that the PLO was in compliance with its commitments.¹³ No such certification was required for Israel. Congress also passed a provision to defund the UN or any UN agency conferring full member state status on Palestine.

In 1995, the Jerusalem Embassy Act became law which called for relocating the US embassy in Israel to Jerusalem by 1999.¹⁴ Congress aimed to recognize Israeli sovereignty over the entirety of Jerusalem's expanded municipal

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boundaries, east and west, though this was to be the subject of final status talks. A presidential waiver was passed in 1999 to allow the president to postpone the embassy move if s/he determined national security required it.

The US, as sole mediator in peace talks, and Congress, as holder of the purse strings for Palestinian state-building assistance, meant that the US (and Israel because of its special relationship with America and the successful lobbying activities of AIPAC), influenced and sometimes held a veto over key aspects of Palestinian decision-making.

F. The Bush II Years (2001 to 2009): Monopolized Multilateralism

The Administration

Two separate camps vied for control over US policy toward Israel/Palestine during the George W. Bush administration: a neo-conservative camp led by Vice President Dick Cheney and Elliot Abrams in the National Security Council and a more traditional, norm-sensitive, internationalist camp headed by Secretary of State Colin Powell.¹⁵ Early in the Bush administration, Powell held greater sway over policy, heeding Saudi Arabia's call for the US to get engaged during the height of the second Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories. With Powell's influence in ascendancy, the administration took the step of expressly supporting Palestinian statehood, breaking considerable new ground.

Secretary Powell also led on the US involvement in a new multilateral mechanism to support Middle East peacemaking, the Middle East Quartet (discussed in Section III.B). When the neo-cons gained favor in the administration, the US used its influence in the Quartet to channel the principals away from the Quartet's Roadmap for Middle East Peace ("the Roadmap") which included interlocking obligations such as a settlement freeze and an end of violence, toward a much more limited agenda which focused on micromanaging Palestinian internal affairs. Quartet Principals

were prevented from otherwise taking individual action to mediate between the parties or to use their normative or economic leverage towards obtaining Israeli compliance with international law and signed agreements.

Despite the Bush administration's endorsement of the two-state solution, it went about undermining the Palestinian negotiating position and the very possibility of agreement between the parties. In a letter to Israeli Prime Minister Sharon, Bush recognized that "new realities on the ground" meant that Israel's complete withdrawal from the occupied territories would be "unrealistic." He also called for all Palestinian refugees to be resettled in a future Palestinians state.

The Annapolis peace conference, launched in November 2007, was the first substantive peace talks between Israelis and Palestinians in seven years. The direct negotiations between Olmert and Abbas, unmediated by the US, made some headway. However, Abbas's crisis of legitimacy and the Gaza-West Bank division tied his hands. Similarly, the looming corruption charges against Olmert prevented Abbas from taking Israeli proposals seriously.

Congress

During course of second Palestinian uprising and the War on Terror, Congress passed legislation to prevent PLO officials from obtaining a visa to the US absent a waiver granted by the State Department and the Department of Homeland Security. After the PA heeded US calls for Palestinian elections and the Hamas victory in the Legislative Council, Congress moved to block assistance to the PA if a unity government was formed with Hamas unless it accepted the Quartet Principles.

G. The Obama Years (2009 to 2016): A Master Class on Treading Water

The Administration

President Obama, the first US president to have had personal relationships with

Palestinians before entering the White House, assumed the presidency amid Israel's 2008-2009 bombardment of Gaza. His first day in office, he appointed veteran mediator George Mitchell as Mideast peace envoy. Mitchell had gained a keen understanding of the destructive nature of continued settlement construction during his time chairing an investigation into the causes of the start of the second Palestinian uprising. Despite his understanding of the unsustainability of settlement expansion, Mitchell could only obtain Israel's agreement to a ten-month moratorium on construction, excluding occupied East Jerusalem.¹⁶

After peace talks failed during his first term, the Obama administration focused on opposing Palestinian actions in international fora even when such actions were only meant to bolster the two-state solution and the internationally-recognized parameters for peace. He also pressed President Abbas to delay a vote at the UN Human Rights Council to endorse the UN fact-finding report documenting war crimes and possible crimes against humanity committed by Israel and Hamas during the 2008-09 Israeli bombardment of Gaza. In 2011, the Obama administration, opposed Palestine's bid for UN membership though it would have enhanced the Palestinian negotiating position and salvaged the possibility of the two-state vision that was US official policy. The administration also blocked a Security Council resolution condemning settlements that mirrored US language in furtherance of a commitment to shield Israel from UN action.

A renewed effort at US mediation came in Obama's second term in office with the appointment of John Kerry as Secretary of State. Kerry worked directly with Israelis on parameters for renewed talks without consultation with Palestinians. After nine months of negotiations unguided by agreed terms of reference, talks ended. The Obama administration closed out its attempt at Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking with Kerry's articulation of US support for new peace

parameters which included a new requirement that Palestinians recognize Israel as a Jewish state with the associated implications for refugee return. The open animosity between the Obama administration and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, exhibited during negotiations on the Iran nuclear deal and Netanyahu's address to the US Congress, did not prevent President Obama from signing a ten-year MOU for \$38 billion dollar in military aid to Israel, the largest in US history. With all the US criticism of new settlement construction as "illegitimate," the US could only muster an abstention from a Security Council resolution reaffirming the illegality of Israeli settlement activity in the occupied territories including East Jerusalem.

Congress

Despite Israel's increased activity to build new settlements under Netanyahu threatening the two-state solution, Congress's focus was on preventing Fatah-Hamas reconciliation by withholding economic support for any unity government. Congress passed laws penalizing the PLO for actions taken at the UN including obtaining full member status, and for "any action" taken in the ICC.¹⁷ Like previous laws restricting the PLO, Congress provided presidential waiver requiring that the Secretary of State certify that the PLO has reengaged in "serious talks" with Israel. Thus, PLO legitimacy in the US had become contingent on its continuing to engage in a failed peace process.

H. The Trump Administration (2016 to Present): Normalizing Annexation

The Administration The presidency of Donald Trump has meant a near perfect re-alignment of US policy to the agenda of Israel's right-wing government. The three top US officials working on Mideast peace have either financially supported settlements in the West Bank or have lived in a settlement. Two of these officials helped draft¹⁸ the latest version of the Republican Party platform¹⁹ which

excises any reference to a two-state solution and specifically states that there should be “no daylight” between Israeli policy and that of the US. US Ambassador to Israel David Friedman, a leading member of the policy team, claims that there is no Israeli occupation over Palestinian land or, if there is, it’s de minimis, operating only over only 2% of the area. The words “occupation” or “occupied” have now been removed from the State Department’s human rights country reports for Israel, the Golan Heights and Palestinian territories.²⁰

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The US’s delegitimization and defunding of UNRWA supports the administration’s position that the Palestinian refugee issue is the problem of host countries and not a subject of negotiation with Israel. Likewise, the decision to move the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem is an attempt to remove the subject of Jerusalem from peace talks. The White House’s decision to withhold \$200 million in obligated economic assistance to the PA is meant to punish Palestinians for breaking off contacts in response to the embassy move.

The administration’s failure to condemn Israel’s passage of the Jewish Nation State Basic Law evidences its view that Palestinians have no legal claim to any part of historic Palestine since the law confers an exclusive right to self-determination for Jews anywhere Israel decides to extend its sovereignty.²¹ The closure of the PLO representative office in Washington and the merger of the US consulate in Jerusalem serving Palestinians with the US embassy to Israel underscores that the two-state solution is no longer a policy priority for the US.

Though Trump’s proclamation recognizing Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights was largely seen as a boost for Netanyahu ahead of Israeli elections, it also signals US amenability to Israeli annexation of some part of the occupied West Bank. The US does not seem concerned about taking such prejudicial actions ahead of the release of its peace plan, likely because it has given up on the prospect of being able to garner support for the plan from the Arab world²² or from others in the international community. The US peace plan will likely be a roadmap to Israel on the limits of what the US will support with respect to plans for annexation of the West Bank land.

...the two-state solution is no longer a policy priority for the US.

Congress

Any aid to Palestinians that may resume in the future will be impacted by two new pieces of legislation passed by the Republican Congress under President Trump. The Taylor Force Act calls for the suspension of all aid to the PLO/PA so long as it continues to provide social welfare payments for families of those in prison for or martyred during commission of political violence against Israel or US persons.²³ The Anti-Terrorism Clarification Act of 2018²⁴ will force the PLO/PA to refuse all US aid in any case. Under the ATCA, if Palestinians accept any economic support for security assistance, it will subject itself to over \$600 million in damages from the families of victims of PLO/PA political violence.

I. Table of Legislation Affecting the PLO with Political Context

Below is a table of the most significant legislation affecting the PLO enacted since 1985 with context provided on the political environment that provided the impetus for such congressional action.

Law/Citation	Enacted	Effectuated	Purpose	Political Context
<p>Codification of Policy Prohibiting Negotiations with the PLO</p> <p>(PL 99-83, Title XIII, Sec. 1302)</p>	Aug 8, 1985	Current	<p>Prohibits U.S. Government officials from negotiating with any official or representative of the PLO unless it accepts Israel's right to exist, UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, and renounces the use of violence</p> <p>Prohibits appropriations for dialogue with a PLO representative involved in the death or kidnapping of a U.S. citizen</p>	<p>Secret talks were underway between the PLO and Reagan officials</p> <p>The provisions of this law were suspended when the PLO accepted what would later be termed the Quartet Principles</p> <p>Republican President</p> <p><i>Divided control of Congress</i></p>
<p>Anti-Terrorism Act of 1987 (ATA)</p> <p>(PL 100-204; 22 USC Chptr. 61)</p>	Dec 27, 1987	Current	<p>Designates the PLO a terrorist organization</p> <p>Prohibits all PLO operations in the U.S.</p>	<p>Start of the first Palestinian uprising on December 9, 1987</p> <p>Republican President</p> <p>Democrats control both houses of Congress (Senate Majority Leader is George Mitchell)</p>
<p>Middle East Peace Facilitation Act</p> <p>(PL 103-125)</p>	Oct 28, 1993	Expired in 1997	<p>Provided the president with authority to suspend Anti-Terrorism Act prohibitions on PLO operations in the U.S., allowing the opening of the PLO office in Washington, D.C.</p> <p>Granted a presidential waiver to laws prohibiting U.S. contributions to international organizations that benefit the PLO</p>	<p>Oslo Accords signed on September 13, 1993</p> <p>Democrat President</p> <p>Democrats control both houses of Congress (Senate Majority Leader is George Mitchell)</p>
<p>The Jerusalem Embassy Act</p> <p>(PL 104-45)</p>	Nov 8, 1995	Current (Embassy was moved on May 14, 2018)	<p>Calls for relocation of US embassy in Israel to Jerusalem by May 31, 1999</p> <p>In 1999, president granted waiver authority for national security</p>	<p>Oslo peace process and negotiations ongoing</p> <p>Democrat President</p> <p>Republicans control both houses of Congress</p>
<p>National Security Waiver - PLO Operations</p> <p>(PL 105-118 Sec. 539(d))</p>	Nov 26, 1997	Expired in 2011	<p>Granted the president waiver authority for national security to suspend Anti-Terrorism Act restrictions on PLO operations in the U.S., replacing the waiver authority under the Middle East Peace Facilitation Act</p>	<p>Oslo peace process and negotiations ongoing</p> <p>Democrat President</p> <p>Republicans control both houses of Congress</p>
<p>Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) Designation</p> <p><i>Immigration and Naturalization Act</i></p> <p>(8 USC Sec. 1189)</p>	Jan 5, 1999	Current	<p>Authorizes the Secretary of State to designate an organization a Foreign Terrorist Organization</p> <p>The Secretary of State designates several PLO factions and other groups including Palestine Liberation Front, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), PFLP - General Command, and Hamas</p>	<p>Growing threat from global terrorism</p> <p>Democrat President</p> <p>Republicans control both houses of Congress</p>
<p>Visa Ineligibility and Waivers of Inadmissibility</p> <p><i>Immigration and Naturalization Act</i></p> <p>(8 USC 1182 Sec. 212)</p>	Jan 22, 2002	Current	<p>Makes ineligible for a visa any officer, official, representative, or spokesman of the PLO</p> <p>Provides waiver authority and discretion for State Department and Department of Homeland Security</p>	<p>Second Palestinian uprising ongoing</p> <p>Following the September 11th attacks and the start of the Global War on Terror</p> <p>Republican President</p> <p><i>Divided control of Congress</i></p>
<p>Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act of 2006 (PATA)</p> <p>(PL 109-446)</p>	Dec 12, 2006	Current	<p>Places a set of conditions and restrictions before assistance to the PA can be obligated;</p> <p>Prohibits assistance to any PA unity government with Hamas, or Hamas-controlled institutions unless Hamas accepts the Quartet Principles;</p> <p>Lists sanctions that may be applied if a Hamas-controlled PA or institution does not meet the set of conditions</p>	<p>Hamas victory in Palestinian Legislative Council elections</p> <p>Republican President</p> <p>Republicans control both houses of Congress</p>

Law/Citation	Enacted	Effectuated	Purpose	Political Context
<p>United Nations Limitations Waiver</p> <p><i>Included in fiscal year Foreign Operations Appropriations bills</i></p> <p>(PL 112-74 Sec. 7086)</p>	Dec 23, 2011	Current with Amendments	<p>Limits Palestinian actions at the UN for obtaining full state membership and/or joining specialized agencies</p> <p>Restricts waiver authority for PLO operations, requiring that if the provision is violated, a waiver may only be used following a 90-day closure of the PLO office and only after certification that the PLO has entered into "direct and meaningful negotiations" with Israel</p> <p>Mandates a cut-off in all economic aid to the PA if violated though a waiver is available</p>	<p>Palestinians join UNESCO as member state</p> <p>Democrat President</p> <p><i>Divided control of Congress</i></p>
<p>International Criminal Court (ICC) Limitations Waiver</p> <p><i>Included in fiscal year Foreign Operations Appropriations bills</i></p> <p>(PL 113-76 Sec. 7041(j))</p>	Jan 7, 2014	Current	<p>Places additional limitations on Palestinians for initiating or supporting an ICC judicially authorized investigation of Israeli nationals for crimes against Palestinians</p> <p>Restricts presidential waivers for PLO operations in the US by requiring that if the provision is violated, waiver authority may be used only after a 90-day closure of the PLO office and only after certification that Palestinians have entered into "direct and meaningful negotiations" with Israel</p> <p>Mandates a cut-off in all economic aid to the PA – no national security waiver is included</p>	<p>Growing concerns Palestinian leaders would accede to the Rome Statute (ICC) and initiate an investigation of Israeli officials for war crimes</p> <p>Democrat President</p> <p><i>Divided control of Congress</i></p>
<p>Prisoner Payment Reduction – Graham Amendment</p> <p><i>Included in fiscal year Foreign Operations Appropriations bills</i></p> <p>(PL 115-141 Sec. 7041(m))</p>	Dec 16, 2014	Current	<p>Requires a dollar-for-dollar reduction in economic aid in the amount the PA, PLO, and any successor or affiliated organization spent on payments for acts of terrorism committed by individuals imprisoned after being fairly tried and convicted, and by individuals who died committing such acts</p>	<p>Negotiations launched in July 2013 failed</p> <p>Democrat President</p> <p><i>Divided control of Congress</i></p>
<p>Taylor Force Act (TFA)</p> <p>(22 USC 2378c-1)</p>	Mar 23, 2018	Current	<p>Mandates the cut-off of all economic aid to the PA until it revokes any law, decree, regulation, or document authorizing or implementing a system of compensation for prisoners convicted of terrorism that uses the sentence or period of incarceration to determine the level of compensation paid</p> <p>Finds the Palestinian Authority an organization that incentivizes and finances acts of terror</p>	<p>President Trump preparing "Deal of the Century"</p> <p><i>Sokolow v. PA/PLO</i>, involving PLO/PA liability for terrorism in Israel, before the U.S. Supreme Court</p> <p>Republican President</p> <p>Republican control of both houses of Congress</p>
<p>Anti-Terrorism Clarification Act of 2018</p> <p>(PL 115-253)</p>	Oct 3, 2018	Current	<p>Requires any entity receiving U.S. foreign assistance to accept jurisdiction for Anti-Terrorism Act lawsuits</p>	<p>U.S. Supreme Court denies review of <i>Sokolow v. PA/PLO</i> and dismissal for lack of jurisdiction stands</p> <p>Republican President</p> <p>Republican control of both houses of Congress</p>

J. Trends in the US Political Landscape Affecting Foreign Policy on Israel/Palestine

The political landscape in the US is changing with respect to how Democrats and Republicans regard US policy toward Israel and its treatment of Palestinians. A growing partisan divide is forming which will have implications for US foreign policy in the region in the future. The following are some assumptions and trends to watch:

1. ***The two-state framework, as it has traditionally been understood, is no longer the stated or actual policy of the US administration or of Republicans.*** Any peace plan from this administration or by another Republican administration will fall well short of anything Palestinians can accept.²⁵ The Mideast peace plan is likely to include Israel maintaining overarching security control over the West Bank and a military presence in the Jordan Valley indefinitely.²⁶

2. ***The Republican Party will continue to support the president and right-wing Likud government positions.*** The Republican Party is in sync with the president and the Likud Party agenda on Israel-Palestine. The Republican Party, true to its platform, is committed to the idea that there should be no daylight between US policy and Israel's position vis-à-vis the Palestinians. What does this mean? According to former Trump White House official, Steven Bannon, as quoted in *Fire and Fury*, "the farther right you [are], the more correct you [are] on Israel."

3. ***The more the Republicans move right, the more the Democratic Party will be compelled to articulate a values-based position on Israel-Palestine peace.*** If the Republican Party continues to be led by what is becoming associated with a white

nationalist agenda, it will grow more and more difficult for Democrats to excuse or remain indifferent to the connections that are regularly being made between that agenda and Israel's ethno-nationalist one.

4. ***The 2016 presidential elections placed Palestinian rights firmly within the progressive agenda and those interested in a presidential bid in 2020 know this.*** Palestine has become part of the progressive agenda thanks to the 2016 presidential campaign of Bernie Sanders. Those Democrats that have announced their candidacy for 2020 have all shown a more nuanced approach to Israel/Palestine policy. Most have chosen not to attend the AIPAC annual conference this year²⁷ though only Bernie Sanders attributed it to displeasure with Israeli actions and AIPAC support for the same.

Increasingly, members of Congress are willing to take a stand on Palestinian human rights by signing their names to State Department letters or making statements opposing Israeli actions such as land confiscations and settlement expansion. The groundbreaking bill introduced by Rep. Betty McCollum, the first in support of Palestinian human rights, HR 4391, garnered 30 co-sponsors.²⁸ Over a hundred members of the House signed the Welch-Price letter to President Trump opposing any aid cuts to Palestinians and supporting the two-state solution.²⁹

5. **US public opinion is trending toward Palestinian freedom, justice and equality.** According to a Pew Research Center Poll released in January 2018, the Israel-Palestine issue is increasingly becoming a partisan issue. 79% of Republicans sympathize more with Israel in the conflict while only 27% of Democrats do.

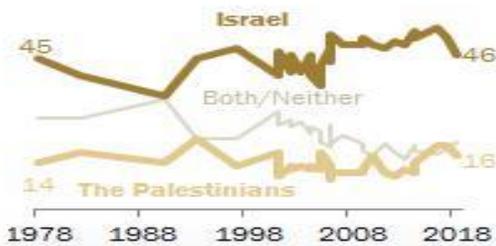
Palestinians is almost even at 27% for Israel and 25% for Palestinians. However, among liberal Democrats, sympathy with Palestinians is much higher. Nearly twice as many liberal Democrats sympathize more with Palestinians than Israelis.

Note: during periods of intifada, sympathy in the US for Palestinians among Democrats increased. As the conflict in Palestine turns into a political and civil rights struggle, more Democrats are likely to support Palestinian rights.

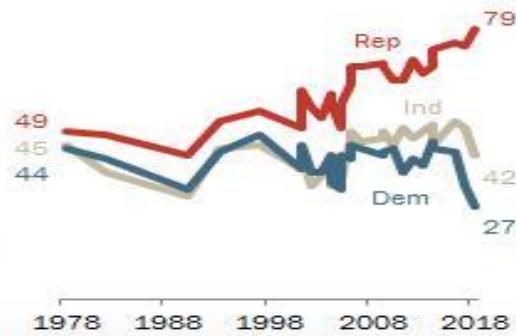
While support for Israel has been increasing among Republicans, it has been trending downward among Democrats. Sympathy today among Democrats for Israelis versus

Partisan divide in Middle East sympathies now wider than at any point in the past four decades

In the dispute between Israel and the Palestinians, who do you sympathize with more? (%)

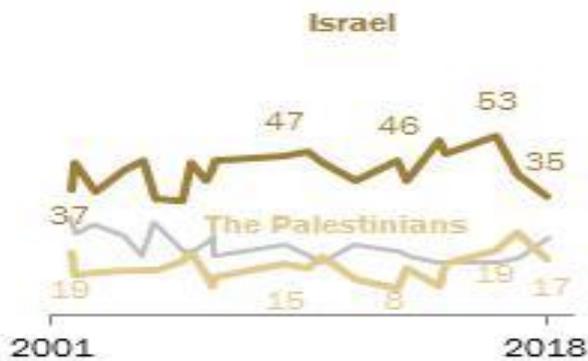


Sympathize with Israel, by party (%)

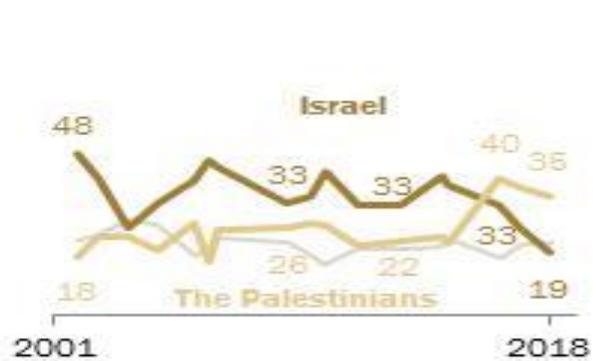


Notes: 1978-1990 data from the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations.

Conservative/Moderate Democrats



Liberal Democrats



Notes: Both/Neither responses are volunteered. Don't know responses not shown. Small sample size (N=93) for Moderate/Liberal Republicans. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 10-15, 2018.

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The Pew poll is supported by research conducted by Professor Shibley Telhami for the Brookings Institution. According to Telhami, 57% of Americans, said they preferred that Trump lean toward neither side of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Telhami polling also suggests that 60% of Democrats favor economic sanctions or something more serious against Israel if it continues with settlement expansion.

6. ***At least in the short-term, as between a one-state and a two-state solution, Democrats in Congress are more inclined to continue to support a two-state solution and oppose Israeli annexation of the West Bank.*** Only Palestinian-American congresswoman Rashida Tlaib supports a one-state solution among members of Congress. The two most talked about new progressive members of the House, Ilhan Omar³⁰ and Alexandria Ocasio Cortez³¹ have indicated support for the two-state solution. More than half the Democrats serving in the current Congress were endorsed or supported by the progressive American Jewish lobby group, J-Street,³² which supports a two-state solution and is critical of Israel's settlement policy in the occupied West Bank.

Democrats who have strongly supported Israel have been critical of the Trump administration's recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the occupied Syrian Golan Heights and are likely to join progressives in opposing recognition of Israeli annexation of the occupied West Bank.³³ Evidence of the threat to traditional support for Israel among democrats that progressives pose, AIPAC stalwarts have launched two new political action committees—Pro-Israel America PAC³⁴ and the Democratic Majority for Israel.³⁵ Pro-Israel America hopes to mobilize small contributions from the grassroots donors to pro-Israel lawmakers on both sides of the aisle³⁶ while Democratic Majority for Israel seeks

to shore up the Democratic Party's traditional support for Israel.³⁷

7. ***Republicans are likely to continue to use Israel as a wedge issue which may compromise traditional bipartisan support for Israel in the future.***³⁸ The Republicans are attempting to cast the Democratic Party as soft on anti-Semitism and support for Israel. The battle over a congressional resolution to condemn Ilhan Omar for alleged anti-Semitic remarks is just one example of strategies Republicans are employing in this regard. A new right-wing movement calling itself "Jexodus" which is aimed at getting young American Jews to abandon the Democratic Party is also part of this effort.³⁹ Jexodus is aligned to conservative republicans and its spokesperson has close ties to Trump's reelection campaign.⁴⁰
8. ***National security issues are seen as an important issue to distinguish Democrats from Trump in 2020 and US policy in Israel/Palestine is among the issues Democrats will be challenged on.***⁴¹ The base of the Democratic Party is keen to push for a US policy consistent with American values. Israeli apartheid-like policies are one area in which Democrats want to distant US support.⁴²

Conclusion

The history of US engagement on Israel/Palestine has been one marked by US deference to Israel and an unwillingness to mitigate the asymmetrical negotiating positions between occupied and occupier. The US has consistently refused to recognize the historic rights of Palestinians and the legal basis for their claims, requiring instead that parameters on

The history of US engagement on Israel/Palestine has been one marked by US deference to Israel and an unwillingness to mitigate the asymmetrical negotiating positions between occupied and occupier.

matters such as borders, refugees, and Jerusalem be subject to bilateral negotiations and, therefore, an Israeli veto. When the US has spoken on the issue of peace parameters, it has been to support Israeli positions and to call for greater Palestinian concessions.

As the Israeli government moves toward de jure annexation of some or all of the West Bank, the current US administration is likely to support the legitimacy of the move as it has done by recognizing Israel's annexation of the Syrian Golan Heights. Though the political landscape among Democrats is changing toward a values-based approach to US foreign policy in Israel/Palestine, Republicans overwhelmingly support the Israeli right-wing government. This means there is likely to be wildly different policymaking from one administration to another. Congress will continue to reflect the partisan divide over the near term but will have to come to terms with the apartheid-reality in Israel/Palestine and what this will mean for US interests in the region.

III. Assessing Past Multilateral Efforts at Peacemaking

A. History of Multilateral Mediation between Israelis & Palestinians

There are few examples of multilateral mediation to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. After the 1967 Arab-Israeli conflict, the UN appointed a special representative to mediate between Israel and the Arab countries pursuant to UN Security Council Resolution 242. However, these efforts lasted only one year. After the 1973 conflict, the US and USSR convened the first international conference for Middle East peace in Geneva which saw some interventions including the dispatch of UN observers and forces but it did not deal with a political solution for Palestinians. In 1988, following the first Palestinian uprising, the US and USSR planned another international conference with stakeholders and permanent members of the Security Council that would lead to direct negotiations involving Palestinians. This initiative was abandoned however.

Another attempt at multilateral engagement occurred in 1992 as a part of the Madrid Peace Conference. Foreign ministers of a number of countries established a steering committee to preside over a multilateral track that ran parallel to bilateral negotiations. The multilateral track provided an opportunity for the discussion of cross- and trans-border issues with countries not directly affected by the Arab-Israeli conflict. The US, Russia, the EU, Japan, and Canada each chaired five technical working groups created under the multilateral track. Bilateral negotiations, however, were divorced from these multilaterals. The final status issues dealt with in the multilateral working groups did not result in breakthroughs that might have supported progress in bilateral talks.⁴³

The most recent effort to introduce multilateral mediation into Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking was initiated by the French between 2016 to 2017 as a response to the diminishing prospects for a two-state solution

and domestic political pressure by members of the French parliament who sought political recognition for Palestine.⁴⁴ Just prior to the inauguration of President Trump, the French convened the second of two ministerial-level international conferences for the purpose of creating new momentum for bilateral talks between Israelis and Palestinians. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu shunned the meeting as an effort to impose terms on Israel.⁴⁵ President Abbas supported the initiative, though neither the PLO nor Israel were invited to attend.

The outcome of the conference was the release of conclusions reaffirming previous UN Security Council resolutions and endorsing the Arab Peace Initiative as a framework for negotiations.⁴⁶ The French initiative activities caused the reactivation of a largely dormant Quartet⁴⁷ and the publication of the July 2016 Quartet report⁴⁸ assessing the progress toward a two-state solution. French efforts were sidelined by domestic elections in mid-2017 and a policy of “wait and see” with respect to the Trump administration’s engagement on Israel/Palestine peace.

... none of the multilateral efforts over the last fifty years mentioned above have recognized Palestinians as having capacity to represent themselves

B. Multilateral Mediation: The Middle East Quartet

Overview

With the exception of the French initiative, none of the multilateral efforts over the last fifty years mentioned above have recognized Palestinians as having capacity to represent themselves or dealt directly with and gave primacy to both an end the occupation of Palestinian land and creation of a sovereign Palestinian state. The first and only example of such an engagement came in 2002 when, at the initiative of the Secretary-General of the UN, the Middle East

Quartet was established. Like all the other multilateral efforts, the Quartet aimed to support bilateral negotiations but stopped short of taking action to remedy the vastly unequal negotiating positions of the parties.

Following the outbreak of the second Palestinian uprising in 2000 and the ensuing humanitarian crisis, the EU and UN hoped to “harness[] the diplomatic energies of would-be competing mediators.”⁴⁹ The aim of the multilateral front was to get the parties to end the violence, freeze settlement construction, and get back to the negotiating table while correcting some of the deficiencies of the Oslo framework in the process.

US participation answered Israeli demands while EU and UN involvement satisfied the Palestinian interest in internationalizing the solution to the conflict.⁵⁰ Each principal brought something to the table: the US its superpower political clout and its special relationship with Israel; the EU, its economic leverage over both the parties to the conflict; Russia, its historic role in Arab-Israeli mediation, Security Council permanent membership, and continuing involvement in the region; and the UN, the value of its normative authority and its diplomatic stature. The UN’s endorsement of both the Quartet,⁵¹ and its signature achievement, the “Performance-Based Road Map to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict” (“the Roadmap”),⁵² brought legitimacy and authority to the informal group.

Despite the high hopes for the Quartet, the individual interests of the principals took precedence over Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking. According to former UN Special Envoy to the Quartet Alvaro De Soto, US policy priorities in the region and relations with Israel undermined the work of the group and the UN’s participation diminished its normative force and charter responsibility to uphold international law and peacefully resolve international disputes.

Why the Need for the Middle East Quartet?

Besides having the key parties around the negotiating table, successful negotiations require a commitment to negotiate in good faith, placement of the central issues in dispute on the table, an agreement to refrain from violence, and sustained negotiations until an agreement is reached.⁵³ Though the Declaration of Principles got Israelis and Palestinians to the negotiating table, good faith was largely lacking for a number of reasons.

One important cause was the lack of an agreed objective beyond an end of conflict and end of claims. The Oslo Accords also neglected to include a normative framework or terms of reference for resolving the conflict and did not include incentives or disincentives to encourage and/or compel both parties to stay at the negotiating table until an agreement was reached. In addition, there was no third party monitoring and enforcement mechanism to prevent deviations from either the letter or the spirit of the agreement.

...what guaranteed failure of the peace process was that it required bilateral negotiations for resolution of the conflict without providing a way to mitigate the power asymmetry between occupier and occupied.

Most critically, what guaranteed failure of the peace process was that it required bilateral negotiations for resolution of the conflict without providing a way to mitigate the power asymmetry between occupier and occupied. Thus, there was no way to ensure that the parties would address the central issues and no commitment to sustaining the process until conclusion of a comprehensive agreement. This made the resort to violence by one or both sides, all but guaranteed.

What was the role of the Quartet and did it succeed?

The Quartet's principal mission was to revive the failed Oslo peace process and act as an effective mediator to the parties so that a bilateral agreement could be reached. The Quartet Roadmap was the vehicle for this purpose. It called for a three-phased approach involving reciprocal and interlocking steps by each party, including an end of violence, certain Palestinian reforms and a freeze on Israeli settlements. The Roadmap largely tracked international parameters for peace, calling for an end of occupation and "an agreed, just, fair, and realistic" solution to Palestinian refugeehood. Most significantly, it defined the endgame of negotiations: Palestinian statehood.

Though the Quartet principals as a collective were meant to be the drivers for mediation, the US quickly took over the helm and steered the group to its own policy agenda which largely mirrored Israeli interests. According to de Soto, "as a practical matter, the Quartet is pretty much a group of friends of the US—and the US doesn't feel the need to consult closely with the Quartet except when it suits it."⁵⁴ According to former Quartet special envoy James Wolfenson, "it was the United States that called all the shots"⁵⁵

With the Americans calling the shots, monitoring and enforcement under the Roadmap were left to the US and its reports went unpublished and unshared with the other principals of the Quartet. The US reinterpreted the Roadmap to require that Palestinian compliance should come before Israeli compliance. The amorphous and difficult to measure obligations on the Palestinian side of the ledger—ending the violence and establishing good governance and credible institutions—essentially meant final status talks would be re-launched only when the US and Israel said so. It also meant that the Quartet as a group and as principals spent most of their time micromanaging internal Palestinian affairs rather than on mediating peace.

The two most problematic Quartet decisions that undermined its effectiveness as a multilateral mediator concerned its response to the Israeli disengagement from Gaza and the election of Hamas. Under pressure from the US, the Quartet principals accepted that Israel's unilateral disengagement from Gaza constituted compliance with the Roadmap⁵⁶ when, in fact, Sharon's stated purpose in leaving Gaza was to consolidate control over the West Bank⁵⁷ and prevent the formation of a Palestinian state.⁵⁸ Until today, according to Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, the isolation of Gaza continues as an Israeli strategy to prevent the formation of a Palestinian state.⁵⁹

Perhaps most problematic of all was the Quartet's decisions following the elections that brought Hamas to power. The Quartet allowed the US to lead on the proper approach, particularly in calling for principles and conditions for dealing with the Hamas.⁶⁰ The Quartet was transformed

*"from a negotiation-promoting foursome guided by a common document (the Road Map) into a body that was all-but imposing sanctions on a freely elected government of a people under occupation as well as setting unattainable preconditions on dialogue."*⁶¹

Thus, the Quartet allowed itself to become complicit in the siege on Gaza.⁶²

The Quartet's boycott policy toward Hamas was the predominate reason for the mechanism's failure to take policy initiatives to re-launch negotiations between 2008 and 2012.⁶³ Any mediation efforts aimed at ending the division between Fatah and Hamas excluded the Quartet,⁶⁴ including those spearheaded by Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

The US role within the Quartet became to shepherd the other principals to its policy and thereby water down the UN's normative authority and keep the EU and Russia from going it alone on policy toward Israel/Palestine. By UN Charter, the Secretary General is

supposed to be beyond the influence of any member states. The fact that the US had the most influence over Quartet decisions meant that UN norms were sacrificed. According to De Soto, the UN had no business in the Quartet unless it could require that Quartet statements adhere to UN positions and could guarantee a free hand to meet with stakeholders like Hamas.⁶⁵

*"Any grouping that operates on the basis of consensus is at the mercy of the lowest common denominator, and that denominator is defined by the US, which has very serious qualms about exerting pressure on Israel."*⁶⁶

US positions got greater currency than they deserved because they reflected the sum of significant international players. Regional actors that might have helped incentivize Israeli compliance with the Roadmap and international law were absent.

The Quartet essentially institutionalized the roles that the US and EU already played: the US, as holder of the monopoly over mediation between Israelis and Palestinians, and the EU, as the main financier of US-driven policies. In contrast, the UN role of upholding international law and peacefully resolving international disputes was neutralized.⁶⁷ Russia's participation might have been beneficial but it was muted by the dominance of the US. The only moments that the Quartet used its considerable collective leverage was to manage Palestinians on governance and state-building and to prevent their taking action internationally to recalibrate their asymmetrical negotiating position. Thus, the Quartet limited the space within which Palestinians could act both internally and internationally.

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The Quartet was "dysfunctional" and "a multilateral cover for US policies rather than []

a real international mechanism.”⁶⁸ Individually and collectively, the EU, Russia and the UN might have been more engaged in steering the parties back to productive negotiations using the considerable economic and/or normative power they wielded as principals. With the US a principal, such agency was inhibited.

What are the lessons learned from the Quartet?

1. The principals within the multilateral group are as at least as important as the substantive framework for mediation efforts.
2. US participation in a multilateral group results in its monopolization of mediation efforts, and serves to undermine international norms by influencing the other principals towards US policy.
3. UN participation in a multilateral group constrains it from its mandate to prevent international conflicts and diminishes the UN’s credibility in upholding international norms and institutions.
4. The EU is the best situated among international actors to uphold international norms and consensus in a multilateral mechanism given its internal constraints to reflect EU consensus positions though this has also meant that it is unable to use its considerable economic leverage against illegal Israeli actions.
5. The absence of Arab states, in the form of the Arab League, allows the influence of the US (and Israel by proxy) in a multilateral group to go unchecked. The Arab League’s absence also removes constraints on individual Arab countries to go it alone with regard to its approach in dealing with the US and the parties on matters affecting Israel-Palestine peace.
6. The presence of Russia, the one other permanent member of the Security Council, creates the illusion of a superpower counterbalance. However, one permanent member sitting alone opposite the US in a multilateral mechanism cannot mitigate the US influence on the other principals.

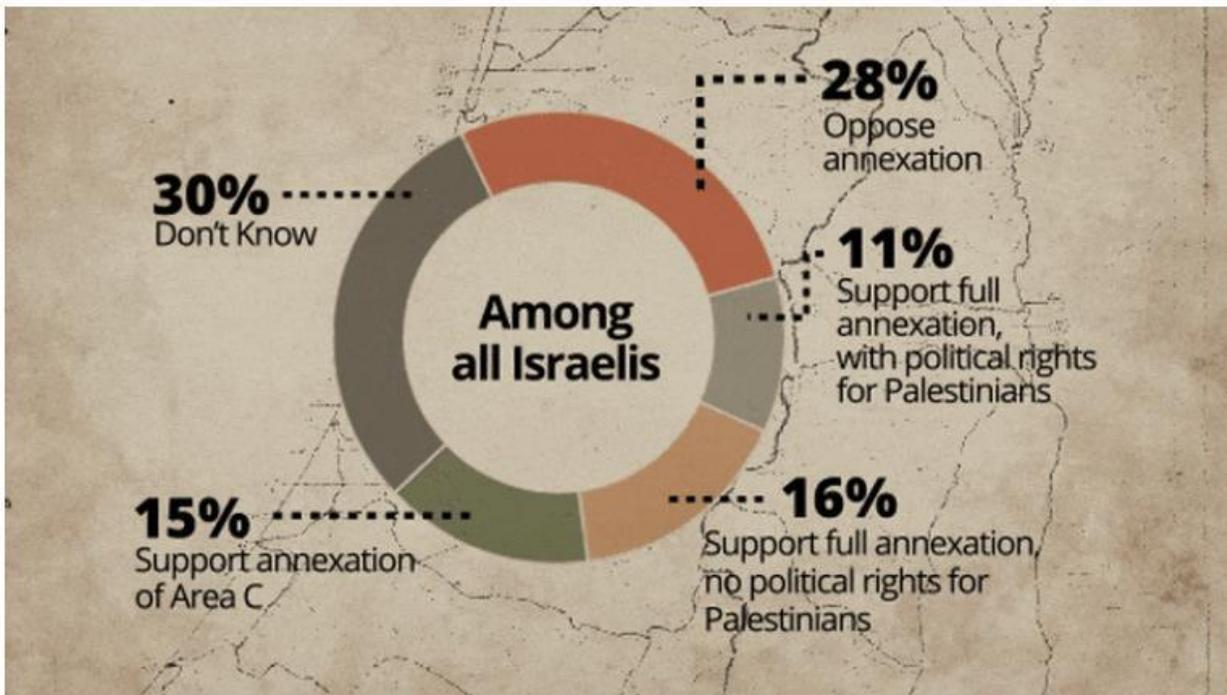
7. It is unlikely that a comprehensive negotiated agreement between Israelis and Palestinians can be reached without US participation in a multilateral mechanism. Therefore, any alternative multilateral mechanism must revise its objective accordingly.

IV. Part Three: Imagining Alternative Multilateral Mechanisms

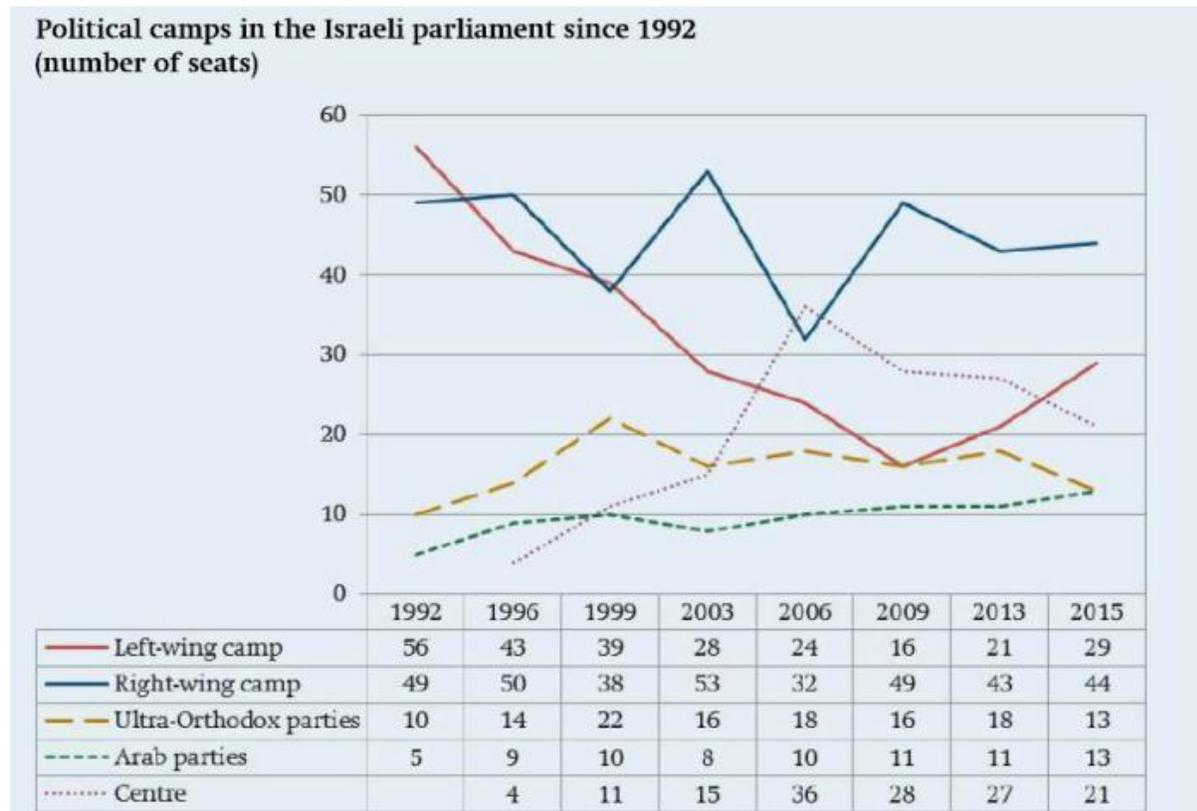
In imagining how a new multilateral mechanism might be reconfigured and recommissioned, it is important to assess the current geo-political environment and operating assumptions impacting resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict.

A. Some assumptions about Israel, Palestine and geopolitical trends:

1. **The political center of gravity in Israel has shifted markedly to the right over the years such that the conversation is not on peace negotiations but whether to partially or completely annex the occupied West Bank.**⁶⁹ Some who may be a part of the next government openly call for forced displacement of Palestinians citizens as well as those living on the other side of the Green Line.⁷⁰ Among the Israeli public, a two-state solution garners only a third of popular support and center left parties are trending in favor of partial or total annexation of the occupied West Bank even among those favoring a two-state solution.⁷¹ Even though 71% of Israeli Jews believe that Israeli control over Palestinians in the occupied West Bank is immoral, 66% believe that there is no alternative to it.⁷²



From Haaretz, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/israeli-palestinian-conflict-solutions/.premium-42-of-israelis-back-west-bank-annexation-including-two-state-supporters-1.7047313>



Peter Lintl, *Actors in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, Repercussions of the Unresolved Conflict on Israeli Power Constellations and Actor Perspectives*, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, SWP Research Paper 3, p. 7 (June 2018).

2. **The PA and the PLO will not engage with the Trump administration so long as it refuses to indicate its support for a two-state solution and does not mitigate its position on Jerusalem by recognizing East Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian state.**⁷³ President Abbas made clear during his remarks before the PLO's Central Council in January 2018 that while he is firmly committed to the two-state solution, Palestinians are neither bound by the Oslo Accords nor will they abide US mediation that is so clearly on the side of Israel's extreme right wing.⁷⁴ Though a multilateral framework that includes the Palestinians will not be opposed by Palestinians, that framework would have to respect international law and consensus which, at the moment, the US stands firmly outside of.
3. **Palestinians in the occupied territories and those living in refugee camps will face severe economic challenges requiring the need for other sources of economic support.** In addition to the termination of US contributions to UNRWA, US aid cuts precipitated by the recent enactment of the Taylor Force Act and the Anti-Terrorism Clarification Act, will cause severe economic stress in Palestine. As President Trump said in Davos, Switzerland in January 2018: "...we give them hundreds of millions of dollars in aid and support. That money is not going to them unless they sit down and negotiate peace." With the Palestinian position firmly against US-brokered peace talks, shoring up Palestinian *sumud* will be critical in the future.
4. **The US is likely to continue to pursue a policy of America First/America Alone in the near term drawing closer to like-minded world leaders who cut against the international order.**⁷⁵ The Republican Party, responding to populist trends, is likely to continue to support this position. This does not bode well for US multilateral engagement. The US is no longer seen as the arbiter of international norms, and on the most pressing issues of the day, the US is choosing to take a back seat.⁷⁶ Democratic control of the executive and legislative branches of government may alleviate, and to a limited degree, reverse these trends but it is unlikely to be enough to see a productive role for the US in Israel/Palestine peacemaking. US constrained by its special relationship with Israel and its domestic political constraints. Its failure to uphold⁷⁷ or even reference norms does damage to the international legal framework for an agreement.
5. **The EU is unlikely to lead on mediation between Israelis and Palestinians though it will struggle to hold firm to international law and consensus as some Central and Eastern European member states seek greater ties with Israel.** Though Europe has shown internal fissures with respect its positions on Israel/Palestine,⁷⁸ thus far the EU has been able to hold member states to EU policy. A 2013 survey of experts from 27 European countries indicated that member states are most concerned about maintaining a unified position on Israel/Palestine.⁷⁹ This has proven true as states that had promised to move their embassies to Jerusalem have had to backtrack after pressure from the EU.
6. **The US's Mideast policy is likely to result in the loss of European**

*deference to and support for US peacemaking efforts in the region and make pursuit of a regional peace with Israel even more difficult.*⁸⁰ In reaction to Trump's proclamation regarding the Golan Height, in rare form, all 27 members of the EU joined together to state that the EU does not recognize Israeli sovereignty over the Golan.⁸¹

7. **Arab stakeholders are moving closer to economic normalization with Israel and are expanding security cooperation in the face of the perceived Iranian region-wide threat.**⁸² However, official diplomatic relations between Arab governments and Israel will likely not be forthcoming without a resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict first.⁸³ Jordan, which already has open diplomatic relations with Israel and is among the greatest recipients of US economic assistance, has indicated that it will not go along with the Trump administration's peace plan, particularly as it relates to Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem.⁸⁴ Virtually all Arab states are concerned about igniting the passions of the Arab street and are not inclined to precipitate another Arab Spring. Arab states are likely to continue to join together as they have under the umbrella of the Arab League to shield themselves from public criticism for their inability or unwillingness to take more decisive individual action against Trump administration policies and Israeli unilateral actions.⁸⁵

Virtually all Arab states are concerned about igniting the passions of the Arab street and are not inclined to precipitate another Arab Spring

8. **Russia is likely to present a greater counterbalance to the US in the Middle East in the future.** It has been increasing its foothold in the region after a long period of inactivity. Russia's approach to Israel and the Arab states is purely transactional. Its trade with Israel has at least tripled over the last two decades while it has been pursuing greater economic relations with Palestinian businesses. Russia recognized the State of Palestine in 1988 and views East Jerusalem as its capital. In 2017, Russia recognized West Jerusalem as the capital of Israel though it has refrained from moving the Russian embassy there. The Russian leader has indicated that he would welcome an opportunity to host bilateral talks and continues to support Palestinian rights in UN fora.
9. **China will continue its efforts to extend its strategic reach into the Middle East with greater ties to Israel and Arab countries forcing it to navigate carefully with regard to its Israel/Palestine policy.** China's "One Belt, One Road Initiative" which aims to develop transport routes for trade across Asia, Africa and Europe means that it will have to seek good relations with all stakeholders and interested parties in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. China has consistently stood in support of Palestinian rights at the UN and opposes Jewish settlements in the West Bank by differentiating between Israel and the Palestinian territories in its bilateral relations with Israel. President Xi Jinping's four-point proposal to end the conflict which includes advancing the two-state solution on 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine is illustrative of China's commitment to international norms.

10. **Existing multilateral mechanisms associated with the Oslo peace process such as the Quartet and the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (“AHLC”) will continue to prolong the status quo and will provide cover for the US administration’s peace plan.** The Quartet and AHLC are structures that supported limited autonomy; they were never meant to support Palestinian statehood or preserve Palestinian rights and claims. Therefore, any new multilateral mechanism will have to rethink the question of donor aid to Palestine and the objectives of such international support.

2.

V. Recommendations: Toward Establishing an Alternative Multilateral Mediation Mechanism

In light of the above assessment, including the US, at least in the short-term, and the UN in any new multilateral mechanism should be avoided. This means that the objective must be more limited and be focused on fighting the impending apartheid-reality taking shape in the occupied Palestinian territories and in Israel. The following recommendations provide a roadmap toward creation of an alternative multilateral mediation mechanism (MMM) and the needed steps to its formation.

1. **Step One—Either after Israel further takes steps to formalize annexation over the West Bank or after the unveiling of the Trump peace plan, France and Palestine approach the four permanent members of the Security Council, excluding the US, to reaffirm the principles for resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict.**

The four permanent members of the Security Council excluding the US (hereinafter “the P4 Group”) should be asked to make a public statement

at an organized media event at the UN. Other members of the Security Council may also be asked to join them. Because of the role France played in convening the international conference in Paris in 2017, Palestine ought to work with France to approach the other three members of the P4 Group. The Group will be important beyond the reaffirmation of principles for a solution to the conflict. As an ad hoc group, they can act as a bulwark against emergent threats to Israeli-Palestinian peace where the Security Council is unable to act, e.g., if and when Israel annexes some or all of the West Bank.

2. **Step Two—France and Palestine identify the criteria for selecting principals to the multilateral mediation mechanism.**

The criteria for selecting principals for the MMM should include the principal’s commitment to international law and UN resolutions related to the conflict, its ability and willingness to exert leverage on both parties, its support for UN institutions and agencies, and the historic and continuing role it has played in the region. Individual states will be lacking in one or more of these critical elements requiring that such states be part of a regional or institutional grouping to mitigate the possibility of deviations.

3. **Step Three— France and Palestine approach regional or institutional groups to be a part of the alternative MMM that will support the principles announced by the P4 Group.**

The following should be approached to join:

P4 Group:

- The P4 Group acts as an alternative Security Council, providing the MMM with normative force and clout. It also brings to the mechanism the UK

with its history in the region, Russia and China with their growing influence over both parties, and France as the lead in past efforts and in initiating the formation of the mechanism. China has sought a greater role in peace mediation as has Russia. Both have also shown willingness to work together where their interests align. Participation in the MMM may provide China with an opportunity to show its commitment to international law and consensus in the face of its growing investment in Israel. It can also demonstrate its support for Palestinian sovereignty by funding the new donor mechanism (see discussion below).

- Should it not be possible to bring the four permanent members of the Security Council together because one or more of them does not wish to appear to be challenging the US monopoly over Israeli-Palestinian mediation, an alternative to consider is the **Non-Aligned Movement**. This group of 120 countries represents 55% of the world population and two-thirds of the UN membership, from Africa, Asia and Latin America. According to the 1979 Havana Declaration, its purpose is in keeping “the national independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and security of non-aligned countries” and to fight “imperialism, colonialism, racism, and all forms of foreign aggression, occupation, domination, interference or hegemony.” Though the group does not bring the stature of the P4 or the funding possibilities for an alternative donor mechanism,

it does bring considerable moral authority and the possibility for concerted action in the UN.

The EU Group:

- The EU is a strong supporter of the UN and has pledged in the Lisbon Treaty to conduct its foreign policy guided by principles of human rights, international law, and the UN Charter.⁸⁶ The EU adopts the French version of UN Security Council Resolution 242 which calls on Israel to withdraw from “the occupied territories.”⁸⁷ The European Council’s 1980 Venice Declaration recognized the role of the PLO in negotiations⁸⁸ and that Palestinians had a right to self-determination.⁸⁹ It further stated that Israeli settlement in the occupied territories is illegal under international law.⁹⁰ The Declaration committed Europe in “play[ing] a special role” in peacemaking that should be more concrete in the future.⁹¹
- Israel enjoys a “special status” with EU, its largest trading partner. Though the EU-Israel Association Agreement states that respect for human rights and democratic principles is an essential element of the agreement which guides both internal and international policy,⁹² the EU has been reluctant to use its economic leverage to press Israel’s compliance with international law and signed agreements.⁹³ In the last decade, however, it has shown greater willingness and interest in differentiating between its dealings with Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories.

- As the PA's largest donor, the EU also has considerable leverage with Palestinians. Its membership in the Quartet provides the EU with lessons learned that can make it a leader in the new MMM. The EU's no-contact policy with Hamas, however, complicates the EU's ability to support Palestinian efforts at reconciliation which is essential for any comprehensive agreement to end the occupation.⁹⁴
- Divisions within the EU and the rise of fascist governments and political parties in Europe has been exploited by Israel⁹⁵ in order to break the EU consensus on Palestine-Israel peace. This along with EU preoccupation with Brexit will make obtaining EU engagement in a new MMM challenging. However, it may be possible to have a smaller alliance of EU member states participate in an alternative mechanism.

Arab League Group:

- The Arab League brings to the table the normative force of the Arab Peace Initiative and stakeholders absent from the Quartet. More importantly, including the Arab League will discourage individual Arab countries from breaking from consensus and normalizing with Israel absent a peace agreement with Palestinians. The group, acting within the MMM, may be better encouraged to direct aid in ways to combat challenges on the ground to Palestinian rights and sovereignty rather than to a

Trump peace plan that will preserve the status quo.

- Arab countries may be more amenable to participating in the MMM as a group following the release of the Trump peace plan as a way to maintain a common front against normalization of the annexation of Jerusalem and parts of the West Bank. The failure of the Trump administration to obtain higher-level and broader Arab support for its "Peace to Prosperity" plan for Palestinian and regional economic development at the workshop convened in Bahrain recently shows that Arab states must still answer to their domestic constituencies which remain supportive of Palestinian human rights and sovereignty over Jerusalem.

The HCP Group:

- Switzerland, as the depository for the Fourth Geneva Convention, ought to be approached to lead efforts in convening the High Contracting Parties of the convention for the formation of a legal taskforce assigned with treaty monitoring and compliance ("The HCP Group"). The HCP Group should be a permanent mechanism that deals with all situations of illegal annexation of occupied territory and provide guidance to third party states on how to uphold treaty obligations in relations with the occupying state.
- With respect to participation in the MMM, the HCP Group will assist the mechanism in

upholding humanitarian law and in working to remedy the asymmetrical nature of the negotiating positions of the parties. It will function to alleviate some strain on the UN by becoming the center for matters concerning accountability for occupation. Swiss participation and leadership in the HCP group is important because of its past role in mediating with Hamas. The HCP Group will be in a position to recommend questions that the General Assembly ought to submit for an advisory opinion from the ICJ on the occupation and may direct information to the ICC prosecutor concerning violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention and the Rome Statute.

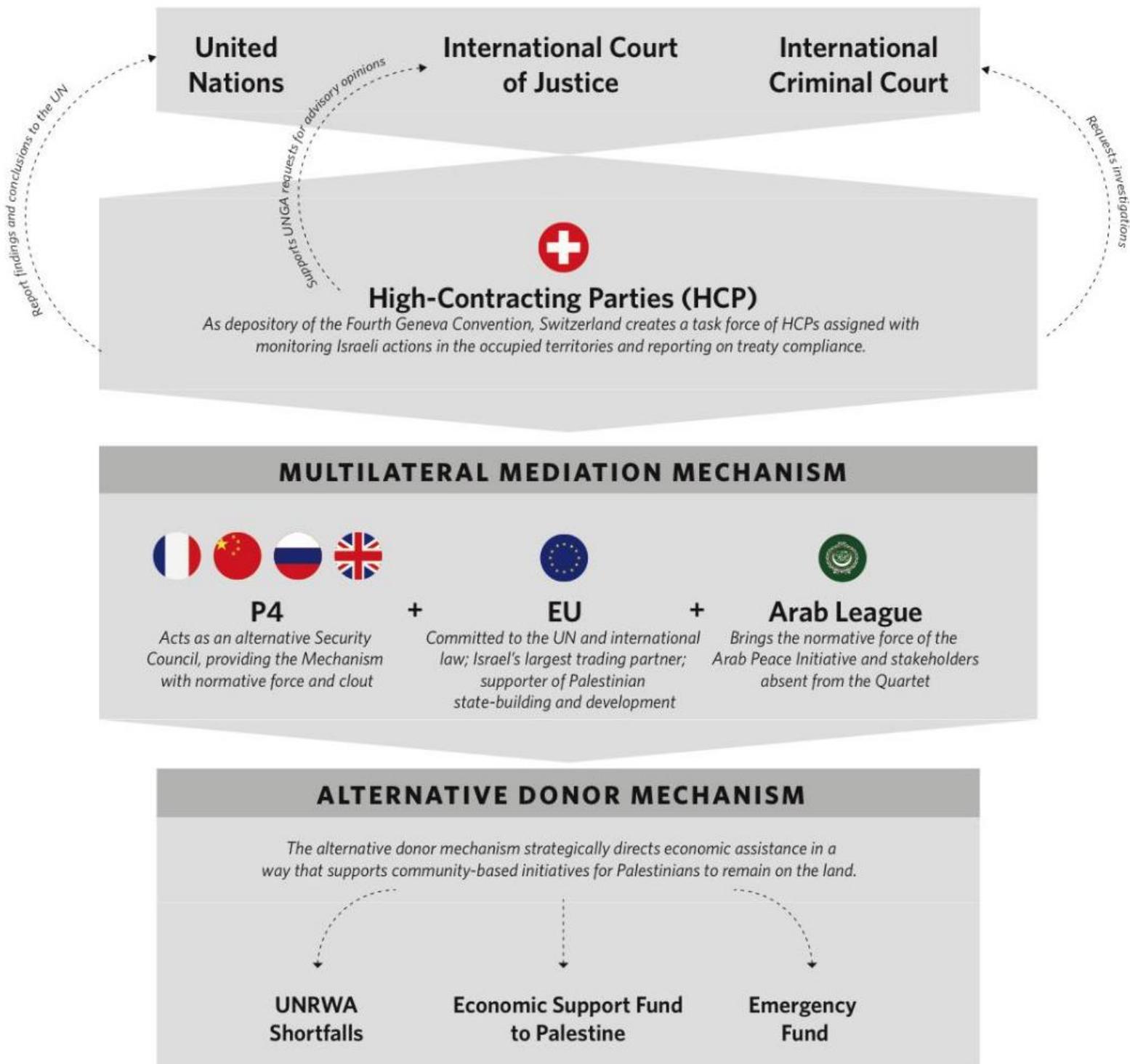
potential recognition by the current US administration. Consultations with the four permanent members of the Security Council should begin on the preparation of the statement responding to the Trump peace plan immediately after the plan's release. The statement should outline international law and Israel and third party obligations with respect to occupied territory.

4. Step Four—The principals of the MMM establish a Alternative Donor Mechanism (“ADM”) to support Palestinian resiliency in the face of the enduring Israeli occupation.

Though the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee is still functioning, it operates as a vestige of the Oslo framework. The ADM is not meant to replace it, rather it is meant to strategically direct economic assistance in a way that supports community-based initiatives for Palestinians to remain on the land (as opposed to large infrastructure designed to implement separation and fragmentation of the West Bank). Funding should also go to make up UNRWA shortfalls and emergent situations. Guidelines for the distribution of the funds ought to be established by the HCP Group in accordance with the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Planning for the creation of the alternative multilateral mechanism ought to begin immediately in light of the looming annexation of the West Bank and its

Diagram of the Multilateral Mediation Mechanism



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“ This compendium includes the policy papers that were commissioned to form the basis of the ‘Palestine 2030’ strategic report, which in turn seeks to inform the direction of the Palestinian strategy towards a peaceful resolution to the conflict. These publications are the product of a three-year Palestine Strategy Group (PSG) project-‘Building Strategic Capacity: Empowering Civil, Political and Emerging Constituencies in Palestine’ co-funded by the European Union and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, involving the commissioning of twelve research papers, thirteen roundtables discussions and four international workshops. The overarching objective of the project was to create new networks of civil-political agencies; develop an inclusive forum and ultimately provide knowledge-based, strategy orientated outputs to impact decision-making processes in Palestine.

The research was designed to map the social, political and economic realities inside Israel, explore the shifts in regional alliances in relation to the Palestinian issue, and finally to assess the possible frameworks through which to re-engage the international community with the Palestinian cause.

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