

## ISRAEL NEEDS A NEW MAP

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In November 2010, I spent a long and fascinating evening with a dozen veteran settlers from the ideological core of the movement previously known as Gush Emunim. I was in their settlement to discuss *ha-matzav* (the situation) with these Jews, who were living the political consequences of their ideology every day. At the end of a long evening, I asked them a question I've asked almost every Israeli I have met for the last 15 years: Can you describe a future for the country that you like and that you think is possible? When I first began asking this question in the late 1990s, Israeli Jews in the center-left of the political spectrum had little difficulty answering with one version or another of the two-state solution. On the other hand, apart from those who would simply say they trusted in *HaShem* (God) to make things work out, I had very little luck finding Israeli Jews on the right side of the spectrum capable of describing a future for the state and its relationship with the Arabs and the region as a whole that they liked and that they thought was possible. But by the early 2000s, it was not only the right that had difficulty answering this question; few in the center or left could do so, either.

I was therefore not surprised at this meeting with the Gush Emunim activists in 2010 when not a single one of them was capable of answering that question. One settler declared that — for reasons he did not explain — the question itself was unfair. He was actually told by his colleagues, “No, actually, we have to realize this is a fair question,” but he insisted it was unfair. What was striking was the glum realization that none of those present, usually so voluble and confident on so many topics, could describe a future that in its basic outlines they themselves could consider both satisfying and attainable.

The angst that filled their room that night is part of a larger, oft-commented-upon sense of depression, worry, even existential dread that has settled upon the Jewish state. A revealing sign of this abiding mood is the prevalence in Israeli political discussions of conditional sentences in which the main clause refers to the survival of the state. For example: “If Iran gets nuclear weapons, the state will not survive”; “If settlements are not built, the state will not survive”; “If more settlements are built, the state will not survive”; “If the youth are not brought to

believe in the Zionist dream, the state will not survive”; “If the education system is not improved, the state will not survive”; “If the Galilee, Jerusalem and the Negev are not settled with Jews, the state will not survive”; “If a two-state solution is not implemented, the state will not survive”; “If Israel abandons Judea and Samaria, the state will not survive”; “If the Golan is returned to Syria, the state will not survive”; “If *aliyah* (immigration) does not increase, the state will not survive”; “If Israel remains internally divided, the state will not survive”; “If *hasbara* (propaganda) is not improved, the state will not survive”; “If the *Haredim* (the ultra-orthodox) and the Arab citizens of the country are not required to assume the full responsibilities of citizenship, the state will not survive”; “If Palestinian refugees are given the right to return, the state will not survive”; “If the global delegitimization campaign is not defeated, the state will not survive”; “If the Arab peace initiative is not acted upon, the state will not survive.”

In a recent study, Israeli scholar Uriel Abulof presented data showing that in the years between 1996 and 2001, an average of 147 articles per year appeared in *Haaretz* focused on an existential threat to the country. In the next six years following 2001, that average increased from 147 to 244 articles a year, an increase of 65 percent.

Another refrain — second to the theme that Israel is in danger and is not going to survive, based on any one of a multitude of threats — is just as common, expressing and usually bemoaning the impossibility of significant change taking place in Israeli politics or in Israeli policies on key issues before the country. Even the moderately surprising outcome of Israel’s recent elections has led no serious observers to imagine a substantial change resulting in

Israel’s relationship to the Palestinians or in its overall predicament. I might note that it’s fascinating to look at the biggest surprise in that election: the success of Yesh Atid, which won 19 seats. What does the name of that party mean? “There is a Future.” The fact that Yesh Atid wins with that name is a fascinating indicator that, as I have suggested, just about everybody is asking the question “Is there a future?”

What is the implication for Israel of a combination of an abiding sense of numerous threats to the state’s very existence and a conviction that the country’s political system is paralyzed? What is the underlying logic that produces this terrible combination of public beliefs? How can this contemporary version of “as sheep going to the slaughter” be replaced by a healthier, vigorous posture toward the challenges facing Israel?

To begin, let us establish the pattern of stagnation in Israel that contributes to the sense of collective — if not so often personal or individual — doom. The key problem facing the country for the last 45 years is what to do with the West Bank and its large Palestinian population. On the one hand, any reader of the Israeli press is familiar with the merry-go-round of deadlines, scandals, protests, career implosions, confrontations, court decisions, demonstrations, new settlement construction, partial restraints on settlements, high-level meetings, settler vigilantism, Palestinian terrorism, rockets on Israel from Gaza, bombings and invasions of Gaza, liquidations, retaliations, human-rights challenges and UN votes. Like a carousel, news of the conflict and the peace process goes on and on, but it goes nowhere.

We can test this claim by a simple thought experiment. Let’s look at the past, starting from the present, in approximately

five-year chunks. Notice what happens if we go back five years. In the five years since then, what has changed, if anything, in the trajectory of the West Bank and its relationship to Israel? In 2007, five years before the recent war in Gaza, Israel was recovering from an attack against Hezbollah in Lebanon that developed into a major political and military debacle, putting an effective end to the political prospects of the relatively moderate, Olmert-led, Kadima-Labor coalition government. Within eight months, it would seek unsuccessfully to redeem itself with an immensely destructive, politically costly in international terms but almost casualty-free, war in Gaza to punish Hamas for rocket attacks. No serious negotiations were underway in 2007 and none are now. The political mood in Israel was more or less what it is now: outwardly defiant, inwardly depressed and angry. This is the mood that helped bring to power a coalition government run by the Likud under Benjamin Netanyahu and the hard-right Yisrael Beiteinu party. These two parties, now merged, are the core of the new Israeli government.

As part of our thought experiment, let's push back the clock five more years. In 2002, Israel under Ariel Sharon launched a major operation in Gaza in response to suicide bombings in the second Intifada, along with the largest military operation in the West Bank since the 1967 war. Hundreds of Palestinians were killed, thousands detained. A policy of closing Israel to West Bank Palestinians, begun in the early 1990s, was escalated with the construction of the "separation barrier."

A similar logic lay behind Sharon's decision to disengage from the Gaza Strip, along with an attempt to put the already moribund peace process into what his adviser Dov Weissglass called "formalde-

hyde" for 20 years. The idea, as Weissglass put it, was to receive a "certificate of no one to talk to" from the international community that would protect the West Bank from any diplomatic or political process likely to affect settlements and de facto annexation. This was achieved by a unilateral withdrawal from Gaza, condemnation of the Hamas government there as a terrorist organization, and a quarantine/blockade of that territory. Disengagement from Gaza was accompanied then by an all-out effort to discredit and destroy Yasser Arafat as leader of the Palestinians.

To continue for one more cycle, five years farther in the past, consider the status of the West Bank in 1997. Netanyahu had come to power in the aftermath of a horrific series of terrorist bombings and Israeli retaliations against Palestinians. On the ground and in the diplomatic arena, Netanyahu abandoned any effort to use the Oslo Accords as a partnership with Palestinian leaders, substituting instead legalistic exploitation of Oslo's complex provisions to thwart any progress toward implementation of a two-state solution and to destroy the image of the Palestinian Authority as a potential partner, all the while expanding settlements and road construction to integrate the West Bank as tightly as possible into Israel.

What can we learn from this exercise of going back in time for three chunks of five years? The most striking thing is how much continuity is displayed despite all the ups and downs of the last 16 years. That period included Netanyahu's defeat by a Labor Party peace candidate, Ehud Barak; the Clinton-hosted Camp David summit; the death of Arafat; the disengagement from Gaza; several wars or mini-wars; countless terrorist attacks and retaliations; several Israeli elections; several wars in

the region; two changes in the party controlling the White House; the upheavals of the Arab Spring; civil war in Syria; the end of the Israeli-Turkish alliance; and the rise of a global boycott, divestment and sanctions movement targeting Israel and Israeli policies. Despite all this, virtually nothing has changed to deflect the trajectory of the West Bank and its relationship to Israel as a tightly subordinated, politically impotent, and developmentally stagnant region.

Nor can one detect any significant effect on the steady expansion of Israeli settlement of the West Bank. In 1997, there were 300,000 Jewish settlers in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. In 2002, there were 390,000. In 2007, there were 460,000. Today, there are 520,000. So for all this tumult, all this churning, nothing changes except the number of settlers.

Well, not quite nothing. One other substantial change may be noted inside Israel during this period: the disappearance of the Zionist left as an effective political force. True, in the last election, enough dovish, liberal Meretz voters returned from the centrist groups to whom they had given support in previous elections to raise Meretz's representation from three Knesset members to six, but still only half its representation in the 1992-96 Knesset. Considering decisions by Yesh Atid and the shriveled Labor Party to virtually abandon the issues of peace and the Palestinians during their campaigns, however, there is no reason to doubt the general judgment of observers regarding the collapse and near political disappearance of the dovish left in Israel as a political force capable of leading the country or playing a decisive role in a coalition government. Regardless of any formal responsibility she may have, no serious observer expects Tzipi Livni to be able to make any prog-

ress on this front with Bibi Netanyahu in the prime minister's office.

The fact is that, with Rabin's assassination in 1995 and Peres's incompetence and timidity as his successor, followed by Netanyahu's systematic sabotage of Oslo and Barak's betrayal of it, the peace process was largely dead even before the outbreak of the second Intifada. The horrors of that conflict then sealed its fate by triggering a mass alienation of centrist Israelis that corresponded to a comparable shift among Palestinians that had already occurred. These developments have consigned dovish politicians and commentators in Israel to the role of Cassandra: Year after year they warn that, without immediate change in Israeli policies, the two-state solution will disappear as a strategy for addressing fundamental challenges to Israel's future, and with it any chance for a state that is both democratic and Jewish.

The anxieties associated with Israeli inability to imagine a positive future for the country or change in its political direction have been sharpened in recent years by transformational developments in the Middle East as a whole. The contrast is stark. Israelis feel their country is set on an unchangeable course to an undesired destination. At the same time, tens or even hundreds of millions of Middle Easterners have been aroused by the partial but impressive accomplishments of people power to remove or destabilize dictatorships. They know their world is changing. They may be deeply worried about near-term economic and political prospects, but one thing they do know, or at least believe, is that their world can be changed and that they can have a hand in changing it. The risks taken and sacrifices made by masses of mobilized Libyans, Egyptians, Tunisians, Syrians, Bahrainis, Iranians, Jordani-

ans, Moroccans and others show that in the Muslim Middle East, there are plenty of people able to imagine a better future and willing to act vigorously to bring it about.

Yes, hundreds of thousands of Israelis were also inspired to take to the streets, but the demands of that movement for social and economic justice within Israel were narrow. Despite the 19 seats received by Yesh Atid, that brief period of mass mobilization has so far not resulted in significant change at either the political or policy level in Israel.

Of course, it is not only or even mainly this contrast between Muslim Middle Easterners that see the future as a dynamic one, where they have a role to play, and the image in Israel of the future as a stagnant one in which they are trapped, more or less, to live forever the way they are living now. What matters more is that the substance of changes in the Arab world are limiting the ability of Israel to use force — unilaterally and at low cost — as a substitute for diplomatic or political action capable of protecting the country's long-term interests in peace and security. The treaty with Egypt is now at risk, saddling the country with the prospect of the southern front's budget-busting reappearance. With the added specter of a nuclear-capable Iran on the horizon, it's no wonder an otherwise extreme right-wing government has been careful to refrain from "mowing the lawn" in Lebanon or sending armor and infantry into Gaza. It's one thing to satisfy overwrought domestic opinion with large-scale military action if Israeli casualties are counted in the single digits and the fighting has no major economic impact. It's quite another to do so when the result can be heavy bombardment of Israeli cities and the risk of billions more dollars annually in defense costs.

It is precisely against this background of paralysis, confusion about the future, and dramatic shifts in the strategic landscape that the impoverishment of Zionist ideology for coping with twenty-first-century problems is thrown into high relief. In many respects, Israel operates as if caught in a nineteenth-century time warp. Indeed, the political consciousness of Israeli Jews is still dominated by the confrontation of Jews 130 years ago with vicious forms of anti-Semitism in a rapidly modernizing Europe. Key Zionist principles of self-reliance, national egoism and opportunistic expansionism that served the Jewish nationalist movement well in its heroic period are dangerously out of place in the twenty-first-century. Yet these principles, the polemics developed to defend them, and the lapses, errors, exaggerations and stereotypes that eventually turn all ideologies into snares and delusions, hold Israeli political culture and the outlook of many Israelis in an iron grip.

Last year, *The Jerusalem Post* hosted its first annual conference — not in Jerusalem, but in New York. The program featured a full array of center, center-right, and right-wing politicians from Israel: former prime ministers, former chiefs of staff, famous polemicists, diplomats and journalists. The conference title was "Israel 2012: Fighting for the Zionist Dream," evoking Herzl's Nietzschean pronouncement, "If you will it, it is no dream." However, not one of the three substantive sessions of this conference — Iran, American Jewry, and the global delegitimization campaign — had anything to do with foundational Zionist principles, let alone Zionist dreams. My point is that even as most Israeli Jews and virtually all Israeli politicians feel compelled to turn to Zionist slogans and tropes for guidance, reassurance, legitimization

and the names that they give to the conferences they hold, there is virtually nothing there of use for finding solutions to contemporary problems.

The foundational principles of Zionism, especially as they relate to the problem of achieving a permanent and secure place for Israel in the Middle East, are not only wrong, they are absurdly wrong. Herzl's Zionism began with the assumption that the homelessness of the Jews was a special and vital problem for the international community, and that the international community would go to great lengths — including imposing a Jewish state on resisting Arab locals — to solve it. Today, the opposite is the case. The international community now sees the homelessness of the Palestinians as a special problem requiring global intervention and possibly imposition of a settlement against the will of the Israelis. Rather than riding a wave of sympathy and support for Zionism as a solution to the worldwide problem of anti-Semitism, and despite huge investments in rebranding efforts, the policies of the Israeli government toward the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, Hamas in Gaza, and the Arab citizens of Israel, have triggered cascades of international obloquy toward Israel and waves of sympathy and mobilization on behalf of the Palestinians — including a campaign of boycott, divestment and sanctions that seeks not just an end to the occupation but the delegitimization of Israel as a Jewish state.

Early Zionists imagined the Jewish state as a modern, secular democracy, serving as a rampart of Western civilization against the barbarian East sunk in backward religious ideas. Eventually, it was expected, the region would modernize, westernize and democratize. In the process, the region would become like

Israel and accepting of — even grateful for — its presence. Instead, what has Israel's association with the West and the modernization of Middle Eastern countries such as Turkey produced? Modernization and democracy have come to Turkey, but the result has been intensified opposition to, and even hatred of, Israel. The Arab Spring may or may not bring democracy to the region, but it has removed dictators with whom Israel knew how to cooperate. In post-Mubarak Egypt, it is becoming evident that popular beliefs and passions will have greater influence over foreign policy in Muslim Middle Eastern states. This will mean a stronger commitment to Palestinian demands and less tolerance for back-room security cooperation with Israel or for winking at Israeli uses of force in Gaza or Lebanon.

Another bedrock idea of Zionism was that in a Jewish state in the Middle East, Jews would finally be physically secure against threats to their existence. But now, with Iran coyly and infuriatingly combining Holocaust rhetoric with nuclear opacity, Israelis feel deep in their core the reality that the one place in the world Jews could really be exposed to a threat to their physical existence is Israel.

What kind of a recognizable Zionist world is it when the fastest-growing Jewish community in the world is in Berlin, due in substantial measure to Israeli emigration? Is it any wonder that Israeli Jews should be confused and frustrated? They turn to Zionist principles, ideas and political stances for guidance and inspiration, but these elements of Zionism's heroic period are precisely wrong about the present. Israel is not the vanguard of a Europeanized Middle East that will embrace it gratefully. The world is fixated on an international problem of homeless-

ness for a persecuted people, but it's not the problem of the Jews; it's the problem of the Palestinians. Israel is not the only democracy in the Middle East, and it is certainly not a secular democracy. The rule of the effendis and the dictators is coming to an end. But as the masses in the Middle East enter politics, the governments they are producing are not and cannot be lovers of the Jewish state. Even the "Iron Wall," the idea that at least medium-term security can be provided by establishing Israel's presence as a "like it or not" permanent reality, collapses under the weight of hopelessness about the possibility of accommodation with the Arab world, missile threats carrying weapons of mass destruction, and the Holocaust mania such threats so easily engender.

The predicament Israelis face can be summarized with a simple allegory. Imagine a family car trip. I live in Philadelphia — let's imagine a trip in Pennsylvania. The family piles into the car, and heads out onto the road. They've got a map of Pennsylvania. The map shows where to go and where not to go for swimming, camping, hiking and so on. Here's the Delaware River gap, here are the Pocono mountains. Relying on that same map, they cross the Susquehanna River. It is going north to south, just the way it's supposed to. All is well, all is understandable. But imagine that the family continues driving and they end up in Montana or Texas, but all they've got is that map of Pennsylvania. They keep relying on it. But that map is not going to help them find their way, it's going to produce nothing but confusion, false certainty, irritation, anger and frustration. The Rio Grande will be mistaken as the Ohio, the Poconos will be enormously larger than they're supposed to be. Without a new map or at least the realization that

the old map cannot possibly provide guidance, the trip can only end in disillusionment and disaster, to say nothing of bitter disputes within the car over who misinterpreted the map and who is responsible for the wrong turns.

Zionist ideology, like any ideology, combines a theory of how the world works with an imperative to action. That's what an ideology is — it's a theory plus an exhortation. An ideology is a map of the political world, with a route to be followed that is already charted.

Israelis need a new map, a more accurate theory of how the world works, one that does not identify the country's problems as fundamentally linked to anti-Semitism, that does not blame the world for the failure of its own policies, that is not wedded to *fait accompli* heroism of the "tower and stockade" as a way to overcome moral uncertainties and international opprobrium, that does not fashion Palestinians as Nazis or the United Nations as the British mandate, and that recognizes that the one fundamental objective of Zionism has been achieved — Israel is a normal country. That means it is as prone to stupidity and to brutality in the name of its old gods as any other country. More ominously, it is as likely as any other small country to pay the terrible costs of not seeing in itself the flaws it so naturally sees in others.

Zionist ideology was, in its day, a valuable problem identifier and guide to the solutions for those problems for desperate Jews. But except for the foundational principle that Jews are normal and deserve the rights of any other people, the traditional discourse of Zionism as theory and guide is an obstacle to Jewish welfare and security. The challenges Israel faces are immense but not necessarily insuperable. What can make them insuperable

are the paralyzing distortions of Zionist ideology; America's smothering cocoon of economic and political largesse; and a fatal embrace of the Holocaust as a warrant for paranoia, a guaranteed argument-ender, and a permanent, infinite IOU. Israel can live in a post-Zionist age by adapting to the world as it is, or it can die in one. As we Jews say: "Choose life."

**Q AND A**

**Q:** Is there any way out of the current situation so long as the peace efforts have completely collapsed? You cannot ask to have a peace negotiation between a tiger and a cat, with the tiger protected by a tamed lion (that's the United States). Is there any way that history will not take its ugly course in the region, whereby millions of people could be killed and Israel could be wiped off the map?

**DR. LUSTICK:** That is the question we are all here wondering about. I'm writing a new book on that, but I've not written the conclusion yet. I think the way you put it at the end is very important. History will solve the problem, in the sense of the way entropy solves problems. You don't stay with this kind of constrained volatility forever. When you constrain exchange rates in a volatile market by not allowing rates to move, even though the actual economy makes them absurd, rates will eventually change, but in a very radical, non-linear way. The more the constraint, the less the adaptation to changing conditions, the more jagged and painful that adaptation is going to be. What I've been describing is the exhaustion of Zionist ideology and its iron grip on Israel. I could just as easily lecture on the fatal embrace of the Holocaust and the Israel lobby in the United States. Those three things constrain this

volatility, making it difficult to develop or implement new policies as gradual adaptations to stubborn realities.

That doesn't mean peaceful change is impossible. However, I'm afraid it's highly implausible. There's a huge difference between saying that something is impossible and saying that it's implausible, as opposed to saying it's improbable. I used to think during the peace process in 1993-94 that actually a two-state solution was probable. Now, anyone who's advocating the two-state solution is in the position of trying to say it's not just barely possible; it also could be plausible. But that person is not struggling to make it happen, only to make it seem plausible. That's a useful thing to do. I still think it's possible. However, many other things are more plausible and more probable.

Positive change will require heavy lifting by an American president, and of course the problem is that there is almost no convincing political logic leading an American president to do so. On the other hand, consider for a moment other situations of constrained volatility: the Soviet Union before its tremendous transformation in 1989 or Iran in 1978-79. How many years prior to those tremendous transformations would you have been able to imagine that these events would have happened? Ten years? No. Five years? Maybe two, if you were very, very good? So we may be much closer to tremendous change that will not be pleasant.

**Q:** I came hoping that you would have a map for us, for Israel. Given the mood of Israelis, they have hunkered down, and the Arabs' love for freedom is rising. Can we have a peaceful solution? The Soviet Union and Iran were internal transformations. But here it is not confined to Israel.

Do you see, short of a catastrophe, that there will be changes, given the mood of both Israelis and Arabs?

**DR. LUSTICK:** Let me give you something of a map that might not be catastrophic. What could Israel move toward now? Let's imagine that we strip away this Zionist ideology, these preconceptions, these categories that are a hundred years out of date, and look at the reality. You see opportunities, such as a two-state solution, with a map that involves land swaps and a real Palestinian state with Al Quds as its capital. You see economic opportunities flowing from Europe, the United States and Saudi Arabia.

But this would require a sharable narrative. When Ben-Gurion and Sharett agreed to German reparations in the early 1950s, they forced Germany in secret negotiations to acknowledge what actually happened in the Holocaust before they would agree to take the German money. The amazing thing is that, although Adenauer did give a speech including the paragraph they agreed on, the speech said almost nothing else that was true. He said the German people abhorred the Nazis and that most of them fought to rescue their Jewish brethren. But Ben-Gurion and Sharett still were able to use that little bit of truth about the Holocaust in the speech to take the money and build the Jewish state. It's not true that the Palestinians need an admission of the whole truth by Israel, but there has to be a sharable narrative. Once you have that, other possibilities that have seemed impossible can open up.

There has to be generous refugee compensation, which would be obvious to anyone who wasn't terrified about an end to the country because you thought the principle of Palestinian return was too

difficult to admit responsibility for. You would have to agree, instead of accepting Ben-Gurion's view that Israeli Jews need nuclear weapons to survive another Holocaust, that nuclear weapons, whether in Israel's hands or anyone else's hands, are a threat to the peoples of the Middle East. You would have to agree that Israel could use its nuclear capacity to arrive at a non-nuclear, non-WMD (weapons of mass destruction) Middle East and avoid this threat.

I could go on about discovering new paths forward, once you stop thinking of Israel in traditional, strictly Zionist terms.

But paths forward to where? We've talked about the two-state solution, but that can come in many different forms. You can hold open the idea of a negotiated agreement, which many of us may fantasize about, or you could imagine something that is now much more likely, a glorified *hudna* (truce), where there is no end to the conflict officially, but there is an end to the use of military force. Khrushchev said, "We will bury you" to the United States. But instead of saying we've got to destroy Khrushchev and the Soviet Union, we said, okay, we're going to have peaceful, competitive coexistence.

**Q:** You say Israelis don't really see a positive future because they are stuck in a nineteenth-century time warp. But Israeli policies are based on national security and the need to survive violent attacks, and thus Israelis are unable to think about a more positive future. Are there leaders in the Israeli government who agree with your analysis?

**DR. LUSTICK:** The security rationale is used by Israeli leaders to justify every policy. In fact, most problematic Israeli

policies have nothing to do with national security — for example, settlements, the main problem that makes this conflict nearly insoluble. For the past 45 years, most Israeli generals have opposed settlements as a burden.

Even Israel's policy toward Iran has more to do with distracting attention away from the Palestinian issue than with security. Israel's former security chiefs acknowledged in their interviews in the movie *The Gatekeepers* that Israeli policies toward the Palestinians have made no strategic contribution to security.

As for prominent Israeli leaders who agree with me, I cannot point to any person. But in Israeli universities and think tanks there is widespread acceptance that Israeli policies must change. Unfortunately, it takes a while for those ideas to percolate into the culture and produce cadres who can be political leaders. Whether that process will occur fast enough, I don't know.

**Q:** President Obama will be going soon to Israel, Jordan and the West Bank. What policies should he promote?

**DR. LUSTICK:** It's very, very difficult for an American president to create a policy toward Israel based on national security or national interest. Our leaders are heavily influenced by domestic constituencies that care tremendously about Israel while other Americans have wider interests and care far less about Israel. Indeed, our policy toward Israel deviates wildly from the international mean for much the same reason that our policy toward Cuba does — a powerful, strategically placed, single-issue lobby. Often, in the United Nations, the United States, Israel and Micronesia vote one way, and the rest of the world votes the other.

The other obstacle, apart from the lack of a strong domestic mandate, to pressing for new Israeli policies, is that there is virtually no opposition or shadow government in Israel today that would support such American pressure for change on, for example, Israel's settlement policy. In contrast, when President George H.W. Bush threatened to cut back on loan guarantees for settlements in the early 1990s, there was support for this in the Israeli opposition, which won the next election, leading to the Rabin government.

**Q:** Also, one of the things that sort of put the two-state solution on the agenda was Palestinian support for it. I don't see any Palestinian strategy today. What can the Palestinian collective do to change things and to be something more than just the victim?

**Q:** We're still negotiating between the Palestinian Authority and Israel. Do you see negotiations succeeding? Are they even worthwhile? How can we influence either side?

**DR. LUSTICK:** I'm skeptical about simply returning to negotiations without new policies. There's a tendency in this town to believe that talks are better than no talks, but that's not always the case. I can't imagine Netanyahu being involved right now in real negotiations, and it would be a delusion to pursue them. If I were the United States, I would play hard to get. You want me to get involved? You're going to have to meet my conditions. That's a better stance. The problem with it is that, in the Israeli context, we are constantly doing things that fan the flames of the conflict, for example, by giving \$3 billion a year in unconditional aid to Israel and

voting against everything critical of Israel in the United Nations, irrespective of the merits. It's important to stop doing that before pushing new negotiations. If we did so, that would shape the political space and make negotiations worth pursuing.

I'm not predicting that my views will be embraced by the mainstream of Israeli political opinion — even left-wing political opinion — in the near future. But I'm also not sure it is too late. The bad news is that I argued in 1971 that 1,500 settlers in the West Bank were a catastrophe that would lead Israel into a political dungeon from which it might never escape. I was laughed at. I also argued for a Palestinian state alongside Israel in the early 1970s, but it took 25 years before the mainstream in Israeli politics agreed with that. It may take another 25 years before they realize that what I'm saying is true now and will be even truer if Israel is still around in 20 or 25 more years.

There are ideas percolating among young Israelis who are bravely pursuing a brighter vision for Israel and Palestine, despite the enormous pressures on them. The sparks of change are there, though they may not succeed.

Yes, actually, Palestinians have a strategy. The Palestinian Authority (PA) has become dependent on funds from abroad. For all the good will I feel toward Abbas himself, the PA is separated from the population and has no real political support. The PA is caught between its need to work with Israel and the strategies, increasingly popular among Palestinians, of boycott, divestment and sanctions, delegitimization, and fighting in arenas where Israel does not have an automatic edge. Thus, whether the PA does challenge Israel in the International Criminal Court and elsewhere will be an interesting indication of where things

are headed. Hamas's position is non-recognition of Israel and its right to exist as a Jewish state. Hamas and the Palestinians in the West Bank are never going to say, "We have a duty to allow you to be here." They may, as the "Iron Wall" strategy demanded, acquiesce in a reality they can't change, but that's different. I think they (both the PLO and Hamas) will say, we don't agree to an end to the conflict, but we also are ready to enter a long-term competitive struggle on all levels, and we can have a peaceful *modus vivendi*.

**Q:** It seems to me that the Zionists are the ones who have changed because of the situation, and you're the one who's the dinosaur and stuck in the old habits, believing the old Zionist dream that if they behaved properly and accommodated the Arabs that they would have peace.

**DR. LUSTICK:** You said that the old Zionist dream was that if we Jews, Zionists, behave properly, then we would have peace with Arabs. Which old Zionist can you cite that had that dream? Because I don't know of any. What was actually the old Zionist position was not the dream that if we behave properly the Arabs will make peace with us. No, they were much smarter than that. In the 1920s, Ben-Gurion said, there's a simple problem between the Arabs and us: they want the country to be theirs, we want it to be ours. Jabotinsky said in his famous "Iron Wall" article, which was accepted by almost the entire Zionist movement, that there is no basis for the Arabs, who are the indigenous population, to make peace with us alien settlers. No. We can't negotiate with them now because we have no minimal basis for agreement with them. We have to eliminate any hope that they can get rid of us. Then

we could, at least in principle, negotiate with them.

But Netanyahu has abandoned this policy. The old policy was that the Jews should not use more violence than necessary, because they should always look for the opportunity eventually to make a compromise. As I wrote in my article on the abandonment of the “Iron Wall,” the new Israeli leadership doesn’t believe in the Iron Wall anymore and has abandoned even the possibility of eventual peaceful compromise. Let me ask you a question. Do you have an image of an Israel in the future that you like and you think is possible? What would be the fate of the Arabs? Do you think it’s possible to get the Arabs to accept an Israel that you would like?

**Q:** In my lifetime no, they won’t accept it. So the point is, you have to be humane and give them what you can give them, but not enough so you’re going to destroy yourself.

**Q:** Has the demographic explosion in Israel of the religious and the Haredi sectors, which are not open to modernization, blocked Zionism from adapting to reality? How does that change affect the ability of Israel to actually face the future?

**DR. LUSTICK:** The Haredim, the ultra-orthodox, have a lot of children, but let’s not exaggerate. We see all the statistics about the Haredi birth rate, but you don’t see so many statistics about the number of Israelis who leave the Haredi world. So although they’re growing, it’s not as if their demographic bulk is the most important thing shaping Israel’s future.

I’ll tell you what the most important thing is in this sector: ideological change. There’s no intrinsic reason why the

Haredim can’t be the most dovish force in Israel. They were for a long time. The head of what is now Shas, Ovadia Yosef, was at one point the person who wanted to withdraw from all the territories. When I look at the settlements, the ones I’m least worried about are Beitar Illit and other ultra-orthodox communities, because once the rabbi tells them to go, they’re out of there. But there is no group in Israel, even the Russians, that has as much visceral fear and hatred against Gentiles, but specifically Arabs, as the Haredim. That has penetrated into their culture and will be a big job for the rabbis to overcome. But the rabbis have resources, if they needed to use them. So I wouldn’t say it’s the demographics; it is that ideological/cultural shift that is the big challenge.

**Q:** We’re about to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech. I think that ushered in the end of segregation, or at least the approach to the end of segregation in the United States. So why would the United States want to acquiesce in segregation in Israel? As a follow-up, can Jews still maintain a homeland if they allow equal rights to the Palestinians?

**DR. LUSTICK:** How can the United States support segregation in Israel when we have tried to end it here? The United States overthrew Allende, a democratically elected government. All over the world we have supported for decades governments that absolutely contradicted not only our values, but the values that we aspired to. So that is not a puzzle. You could try to make an argument out of it, which is important because the argument on the Israel lobby side often is that Israel is the only democracy in the region; they share

our values. It's pretty easy to see, however, that the current governments in Israel don't share a lot of traditional American values, and you've pointed out one of them.

To be fair, not every state, including Israel or a Palestinian state, has to be like the United States, where you have complete integration — as if we do. Every country expresses its own culture.

But on the other hand, there certainly will be no Israel as an expression of Jewish culture if there is not also a Palestine that is an expression of Arab-Palestinian culture. It just won't be. It may be that one way to do that is in a larger political entity that's not two states but a larger, different kind of state. We don't know yet. But I agree with the basic thrust of your comment.

**Q:** What is Israeli policy toward the Syrian conflict? Also, is Israel a democracy? How can it be if Palestinians refugees don't have a right to return?

**DR. LUSTICK:** On Syria, that's one issue where I don't have a lot of criticism of Israeli policy, frankly. I'm not sure they have any good options. I don't know what they're doing behind the scenes. They've been relatively moderate in their responses to a couple of shells that have come over. They've been focused on issues that clearly are national-security issues to them — for example, the transfer of new kinds of technology to Hezbollah and Syrian chemical weapons. There's no way not to be worried about those. I suspect, and I'm fairly confident, that they're cooperating with the United States and the Jordanians — maybe even with the Turks. So I don't

have any particular criticism of Israel in that regard.

I think, like the rest of the world, Israelis are horrified by what's going on in Syria. I don't think they have the feeling in general, "Better the evil we knew than the one we don't know." I don't think Israelis are particularly optimistic about the groups that are rebelling in Syria. As I have said, in any case, it is going to be more difficult for Israeli governments to relate to new Arab governments, whereas in the past, they could make backroom deals with dictators. Democracy has its costs, and that's one of them for Israel.

**Q:** Is perhaps the key to your theory the fact that Zionism may have been based upon nineteenth-century Western colonialism, and continues in that direction, which sets it on the wrong course?

**DR. LUSTICK:** It's a complicated question. Zionism borrowed from many European ideologies, including colonialism and nationalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries. After World War II, colonialism was discredited and national liberation took its place. I can show you a great Zionist pamphlet from the 1960s saying Zionism was the first of all national liberation movements. I can show you pamphlets from 50 years earlier when Zionism was the prototype for what a true colonialist movement should be.

In other words, don't take too seriously ideological labels like racialism, nationalism, communism, fascism, self-determination — they all have left their sediments in contemporary Zionism.