

CREATING
THE
PALESTINIAN
STATE

A Strategy For Peace

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***For my Mother and Father
and Etta and Esther***

Preface

This is not your typical book on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is not a history of the conflict. It is not an analysis of one of the many aspects of the conflict. It is a strategy proposal for resolving the conflict.

A strategy for resolving the conflict is not the same as a description of the post-conflict political landscape. A strategy proposal prescribes steps for getting to the post-conflict situation. It offers a plan of action for achieving conflict resolution.

In the vast literature on the Middle East, it is amazing how few attempts there have been to lay out in detail any strategy for resolving the conflict. What exists are typically strategy proposals directed towards either the Israelis or the Americans.

This manuscript is a strategy proposal directed primarily towards the Palestinians. In the first instance it is directed towards the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). But the PLO, like all political actors, does not operate in a vacuum. It cannot by fiat pick up one strategy and drop another. It operates within a network of constraints and influences. The strategic decisions it makes are affected by the views and likely responses of the other actors: the Palestinian people, the Israeli government, the Israeli people, the American government, the American people, the Arab nations, the Soviet Union, the European states, and so forth. In particular, there is a major role to be played by the American Jewish community.

Thus, while this proposal is in the first instance directed towards the PLO and the Palestinians, it is also crucially directed at the wider community of actors. Essentially, it is a strategy for bringing about peace through the two-state solution. It seeks a peace based on the idea of partition, an idea that forty years ago

was supported by Israel, the United States, and the Soviet Union.

Forty years ago, the Arab world rejected the two-state solution. Today the PLO is seeking peace based on the two-state idea. The strategy it has been following calls for the convening of an international conference and for negotiations. To a very large extent, once it became abundantly obvious that Israel could not be defeated militarily, virtually everyone assumed that the only alternative was negotiations. A great deal of heat has been generated over the issue of whether the venue for these negotiations should be an international conference, multilateral efforts along the Camp David model, or direct bilateral talks.

The strategy proposal I put forward does not place the negotiations process at the center of activity. I see negotiations as coming late in the process. I see negotiations as likely to bring a formal peace only when they are negotiations between two states: Israel and Palestine. For this to be possible, there must first exist a Palestinian state. Creating the Palestinian state without obtaining prior Israeli agreement lies at the heart of this strategy.

I believe it can be done. But it cannot be done by the Palestinians alone. It can only occur if there is broad support from all who seek peace along the lines of the two-state solution. It is toward building this consensus that this analysis is directed.

A sketch of my strategy for creating a Palestinian state first appeared on April 27, 1988 in Arabic in *Al-Quds*, the largest Arabic newspaper published in Jerusalem. It met with widespread interest within the territories and was the subject of a few news stories. Versions of that article appeared in English in *Al-Fajr*, *The Washington Post*, the *International Herald Tribune*, and other papers.

This book lays out the strategy in detail. As this manuscript progressed, I sent sections of it to people in the territories and to the PLO leadership in Tunis. The core of the manuscript was available by the end of June 1988.

In early August 1988 public attention to my proposals took a quantum leap forward, propelled by two events. The first was

the decision by King Hussein of Jordan to abandon Jordan's claim to the West Bank, thereby formally submerging the "Jordanian option." And the second was the revelation that Israeli authorities had found a plan for a Palestinian declaration of independence in the East Jerusalem offices of Palestinian leader Faisal Husseini, a man some see as the leader of the Palestinian uprising.

When the news of the so-called "Husseini-document" broke in Israel, it was quickly observed that the text and conceptual framework of that document strongly resembled the strategy I had advanced in *Al-Quds*. Thus, overnight I became a sensation within Israel and was referred to as "the Herzl of the Palestinian state" or "the Jewish father of the Palestinian state." There is a certain silliness in these descriptions, and they vastly exaggerate the contribution that I, an American Jewish academic, have made. My role has been essentially to conceptualize and articulate a strategy that was already implicit in the praxis of the Palestinian people.

Furthermore, my efforts have been directed towards the creation of a Palestinian state, not primarily as an end in itself, but as a component part of the two-state solution. The two-state solution is, in my estimation, the only basis for a stable peace in the Middle East, and in the long run, the only basis on which the survival of either state can be assured.

This book provides a strategy for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It should be judged on a very simple basis: How does it compare to any other proposal for bringing peace and justice to the Middle East?

The Introduction discusses the historical meaning of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Chapter one consists of a brief account of the evolution of the PLO. I argue that over the last twenty years the PLO has totally reversed its most basic position. At the outset it was dedicated to Israel's destruction. Today it seeks a Palestinian state that will live at peace with Israel. In Chapter two I sketch the general terms of the proposed strategy. There are four broad components: 1) a unilateral Palestinian Declaration of Independence and Statehood, coupled with the formation of a provisional government that replaces the PLO; 2) a

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peace initiative; 3) steps to build the inner sinews of the new state; and 4) a campaign to achieve Israeli troop withdrawal. Chapter three details thirteen specific elements of the strategy. Chapter four deals with a vast array of questions and challenges that may be posed.

I wish to thank the Institute for Philosophy and Public Policy, at the University of Maryland, College Park for assistance and support. Thanks also to the editors of *Al-Quds*, *Al-Fajr*, and *The Washington Post* for publishing my first formulations along these lines. And thanks to The Brookings Institution and the Institute for Policy Studies for arranging discussions that allowed me to sharpen my ideas and better understand the perspectives of others.

I also wish to thank David Ludden, Mark Cohen, Ellen Siegel, Naomi Nim, Norbert Hornstein, David Luban, Claudia Mills, Carroll Linkins, and Gershen Baskin for their various contributions.

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Introduction
**THE HISTORICAL MEANING OF
THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT**

A Palestinian friend once asked me why I was so involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In responding to her, it immediately became clear to me, clearer than it had ever been before, how different the conflict is for her, a West Bank Palestinian, than for me, an American Jew.

By this I am not referring to our perceptions of the basic facts of the conflict or our analyses of the options facing both sides. In our case these were quite similar. And in the end we both agreed that the two-state solution is the only viable solution for either people.

The difference that struck me was the extent to which I was absorbed with abstractions, while for her the conflict is remarkably concrete. For her it involves constant contact with the Israeli military. Every day it involves silent contact with the Israeli settlers whose cars cut in front of her at checkpoints along the road from Ramallah to Jerusalem. For her it means the danger of arrest and imprisonment without charge or trial; it means relatives and friends who have been injured or even killed; it means people who have lost the homes they were raised in and the fields that their grandparents tilled.

For me the conflict raises questions of Jewish identity, the meaning of history, and the meaning of Jewish history, in particular. Understandably, she had very little patience for my abstractions. But it is this most abstract level of the conflict that I find compelling, and in its own way deeply personal.

My relationship to Israel began before I had ever heard of the

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Palestinians, and certainly prior to any understanding of the history and nature of the conflict. I grew up in a totally Jewish neighborhood in the Bronx. After I finished regular school hours, I would go for an extra hour of instruction at the local Yiddish school. The instruction was not of a religious nature. We were there to learn Jewish history, to learn to read, speak, and write in Yiddish, to learn Yiddish songs and a smattering of Hebrew. In a word, we were there because our parents wanted to make sure that we developed a strong Jewish identity.

There was a time every year when we went door-to-door in the neighborhood selling stamps and collecting money that would be used to plant trees in Israel. It never occurred to anyone to ask why we were doing this, or what our relationship to Israel was. Israel wasn't a central preoccupation; it was part of the landscape. Raising money for Israel was just an accepted part of childhood.

When the 1967 war occurred, I was no longer a child. For three years I had participated with millions of others in the effort to extricate the United States from Vietnam. I had published and lectured on the nature of moral agency and on selective conscientious objection. Philosophically, I was broadly critical of any form of soldiering. I saw it as a process whereby one participated in the dehumanization of the other, where one made oneself into someone indifferent to or even proud of causing the deaths of other young people little different from oneself.

Yet when the Six Day War occurred, these philosophic conclusions evaporated. I found myself thrilled by Israel's victories. I reacted to the news reports of fighting in the Middle East with full enthusiasm for an Israeli triumph; mine was the kind of total identification with war that I found appalling when I encountered it anywhere else.

Fifteen years later, when Israel invaded Lebanon, I joined with other Jews to protest in front of the Israeli embassy in Washington. I protested not merely because the Lebanon war was an optional war. And it was not merely that I expected the war to be a disaster for Israel. It was something much stronger—a growing sense that Israel had gone deeply astray. It was the realization that the Palestinians also have rights and valid

claims, and that as a people they have been and continue to be the primary victims of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It was the realization that the conflict continued in large part because something very significant was wrong in the Jewish community and within Israel: we were refusing in principle to extend to others the same rights we claimed for ourselves. It was then, in 1982, that I became active in the Jewish peace movement in the United States.

My engagement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict turns on an essentially conceptual point: Jewish identity and Jewish history have become hostage to this conflict. Who and what we are will be determined by this conflict and the relationship we bear to it.

We are all creatures within a larger human story; our identity is in large measure determined by the meaning of that story and our role within it. To understand ourselves in relation to the Middle East conflict we must understand its historical meaning.

To ask about the historical meaning of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is to ask about its larger significance. Larger in the sense of bearing on more than the interests of the immediate participants, the 1.5 million Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza, the 100,000 Jewish settlers, the over 3 million Israeli Jews, the 500,000 Arab citizens of Israel, the 400,000 Palestinians living in Lebanon, the PLO members scattered around the Middle East, and the wider circles of Palestinians and Jews around the globe.

When a question of this sort is put, it most often is a question of whether or not the conflict can affect still wider interests. And indeed, there is no doubt that it can and has. To see this one has only to make a list of areas of past and possible future impacts:

- oil prices
- nuclear proliferation
- Arab unity
- U.S.-Soviet trade/detente
- U.S.-Soviet conflict
- U.S. relations with the Islamic world
- the Iran-Iraq war

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-American politics

-South Africa

-Jewish-Black relations in the U.S.

In one sense, these are the crucial arenas that make this conflict so important and make it absolutely necessary for any future U.S. President to set a resolution of the conflict high on the list of foreign policy priorities.

Yet these are not the factors I have in mind when I raise the question of the historical meaning of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The question I am asking has less to do with the causal consequences of the conflict, even the causal consequences for humanity, than it has to do with how this conflict affects the very meaning of history.

The question of the historical meaning of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a question about how what happens in this conflict will give one or another kind of meaning to human history, how it will force us to re-perceive central aspects of the human story, how it will cause us to change our understanding of ourselves as human beings.

Put in this fashion it sounds as if there is only one story of human history. Surely this is not correct. Potentially there are an infinite number of such stories, but not all stories are on the same level. Some stories are more comprehensive than others; they offer a perspective that makes sense of a wide variety of events. Some stories are more powerful than others. Some are so powerful that once one has heard them, one forever defines oneself in relation to them. Indeed, it is by learning such stories of human history that one learns who one is.

The telling of such a story is a projection of one's values, a projection of one's concerns, of what one cares about and is moved by. Our values are reflected in how we choose the subject of the story and in the transformations we judge worthy of attention. Once importance is established, the dramatic character of history returns, for drama is nothing other than an account of what is important that is filled with uncertainty.

The story I am concerned with is clearly a Jewish story. It is also a Christian story, and as such bears some important connec-

tion to an account of history that a Muslim might hold. It is very much a Western story and might seem of less significance to the three-quarters of the planet that have evolved largely in isolation from the West. In the end it might be little more than a personal statement, yet I believe it to have universal significance, to be a central text for humanity as a whole.¹

Who is the "we" that the story is about? Ultimately, that depends on who is listening to the story and how he or she listens. It is a matter of whether or not the listener finds in it something that tells him about himself.

On one level the primary subject of the story starts out as the Jews. Only toward the end do the Palestinians enter. Yet because the Jews are representative of all human suffering, the story of the Jews is allegorically the story of the Palestinians. And in the end the encounter of the Jews and the Palestinians is the encounter of each people with itself at another point in time. For the Jews of Israel, the Palestinians of today and especially the Palestinian victims of tomorrow's expulsion are all the Jewish victims of history. And for the Palestinians, the Jews of Israel are what a suffering people becomes when it becomes a state. They are in potentia Palestinians of a possible future.

Who are the Jews? They are the only people of the ancient world of Western civilization to have survived as a coherent entity from their emergence roughly thirty-five hundred years ago. Of other ancient peoples we have traces, descendants, and in some cases abundant knowledge. But they themselves are all gone. There are nowhere to be found ancient Egyptians, Mycenaens, Sumerians; ancient Greeks, Romans, or Babylonians. For the West, the Jews are the only living thread that has endured from the earliest times of which we have records.

They were the most historical people ever to exist. They imposed upon history a particular story. They were the first really to think of history as a story. They were not the first to have creation myths, but the first to have a vision of what happened to themselves in history and to see this as the story of the world.

The ancient Greeks saw history as cyclical. For the Jews each

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historical moment was unique, never to be repeated. History was God-endowed. It begins with a specific moment of creation. Human subjects were central to its unfolding, and human actions were the driving force of historical change. History would be the one-time story that begins with the creation of Adam and Eve and their expulsion from paradise and ends with the coming of the Messiah and the millennium.

The Jews are a numerically small people; today less than one-half of one percent of the global population. Yet from them emerged many of the central figures who have shaped human experience; Abraham, Moses, Jesus of Nazareth, Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Albert Einstein. They are the most literate people; their rites of passage consist of reading from sacred texts. And the texts themselves are less theologies than they are histories.

Morally and religiously the Jews carried ideas and perceptions that have formed much of modern consciousness. They were monotheistic; they emphasized social justice and concern for the poor.

But more than anything else the Jews became the people of suffering, the victims of the world. And in resistance to this victimization they developed a will to survive as a people that transformed their suffering into a strength that helped them to endure. And they did this through historical interpretation. They recorded the facts of the catastrophes that befell them as a people; they interpreted these facts to find some meaning in them; they wove these histories into religious ceremonies containing memories even of what befell them three thousand years ago. And they built the identity of each generation around an understanding of this extended history.

Early on they lived for hundreds of years in conditions of servitude in ancient Egypt. Somehow they managed to break away, as an entire people. They invaded the land that is today Israel and the West Bank, and with great ruthlessness killed and drove out the inhabitants. And for hundreds of years they went about their business and contended with more powerful neighbors. In 586 B.C., they suffered an enormous defeat at the hands of the Babylonians and yet managed to survive and return and reestablish a state. Through mistakes that probably could have

been avoided, they ultimately found themselves in a death struggle with Roman armies, in which they were finally defeated, killed, and dispersed.

Over the next two thousand years they survived as a distinct people. Many lived in Europe under rulers committed to a faith that centered on one of their great teachers, but one whom they disowned. So long as the Roman Empire existed, the dispersed Jews retained rights as citizens of the super-state. But as the empire ceased to exist, they were no longer seen as citizens, but merely as foreigners. Ultimately within the medieval framework they came to be viewed as the property of local rulers. Devoid of rights, they could be expelled at will.

Large numbers continued to live in the Middle East. They came under the control of Moslem rulers, whose religion also saw itself as emerging from the Jewish tradition, but was far less hostile to it than Christianity. Yet here too they were outsiders, guests, sojourners without an equal claim to the earth they inhabited.

Ironically, it was the Crusades, the great conflict over the Middle East, the conflict between the Christian and the Islamic world, that was the cause of intensified Jewish suffering, as crusading hordes destroyed the Jewish communities they found in their path as they moved towards Jerusalem.

Centuries of intense vulnerability ensued, and then with the Enlightenment came the French Revolution and Napoleon, the would-be world emperor. And under Napoleon, for the first time in over a thousand years, European Jews became citizens of the lands in which they lived. Ironically, this very acceptance tended to undermine their identity, and in some quarters even religious observances were changed to fit in with Christian traditions.

Jews entered more and more fully into the life of Europe. But the spirit of enlightenment was not to last, and anti-Semitism emerged stronger than ever. Within the Jewish community, there was internal struggle as diverse elements—the orthodox, the Jewish-nationalists, the socialists—contended for the soul of the people. The nationalists began their project of bringing

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about Jewish sovereignty over a piece of territory, of creating a Jewish state. They sought the ancient territories of the Middle East, then ruled by European colonial powers. They entreated with these powers, paying little heed to the people living there. But those people too were struggling to emerge from the yoke of foreign rule; they too were awakening to a call for national self-determination. So conflict evolved between the immigrant Zionists and the Palestinians. And they slew each other, each anticipating that soon the colonial rulers would leave.

And in Europe, the Europe of Christianity and the Enlightenment, there emerged an evil that surpassed anything ever seen before. The Jews underwent the worst catastrophe of their thirty-five hundred year existence. Yet three years after the Nazi horror had ended, the Jewish-nationalist project had triumphed. The colonial power had withdrawn and for the first time in two thousand years the Jews were sovereign over a territory. But the conflict with the Palestinians continued, and after two decades the newly sovereign Jews became rulers over a large Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza. And after twenty years of Israeli occupation, the Palestinians rose up in massive revolt.

And so the conflict continues. Where will it end? What meaning will the ending give to the thirty-five hundred year history? What meaning will it give to the two thousand years of oppression? What meaning will it give to the six million who went into the ovens? And how will the potential alternative endings affect the meaning of the human story that began with Abraham and Moses and then Jesus Christ and later Mohammed?

Consider the meaning of three alternative endings:

Destruction of the Other

The Uprising that began in late 1987 continued. After several hundred Palestinians were killed and after alternating periods of relative calm and new outbursts, it looked as if the Israeli government had succeeded in restoring its authority. Then, just as it appeared that order had been restored, an Israeli soldier was fatally knifed. He died. Another was killed a day later. In Jerusalem a young girl was killed. Settlers in the territories took