

" Palestinian Strategies and the Road to Peace"
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Moment."

We are at a decisive crossroads in the history of the Middle East. One road forward is remarkable. For the first time we have the very real possibility of a lasting and stable peace. Many different events have come together to make this possible. Israel now has a decade-old treaty of peace with Egypt. There is increased moderation in the Arab world. The Palestinians have come to accept the idea of co-existence with Israel. Following the long struggle with Iran, Iraq has become more moderate. And the Soviet Union under Gorbachev's leadership appears interested in solving regional conflicts. It is now possible to achieve a peace that will endure.

On the other hand, there is a second road before us. And I have more often thought it is the way we will go. We can't underestimate the horrors that await along this other path. It offers us forty more years of open-ended conflict in the Middle East. To put that in perspective, forty years is the time span from just before the outbreak of World War I to just after the Korean War.

Given the pace of development of military technologies, forty years means that anything that we can conceive of may, and many things that we can't conceive of will come to pass. My use of the span of forty years is quite deliberate. Forty

years is the age difference between Yasser Arafat and the young people who are throwing stones at Israeli soldiers.

It is the length of time separating the 1948 war to destroy Israel, from the Palestinian Declaration of Independence which accepted Israeli existence.

The future may turn particularly ugly, and as ugly as events are now, they are not nearly near as bad as they may become. In its effort to put down the Palestinian uprising, the Israeli government has not taken recourse to anything resembling the military power at its disposal. And we have not seen on the Palestinian side any efforts to launch a guerrilla war that would seek in earnest to take the lives of Israeli soldiers and settlers. The Palestinians have been operating under a rather strict self-imposed discipline regarding the use of weapons. We must not assume that this will go on forever.

There are a variety of scenarios that could lead to a breakdown of the current limits on the level of violence. Once these limits are breached there will be an accelerating spiral of violence. If that starts to occur, the stage will be set for decisive action on the part of the Israelis probably some form of transfer.

Massive transfer or massacre would mean a re-traumatization of the Palestinian world. The new generation would take another forty years before they would be prepared to make a pragmatic peace with the Israelis. Within that timeframe, we will see more than one Israel-Arab war. And future Israel-Arab wars will be quite unlike what we have seen in the past. They will resemble more closely the Iran-

Iraq war and will probably involve chemical, bacteriological, and possibly, even nuclear technologies.

Don't underestimate the horrors that may lie ahead. t.

Moreover, our time at the crossroads may be remarkably brief. We could all wake up tomorrow and open the newspaper to discover a totally transformed and irredeemable situation.

It was just a year ago that the incident at Beita occurred. Beita was the Palestinian village where a group of Israeli hikers were originally reported to have been attacked by villagers and a young Israeli teen-ager stoned to death. It turned out that this story was inaccurate. The incident appears to have been provoked by an Israeli guard accompanying the hikers, and it was a bullet from his gun which killed the young woman. But before the facts were known the false story swept through Israel. The country went wild. There were calls for destruction of the entire village and the deportation of all the villagers. Houses were destroyed and people deported before an investigation was even undertaken. Yet Beita is but a small taste of what may come.

Beita tells us that events on the ground that are going to be decisive; more so than anything in international diplomacy.

That said, let me talk about alternative strategies.

Strategies are important, of course, because actions tend to be taken within one strategic framework or another. But they

have a second, and perhaps more important role. A strategic vision embodies a broad scenario of how success will be achieved. And in so imaging the path to success, it also provides an image of what a process that is failing will look like. These images of the unfolding of success and failure are held not only by PLO leaders in Tunis, but also by Palestinian teenagers in Gaza streets.

In particular, the background image of what constitutes failure plays a decisive role in determining the reactions to events. Events, at no point, come with a sign on them

which says "failure." There is no point at which one looks up into the sky and there in the clouds it is written that Arafat's peace initiative has failed.¹ Rather, failure is an interpretation that is put on a sequence of events. And how success and failure are imaged plays a major role in determining time frames; in particular in determining how much time any initiative has, before it is judged to have failed. Time is of the essence and buying more time is critical.

There are three alternative strategies that the Palestinians have at their disposal. They all interact, and they're all on the table right now. They are all in

¹ In Algiers, when George Habbash voted against the PNC resolution accepting U.N. Resolution 242, he predicted that Arafat's peace initiative would fail, and that in six months time Palestinians would judge that he, Habbash, had been correct. But he never specified what would count as evidence of success or failure.

operation.

The first strategy is that of armed struggle it is affirmed within the Palestinian National Covenant as the only strategy for the Palestinians. This judgment emerged from the Palestinian objective of "liberating" all of Palestine, all of what is viewed in Palestinian eyes as appropriately their own. Since that means the destruction of Israel and since it is clear that no country will negotiate its own destruction, that objective can only be achieved through armed struggle.

Today the PLO objective has changed, but armed struggle has re-emerged as a possibility, not now armed struggle aimed at the destruction of Israel, but armed struggle aimed at forcing the Israelis out of the West Bank and Gaza. It is pointed out that Israel withdrew from Lebanon only after suffering several hundred casualties. Similarly, the 73 war and the War of Attrition paved the way for the withdrawal from the Sinai. It is also noted that serious casualties were required before the Americans withdrew from Viet Nam. This is the body-bag strategy, the belief that without exacting a major toll in Israeli lives, no withdrawal will ever occur.

These analogies are ill-founded and extraordinarily dangerous. Movement along those lines will set the stage for a total disaster for the Palestinian people, a disaster that will ultimately be a disaster for the Israelis and for the Jewish people as well. But the move towards a guerrilla

struggle is a real possibility.

The second strategy relies on negotiations . In particular it is a strategy that puts tremendous emphasis on an international conference and the super powers . In particular, it emphasizes the role to be played by the United States. Its underlying assumption is that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict threatens American interests and that by engaging American interests it will be possible to induce the United States to force the Israelis to sit down with the PLO. And having done that, the United States will subsequently force the Israelis, against their better judgement, to accept a Palestinian state. This is supposed to happen at an international conference, but the critical point is not the conference but the assumption that the United States will ultimately turn the screws. My own belief is that represents a total misreading of the nature of American policymaking and the interaction between American domestic politics and foreign policy. The United States does not have and will not have the will to attempt it. Secondly this line of thought misunderstands the relationship between the United States and Israel. The United States does not have the power to force Israel to accept a Palestinian state. An aid cut-off or an ultimatum on this issue, would move Israeli politics to the right.

Yet this line of thought has a powerful hold on many Palestinians , both in Tunis and in West Bank villages. Among Palestinians it probably remains the dominant model of

how a Palestinian state will come into being. On this model, the Palestinian peace initiative is expected to yield results relatively quickly. And the emphasis on the United States gives enormous significance to certain very specific events. For instance, if the US - PLO dialogue should be

broken off, then the whole strategy which emphasizes the U.S. role is set-back terribly. This would be worse than if the dialogue had never begun.

The Palestinians hold a third strategic approach. It is one with which I am heavily associated. One particular version, perhaps an ideal type, is articulated in my book Creating the Palestinian State: A Strategy for Peace, and prior to that appeared in an essay published in April 1988 in Al Quds, largest Arabic language newspaper in Jerusalem.

This strategy calls for unilateral Palestinian movement towards the two-state solution. The general characteristics of it are first that it is a peace strategy as opposed to a strategy for the creation of the Palestinian state per se.

While it is a way of creating the Palestinian state, it is critical to understand that this can only be accomplished within the larger objective of making peace between Israel and the State of Palestine. The strategy itself cannot proceed unless this is the deep Palestinian intention.

Secondly, it is a nonlethal strategy. It is not necessarily a strategy of non-violence. But it is one that maintains and extends the Intifada's practice of not using guns .

Third it is a Palestinian-led peace strategy. My perception a year ago was that the only party really capable of moving in a radically different direction were the Palestinians themselves. I viewed the United States as largely paralyzed, and we were. To some extent there has been a loosening up of the American position, but it has occurred in response to steps that the Palestinians have taken.

We are in the midst of a PLO led peace strategy. Six months ago, neither the United States nor the Israelis, whether the Labor Party or Likud, were capable of launching a real peace strategy. The Israelis still are not capable of this.

Fourth, though the Palestinians are the central agents of change, it is a single strategy for all members of the peace camp including Israelis, Americans or Palestinians. It is largely a strategy that works by affecting events inside Israel. The ultimate question is, how and when do you bring about Israeli troop withdrawal from the West Bank. My view is that withdrawal will only occur as a result of a political decision inside of Israel. But that decision will not be made until there is substantial transformation inside the Israeli body politic, one that is ultimately reflected in a new Israeli government. Thus, ironically, the path to the Palestinian state lies through a Palestinian led transformation of the Jewish state.

And finally, this third strategy can be characterized

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in terms of how it approaches the role of negotiations . Unlike the framework which emphasizes an international conference and the super-power role, on this orientation negotiations do not necessarily play the central role; they come late in the game. There are some aspects of the Israeli Palestinian conflict that can only be resolved through negotiation. For instance, those involving the right to return; only a negotiated agreement can resolve outstanding rights and claims, and put those issue!> to rest. So negotiations have to occur at some point, but not necessarily at the outset.

This strategy envisions the establishment of a Palestinian state without getting Israeli governmental permission at a negotiating table. In a sense it takes a leaf out of the Zionist experience. The founders of Israel set up their state in the face of Arab and Palestinian opposition; they neither negotiated with the Palestinians nor got Palestinian agreement. Following the passage of United Nations Resolution 181 in 1947, they went ahead and declared independence, gained worldwide recognition and then succeeded in the 1948 war in not only gaining effective control of the territories but in expanding control.

There are some analogies and disanalogies here for the Palestinians . On the third strategy they do not negotiate permission to proclaim the existence of a Palestinian state; they do so on their own and then set about making it real.

Negotiations come somewhat later, possibly much later. Let

me explain why.

There has been so much emphasis on getting negotiations started, that there has been relatively little focus on the dangers of negotiations. Once negotiations are started, what happens when it becomes clear that the two sides are so far apart that the negotiations aren't getting anywhere?

What happens when negotiations deadlock and are broken off?. We had a negotiation process articulated within the Camp David framework. And we had 10 years negotiations over Taba, a meaningless speck of land.

Israeli-Palestinian negotiations are a very different thing. They involve Jerusalem, the right to return, Palestinian sovereignty, settlements, demilitarization, water rights and so on. With the best will in the world, and an agreement to resolve the conflict along commonly held principles, it will be extraordinarily difficult to successfully negotiate these issues. The negotiations involve problems of such intractability that they might deadlock in any event. And this is with good will on both sides and an agreement on common principles. At present, these conditions do not exist. In particular the current Israeli government refuses to even acknowledge that the withdrawal provisions of Resolution 242 apply to the West Bank -- the principle of land for peace remains to be accepted.

It is true that a negotiations process has the possibility of causing the very transformation that it needs

in order to be successful. But this must be set against the risks of negotiations failure. My own belief is that negotiations can play a useful role as a transformative force, but they are also quite dangerous if, they are seen as the central arena within which change occurs. It may be best if they do not occur until, in some sense, a Palestinian state is a partial fait accompli.

At the PNC meetings in Algiers, the Palestinians took decisive actions of the sort called for on this third approach. Yet it would be a mistake to say that Algiers represented the clear ascendance of the third strategy (unilateral Palestinian action directed at Israeli transformation) over the second strategy (negotiations in which the United States plays a decisive role in bringing about Israeli acceptance of a Palestinian state).

To many Palestinians, the Declaration of Independence and the peace initiative which was embodied within its text, were part of the effort to bring about an international conference at which the United States would play a critical role. Certainly the Palestinian efforts to satisfy the American conditions for U.S. - PLO dialogue can best be understood within this framework.

Put in different words, we may say that many Palestinians have tended to accept the characterization of their Declaration of Independence as having created a "paper state." The assumption is that until the Israelis withdraw this is all they can have. Here we are entering the realm

of metaphysics : "What is a state? And what does it mean to say that it exists?" As one trained in philosophy, let me offer an answer.

We may view a state in essentially the same way as we view other human organizations . A club or a company can be created instantaneously by any two human beings who come together and say, for instance, "Let's create the London Flower Club." All they need to do is say, "Hereby we do so"; and as soon as they've said that, in fact, the London Flower Club exists .

Now with a state it's somewhat different in that there are at least certain requirements for characterizing this corporation or club as a state; it could remain a flower club. The common view of what it takes for a self-proclaimed organization to actually be a state, is that it control territory. But in fact, this is a metaphor. We see this, if we look at this phrase "controlling territory" and we ask quite literally, and it's almost comic to do so, what "controlling territory" means . Well, it certainly doesn't mean what it appears to mean literally. To control land does not mean that one is able to get the river to change its course, or the mountain to move, or trees to shift their position. What controlling land means, in fact, is that the people who live on that land respond to directives.

So a state then is an organization which has a certain kind of relationship with a group of people. Now, it's not merely a question of getting people to obey orders. There

are other actors that can get obedience to orders. And its certainly not a question of a monopoly on the control of force within a territory anybody who has lived in our large cities, for instance in parts of the Bronx, or anyone who has tried to walk across Central Park at night, knows that the governmental bodies in the United States have no monopoly on the use of force inside New York City. And anybody who has faced the problems of immigration and illegal aliens in the Southwestern United States knows that it's not a question of maintaining effective monopoly control over access to a territory.

Further, even when a government exercises control over a territory (i.e. over a population), there is no such thing as a blank check. There is no government in the world that has completely open-ended control over any population, in the sense that any orders, directives or laws would be obeyed. There are always limits and points at which people say no and move to revolution or just disobedience. So, there are always severe constraints around this notion of obedience.

Furthermore, the obedience that you get at the point of a gun, if it's directly at the point of a gun, is the obedience given to kidnappers or muggers in Central Park, but that's not the way governments exercise control, even illegitimate governments. Legitimate or illegitimate, governments get general acceptance of their authority; their orders are obeyed because the government is accepted, within

limits, as the rule giver.

That said, if we reflect on the Intifada, we can see that the Intifada is the process of withdrawing the power of governance over the West Bank and Gaza from the Israeli authorities, and of transferring that authority of governance to new organizational structures that have arisen.

The clearest examples of this are found in everyday matters; for instance "the war of the shops," and the labor regulations issued by the underground command specifying certain days as strike days and whether stores will be open or closed. At the very beginning of the Intifada, we saw dramatic scenes of Israeli soldiers forcing open shops, and clipping locks, and Palestinians closing them. By and large the Palestinians won that struggle. And they have done it in response to organizational structures of their own creation. They have transferred their recognition of who is the rule-giver from the Israelis to another organization. But this is essentially is the process whereby a state is created. The Intifada is properly seen not as a revolt, but as something deeper, as the process of the creation of the Palestinian State. The Declaration of Independence issued in Algeria was a particular moment within a larger process which made it meaningful.

Let me move quickly through the specifics of the strategy that I've put forward. And, as I say, its an ideal type that lays out a maximal peace offensive. I never

expected that those who thought that there was some wisdom in it, would embrace it 100 per cent. It starts with a unilateral declaration of independence and the creation of a provisional government. In my Al Quds article and in my book, I urged that the provisional government should be created by the PLO as its last act, that the PLO in fact, should go out of existence when it creates the Provisional Government.

Next the Provisional Government should adopt a constitution for the new state. That constitution would simply supplant the PLO Covenant in the way that the U.S. Constitution supplanted the Articles of Confederation. It would become the basis for the new state. And that Constitution should specify that the state of Palestine will have no standing army. This is something which has a precedent in the constitutions of several other countries; I believe Costa Rica is an example. The new state should unilaterally declare that it is at peace with Israel. The very first law of the new state, I suggested, should be an anti-terrorism law which forbids terrorism and creates major penalties for anybody planning or launching terrorist acts from the territory of the State of Palestine. Then the Provisional Government should go on to name an ambassador to Israel and send him to Israel with the hope that he will be received and able to open negotiations. Probably, the Israeli government will refuse to negotiate with the State of Palestine even if the ambassador arrives in Jerusalem.

If that happens, what I suggest is that the emphasis on negotiation be put on hold, and that instead the focus should be on a single demand: Israeli troop withdrawal. Postpone the pursuit of Israeli recognition or negotiations; simply emphasize that a Palestinian state exists, that it has declared itself in principle permanently at peace with the state of Israel, and that it is no threat to it. Call on the Israelis, essentially, to declare victory and go home, to leave the country of Palestine. On this basis I argued that it would be possible to build an international campaign which would have roots around the world including very strong roots inside of Israel. It would be essentially a unified peace campaign focused on Israeli troop withdrawal and based on the moral indefensibility of continued occupation of a peaceful state.

Finally there were two other critical elements. One is the development of alternative Palestinian institutions on the ground -- this had been going on since the inception of the Intifada and continues today in the areas of schooling and health. I emphasized the need for an alternative legal and court structure on the grounds that for a state to exist, all that it has to do is fulfill the conditions of the minimal state in a Libertarian model, and this centers on the ability to enact and enforce criminal law and identify and enforce contracts.

Lastly, there must be movement on the level which invokes the symbols of the state, in particular in mediating

the interaction of individuals, nationally and internationally. This is tremendously important in terms of getting all concerned, not just Palestinians, but Israelis and the rest of the world to recognize that in some sense the State of Palestine has come into existence even though it is under occupation.²

This level of state-imbued interaction involves the issuance of passports, the travelling on passports at least between those countries that have recognized the state of Palestine (over 100 countries have recognized the new state). Similarly postage stamps should be issued by the Provisional Government and their acceptance achieved within the international community. And thirdly, a Palestinian currency should be created and introduced internationally as well as within the occupied territories. Every transaction would reaffirm the existence of the Palestinian state.

The key is ultimately for the Israelis themselves to believe that a Palestinian state is to some extent a fait accompli and that there is an opportunity for permanent peace.

Now with respect to these three strategies, where are we today? The PLO is basically suspended between all three of these strategies: armed struggle is to some extent still

there operationally in the attempted raids over the Lebanese

² It is interesting to note that a recent poll conducted by the New York Times showed that 44% of Israelis, including 32% of Likud voters, view a Palestinian state as inevitable.

border and into Israel from other directions. The Intifada continues to severely restrict the use of weapons, but escalation remains part of the permanent potential of the Intifada. And pressure is building in that direction. At some point, young Palestinians will say "If I'm going to die, I'm going to take an Israeli teenager, an Israeli young man with me." And once they cross that line, we'll move to a whole new phase. So armed struggle is always there and it's deeply foolish and dangerous to imagine that it ever gets put off the table.

Secondly, with respect to negotiations that focus on the role of the super-powers, particularly the United States, I think this still represents the dominant image of how a Palestinian state will come into being.

And thirdly, since November 15, 1988 in Algiers, the PLO has also adopted this strategy of unilateral imposition of the two-state solution. Thus, in Algiers, with the Declaration of Independence proclaiming the existence of the State of Palestine, a peace offensive was begun. This was built into the text of the Declaration of Independence itself. The Declaration does not mention armed struggle. It does however refer to United Nations Resolution 181, which is also cited in the Israeli Declaration of Independence. In the Palestinian Declaration of Independence, while stating that 181 involved historic injustices to the Palestinian people, it is further stated that it provided for the creation of both a Jewish state and a Palestinian

state, (and it's very significant that they identified Israel as a Jewish state), and then stated that this resolution remains a basis in international law for the creation of the State of Palestine. So inside the Declaration of Independence, they referenced a document which they themselves identified as providing for a Jewish state, and they referenced it as a basis in international law for their own legitimacy. Thus they tied the existence of their state to that of Israel.

Subsequently, to American satisfaction, they met the American conditions with respect to 242, terrorism and Israel's right to exist. Thus, starting in Algiers, within a framework made possible by the Declaration of Independence, the PLO launched a peace initiative which has produced some results and continues to endure today.

The new state has gotten recognition from some 100 countries and the process of creating alternative institutions continues. They have not proceeded to establish a provisional government, but in recent days, they did proclaim Yassir Arafat the President of the new state. There are reports that Farrouk Kaddoumi will be named as foreign minister, and once a President and a Foreign Minister have been named, they are well along the way to a provisional government. A constitution is in the process of being drafted but the timetable for its adoption is obscure.

The area in which the least has happened is on the symbolic level; there are no passports, there are no stamps,

there is no currency. But these may yet emerge.

In sum, all three of these strategies are still rattling around. There is some armed struggle and the possibility of more. There are great hopes for a decisive American role in dictating to Israel, and there is movement within the strategy of unilateral imposition. What that means is that there are a multiplicity of frameworks in terms of which the success or failure of Yassir Arafat's peace initiative will be judged. And this is unfortunate.

The key thing about the strategy of unilateral imposition, is that it has a very long timeframe. Within it the state of Palestine comes into being gradually and slowly, aided by a permanent peace initiative. There is no early point at which one could judge that the peace initiative has failed. There is the expectation of slow but sustained progress as the demand for Israeli troop withdrawal gains strength inside Israel. At some point the political transformation inside of Israel is reflected in governmental policy.

When people on the ground function within an image of a long-term strategy of this sort, the process of building peace is not acutely vulnerable to specific events such as the collapse or stagnation of the U.S. - PLO dialogue. But this is not where we are today. Palestinian strategic thought has not coalesced. It remains subject to change in response to actions and inactions of the U.S. and Israeli government. The Palestinians, through their actions in Algiers have moved

us to a more hopeful moment. But w should not take it for granted. In truth we are sitting on a tinderbox, one which could explode tomorrow.

