

Middle East Notes
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
April 17, 2014



Please note: Opinions expressed in the following articles do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.

[Read previous weeks' Middle East Notes.](#)

After a brief Easter break, the Middle East Notes will again be distributed on May 8, 2014.

This week's Middle East Notes focus on the faltering Israeli/Palestinian negotiations, Kerry's frustration, Israeli government obstacles, Abbas' signing 15 UN documents, U.S. failure in using leverage to encourage fruitful negotiations, call for boycott of products from "illegal" Israeli settlements, increased settlement expansion, and the need for clear U.S. position statements on settlements, Palestinian incitement, the Jewishness of Israel, Israeli security, the terms for a peace accord, and other issues.

- A Ha'aretz editorial states that the Israeli public deserves a government that clearly admits it has no desire for a peace agreement and no desire for a peace since its main motivation is to continue developing the West Bank settlements.
- The April 3 and April 10 CMEP Bulletins focus on the interruption and possible failure of the Kerry negotiations after Israeli refusal of prisoner release, the implications of no further negotiations and the Palestinian request to join 15 international groups.
- Raphael Ahren in the Times of Israel notes that Secretary of State Kerry's remarks to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations highlighted both sides' "unhelpful moves" but clearly indicated crisis began with the Israeli failure to release prisoners as promised.
- Barak Ravid in Ha'aretz comments that Kerry's remarks to the Senate committee made clear what Jerusalem should have understood by now - there is no symmetry in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
- Cecilie Surasky blogs for Jewish Voice for Peace that Kerry's testimony to Congress might go down in history as a real turning point in the last 20+ years of U.S.-orchestrated negotiations: For the first time – and despite later efforts to backtrack – a Secretary of State admitted the Israelis derail talks.
- Uri Avnery notes that in his testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations committee, Secretary Kerry explained how the actions of the Israeli government had torpedoed the "peace process" by breaking their obligation to release Palestinian prisoners, and at the same time announcing the enlargement of more settlements in East Jerusalem.
- Bassem Khoury comments in Ha'aretz on the 15 documents recently signed by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, which will bring Palestine towards membership in United Nations institutions related to human rights and international law.
- Aeyal Gross in Ha'aretz writes that the decision to accept Palestine as a signatory to 15 international treaties rests mostly with UN Secretary General Ban, who will be hard-pressed to say no.
- Saed Bannoura reports in IMEMC that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu decided to "punish" the Palestinians and the Palestinian Authority of President Mahmoud Abbas for filing a formal application to join 15 UN conventions, by imposing a series of measures and restrictions.
- The Israel Policy Forum's State of Two States for the week of April 6 also focuses on provides a number of quoted references to the aftermath of the Palestinian Authority's decision to submit 15 applications to UN agencies and Israel's refusal to release the fourth group of prisoners.
- Chris Carlson Ma'an News Agency reports that Hamas that in light of the stalled peace negotiations and Israeli new sanctions, the Palestinians in the West Bank should "give full rein" to resistance against the Israeli occupation and end security cooperation with Israel.
- Ma'an News Agency notes that a Fatah central committee member warned that the recent Israeli sanctions could lead to the collapse of the Palestinian Authority.

- Daoud Kuttab in the Ma'an News Agency comments that the reaction of senior Israeli officials to the decision by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to sign 15 international treaties brought further proof of Israeli racist attitudes towards the Palestinians.
- Henry Siegman suggests in Ha'aretz that with the U.S. having failed to use its leverage over Israel, the only way to convince Israelis to accept a two-state outcome is a Palestinian nonviolent, anti-apartheid struggle.
- Israel News records that Riyad Mansour, Palestine's UN ambassador, urged the world to boycott products from "illegal" Israeli settlements.
- Zbigniew Brzezinski, Frank Carlucci, Lee Hamilton, Carla Hills, Thomas Pickering and Henry Siegman in Politico state that they believe that the confidentiality that Kerry imposed on negotiations should not preclude a more forceful and public expression of certain fundamental U.S. positions.

The [March/April 2014 Report on Israeli Settlement in the Occupied Territories](#) (Foundation for Middle East Peace) is now available. It can be viewed online or in PDF format.

1) [Kerry told the simple truth](#)

Ha'aretz editorial, April 10, 2014

One can only regret the American administration's attempts, coated with praise for Benjamin Netanyahu and Israel's government, to clarify and modify Secretary of State John Kerry's statement to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on Tuesday.

Describing the events leading to the collapse of the negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, Kerry said Israel had not released prisoners as it had pledged to do as part of the agreement to resume the talks, and had then approved tenders for constructing 700 new settlement units in East Jerusalem (which followed other huge tenders for accelerated construction in the settlements).

Kerry refuted the spin issued by Netanyahu's office — that the talks broke down because Mahmoud Abbas had signed applications to join Palestine to 15 UN treaties. Kerry said this move, which he described as "not helpful," came in response to the Israeli violations of the agreement, not as an intention to sabotage the talks. So Kerry was right to blame Israel with blowing up the talks. His words hewed to the simple truth. Throughout the negotiations, Prime Minister Netanyahu has been busy spreading fog around his intentions and inventing spin tactics aimed at avoiding any significant decision. Housing Minister Uri Ariel and Defense Minister Moshe Ya'alon have done everything they could to sabotage the talks. Finance Minister Yair Lapid made do with lip service to the peace process, while Justice Minister Tzipi Livni served as a fig leaf trying to cover Israel's insincerity.

So instead of automatically blaming the Palestinians for the negotiations' failure, they should ask themselves what their own part was in the foot-dragging and obstructionism in the talks, and how they helped create the pretense that Israel and the Palestinians are two state entities with equal military and economic status.

The Israeli public deserves a government that is candid with it and admits clearly that it has no desire for a peace agreement, and that its main motivation is to continue developing the West Bank settlements. In other words, it wants to continue the occupation and separate the Palestinians from their lands.

Once the government admits that, Israelis will be able to choose which kind of state they want to live in and which vision of a state they want to vote for — that of a democratic state that respects the rule of law and human rights and sees international relations as a vital asset, or of a messianic, separatist state with features of an apartheid regime, in which a privileged Jewish population rules over millions of Palestinians.

These are Israel's options. Any other portrayal of them is a false one.

2a) Churches for Middle East Peace Bulletin, April 3, 2014

Dramatic moves push talks to the brink: Tensions escalated quickly this week after Israel decided not to go through with the planned release of Palestinian prisoners. Following a series of dramatic tit-for-tat moves, Secretary of State John Kerry cancelled his trip to Jerusalem and Ramallah and is now stepping back from the peace process he worked to revive, at least until the blame game ends and the parties get serious about negotiating a solution.

When Secretary Kerry managed to restart the negotiations last July, he extracted trust building gestures from both the Israelis and Palestinians. Israel agreed to release 104 Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails in four waves. Palestinian negotiators agreed to halt efforts for recognition of Palestine in international bodies and not pursue cases against Israel in the International Criminal Court for the duration of the talks. The talks were scheduled to go nine months, ending April 29.

The fourth and final prisoner release did not happen as scheduled on Saturday, March 29, setting off this latest crisis. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he is not willing to release the final wave of prisoners unless there are guarantees that Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas will agree to extend the negotiations through the end of 2014. Despite a last minute trip to the region by Kerry to get Abbas to agree to push back the deadline, Abbas was not swayed.

Kerry then tried to make a blockbuster deal with Israel to get the prisoners released. He reportedly agreed to release American spy Jonathan Pollard, who is serving a life sentence for spying on behalf of Israel, in exchange for the release of 400 Palestinian prisoners and a vague promise of “restraint” on settlement construction that did not include East Jerusalem (the desired capital of a future Palestinian state). As word of this potential deal broke, the Israeli housing minister announced he reissued bids for the construction of more than 700 housing units in the East Jerusalem settlement Gilo.

On Tuesday, the Pollard deal was on the cusp of being signed when President Abbas made a surprise announcement. He signed letters stating if Palestine would ask to join 15 international conventions and treaties, including the Geneva Convention on protecting civilians in conflict zones as well as covenants prohibiting torture and discrimination against women. This bombshell announcement put any Pollard deal on hold indefinitely.

Abbas’ move did not come without warning. Palestinian negotiators said that if the prisoner release did not go through, they would pursue further recognition and participation in the UN. Nevertheless, Israel and the U.S. were not notified before the announcement and both were caught off guard. Secretary Kerry quickly announced he would not be going back to the region Wednesday as planned. He had expected to finalize the extension of the negotiations with Abbas.

On Wednesday, a State Department spokesperson said, “over the last 24 hours, there have been unhelpful actions taken on both sides here and we didn’t think it was a productive time for the Secretary to return to the region.”

Despite cancelling his visit, Kerry says he’s not giving up and both parties have signaled a willingness to keep going, at least until the end of the month. In Algeria today he said, “the parties themselves have to make fundamental decisions and compromises, the leaders have to lead.... There is an old saying, you can lead a horse to water but you can’t make it drink. Now is the time to drink, and the leaders need to know that.” ...

[Read the entire Bulletin here.](#)

2b) Churches for Middle East Peace Bulletin, April 10, 2014

Playing the blame game as talks continue: The Israeli-Palestinian talks that Secretary of State John Kerry worked to revive last summer are in dire straits with 18 days left until the initial deadline that the parties agreed to. While Secretary Kerry has not returned to the region, U.S. Middle East envoy Martin Indyk is still meeting with the Israeli and Palestinian negotiators in Jerusalem to try to find a way forward.

Three days after Israel reneged on its agreement to release 27 prisoners on March 29, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas signed the paperwork for the UN-recognized state of Palestine to join 15 international conventions and treaties. The move was largely symbolic, but it caught the U.S. and Israel off guard and no doubt strengthened Abbas politically among Palestinians.

The Netanyahu government warned there would be consequences. On Sunday the prime minister said, "Unilateral steps on [the Palestinians'] part will be met with unilateral steps on our part." On Wednesday, he instructed government ministers to halt cooperation with their Palestinian Authority counterparts. Defense ministry officials dealing with security cooperation and of course, the negotiators are excused from the new edict.

Israel's opposition had harsh words for the new rule. Labor party leader Isaac Herzog said, "It's not clear what good will come from this unnecessary step of disconnecting from the Palestinian Authority... At the same time, it's clear what damage will come of it. It will hurt our interests and those of businesses." So far, according to The New York Times, "Israel has already frozen plans for a Palestinian cellphone company to enter Gaza and for allowing 3G service in the West Bank. In addition, Israeli officials said plans to advance Palestinian housing and agricultural projects in parts of the West Bank where Israel maintains full control had also been delayed."

Secretary Kerry made headlines on Monday when he addressed the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. When describing what led the Palestinians to apply to join the conventions, he said, "Unfortunately, the prisoners weren't released on the Saturday they were supposed to be released. And so day went by, day two went by day three went by and then in the afternoon when they were about to maybe get there, 700 settlement units were announced in Jerusalem. And poof! That was sort of the moment."

Many Israeli officials interpreted this as blaming Israel for the stalled negotiations. According to The New York Times, an official in the prime minister's office said Secretary Kerry's remarks "will both hurt the negotiations and harden Palestinian positions."

A State Department spokesperson clarified the remarks by saying, "[Secretary Kerry] doesn't think that he laid the blame on one side over the other, because both sides took unhelpful actions. He did not intend to play a blame game."

Martin Indyk has met with the negotiators several times in the past week to come up with a deal to extend the negotiations. It is possible that the deal that was discussed before the Palestinian applications to join the international treaties could still be on the table. Ha'aretz explains that under that deal, "Israel would release a fourth batch of Palestinian prisoners with blood on their hands (who were convicted of committing terrorist acts), as well as 400 other prisoners without blood on their hands. During that period Israel would also stop most settlement construction in the West Bank, and the United States would free Jewish-American spy Jonathan Pollard."

One positive sign this week came on Thursday. Israeli officials told Ha'aretz that there was "progress" on a deal to extend the negotiations but no "breakthrough" yet. ...

[Read the entire Bulletin here.](#)

3) Kerry focuses blame on Israel for collapse of talks

Raphael Ahren, Times of Israel, April 8, 2014

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said Tuesday that both Israelis and Palestinians were responsible for the current crisis in peace talks, but appeared to allocate the lion's share of the blame to Jerusalem. At the same time, he expressed hope that the two sides would continue to negotiate, but also warned that there was a "limit" to how much effort the U.S. government could invest in the process if the two parties weren't serious about negotiating a pact.

"Both sides wound out in a position of unhelpful moves," Kerry said at a hearing of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, delineating what he said led to the current impasse. "The prisoners were not released by Israel on the day they were supposed to be released and then another day passed and another day, and then 700 units were approved in Jerusalem and then poof — that was sort of the moment," Kerry said.

The secretary of state was referring to the planned fourth release of Palestinian security prisoners, which was originally slated for March 29. Israel did not proceed with the release on time, with Jerusalem saying that it was delayed because the Palestinian Authority had demanded that Israeli Arabs be among those freed and was unwilling to commit to extend peace talks beyond their April 29 deadline.

On April 1, the Israel Lands Authority reissued a call for tenders for 708 homes in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Gilo, which is located beyond the 1967 lines and was annexed by Israel. Later that same day, PA President Mahmoud Abbas signed 15 letters of accession to multilateral treaties and conventions, in what Israel said was a clear breach of Ramallah's commitment not to take unilateral steps to advance their statehood bid so long as the talks were ongoing.

"The treaties were unhelpful, and we made that crystal clear to the Palestinians," Kerry said at the Senate hearing. He also said that Palestinians recognition of Israel as a Jewish state should be part of a final peace agreement, but added that the step would likely only be achieved at the very end of the process and not at the outset. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has in recent months elevated the demand for such Palestinian recognition to that of a core issue. Despite his evident frustration, Kerry said it was still possible for the two sides to find a way to extend the talks and return to "substantive discussion." Senator John McCain told Kerry that "talks, even though you might drag them out for a bit, are finished," but the secretary of state replied by saying that the peace process should not be declared dead as long as the two sides declare their willingness to continue negotiating.

At the same time, Kerry said, "there are limits to the amount of time the president and myself can put into this, considering the other challenges around the world, especially if the parties can't commit to being there in a serious way." Afterward, the State Department attempted to dispel the impression that Israel had been singled out for harsher criticism in Kerry's comments.

"As he has been throughout this impasse, today Secretary Kerry was again crystal clear that both sides have taken unhelpful steps and at no point has he engaged in a blame game," spokeswoman Jen Psaki said. "Today he even singled out by name Prime Minister Netanyahu for having made courageous decisions to bring the process this far. Now it is up to the parties and their leaders to determine whether we maintain a productive path," she added.

Kerry was set to meet U.S. President Barack Obama and Vice President Joe Biden in the Oval Office later Tuesday to discuss the fate of the peace talks.

Senior officials have rejected the idea that Obama intends to pull the plug on the peace effort, and say he deeply appreciates his top diplomat's efforts.

But equally, Obama may need to be convinced that Kerry's intense focus on the initiative is merited given its apparently slim chance of success and deepening global crises crying out for U.S. attention elsewhere.

"The issue now is whether the parties can demonstrate that they are willing to make the difficult decisions necessary to move the process forward," said White House spokesman Jay Carney. "The parties understand what the choices are and they understand that these are not decisions that the United States or any other country can make. The parties themselves have to make them."

4) Providing a look inside the negotiation room, Kerry reinforced the Palestinian version of events

Barak Ravid, Ha'aretz, April 9, 2014

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry's statements before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee should not have surprised anyone. They simply expressed the frustration that many senior American officials have been voicing in private conversations over the past week about Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The storm was unleashed because Kerry said out loud what he was thinking.

Kerry was not speaking Tuesday to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee only as secretary of state, but as a state's witness. He provided a look inside the negotiating rooms at the sequence of events that led to the serious crisis in the peace talks. Kerry's remarks contradicted the spin coming out over the past few days from the prime minister's bureau and inflated by the various cabinet ministers.

The secretary of state adopted the Palestinian version of events and reinforced it. He presented Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' signature on applications to join 15 international conventions as a response to Israeli violation of commitments and not as a step initiated to sabotage the talks. According to Kerry, the Palestinian move was negative and damaging, but Israel's moves were even worse.

Kerry noted two Israeli breaches – failure to meet the obligation for the fourth phase of the prisoner release, and issuing a tender to build 700 apartments in East Jerusalem at the most critical point in the negotiations. His tone and body language when he spoke about the Israeli construction in the settlements showed how frustrated he was with Israel's conduct.

The White House and the State Department in Washington tried to correct and explain Kerry's statements. They sent messages to reporters, emphasizing his praise for Netanyahu at that same Senate hearing and stressed the fact that he had been balanced and had also criticized the Palestinians. But all of that was hindsight. If Kerry really wanted to pin responsibility on both sides equally, he could have said so much more clearly.

The fact that Kerry places most of the responsibility for the deadlock on Israel will be heard loud and clear in the world's capitals. There will probably be quite a few Arab foreign ministers at the emergency meeting of the Arab League in Cairo on Wednesday, convened at the request of the Palestinians, who in their addresses will simply quote their American colleague.

The focus Kerry places on the settlements as one of the reasons for the meltdown of the talks will be clearly understood in the European Union's institutions in Brussels and in the various foreign ministries on the Continent. That is precisely what Jerusalem is afraid of. The Europeans have warned Israel a number of times over the past few months that if the talks broke down over construction in the settlements there would be consequences in the form of additional European sanctions. The marking of products from the settlements in European supermarkets is a step waiting on the shelf for implementation.

Palestinian conduct over the eight months of the talks and especially the last two weeks was frustrating and irritating. Abbas is just about as serious with regard to changing the status quo and taking courageous steps to attain a historic peace agreement as Netanyahu is.

However, Kerry's remarks made clear what Jerusalem should have understood by now – there is no symmetry in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Israel is perceived by the United States and the rest of the world, and rightly so, as the stronger party, as the occupying power and the entity with the greatest ability to change reality on the ground, for good and for bad. And so the big loser in any failure will always be Israel.

5) Poof - Statement on peace process
Jewish Voice for Peace, Cecilie Surasky, April 11, 2014

It wasn't exactly poetry, but Secretary of State John Kerry's testimony to Congress this week might go down in history as a real turning point in the last 20 plus years of U.S.-orchestrated negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians. For the first time – and despite later efforts to backtrack – a U.S. Secretary of State admitted it was the Israelis who are derailing talks.

Kerry couldn't have been more clear about the recent sequence of events that have driven these talks to the brink.

First Israel refused to release the last group of Palestinian prisoners they had promised to free, then they announced construction of 700 new settlement units, and only then did the Palestinians announce that they would attempt to join 15 international human rights conventions. The U.S. and Israel still vigorously criticized that move, which begs the question: what kind of "peace process" considers signing on to covenants promoting the rights of children, the disabled, and others a threat to peace?

Of course, unilateral Israeli actions to undermine peace go back much further.

Since the Oslo Accords, the number of Jewish settlers on Palestinian land has more than doubled - to more than 650,000. In fact, Benjamin Netanyahu campaigned for re-election on a promise of one million Jews living in "Judea and Samaria." Rather than hold Israel accountable, the United States has repeatedly rewarded the Israeli government whenever it violated the law or agreements, now fueling the occupation with \$3.2 billion in annual military aid.

The United States is indeed acting like a broker in these talks — representing Israel.

The losers in this peace scam? The Palestinians most of all, but also every Israeli who wants a lasting and just peace. And every U.S. resident who wants our tax money to be used for freedom and democracy, not occupation and apartheid. In truth, the terms Kerry and Israel set forth have nothing to do with equality – they'll require Palestinians to sit at the back of the bus.

But they give us an idea of what will be on the table should talks, which have proven to be an effective delaying tactic while Israel builds "fact on the ground," limp along.

They include an unprecedented demand that the Palestinian Authority recognize Israel as a Jewish state. That's code for condemning Israel's 25 percent of citizens who aren't Jewish to second and third class status, and denying the internationally recognized rights of Palestinian refugees.

And the land being negotiated for a future Palestinian "state"? It looks more like the holes in a piece of Swiss cheese, thanks to decades of U.S.-enabled settlement expansion. Put another way, whatever the rhetoric of a "two-state solution," Israeli policies have already created a de-facto single state including all of Israel, the West Bank, Gaza and occupied East Jerusalem, albeit one built on the premise of separate and unequal lives for Jews and non-Jews. This is the very definition of apartheid.

So what next?

At Jewish Voice for Peace, we believe that the struggle for freedom and self-determination will end, like similar struggles in Northern Ireland and South Africa, at the negotiation table. But that will only happen when all parties can sit down together with equal power. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

6) Peace talks in the land of make-believe Uri Avnery, Counterpunch, April 12, 2014

Poor John Kerry. This week he emitted a sound that was more expressive than pages of diplomatic babble. In his testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations committee he explained how the actions of the Israeli government had torpedoed the “peace process.” They broke their obligation to release Palestinian prisoners, and at the same time announced the enlargement of more settlements in East Jerusalem. The peace efforts went “poof”. “Poof” is the sound of air escaping a balloon. It is a good expression, because the “peace process” was from the very beginning nothing more than a balloon full of hot air. An exercise in make-believe.

John Kerry cannot be blamed. He took the whole thing seriously. He is an earnest politician, who tried very very hard to make peace between Israel and Palestine. We should be grateful for his efforts. The trouble is that Kerry had not the slightest idea of what he was getting himself into. The entire “peace process” revolves around a basic misconception. Some would say: a basic lie.

Namely: that we have here two equal sides of a conflict. A serious conflict. An old conflict. But a conflict that can be solved when reasonable people of the two sides sit down together and thrash it out, guided by a benevolent and impartial referee. Not one detail of these assumptions was real. The referee was not impartial. The leaders were not sensible. And most importantly: the sides were not equal. The balance of power between the two sides is not 1:1, not even 1:2 or 1:10. In every material respect – military, diplomatic, economic – it is more like one to a thousand.

There is no equality between occupier and occupied, oppressor and oppressed. A jailer and a prisoner cannot negotiate on equal terms. When one side has total command of the other, controls his every move, settles on his land, controls his money flow, arrests people at will, blocks his access to the UN and the International courts, equality is out of the question.

If the two sides to negotiations are so extremely unequal, the situation can only be remedied by the mediator supporting the weaker side. What is happening is the very opposite: the American support for Israel is massive and unstinting. Throughout the “negotiations” the U.S. did nothing to check the settlement activity that created more Israeli facts on the ground – the very ground whose future the negotiations were all about.

A prerequisite for successful negotiations is that all sides have at least a basic understanding not only of each other’s interests and demands, but even more of each other’s mental world, emotional setup and self-image. Without that, all moves are inexplicable and look irrational.

Boutros Boutros-Ghali, one of the most intelligent people I have met in my life, once told me: “You have in Israel the most intelligent experts on the Arab world. They have read all the books, all the articles, every single word written about it. They know everything, and understand nothing. Because they have never lived one day in an Arab country.”

The same is true for the American experts, only much more so. In Washington, D.C. one feels the rarefied air of a Himalayan peak. Seen from the grandiose palaces of the administration, where the fate of the world is decided, foreign people look small, primitive and largely irrelevant. Here and there some real experts are tucked away, but nobody really consults them.

The average American statesman has not the slightest idea of Arab history, world-view, religions, myths or the traumas that shape Arab attitudes, not to mention the Palestinian struggle. He has no patience for this primitive nonsense. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

7) Why Palestine is heading back to the UN **Bassem Khoury, Ha'aretz, April 2, 2014**

Fifteen documents have been signed by ... Mahmoud Abbas, documents that will bring Palestine towards membership in UN institutions related to human rights and international law. Despite the naysayers and the pressure from all sides, the PLO leadership has shown that it will no longer be a passive observer, and that it will use the growing leverage it has for justice for the Palestinians.

The Israeli occupation and the colonial infrastructure it has built impose a matrix of control on Palestine, leaving all aspects of life - particularly its economy - hostage to strategies implemented with complete disregard to human rights or international law. The Palestinians' fate is determined by Israel's will.

However, a new dynamic is now clearly emerging. Israeli policies too are being influenced by economics, with international law and human rights being the catalysts. Thomas Friedman's recent description of Israel - as facing a dichotomy and choice between its colonialism and its economic prosperity - is both accurate and relevant.

So what has changed? Is there now a different Israel from before, one whose colonial products Europe wants to label as such, one whose banks European investors are withdrawing from investing in? The answer is - Israel hasn't changed. It is the same colonial entity pursuing the same ethnic cleansing policies it did for decades. So why has this movement ten off now? How is it related to U.S. Secretary of State Kerry's adamant efforts, or so they appear, to broker a deal?

The change of "potentially seismic proportions," altering the nature of the conflict, occurred on 29th November 2012, when Palestine became a non-member state by a two third majority United Nations General Assembly vote. This vote was enabled by the Europeans' decision to vote in favors, a decision spearheaded by Ireland, Malta and Luxemburg, and followed by France, Italy, Spain and the Nordic countries, in spite of pressures for "a common European position of abstention." This rendered the UN decision irrevocable. It was said that Abbas went ahead with the UN vote in spite of pressures on him to desist; the U.S. had warned that this act crossed red lines and endangered American national interests.

What is so significant about the non-member state status? Non-member states have accession rights to international treaties and international organizations. First on the accession list are the Geneva Convention - which the Palestinian President has petitioned to join today - and the Treaty of Rome. Thus, Palestine's status will become that of an "Occupied Country." Any illegal actions by the Israeli occupier constitute a war crime, allowing potential ICC prosecution of any person, legal entity or country infringing Palestinian sovereignty and holding anyone benefiting from the occupation liable under international law. European courts have already proven its jurisdiction; the precedent was set by Nigerian farmers against Shell Oil for human rights violations in its efforts to extract oil; Shell was indicted and was forced to make a hefty settlement.

Infringements on Palestinian sovereignty by Israelis and internationals are widespread. Flights overflying Palestine or tourists and pilgrims visiting Jerusalem via Israel without Palestine's consent; Volkswagen's billion-dollar deal for Dead Sea minerals; Heidelberg Cement's quarries and Veolia's tram connecting the Jerusalem colonies are all examples of blatant violations. In a nutshell: Any of the 700,000 or so colonialists or anyone who builds, or gives services to the colonial infrastructure is a potential war criminal.

To give negotiations a chance, a nine-month moratorium on joining international treaties was agreed. This expires formally on the 29th April 2014, and Palestinian policy makers have referred to this date as "D-Day." They have insisted that without a breakthrough Palestine will act; Palestinian negotiators show off a CD ready with instruments of accession to the 63 UN-related treaties and conventions. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

8) [Palestinians signaling: The Hague is next](#)

Aeyal Gross, Ha'aretz, April 3, 2014

The Palestinians' request to become a party to 15 international agreements includes the primary human rights covenants, the Fourth Geneva Convention, the treaty that regulates diplomatic and consular relations, as well as the "Treaty of Treaties," the one that regulates treaties concerning international law. For now, the Palestinians have not requested to join the Rome Statute that founded the International Criminal Court at The Hague where claims regarding war crimes and crimes against humanity are heard. But a future Palestinian bid to join the Rome Statute could be in store.

When the Palestinians petitioned the ICC to investigate claims of alleged Israeli war crimes during Operation Cast Lead, the prosecutor decided in April 2012 that Palestine's status as a state is unclear, and that only states are allowed to agree to give jurisdiction to the court for crimes that took place in their territory. (This rule has an exception: When a case is referred to the ICC by the UN Security Council, the states do not need to agree for jurisdiction to be created. Also, states can consent to the ICC's jurisdiction over crimes allegedly committed by their citizens.) The prosecutor pointed out that Palestine was classified as an observer by the UN, and not as a state, and that if the status were to change, the request to investigate war crimes could be reviewed, stressing also that the UN secretary-general gets to decide if a political entity constitutes a state. When in doubt, the UN Secretary General generally goes along with the position of the General Assembly.

But in November of that year, the UNGA decided by a large majority to recognize Palestine as a non-member state. Palestine will not manage to become a member of the UN anytime soon, as that would require approval from the Security Council, and the United States would most likely veto such a motion. But now, as the Palestinians are asking to sign onto various international agreements, many of which relegate the decision on an entity's status to the secretary general, this "hot potato" will end up in Ban Ki-moon's hands. Since the secretary general is supposed to take his cues on issues like these from the UNGA, the decision from 2012 will make it difficult for him not to accept Palestine as a party to these treaties. And in any case, if the secretary general asks the UNGA for an opinion, undoubtedly, the UNGA will treat Palestine as a state.

The treaties Palestine is currently seeking to join are generally those that would bind Palestine to human rights and humanitarian law. Thus, for example, Palestine would have to report to UN human rights bodies, just like Israel and other nations.

Successfully joining these treaties, however, would be a cue to Israel and the rest of the world that Palestine is able to join the ICC statute as well, or to simply return to the ICC with its non-member state status. If that were to happen, especially after joining 15 international agreements, the ICC prosecutor would have a hard time turning down the Palestinians' case on the count of unclear statehood status. In such a case, Israelis could be investigated by the courts for war crimes, for various acts against Palestinians including settlements, as the court statute forbids an occupying power from transferring its civilian populations into occupied territory.

The Palestinian case is a unique one, as occupation does not negate sovereignty, but one measure of statehood is proving effective control over territory and population, as well as political independence. Can a state be created on territory that is still under occupation? This paradox could keep jurists busy for years to come, but in reality, this latest Palestinian step looks like another step toward defining its political status as a state, and a warning sign to Israel, that it might have to find its citizens on the defendant's bench in The Hague.

9) Israel punishes PA for filing requests to join international organizations **Saed Bannoura, International Middle East Media Center, April 4, 2014**

Israeli daily Ha'aretz has reported that Israeli Justice Minister Tzipi Livni stated during what was described as a tense meeting between Israeli and Palestinian negotiators, that "Israel will not implement the release of the fourth phase of veteran political prisoners." Livni threatened that, unless the Palestinians void their application to join the UN organizations, Israel will not release any Palestinian detainee.

Ha'aretz said that the Israeli government also decided to impose a series of punitive measures against the Palestinians in the occupied West Bank. It said Netanyahu and his Defense Minister Moshe Ya'alon instructed the coordinator of "Government Activities" in the occupied territories, Major General Yoav Mordechai "to prepare a list of all possible measures" to punish the Palestinians.

One of the measures is to suspend a permit to the "Wataniya" Palestinian wireless provider, operating in the West Bank, and to prevent it from bringing its equipment to the Gaza Strip where it intends to provide services.

On Thursday, United States Secretary [of State] John Kerry allegedly tried to get Netanyahu to have restraint in order to avoid a "total collapse of peace talks," yet, when he made public statements, he urged both Israeli and Palestinian leaders to act on saving the peace process.

Ha'aretz said that an Israeli-Palestinian and American talk session started on Wednesday evening around 7:30 in the evening, and continued until dawn on Thursday, but yielded no positive outcome.

Livni and Netanyahu's special envoy Yitzhak Molho represented the Israeli side, while chief negotiator Dr. Saeb Erekat and Palestinian Intelligence Chief Majid Faraj represented the Palestinian side.

U.S. Special Envoy Martin Indyk supervised the meeting and tried to moderate it, but it ended with complete failure following a very stormy session filled with what Ha'aretz described as "threats and accusations."

On Thursday, the White House said the Israeli decision to void the release of the fourth phase of veteran Palestinian detainees "poses more difficulties in achieving peace." The detainees were supposed to be released by the end of last month, but Israel delayed the release and decided to void it.

Livni told Erekat that Israel will not release the 26 veteran detainees because the Palestinian Authority filed an application to join 15 UN and international agreements and treaties. The United States said it "would continue its efforts" to ensure the resumption of peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians despite the current impasse.

Israel's government has announced the construction of thousands of settler housing units, and its army has killed 60 Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza since the negotiations were resumed last year.

Hundreds of Palestinians were kidnapped, and hundreds were injured.

On [December 31, 2013] Israel released 26 veteran Palestinian detainees, as part of the third phase of releasing all detained Palestinians held since before the first Oslo peace agreement in 1993.

During the first and second phases, Israel released, back in mid-August, 26 detainees (14 from Gaza, 12 from the West Bank) and, in October, it released 26 detainees (21 from Gaza, five from the West Bank)...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

10) The State of Two States Week of April 6

Israel Policy Forum

In the aftermath of the Palestinian Authority's decision to submit 15 applications to UN agencies and Israel's refusal to release the fourth group of prisoners, tensions between both sides have been running high this week. Nevertheless, several reports have indicated that the American team is fervently working to bring the Israelis and Palestinians to the table and taking steps toward reaching an agreement outlining the continuation of negotiations. This week, Economy Minister Naftali Bennett and others in government have threatened that they will leave the coalition if the prisoners are indeed released. On Wednesday, Secretary of State John Kerry met with Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman to discuss the current situation as well as its future.

"It's a departure from the policy that I represented. The policy I represented was that the 'Jewish state' issue would be at the conclusion of the process." – Michael Oren, former Israeli ambassador to the U.S., speaking to JTA (Tuesday 4/8)

"Both sides, whether advertently or inadvertently wound up in positions where things happened that were unhelpful...Unfortunately, the prisoners weren't released on the Saturday they were supposed to be released ... day (one) went by, day two went by, day three went by, and then in the afternoon, when they were about to maybe get there, 700 settlement units were announced in Jerusalem, and poof, that was sort of the moment." – Secretary of State John Kerry commenting on the challenges for continuing peace talks at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing (Tuesday 4/8)

"Arab-Israeli talks are not for the weak-hearted. Perseverance is the key. Quitting now would be like giving up when you're down by a couple touchdowns early in the fourth quarter. The Bradys and the Mannings pull out the victories under highly adverse-looking circumstances. Whatever they say, Israelis and Palestinians thrive on these kinds of confrontations, and Kerry does too. That's why now is not the time to give up. If he wants any chance of succeeding, Kerry should just be getting started." – IPF National Scholar Steven L. Spiegel writing on Kerry's position in the current state of the peace negotiations (Wednesday 4/9)

"Obviously, we are working hard to try to find a way forward. And both parties indicate they would like to find a way to go forward in the talks. We obviously want to see that happen...Our relationship with Israel, as everybody knows, is an historic and deep one. We remain totally committed to the security of Israel." – Secretary of State John Kerry responding to reports on the future of the peace talks after a meeting with Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman (Wednesday 4/9)

"I believe that negotiations are going to be resumed for several months and we hope that this will be the end of it." – Secretary-General of the Arab League, Nabil Elaraby, asserting to The Associated Press that the peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians are not over and have not failed (Thursday 4/10)

"Ron Pundak was a warrior for peace until his last breath, a man of values. He dedicated his entire adult life to the fight for peace between us and our neighbors. He was willing to do anything for peace, to give every moment of his life. When it came to peace, he knew no compromise, he chased justice and breathed peace. He was a passionate man for whom peace burned like an eternal flame. He was passionate and encouraged passion in others; he was dedicated, and inspired dedication in others. Ron was the salt of the earth, a great spirit, a family man. He will be missed by us all." – President Shimon Peres remembering Ron Pundak, one of the minds behind the Oslo Accords, after Pundak's passing this morning (Friday 4/11)

11) Hamas calls for end to PA security coordination with Israel

Chris Carlson, Ma'an News Agency, April 9, 2014

Hamas said today [Wednesday, April 9] that Palestinians in the West Bank should "give full rein" to resistance against the Israeli occupation and end security cooperation with Israel. The move comes just hours after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered Israeli government officials to stop cooperation with Palestinian officials as part of a round of sanctions on the PA, as peace negotiations between the two sides stalled in recent days.

Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoun said PA President Mahmoud Abbas should take advantage of Netanyahu's decision and end all aspects of security coordination with Israel. Abbas should let resistance "deter the Israeli occupation and defend our people, our land, and our holy places," Barhoun said in a statement. He said Abbas should end negotiations and recruit regional and international opposition to the occupation.

The failure of the peace talks so far proves that Hamas was correct in its view that negotiations with Israel only have a negative impact on the Palestinian people, the statement said. Barhoun also urged Arab countries to support regional and international divestment from Israel.

Arab foreign ministers who gathered, on Wednesday, with President Mahmoud Abbas said Israel was "wholly responsible for the dangerous stalemate" in US-brokered peace talks scheduled to end on April 29. The emergency meeting was requested by Abbas after Israel backtracked on releasing a final batch of Palestinian prisoners and reissued tenders for 708 settler homes in occupied East Jerusalem.

Peace talks between Israelis and Palestinians were relaunched in July under the auspices of the U.S. after nearly three years of impasse. Israel's government has announced the construction of thousands of settler housing units and its army has killed 60 Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza since the negotiations began.

Netanyahu's decision to cut coordination with Palestinian officials comes in response to the PLO's decision to apply to join 15 international conventions. Palestinian officials say the decision to apply to the international conventions was in direct response to Israel's failure to release a fourth and final round of veteran prisoners as agreed.

12) Fatah leader: Israeli sanctions will lead to collapse of PA

Ma'an News Agency, April 9, 2014

RAMALLAH (Ma'an) -- Fatah central committee member Azzam al-Ahmad warned on Wednesday that Israeli sanctions will lead to the dismantling of the Palestinian Authority.

Al-Ahmad told Ma'an that the PA will not announce its dismantling outright, but stressed that Israeli actions will "lead to its collapse."

Al-Ahmad's comments come amid a near breakdown in peace talks between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, after Israel refused to release a group of Palestinian prisoners as previously agreed upon if the Palestinians refused to extend talk beyond the deadline at the end of April.

After Palestinian leaders announced that they would accede to 15 international conventions, Israel announced that it would impose sanctions as it considers the move an attempt to seek international recognition and potential intervention by Palestinians. "The United States and Israel are jointly responsible for the collapse of the PA and its consequences," al-Ahmad said.

13) Analysis: Abbas' move brings out Israeli racism **Daoud Kuttab, Ma'an News Agency, April 10, 2014**

The decision by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to sign 15 international treaties brought further proof of Israeli racist attitudes towards the Palestinians. Public statements by senior Israeli officials, as well as commentaries and analyses by Israeli pundits show angry reactions to the Palestinian move, something akin to the anger one would read about when slaves did not show enough respect and actually dared "suggest" that they wanted to be free.

The Israeli prime minister set the tone during the start of the weekly Israeli Cabinet meeting. He argued that Palestinians can only get their coveted state through his style of negotiations and based on his conditions, including his new demand that Palestinians recognize Israel as a Jewish state.

Strategic Affairs Minister Yuval Steinitz joined the attack with a diatribe reflecting a slave-owner mentality: "Truth be told, Mahmoud Abbas is spitting in our faces. The Palestinian Authority exists thanks to us. Not only because of the Oslo Accords, but because of the funds we transfer them, and the security we give them. Otherwise, Hamas and Islamic Jihad, as they control Gaza, would also take down Abbas and take over Ramallah."

Other Israeli officials made similar remarks. Settlements representative in the Cabinet Naftali Bennett mocked the Palestinian president's UN move: "If he wants to go to the UN, I will buy him the ticket and there he will face a personal lawsuit for war crimes."

The Israelis are not signatories to the Rome Convention, which created the International Court of Justice, an institution the Palestinians have not signed up to.

While the vulgarity of Israeli officials came out loud and clear in reaction to the Palestinian move, a more nuanced Israeli racism showed up in the analyses published after the decision. Instead of explaining the truth about the breakdown of the talks, Israeli analysts came up with all sorts of excuses except the real one. Rarely was the Israeli refusal to implement an agreed-to quid pro quo dealt with.

Palestinians had agreed not to join UN agencies or treaties in return for Israel releasing 104 prisoners who had served more than 20 years and jail and who had been imprisoned prior to the Oslo Accords. Israel reneged on that U.S.-sponsored agreement and the Palestinians felt that they were free of their obligation. Israeli analysts focused on blaming the Palestinians for the lack of progress in the peace talks, saying that Abbas was trying to salvage a supposedly lost public support. All these are factually false, and fail to point at Israel for failure of progress in the peace talks.

The Palestinian president has made tough decisions and showed he is able to take difficult choices, like when he told Israeli students one month ago that Palestinians do not plan to flood Israel with refugees. His public compromise on one of the most difficult issues, the right of return, clearly belies the Israeli claim that he is no partner for talks.

Neither has Abbas lost public support, as the Israelis claim. Two independent polls taken in March (a month before the Palestinian decision) show high approval rating for Abbas. The Arwad poll conducted around March 11 shows 58 percent of Palestinians approving his efforts. In another poll, 53 percent said that they would vote for Abbas if national elections were to take place, an increase from 52 percent a few months earlier. Certainly these are not numbers of a failing leader who is looking for a public relations stunt to improve his standings, as claimed by Israel. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

14) Why America is irrelevant to Middle East peacemaking

Henry Siegman, Ha'aretz, April 8, 2014

Secretary of State John Kerry's extraordinary exertions to achieve a conflict-ending Middle East peace accord have been nothing short of heroic. He is as well-informed about the issues in this conflict and as familiar with the major players as any of his predecessors. So what is it that Kerry did not know that is responsible for this latest breakdown in the peace process?

Has the formula for a permanent status accord turned out to be so much more complex than even this well-informed statesman imagined? That is hardly likely, for the outline for an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement is better known and more widely accepted than for virtually any other international conflict. That "everyone knows" the shape of an Israeli-Palestinian agreement has been a cliché for years now. Virtually every detail of a permanent status accord has been known since President Clinton presented his formula for a peace accord in December 2000. No one, including Kerry, has deviated from that plan in any significant respect.

America has been seen by the entire international community as "owning" the peace process, not because its statesmen are believed to be wiser than all others, but because it enjoys leverage with Israel that uniquely enables it to influence the Jewish state's policies. No other country possesses that leverage, for it is the consequence of the many decades of unprecedented U.S. generosity towards the Jewish state in the form of virtually unlimited military and economic assistance. Of no less importance, America has had Israel's back against any and all efforts by the international community to sanction it for its repeated violations of international law with its colonial project in the West Bank, violations that continued even as the peace talks were underway.

It has long been assumed that a point would surely come when Washington would use its long-accumulated leverage to inform Israel's government that it could no longer fend off international criticism of Israel's occupation without incurring serious damage to its own credibility and national interests. It was believed that when the U.S. reaches that point, Israel would have no choice but to withdraw from the West Bank to the pre-1967 lines, subject to minor mutual border swaps and appropriate security guarantees.

But that moment of truth never came, and no one believes any longer it ever will. Not only is the U.S. no longer seen as the indispensable peacemaker, it is now seen as the leading obstacle to peace, for it is repeatedly threatening to veto all efforts to allow the Security Council to deal with the issue of Palestinian statehood or to adopt a framework for a two-state accord. The U.S. has therefore become as relevant to Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking as Micronesia, the country with as impeccable a pro-Israel voting record in the UN as that of the U.S.

President Barack Obama's key advisors, including Benjamin Rhodes, have now upbraided Israelis and Palestinians for their inability to make tough decisions. Secretary Kerry has fallen back on the chestnut that we cannot want peace more than the parties themselves in explanation of the latest break in the talks. These alibis are at best unseemly. For if the parties were able to make the tough decisions on their own, they would have been made long ago. From the beginning, they were in need of an outside party that they trusted, and about whom they could say to their respective constituencies, "We had to make these controversial compromises because otherwise we would have lost support that would have left us more insecure and worse off than we are now."

The U.S. needed to say to Israel that its border is the 1967 line, clearly identified as such in UN Resolutions 242 and 339, and that neither the U.S. nor the international community would accept deviations from that line other than limited and mutually agreed territorial swaps. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

15) Palestinian UN envoy: Boycott “illegal” Israeli settlements **Israeli News, April 8, 2014**

Riyad Mansour told a UN meeting Tuesday that the Palestinians are ready to resume U.S.-mediated peace talks with Israel, which appeared in recent days to be headed for collapse. But he warned that if the Israelis aren't prepared to negotiate “in good faith,” the Palestinians will be forced “to move into the next stage of holding them accountable for all of their illegal behavior in all fronts, politically, diplomatically and legally.”

Mansour said Palestine will officially become a party to 15 international conventions it has applied to join on May 3 – and is ready with more applications, depending on Israel's actions. Mansour also said on Tuesday that the Palestinians were prepared to join more international groups if Israel retaliated. As a UN non-member state, Palestinians can join 63 international agencies and accords.

“If they want to escalate further and try to illegally punish us for doing something legal, we are ready and willing to send the second barrage, the third barrage and more of what legally we could do,” Mansour told the UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

Israeli and Palestinian negotiators ended another U.S.-mediated session on Tuesday with no sign of a breakthrough in efforts to save peace talks from collapse, but an Israeli official said they had agreed to meet again. In a statement about the latest discussions, U.S. State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki said: “Gaps remain, but both sides are committed to narrow the gaps.”

The U.S.-brokered negotiations, which began in July, plunged into crisis last week after Israel, demanding a Palestinian commitment to continue talking beyond an April 29 deadline for a peace deal, failed to carry out a promised release of about two dozen Palestinian prisoners. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas responded by signing 15 global treaties, including the Geneva Conventions on the conduct of war and occupations, on behalf of the State of Palestine, a defiant move that surprised Washington and angered Israel.

Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman, speaking on Israel Radio on Tuesday, said Abbas would have to reverse that step in order for the prisoner release to be re-addressed. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has threatened unspecified retaliation in response to what Israel views as a unilateral statehood move by Abbas. Palestinian Foreign Minister Riad al-Malki said Abbas would appeal at an Arab League meeting in Cairo on Wednesday for political and economic support in the event of Israeli punitive measures.

As part of the U.S.-led bid to salvage the talks, Israeli chief negotiator Tzipi Livni and Palestinian counterpart Saeb Erekat, along with U.S. mediator Martin Indyk, reconvened late on Monday after what the United States had described as a “serious and constructive” meeting on Sunday.

“The atmosphere was business-like and the sides agreed to meet again to try to find a solution to the crisis,” said an Israeli official, who asked not to be identified, after the latest talks wrapped up in the early hours of Tuesday. The official did not say when the next meeting would be held. There was no immediate Palestinian comment about any future session.

Expectations among the Israeli and Palestinian public of a peace deal have been low from the start. The talks have stalled over Palestinian opposition to Israel's demand that it be recognised as a Jewish state, and over settlements built on occupied land Palestinians seek for a country of their own. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

16) Stand firm, John Kerry

Zbigniew Brzezinski, Frank Carlucci, Lee Hamilton, Carla A. Hills, Thomas Pickering and Henry Siegman
Politico, April 8, 2014

The co-authors are, respectively, former national security adviser; former U.S. secretary of defense; former chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee; former U.S. trade representative; former undersecretary of state for political affairs; and president, U.S./Middle East Project.

We commend Secretary of State John Kerry's extraordinary efforts to renew Israeli-Palestinian talks and negotiations for a framework for a peace accord, and the strong support his initiative has received from President Barack Obama. We believe these efforts, and the priority Kerry has assigned to them, have been fully justified. However, we also believe that the necessary confidentiality that Secretary Kerry imposed on the resumed negotiations should not preclude a far more forceful and public expression of certain fundamental U.S. positions:

Settlements: U.S. disapproval of continued settlement enlargement in the Occupied Territories by Israel's government as "illegitimate" and "unhelpful" does not begin to define the destructiveness of this activity. Nor does it dispel the impression that we have come to accept it despite our rhetorical objections. Halting the diplomatic process on a date certain until Israel complies with international law and previous agreements would help to stop this activity and clearly place the onus for the interruption where it belongs.

Palestinian incitement: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's charge that various Palestinian claims to all of historic Palestine constitute incitement that stands in the way of Israel's acceptance of Palestinian statehood reflects a double standard. The Likud and many of Israel's other political parties and their leaders make similar declarations about the legitimacy of Israel's claims to all of Palestine, designating the West Bank "disputed" rather than occupied territory. Moreover, Israeli governments have acted on those claims by establishing Jewish settlements in East Jerusalem and throughout the West Bank. Surely the "incitement" of Palestinian rhetoric hardly compares to the incitement of Israel's actual confiscations of Palestinian territory. If the United States is not prepared to say so openly, there is little hope for the success of these talks, which depends far more on the strength of America's political leverage and its determination to use it than on the good will of the parties.

The Jewishness of the state of Israel: Israel is a Jewish state because its population is overwhelmingly Jewish, Jewish religious and historical holidays are its national holidays, and Hebrew is its national language. But Israeli demands that Palestinians recognize that Israel has been and remains the national homeland of the Jewish people is intended to require the Palestinians to affirm the legitimacy of Israel's replacement of Palestine's Arab population with its own. It also raises Arab fears of continuing differential treatment of Israel's Arab citizens.

Israelis are right to demand that Palestinians recognize the fact of the state of Israel and its legitimacy, which Palestinians in fact did in 1988 and again in 1993. They do not have the right to demand that Palestinians abandon their own national narrative, and the United States should not be party to such a demand. That said, Palestinian recognition of Israel as a Jewish state, provided it grants full and equal rights to its non-Jewish citizens, would not negate the Palestinian national narrative.

Israeli security: The United States has allowed the impression that it supports a version of Israel's security that entails Israeli control of all of Palestine's borders and part of its territory, including the Jordan Valley. Many former heads of Israel's top intelligence agencies, surely among the best informed in the country about the country's security needs, have rejected this version of Israel's security. Meir Dagan, a former head of the Mossad, dismissed it as "nothing more than manipulation." ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)