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CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE

Israel and the Middle East News Update

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April 2, 2019

Times of Israel

Hamas Denies Reports of Prisoner Swap Talks with Israel

Hamas denied reports in Palestinian media that indirect talks with Israel include negotiations over a prisoner swap deal that would see Palestinian terror convicts released in exchange for two Israeli citizens and the bodies of two IDF soldiers believed to be held in the Gaza Strip. Senior Hamas member Ismail Radwan said that the talks also are not focusing on a long-term ceasefire deal, but rather on stabilizing the truce agreed in 2014, the current conditions of Hamas prisoners in Israeli jails and the status of the Temple Mount compound in Jerusalem.

Ynet

Palestinian Killed in West Bank Clashes with IDF

A Palestinian was killed and three other people were wounded during pre-dawn clashes with Israeli security forces in the West Bank, Palestinian Authority officials said Tuesday morning. The clashes occurred during an arrest raid in Qalandia refugee camp, north of Jerusalem. The IDF said that troops came under attack by Palestinians after they entered the town.

Ha'aretz

Gantz Cannibalizing Smaller Parties in the Polls

Ahead of next week's election, the Kahol Lavan [Blue and White] party is seeking to enlarge itself at the expense of other center-left parties, potentially pushing Meretz below the electoral threshold. "If Kahol Lavan isn't the largest party by at least five seats, we won't replace Netanyahu," one of the party's leaders, Yair Lapid, told Army Radio on Sunday. "A vote for Labor is a vote for Bibi." But Labor officials are worried. "Gantz has apparently despaired of attracting rightist voters, so he wants to inflate his party's size at the expense of the left-wing bloc," a Labor source said.

Times of Israel

Not a Bot: PM Trots Out Homophobic Kahanist

A man Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu paraded in front of the media on Monday as proof that his online supporters were "real people," and not "bots," is a far-right political activist with a history of lashing out against the prime minister's rivals, and journalists with racist and homophobic statements. Giora Ezra, who runs a pro-Netanyahu Twitter account under the moniker "Captain George," assured journalists that he was personally in charge of his account, in response to a report uncovering a network of fake Twitter accounts backing Netanyahu.

Times of Israel

Palestinian Prisoners to Launch Major Hunger Strike

Palestinian security prisoners at Israel's Ketziot Prison have announced that they will launch a major hunger strike next week to protest an intensifying crackdown on illicit cellphone usage among inmates. Palestinian Prisoners Affairs Commission spokesperson Hassan Abd Rabbo said that the strike will begin at Ketziot, and be extended gradually to include Palestinian prisoners in other Israeli jails. He said the prisoners were launching the strike to protest their incarceration conditions — particularly the recent Israeli measures to restrict cellphone usage by the prisoners, including the installation of jamming systems.

Jerusalem Post

PA Will Stop Funding Palestinian Medical Treatment in Israel

The Palestinian Authority has announced it will stop providing its citizens with medical treatment in Israel, according to a report published by the Palestinian newspaper Al-Hayat Al-Jadida. "This decision was made in response to the deduction of sums [Israel transfers] from the taxes that [Israel] collects each month for the Palestinian coffers," said PA Ministry of Health Spokesman Osama Al-Najjar. More than 20,000 permits were granted to Palestinians living in the West Bank to enter Israel and receive treatment or support a patient who was receiving treatment in Israel.

Ha'aretz

Yair Netanyahu Called Police 'Gestapo'

Yair Netanyahu, the son of the Prime Minister, called the police "Gestapo" when he was questioned as a suspect in the favorable-news-coverage affair last year, Israel's Channel 13 News reported Monday. In the affair, known as "Case 4000," Netanyahu allegedly took steps that benefited Shaul Elovitch, who controlled telecom giant Bezeq, in return for favorable coverage in Bezeq's Walla News website. "You're the Gestapo police. You are questioning me to pressure my parents, just like a criminal organization," Netanyahu reportedly said.

Times of Israel

Ashkenazi: Only Top Scholars Should Be Exempt from Draft

In recordings aired on Monday, the fourth candidate on the Blue and White slate, former chief of staff Gabi Ashkenazi, said military draft exemptions for ultra-Orthodox community should be like those for athletes, only the very best of whom do not have to serve in the IDF. Everyone else will go to the induction center," said Ashkenazi, adding, "I think this is dangerous for Israeli society — a reality in which a small number of young people serve the country as opposed to a growing public that does not serve."

Druze Not Forgetting Nation-State Law

By Assaf Kamar, Columnist

- The controversial Nation-State Law may have faded from the public consciousness lately, but for Israel's Druze community it still looms large as an election issue. The law raised the ire of many Druze who consider the issue a major factor in the upcoming elections. We travelled to the Druze town of Usfiyeh on Mt. Carmel to hear what the residents' viewpoint. Some 400 years ago, the Lebanese Druze Emir Fakhr-al-Din ibn Maan (an early leader of the Mount Lebanon Emirate, a self-governed area under the Ottoman Empire) established the village of Usfiyeh on the remains of a 5th-century Jewish town, Husifah.
- Cooperation between the Druze villagers and the local Jews began during the Great Arab Revolt (1936-1939) when the Druze suffered from harassment by the local Arabs and sought the protection of the Jewish pre-state militias. That cooperation blossomed into the sacred blood covenant between the Druze and the Jews of the Zionist movement. Since the 1948 War of Independence and throughout the history of the State of Israel, Druze and Jews have fought side by side in defense of the country. Today, Usfiyeh is the second largest Druze town in Israel. A quick survey of residents of the IDF veteran's neighborhood reveals a troubling conclusion. The Nation-State Law designating the state as a state of the Jews alone with no reference to its non-Jewish inhabitants has angered many Druze citizens. Walid Sattar, a resident of the town with an impressive IDF military background and dressed in traditional Druze garb, is furious and blames Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for the law: "Bibi backstabbed us; we support the State of Israel and Bibi (Netanyahu) equates us with the Arabs of Umm el-Fahm who commit terror attacks."
- At the local meat market, we meet Muwafiq Mansour who also served in an IDF combat unit. "In the past I voted for (the Kulanu Part led by) Moshe Kahlon, but after the Nation-State Law passed with the support of Kulanu, I will vote for (Blue and White Party led by Benny) Gantz. My son is an officer in the army and I am ashamed because Bibi betrayed us. We supported the Jews before the establishment of the state but unfortunately this is what we get..." The Kulanu Party garnered much success in Usfiyeh in the 2015 election winning 32.6% of the vote there. The Zionist Union and the Joint List (Arab parties) garnered 22.43% and 21.36% respectively. The Likud only received 3.87% of the votes in the town. At a cellphone repair shop we met Kayuf Baha as he was serving a customer who refused to be interviewed. "I plan to vote for Gantz because of Ghadir Marih, the popular Druze representative from (the neighboring Druze town of) Daliyat al-Karmel. She will advance the cause of minorities," said Baha. "As someone who served in the IDF, as well as all of my family members, the Nation-State Law really disturbs me. This law really harmed us. We have given everything to the state and unfortunately it blew up in our face," he added.

- Although the Blue and White Party has a female Druze candidate in a realistic spot, none of the women we attempted to interview in Usfiyeh agreed to be interviewed. Some said that they do not understand politics and one told us that she "votes according to what the extended family agrees on." At a local hummus shop, Mussa Ilon, a Christian resident of the town served us black coffee and expressed anger at the law: "It doesn't matter who I vote for, I want to move Netanyahu," he declared. Usfiyeh has a small Christian minority, a monastery and two ancient churches. Hussein Sibasi, a Druze resident of Daliyat al-Karmel, joined the conversation. "Generally, I deliberate whether to vote for Likud. Now, because of the law —there's no chance. The Likud of today is chauvinist, fanatic and nationalist." David Haliva, an avowed Likud supporter from Beer Sheva tried to convince the café patrons that Netanyahu is good for the Druze. "God willing, when Bibi is elected, you will hear that the Nation-State Law is altered or withdrawn. The Druze are our brothers," he declares.
- Haliva says that the Likud made a major error and they are now trying to walk it back but don't know how. "Look at what a beautiful state we have here. Look at this beautiful town you have. There is security and a good economy." Sibasi is angered by Haliva's words and they get into an argument and tempers flare. "The Likud even threw the Druze minister Ayoob Kara to the dogs," Sibasi says. "Even he, who took a stance against the whole (Druze) population and voted for the law —Bibi threw him to the dogs. The Druze will no longer vote for Likud."

Eight Steps to Shrink the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

By Micah Goodman, Israeli Author

- One evening, about five years ago, I approached a small group of students. They were at Ein Prat, an institution that I head in Israel, where some 3,000 young Israelis have studied in recent years. Some are very religious, others deeply secular, but they share a deep connection. I asked the students what binds them together. One got up and said something that caused the group to burst into laughter—a laughter that expressed full agreement. “The secret,” he said with a smile, “is that we never talk about politics.”
- I was uncomfortable with this answer, precisely because I felt it was correct. In many closely connected communities, people do discuss politics, but they tend to share similar views. The alternative to homogeneous communities that talk about politics, it seems, is heterogeneous communities that do not. Is there another possibility? Can groups be politically diverse without staying silent about their beliefs? In 2017, I published in Israel a book called *Catch-67* (which is now out in English translation), with the aim of allowing the left to be curious about the right, and the right to be curious about the left. The book presented the philosophical roots of the Israeli left and right, analyzed both sides’ ideas, and tried to show the depth and genius of their perspectives.
- But when the book was published, my life changed. It provoked a stormy conversation. Right-wingers who saw me treating the left’s arguments with respect and admiration accused me of being a leftist; left-wingers who saw that I presented the strongest possible forms of the right’s positions angrily called me a right-winger in disguise. One of them was former Prime Minister Ehud Barak, who wrote in Israel’s leading broadsheet that *Catch-67* was “steeped in a right-wing agenda.” A book that sought to heal Israel’s most impolite disagreements ended up inflaming some rude arguments of its own. I had not intended to create so much noise, but I decided to learn from it. Every time I heard that an Israeli party leader, a Palestinian intellectual, or an Israeli military or intelligence official was reading my book, I asked to meet with that person. I found myself spending long hours in conversation with the most senior figures in Israel’s political, intelligence, and military leadership.
- *Catch-67* did not deal with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, only the broken Israeli discussion about the conflict. On one side are those who believe the conflict can be solved—an aspiration that many Israelis believe is unrealistic, at this point in time, because of the extraordinary risks and costs involved. On the other are those who believe the conflict can be managed, and the status quo sustained indefinitely—an aspiration that is equally fallacious. But as I spoke with these leaders, who disagreed with one another about so much, I began to see a remarkable degree of consensus. There is, it turns out, a third option: The Israeli-Palestinian conflict can be shrunk, and it can be shrunk dramatically. Israelis could take eight practical steps right now that would maximize Palestinian freedom without compromising Israeli security. These steps won’t solve the conflict. They won’t help manage it. But they can shrink it.

- A vibrant and lively political center is emerging in Israel. But what is its political ideology? That is unclear; the center is precisely where people make the greatest effort not to talk about politics. There is tremendous asymmetry, therefore, between the center's power and its lack of clarity. The center is winning increasing support, but its platform is neither clear nor coherent. It possesses an ideology, but those beliefs remain largely unarticulated. This essay is an attempt to close this gap and articulate the unspoken ideology of the Israeli political center. While working on *Catch-67*, I discovered one of the reasons that my students do not talk about politics: Many Israelis have lost their sense of conviction. When it comes to the Arab-Israeli conflict, Israelis are confused. This situation is new. After the Six Day War, Israelis were blinded by certainty. The right's conviction was rooted in the supposedly mystical power of the land of Israel; the left's, in a hypnotic faith in peace.
- Around the world, peace movements emerge in protest against war, but in Israel, the peace movement emerged from victory in war. Israel's peace-seekers woke up after the Six Day War, looked at the country's new borders, and saw that for the first time, Israel had diplomatic bargaining chips: territories that could be exchanged for a peace treaty. Israel's victory in war could also produce its victory over war itself. But there existed another utopian, ideological way to pick the fruits of victory. Instead of giving the territories away, the state could settle them. According to the great ideologue of the settlement movement, Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook, the Hebrew Bible contains a series of prophecies that the Jewish people will return to their land and settle it. By settling the hills of Judea and Samaria, Jews would fulfill these prophecies and provoke a chain of events leading to the messianic days.
- Both sides of Israel's political debate were convinced that, over time, most Israelis would see the light, join their movement, and be swept away by the great political utopia they were promising. But they were wrong. Over the past two decades, both the Israeli right and left have undergone fascinating shifts. The dominant narrative on the right is no longer about the sanctity of the settlements, the fulfillment of biblical prophecies, and imminent redemption. The main concern of most right-wing Israelis is security. The left has also changed; its organizing narrative is no longer about the new Middle East, international reconciliation, and imminent peace. Its main concern now is the occupation.
- Most demographers believe that the Jews will soon cease to be a majority in the areas controlled by Israel—and on the day the Jews become a minority in their land, that land will cease to be theirs. There is a minority opinion among Israeli demographers that this day will never come. But even if they are correct and Palestinians would comprise only 40 percent of a Greater Israel, it would be difficult to define this country as the nation-state of the Jewish people, because one condition for a nation-state is to have a massive majority belonging to that nation. Without a decisive Jewish majority, the State of Israel would be a binational state, and the Zionist project would be over. The desire to control the whole land of Israel, therefore, threatens the State of Israel's self-definition. Paradoxically, permanent control of the biblical homeland would not deepen Israel's Jewish identity, but likely annul it. The Israeli right has also updated

and upgraded its security arguments in recent years. The right used to contend that the establishment of a Palestinian state in Judea and Samaria would endanger the State of Israel. It said that a Palestinian state would likely forge military alliances, build an arsenal, and invade Israel, already shrunken to indefensible borders, defeating it in a surprise attack. This is an old position based on a nightmare scenario that most people agree is no longer relevant.

- But the Israeli right now has a more relevant argument. Since the Arab Spring, the Middle East has been in turmoil. Unstable states collapsed one after the other; Libya has fallen apart, Syria has been pulverized, and the same goes for Yemen and Iraq. Henry Kissinger recently asked this obvious question: Is now really the time to establish a new Arab nation-state? If states with long political traditions have collapsed, would a new and weak Palestinian state hold on? And what would happen if it does not? What would happen if this new state is dysfunctional? In such a situation, who would enter the power vacuum created in the West Bank? Iranian forces? The Islamic State? Hamas? Hezbollah? Perhaps all of them? This is an alarming thought. If the Middle East's most radical forces poured into a weak Palestinian state, Israel would likely find the Middle East's carnage on its doorstep of Tel Aviv. In other words, if the Israeli right's old argument was that an overly strong Palestine would threaten Israel, its revised argument is that an overly weak Palestine would threaten Israel.
- The Israeli right and left are mirror images of each other. The right no longer believes that settling the territories will bring redemption; instead, it fears that withdrawing from them will bring disaster. The left no longer believes that withdrawing from the territories will bring redemption; instead, it fears that staying there will bring disaster. The Israeli left and right have undergone an identical change, moving from dreams to fears. These two shifts completely transformed the nature of the clash between the left and the right. On an intellectual and a conceptual level, whether such a clash even exists anymore is unclear. So long as the left promised a utopia of peace and the right promised a utopia of messianic redemption, Israelis had to choose one path and rule out the other. But now that the right's main idea is not the utopia of messianic redemption but the catastrophe of a withdrawal, and the left's main idea is not the utopia of peace but the catastrophe of the occupation, there is no real clash between them, at least not a necessary one. While rival visions of utopia can only clash, fears can coincide.
- Such is the psychological nature of fear. People who suffer from phobias know this well: If one is afraid of heights, one can also be afraid of confined spaces or spiders. Whereas dreams must come at another's expense, fears can compound, and that is exactly what has happened to so many Israelis. They have adopted and internalized the great fear of the right, as well as that of the left. They believe that Israel cannot guarantee its Jewish national majority if it continues to control Judea and Samaria and, at the same time, that Israel would struggle to guarantee its national security if it withdrew from Judea and Samaria. And that is how the intellectual shifts on the Israeli right and left destroyed most Israelis' sense of political conviction.
- Certainty has been replaced with confusion. If Israel remains in the territories, it will endanger its future, but if it leaves the territories, it will also endanger its future. This dilemma has created a

new space for new ideas. In some sense, this space can be called the political center ground, and is where most Israelis find themselves. But the political center ground does not fully overlap with the center of the partisan political map. Centrist Israelis do not necessarily vote for centrist parties—because many still vote based on identities and tribes rather than political positions. Viewed from the perspective of political positions, not identities, the political center is the widest space for consensus in Israel. Unnoticed, the conflict that once divided Israelis and placed two rival ideological camps in fiery collision now unites them. Most Israelis share the same set of positions about the conflict. But paradoxically, this new, broad Israeli consensus is not about what Israel must do, but what it must not do. It is not an agreement on a way forward, but on a stalemate. Political confusion, one could say, is the new political consensus in Israel.

- Confusion can produce paralysis, but it does not need to. It can lead to fresh thinking and new courses of action. Karl Popper, the philosopher of science, once observed that new ideas are not born in ideological spaces paralyzed by certainty, but in places where doubt fills the human mind with curiosity and openness. In Israel, however, that is not what has happened. The new political center is not a place for innovation, but mostly apathy. The political center has changed the subject of conversation to the cost of living and other important matters—but not the conflict. What I learned from hundreds of my students at Ein Prat is that centrists do not offer a moderate position on the conflict; they simply don't talk about it. The silence of the Israeli center abandons the conversation about the future of the territories to the hard right and hard left. And their monopoly over the conversation has created an undesirable, false illusion: The only options are to manage an unsustainable status quo, or to solve an intractable problem. The Israeli political center should offer a middle way, but it remains quiet, apathetic, and preoccupied with other affairs.
- The first step toward dramatically shrinking the conflict is to break free from the flawed equation that more control over the Palestinians equals more security for Israel. In reality, the occupation of the Palestinians can be shrunk without also shrinking Israelis' security—but not as part of a perfect, redemptive project. In meetings with intelligence and military officials in the two years since *Catch 67's* Hebrew publication, I discovered that their desk drawers contain modest and practical proposals for policies that offer an alternative to the zero-sum game. Israeli think tanks have also proposed important and interesting ideas, which the wider public and international community should seriously consider. Any proposal for shrinking the conflict must meet both the following criteria: shrinking the occupation of the Palestinians, but also leaving Israelis' security intact.
- The belief in national freedom is the beating heart of Zionism, so controlling another nation is not a Zionist act. The belief in the Jewish people's right to live in security is equally integral to Zionism, so endangering the Jewish people's security would not be a Zionist act either. That is the catch in which Israelis now find themselves trapped. Their ancestors did not go to Israel to rule over another nation, but neither did they go there to be threatened by another nation. There are eight concrete steps that Israel could take now that would increase Palestinian freedom without decreasing Israeli security. This is not a comprehensive list of such policies or ideas, nor

does it touch on the problem of the Gaza Strip. Each of these measures alone is a small step, but many small steps will go a great distance together. These policies will not end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and repair the Middle East—but they will guarantee Israel’s vital interests and dramatically improve day-to-day life for everyone on the ground.

- **Keep It Flowing:** The 1993 Oslo Accords created the Palestinian Authority and granted it control over 40 percent of the West Bank. The Palestinian autonomous zones are called Area A and Area B. Area A covers the main Palestinian towns, where the Palestinian Authority has full civilian and security control; Area B encompasses the outlying areas and villages, where the Palestinian Authority has only civilian control. The remaining 60 percent, called Area C, remains under the control of the Israeli army. Although some 90 percent of the Palestinian population lives in areas under Palestinian Authority control, these areas are not contiguous. This has created dozens of autonomous islands of Palestinian territory, surrounded by territories under Israeli control. A Palestinian resident of Ramallah does not directly experience the Israeli occupation on a daily basis. The authority that governs him is Palestinian, the television he watches is Palestinian, the textbooks his children use are Palestinian, and the police force that protects him is Palestinian. But this is only true as long as he remains inside Ramallah. When he wants to visit family in Nablus, he must pass through territory under Israeli control, and many unexpected things can happen on the way. First, he might not even be able to leave Ramallah if the Israeli army has placed the city on lockdown that day. And if he can leave the city, he might be stopped at an Israel Defense Forces flying checkpoint. When he finally gets there, he might be unable to enter Nablus, because now this city is under IDF lockdown.
- Since Oslo, the occupation has been less directly felt inside the Palestinian autonomous zones and more a result of the disconnect between these dozens of isolated islands. Most of the time, Palestinian cities remain open and there are few checkpoints, but nobody can make predictions. Palestinians cannot know whether it will take them 20 minutes or eight hours to travel to visit family. But more important, they experience persistent humiliation, because even if the roads are open, they know that this is because the Israeli military authorities have decided to keep them open. They know that they are traveling by the grace of the foreign army that rules them. This is the occupation.
- Addressing this situation does not require a peace accord. The solution is neither strategic nor political, but infrastructural. In the early 2000s, the Israeli Central Command and IDF Planning Directorate drew up a plan, dubbed Keep It Flowing, to pave roads that would bypass the settlements and join the different parts of the Palestinian Authority. Over the years, civilian bodies have continued developing and upgrading this plan. It would not be cheap to implement, because it involves tunnels and bridges, but it would create transportational contiguity for Palestinians. Senior officials in the IDF Central Command are clear that the Israeli security apparatus already has the technological solutions to facilitate this development—without reducing Israel’s level of security.

- If Israel were to pave this network of roads—and more important, give the Palestinian Authority autonomous control over it—the reality on the ground would be completely transformed. Palestinians would be able to leave their home in Hebron and visit family in Jenin without encountering a single Israeli soldier, because all the roads would be under Palestinian control. Israel would thereby be able to abolish the main source of friction between the civilian population and the military authorities. This endeavor would meet the two criteria listed above: It would shrink Israel's control over the Palestinians without also shrinking Israelis' security. In other words, this plan proves and illustrates that the zero-sum game between security and occupation can be ended. If this is so simple, why has it not been done yet? The hard right opposes any territorial concessions to the Palestinians, because it believes the land is holy and must not be conceded. But many members of the hard left are also against it, because policies that make life easier for Palestinians in the territories will normalize the occupation and thereby legitimize it. Some on the left feel that shrinking the occupation has no moral significance. Either there is an occupation, or there isn't one.
- An unconscious alliance exists between the Israeli peace movement and the Israeli nationalist camp. Both are entrenching the status quo. When the left conditions any progress on a full peace treaty, the unattainability of a peace treaty means there will never be progress. The myth of peace and the myth of the land of Israel both keep things as they are. Ironically, Israelis' faith in the great ideologies that promise to completely transform the existing situation is what's keeping the existing situation frozen.
- Expand the Palestinian Autonomous Zones: The Palestinian autonomous zones are too small for the population, and cannot accommodate its current rate of growth. Areas A and B have not grown since the 1990s, but the population has. As a result, Palestinians have built some 20,000 houses that spill over the boundaries of the autonomous zones. This construction is illegal and unregulated; Israel has placed many of these structures under demolition orders. Palestinian towns and villages have no space to develop, creating self-confined and densely packed population centers that require the authorization of the Israeli army for any changes. Commanders for Israel's Security, a nongovernmental organization, proposes that Israel transfer to the Palestinians territory representing a few percentage points of Area C in order to expand the autonomous areas, letting them develop, grow, and prosper.
- Ease Palestinians' Travel Abroad: The Palestinians do not have their own airport, but the construction of a Palestinian airport would boost Palestinians' independence at the expense of Israel's security. Today the Palestinians' gateway to the world is the international airport in Amman, Jordan. Crossing the border to Jordan at Allenby Bridge, though, involves a long wait time. Palestinians' access to the world can be expanded in two ways. First, Israel could greatly reduce waiting time at Allenby Bridge, including by introducing advanced technological means to speed up and ease border crossings. Second, it could enable Palestinians to fly abroad through Ben Gurion Airport via direct, secured shuttles, connecting the West Bank to Israel's international airport.

- **Employment in Israel:** Some 120,000 Palestinians work in Israel, bringing large sums of money to the Palestinian territories and providing a livelihood for 600,000 people. There is a large pay differential between employment in the Palestinian Authority and in Israel; for the same job, workers in Israel earn twice as much. In recent years, the IDF's top brass have concluded that the number of permits for Palestinians to work in Israel can be dramatically boosted. Employment opportunities can be opened up to women and older men with clean records, with a supervised but minimal risk to Israel. If 400,000 Palestinian workers entered Israel every day, this would significantly improve the Palestinian economy. More than 1 million Palestinians would directly enjoy the fruits of working in Israel, and the whole population would benefit from the injection of new cash into the local market.
- **Land Reallocation:** Israel's Institute for National Security Studies, a think tank, has published a plan—the Political-Security Framework for the Israeli-Palestinian Arena—in which Israel would allocate parts of Area C for Palestinian economic development and industrial estates. The plan would encourage international investment in these areas and create a special credit scheme for loans to build businesses there.
- **No Settlement Expansion:** To facilitate shrinking the conflict, Israel would have to refrain from expanding its settlements outside the major blocs and allocate land in Area C for Palestinian economic initiatives.
- **International and Local Trade:** One of the greatest weaknesses of the Palestinian economy is its isolation from the outside world. A new railroad between Jenin and Haifa and the construction of a Palestinian seaport in Haifa Bay under Israeli supervision would solve this problem. The Israeli army's "door-to-door" plan would have Israeli security officers inspect the loading of goods into marked and locked containers at the border crossings, to avoid the need for unloading and inspection at various checkpoints. The full, accelerated implementation of this plan would enable goods to move easily from Judea and Samaria to the ports at Haifa and Ashdod, and from there to the rest of the world.
- **Economic Independence:** One annex of the 1995 Oslo Accords is the Paris Protocol, which makes the Palestinian economy entirely dependent on the Israeli economy and the State of Israel. The Palestinian tax, customs, import, and export systems rely on and are effectively controlled by Israel. The Paris Protocol can and must be revised to end this dependence. The INSS framework referred to earlier contains a detailed economic plan to give the Palestinians full economic independence.
- **Note the complementary process here.** Alongside political separation is economic integration. These policies would connect the Palestinian labor market to Israel and the Palestinian economy to the world, meaningfully upgrading the Palestinian economy and the Palestinians' financial situation. Israel would separate from the Palestinians politically but connect to them economically, giving the Palestinians more freedom and prosperity. Taken together, these steps would fundamentally transform the weak, fragmented Palestinian territories into a polity that is

independent, contiguous, and open to the world. In effect, this process would change the direction of political traffic. Recent years have seen a creeping annexation in the territories. These eight policies would propel Israel in the opposite direction—creeping separation. This would not be a full divorce. There would be no formal agreement, no evacuation of settlements, and no division of Jerusalem. These policies would not produce a two-state solution, but they would effectively create a two-state reality. The purpose of these small and cumulative steps is not to end the conflict but to change its nature; to transform it from a conflict between a state and its subjects into one between a state and its neighbors. This process would guarantee Israel's vital interests and dramatically improve day-to-day life for all, without heightening the security risks for Israel.

- In 2005, Israel disengaged from the Gaza Strip, a unilateral move that failed to meet our two criteria. As a result of the disengagement, Israel gained a large demographic bump, but it is paying the price with its security, and Israelis in the country's south continue to suffer. Would a return to unilateralism not simply mean a return to the failure of past unilateral experiments? When it comes to Palestinian terrorism, Israel's security is based on its forces' ability to foil the formation of terror cells in the West Bank on a daily basis. Their great success stems from Israel's wide-reaching intelligence network in Palestinian towns and villages. To guarantee the effectiveness of this intelligence, Israel needs free military access to every part of the Palestinian autonomous areas. This is not the situation in Gaza. Israel pulled its army out of Gaza and consequently wrapped up most of its intelligence network there. The IDF's ability to stop terror attacks from the Gaza Strip is therefore extremely limited. This mistake must not be replicated in the context of unilateral moves in the West Bank.
- Further to the eight steps that will dramatically shrink the occupation of the Palestinians, here are the five principles that will guarantee Israelis' continued security: 1. The Shin Bet (Israel Security Agency) will remain in place, and Israeli intelligence will continue to operate in all parts of the West Bank. 2. The IDF will continue to conduct pursuits and arrests in all parts of the Palestinian autonomous area. 3. Israel will retain a permanent military force in the Jordan Valley. 4. The airspace will remain under full Israeli control. 5. The electromagnetic field will remain under full Israeli control. In its withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, Israel conceded three of these five points. The Shin Bet lost its free and unrestricted access to the Palestinian population, the IDF lost its freedom to maneuver through the towns in Gaza, and the withdrawal from the Philadelphi corridor—the border with the Sinai—opened the Strip up to smugglers and allowed the territory to militarize. These mistakes must not be repeated. These five principles will preserve the Israeli army's ability to keep Israeli citizens safe.
- his "eight plus five" plan—eight steps to shrink the occupation, and five principles to guarantee Israel's continued security—does not cover everything that can and must be done. I believe these steps will succeed, and that other interesting steps can be proposed and explored. Others might believe that these steps and principles would be ineffective or impossible. But this is the debate Israelis should be having, not about grand redemptive projects. This approach is an invitation to Israelis, to Jews in the diaspora, and to all well-intentioned members of the

international community to rejoin the political conversation and replace their apathy with pragmatism. It is precisely those who have stopped believing in redemptive solutions, on the left and the right, who have the most to contribute to an intelligent discussion about small, measured, and cumulative steps. This plan owes a great intellectual debt to ideas devised by the Israeli military and to studies and plans drawn up by Israeli civilian leaders, including Naftali Bennett's Tranquilization Plan, Security First by Commanders for Israel's Security, and the INSS's comprehensive Political-Security Framework for the Israeli-Palestinian Arena, written by Amos Yadlin, Udi Dekel, and Kim Lavi.

- Nevertheless, there is a clear, principled difference between the plan to shrink the occupation and the others listed here. Bennett's approach aims to strengthen Palestinian autonomy as part of a broader annexation plan, ultimately declaring all of Area C sovereign Israeli territory. The plans by Commanders for Israel's Security and the INSS contain important ideas, some of them mentioned above, including the economic and infrastructural development of the Palestinian autonomous polity—but their declared aim is to create the conditions for a political agreement that will solve the conflict once and for all. The plan outlined here is neither a first step toward annexation nor a first step toward a withdrawal. Its objective is neither to annex the territories nor to reach a peace accord.
- So what is this plan's objective? Truthfully, it has no specific end point in mind. These steps and principles are not a waystation en route to a final destination—the way itself is the destination. They would avert the threat to Israel's existence as a Jewish and democratic state without decreasing Israeli security. This is a plan for the confused Israelis who are not looking for a plan to solve the conflict, but a way to escape the trap, and to improve the lives of Palestinians as well. But once this journey is underway and the conflict is reorganized as a clash between neighbors rather than between rulers and subjects, things might begin to look a little different. Israelis cannot know what they will see when they get there. History is dynamic and surprising, and so is the Middle East. We can assume that new opportunities will arise. With a plan to shrink the conflict and neutralize immediate existential threats, Israel will be placed in a prime position to spot opportunities around the corner, and take advantage of them.