

## Israel: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

The author of an article, in *The Jerusalem Post* (July 25, 2019), “Encountering Peace: Have We No Shame?” stimulated this overview of the “Palestine Problem.” The author, Gershon Baskin, moved back to Israel from America and took up the cause of peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians. A few days ago, he recounted an event that made a mockery of his efforts to achieve peace: “As I watched the video of the Israeli soldiers and police blowing up one of the 13 residential buildings demolished this week in the Wadi al-Hummus neighborhood of Sur Bahir in east Jerusalem, I wanted to bury myself in shame. When the building imploded and the soldiers laughed as we heard the screams and cries from the Palestinians who became homeless, my shame turned to pure outrage...” As he pointed out, this event was one of an almost weekly litany of Israeli destruction of Palestinian life and their planting of yet-more seeds of hatred among the Palestinians.

The Western — but not so much the Israeli media — often “overlook” such events. The Israelis are more open about reporting them. But both usually stop there. If we really want peace in the Middle East and particularly in the Palestine-Israeli conflict, we cannot stop there. We must seek a more comprehensive view of the “Palestine Problem.” I will try to produce such a comprehensive view here. I begin with how it began, then discuss why it has shaped the lives of so many people, predict how long it will continue and what it will entail in the coming decade or so. I first take up how it began.

Israeli policy was set forth and actions that today were predictable a century ago when the Zionist movement got started, was a perhaps inevitable result of Western antisemitism and was built upon the model of Western imperialism.

What the Zionists did and are doing to the Palestinian people parallels what generation after generation of Europeans did to Jews — and in similar ways also did to Arabs and other colonial peoples. I have discussed the process and results of imperialism on the Muslims in my *Crusade and Jihad: The Thousand-Year War Between The Muslim World and the Global North* (Yale University Press 2018). Of course, neither sequence of oppressive acts justifies the other. Both are inexcusable. But both happened. Even by closing our minds, we cannot escape them. They shape our world today. Both antisemitism and imperialism exemplify the tyranny of the powerful over the weak. The conflict has morphed into an on-going modern form with no end in sight. Both Semitic peoples — the Jews and the Palestinians, most of whom are Muslims — are today locked in a macabre dance of misery, destruction, “Exodus” and death. No one has figured out how to stop the “music.” I tried three times on behalf of the US government and failed; the best I was able to achieve — at the request of both parties (Prime Minister Meir and President Nasser)— was a pause, the ceasefire on the Suez Canal in 1970.

There are obviously many complications and fundamental disagreements that will have to be addressed if any lasting peace can be hoped for; but the absolutely essential starting point is that no substantial improvement made unless or until we, the Israelis and their supporters agree that Israel is a *state* like other states, to be regarded and treated as such, subject to international custom, law and agreements rather than a *cause* above reproach and unaccountable for its actions. Only on this rational basis is there *scope* for moves toward peace. From there, useful analysis of the issues can be undertaken and useful recounting of fears and objectives can be evaluated.

Some participants and observers believe that there is or can be no way to stop the misery until the “music” is finished: so we can usefully begin by asking, “what is the music to which both sides dance?”

In broad terms, of course, we already know the answers. On the surface, they are simple: the Palestinians want their land back while the Israelis are determined never again to be subjected to a Holocaust. But that is only the surface of the conundrum of making peace. Virtually all of the relevant issues have been modified by historical events as perceived through cultural lenses and the guidance of leaders as well as such “objective” issues as geography. Progress can be made only through a sensitive, comprehensive and clear-eyed approach. I will try to provide that in as few words as possible. Here, I will deal with the fundamental issues involved in each of these and attempt to show both how they have been used and modified and how they determine what is now happening and what the future holds.

I begin with the Jewish/Zionist/Israeli side:

The Holocaust, the culmination of the viciousness of Western anti-Semitism has been adopted, employed and taught as the *raison d'être* of the Israeli state: it holds that not just Israelis but all Jews must comprehend the horror of their experience in Europe and devote themselves to gaining and preserving a Jewish State of sufficient strength to prevent a recurrence. This is the scale in which Israeli regimes have evaluated their actions.

Those actions fall into three basic policies that were enacted by each successive Israeli government: first, Israel must become a strong, industrial and military modern state; second, there is no essential distinction between Israelis and Jews living abroad — all Jews everywhere are considered to be potential Israelis — and, third, while limited accommodations have been made with the non-Jewish, Christian, Muslim and Druze Arabic-speaking Palestinians, Israel is and must remain a *Jewish* nation-state.

So how have these policies been effected by the Zionist movement and the Israeli state?

In chronological order, the Zionist program was dreamed of by Theodore Herzl, lobbied for by Chaim Weizman and accomplished by David Ben Gurion. They set out what can be described as the main line of the Zionist movement. But, the program of the main line was regarded as insufficient by what came to be the “Hard Right” wing of the Zionist movement which was led by Vladimir Jabotinsky. He incited a whole generation of Zionists to oppose the British attempt nearly a century ago to secure a *modus vivendi* by dividing “Palestine” between them and the Palestinians. When words failed to sway the British, Jabotinsky’s followers turned to terrorism. Even in the midst of the great war against the Nazis, they engaged in a terrorist war against the British. Ostensibly opposed by the mainline Zionism, the terrorists inspired by Jabotinsky, *Irgun Zva’I Leumi* and *Lohamei Herut Yisrael* (known as *Lehi*, which the British called “the Stern Gang”), actually acted as its spearhead. They were secretly authorized (by a committee under the chairmanship of later prime minister Levi Eshkol) to carry out acts which the main line Zionists did not want to admit. They murdered the senior British official in the Middle East, Churchill’s personal representative, Lord Moyne, and tried to kill the General in command of British forces. As the war drew to a close, they blew up the building in which the British high command was located, and when the UN appointed a peace negotiator who favored participation — a Swedish diplomat who was known for having saved thousands of Jews from the Nazis, Count Folke Bernadotte — they also murdered him. The violence that Jabotinsky advocated shaped the Zionist movement that

fought the British until they gave up and left. Then in Plan “D” for “Dalet” (*Tochnit Dalet*) they carried out an operation Ben Gurion had already envisaged in 1937. As the Israeli journalist Benny Morris has summarized the relevant document in the Israeli archives, it called for “killing the Palestinian political leadership, killing Palestinian “inciters” and financial supporters, killing those Palestinians acting against the Jews, killing senior Palestinian officers and officials in the Mandate regime, damaging Palestinian transportation, damaging sources of Palestine economy (water wells, mills), attacking Palestinian villages and clubs, coffee house, meeting places, etc...” And, as the Israeli historian Ilan Pappé continued, the plan “called for the systematic and total expulsion [of the Palestinians]...outside the borders of the state.” Of the roughly 700 villages in Palestine, 561 were totally destroyed even before the British withdrawal. And, in the course of 1948-1949 virtually the entire population was driven out.

What Jabotinsky had originally proposed and Ben Gurion effected has since been taken up and expanded. Its most explicit formulation was made by the Israeli strategist Oded Yinon roughly forty years ago. The militant “Little Israel” demanded by Jabotinsky and created by Ben Gurion has become Yinon’s dominant “Greater Israel.”

In essence, Yinon’s plan calls for the creation of an Israel ruling the Middle East from the Nile to the Euphrates— that is, east to west, from Cairo to Baghdad and, north to south, from the Turkish frontier to the Persian Gulf.

Yinon didn’t have to dream it up. Put in European strategic terms, the Yinon Plan is a recap of the 1916 Sykes-Picot pact in which Britain and France divided the heartland of the Middle East (and other areas) between themselves (and other imperialists). In this scheme, the native peoples would be incorporated in their empires as “colonial” peoples. That is to say, they were to be treated like Indians, Egyptians, Algerians and other Asians and Africans — without independent means of expression of their social, cultural or political “rights” or aspirations. Neither Mark Sykes nor François Georges-Picot nor Oded Yinon were thinking of federations or commonwealths; they were aiming at empire. As necessary, the natives would be ruled by “the sword” and pacified by incarceration in prisons or concentration camps. That had typified British rule in, for example, India until 1945 and French rule in Algeria until 1962; it has been Israeli practice since the formation of the State. Today, approximately 25,000 Palestinians are in Israeli prisons or concentration camps.

Let us be clear-sighted: the Israeli Hard Right differs today, and has differed from other Zionists, generation after generation, *only in the timing* and *extent* to its objective. All Zionists, both the *Azhkenazi* (European) and the *Mizrahi* (Oriental) Jews, shared an ultimate objective: a Jewish state in which Arabic-speakers, both Christians and Muslims, have no political role. This apartheid status was planned to be and is today operational for all three Arabic-speaking groups — those who were driven out of Palestine to other countries as refugees, those who remained in the enclaves of the West Bank and Gaza and also those who became citizens of Israel. In the eyes of the Israeli Right — both the “Hard” and the “Softer” Right -- all are adversaries. Even when passive, they are regarded as posing an *existential threat* to the Jewish State.

The Israeli Liberals or “*Peaceniks*,” some of whom thought that a binational Israel could fulfill the Zionist aim, have always been few and impotent. While such men as Yahuda Magnes and Martin Buber were revered for their decency and humanity by their followers, their followers numbered only in the scores or hundreds while the various Rightist groups were always the vast majority, to be numbered in the tens of thousands. Today, they have been multiplied

beyond compare. After the arrival of nearly a million *Azhkenazim* (Soviet or Russian Jews), the Hard Right has assumed complete control of the State. If, as has been said, Israelis must choose between being a Democracy and an apartheid State, the Hard Right has made its choice.

Meanwhile, the incoming Russian Jews have been swept politically into central myth of the state, the Holocaust, in which, since they lived beyond the reach of the Nazis, they actually played no part. But having imbibed the angers and fears of the Holocaust, they have carried Zionism to its logical extreme. As the Anglo-American commentator Adam Shatz has written, Israel is now their state, not the State envisaged by such men as Magnes and Buber. Dissenting voices have been stilled: "There is no left in Israel aside from a few heroic groupuscule. [Benjamin] Netanyahu's Israel — illiberal, exclusionary, racist — is now the political centre." As the *Haaretz Newspaper* commentator, Gideon Levy, has sadly pointed out that is today's Israel: "The racism, extreme nationalism, divisiveness, incitement, hatred, anxiety and corruption..." is not just the result of the leadership. "Simply put, the people are the problem..."

So who are "the people?" And why are they united behind the Hard Right?

The unity of today's Hard Right is anchored, in large part, on the Russian Jewish immigrant community. Their loyalty has been won by the policies of the current Rightist government of Benjamin Netanyahu. As Gershon Baskin wrote, "I know why the settlers fight so hard to stay where they are and it has nothing to do with God's promises to the Jewish people and it has absolutely nothing to do with the security of the State of Israel. They have a great deal. Very affordable very large housing with high quality of life, and the Israeli taxpayers foot a large part of the bill. They build on land that is not theirs. They use modern infrastructure that they do not pay for. They live under the laws of a state that is not sovereign there. Of course they want to stay. Of course they use their political power to protect their interests..."

Similar in politics but different in provenance from the Russian Jews are the "Oriental" Jews. The *Misrahim* are Jews who stayed in the Islamic countries of the Middle East, living -- like the Arabic-speaking Christians -- in self-governing ghettos. In earlier times, both the Jews and the Christians enjoyed at least as much if not more freedom and security than their European cousins, but as nationalism took root, they both came to resent Muslim dominance. Then, tragically, the Jews were caught up in the events surrounding the formation of the State of Israel. Most of the *Misrahim* emigrated to Europe or Israel and took with them a hatred of modern Muslims and Arabs. Knowing Arabic and the customs of the Arab societies, they have been the core of Israel's vaunted intelligence service and generally side with the Israeli Hard Right.

In contrast, but also in smaller numbers is another group with more distant roots in the Muslim world, the *Sephardim*. Having played a key role in the Spanish-Arab (Andalusian) society for centuries, the *Sephardim* were expelled from Spain by Queen Isabella in 1492. Groups of them then migrated from fiercely intolerant Christian Spain to Muslim Morocco and the Ottoman Empire as well as to the Papal States in what is today Italy. Over time, some found their ways to the Austrian Empire, the German states and France where from the late eighteenth century they were allowed to enter the dominant Christian society — and many converted to Catholicism or Protestantism. Outstanding Sephardic Jews participated in government and took prominent places in unfolding of European art, music, literature and the sciences. Some of them, Herzl himself and his associates, brought to Zionism, which after all was an Austro-German movement, a rich cultural and scientific endowment.

Different from the *Azhkenazim*, the *Mishrahim*, and the *Sephardim* is the Orthodox Jewish community, the *Haredim*. The *Haredim* were initially opposed Zionism. Members of their community had lived for centuries in Palestine as pilgrims, scholars and repositories of Jewish religious culture. They held that, since Judaism is a religion, politicizing it and incorporating it into a state sullied its purity. But, , they have been won over by concessions (such as exemption from military service) so that they are supporters of the State and generally now side with the Hard Right.

In broad categories, leaving aside, as the Israelis themselves do, such “marginal” peoples as the “Black Jews,” the *Azhkenazim*, the *Mishrahim*, the *Sephardim* and the *Haredim* are the Israelis.

I turn now to the Palestinians.

Whereas for the last two centuries even Russian and Polish Jews have profited from living in relatively stimulating circumstances and often were allowed to participate in community or even state level self-rule, the Arabic-speaking communities — plural — were not. Under the Ottoman empire, which was of course a Muslim State, the vast majority of Palestinians who also were Muslims, were ruled directly by the State. They were not considered to be a separate ethnic or “national” group. Unlike the Christians and Jews who were granted in Muslim law a self-governing (Ottoman Turkish: *millet*) status they did not have their own schools, hospitals, control over individual taxation or exemption from military service. Those Palestinians who were Christian shared with the Jews this separate status but like the Muslim majority of the population were farmers, craftsmen, shop keepers and other tradesmen. It was not, however, so much what they shared as how they stood apart that typified their lives.

By means of earning a living, religiously, socially, residentially, culturally, and geographically, those who speak Arabic were divided: *professionally*, the craftsmen associated with their fellows; *religiously*, as I have mentioned, the widest split was between Muslims and Christians, but Christians were further divided into a variety of sects, each of which was motivated by recondite but deeply held doctrinal issues that were built into the *millet* system and literally moved them apart from others; *residentially*, the roughly one million Palestinians were divided into quasi nations — virtually autonomous villages, towns and quarters (*haras*) of cities; *culturally*, within each group people were further divided by their degree of literacy, education and “openness,” with the more urban and wealthier living and thinking very differently from the rural and poorer members.

These differences carried over into the refugee experience: living far from their homes, often cut off from “normal” activities in haphazardly coalesced camps, often distant from one another, and under the control of foreign administrators (of whom I was once asked to be one) with the younger refugees never having actively participated in the former life, and core families often out of touch with their “extended” families,” little clots of people who previously would have regarded one another as foreigners, began to form new societies, but the process was both slow and uneven and is still far from complete.

To the degree that they met, worked for as seasonal laborers or otherwise interacted with the citizens of the countries in which they found themselves, they were further divided geographically and politically. Those living in Lebanon shaped by forces different from those

acting on the refugees living in Jordan or Syria or Gaza. So, reshaped, the old sources of division have carried on into today's Middle East.

The Israelis have promoted these divisions by the building of labyrinths of highways, checkpoints, forbidden areas and new settlements on the West Bank, by regulations both there and in Gaza that restrict or prevent movement, by trade and financial policies that impoverish the Palestinian communities and by criminalizing and severely punishing dissent.

Psychologically underlying the differences between the Palestinians and the Israelis is the fact that refugees from Europe and immigrants from Russia joined a powerful, rich and successful society whereas the Palestinians who fled or were driven from their homes have continued to live with a sense of defeat, hopelessness, shame and a deleterious fixation on a sense of having been wronged.

Not surprisingly, the Palestinians never achieved national or ethnic unity; they never formed a single society on which to build a nation as the Israelis or even such other former victims of imperialism as the Syrians, Iraqis, Egyptians and Algerians have done. Put simply, the Palestinians continue to exhibit the characteristics of a colonial people.

In these circumstances, many Israelis have long regarded Palestinians — as the Germans regarded the Jews — as *untermenschen* while the Palestinians have come to regard the Israelis as colonists and the Israeli State as a worse version of the Anglo-French imperial states.

Thus, neither the Palestinians nor the Israelis see much scope for compromise. Let me amend that statement: logically the Palestinians *should see* little or no ground for compromise. And, in the long run, I think that view will prevail, but in the short term many of their leaders and most of the Palestinian population, to the degree that we can judge their attitudes, are constantly seeking compromises. Their propensity to do so has both weakened them *and* encouraged the aspirations of the Israeli Hard Right which sees no incentive to compromise and only danger in doing so.

The Palestinians initially *believed* and some even today still *hope* that the Israelis, like the Crusaders or the British imperialists in Palestine and the French colonists in Algeria, would eventually just leave. But that hope has been overturned. Among the reasons why is that, unlike the British and French imperialists, the Israelis have managed to isolate themselves from metropolitan strictures on oppression and worries about the excessive cost of occupation and suppression of guerrilla warfare. Britain lost Palestine in London's Threadneedle Street (where the Bank of England is located) and France lost Algeria in the newspaper offices of Paris (which published accounts of torture that revolted the French public). In contrast, the Palestinians, with the help of Zionists, the Born-Again Christian Right in America and the ugly instances of terrorism, have managed to turn European and American public opinion against themselves. There is not only no effective American pressure on the Hard Right to moderate its actions, but support is assured for even its worst excesses.

While there has been recently begun at least a vocal criticism of Israeli policies by Western European Jews, such criticism has not, at least so far, affected the Eastern European or Russian Jewish immigrants. They come, as I have pointed out, from a very different intellectual and cultural background from the Western Jewish community, are obviously firmly committed to stay where they now are and are the core constituency of those leaders who support the Hard Right.

Finally, to the surprise and dismay of the Palestinians, many of the leaders and at least some of the population of the Arab states have begun to find shared interests with the Israelis. Many Arabs blame the Palestinians for their fate — “they sold their country to the Jews” — and wish to avoid even discussing the fate of the Palestinians. By trying to shame the other Arabs into supporting them, and blaming them for failure to do so, the Palestinians have alienated them. Moreover, other Arabs, particularly those enriched by oil and intent on achieving “modernity,” find the power, the skill, the determination and the wealth of Israel appealing.

Many want to be like the Israelis; practically none want to be like the Palestinians. Even when groups of Palestinians take up “the sword,” as the HAMAS in Gaza have done, the people of the established rich states and even the Egyptians fear them as troublemakers rather than respecting them as patriots.

Thus, both internally and externally Israel is stronger today than in the recent past.

So, what lies ahead? I offer my speculation:

First, I do not believe the Israelis will *exactly* follow the Yinon Plan, the Sykes-Picot plan or the ultimate Zionist goal set forth by Theodore Herzl. Modern Israelis are realists and have benefitted from experience. They have learned not only from the failures of the British and French but also from their more recent experiences that ruling a subject people involves unnecessary costs and unpredictable dangers. But, *parts of the scheme laid out by Yinon* are likely to be effected. I set them out as concisely as possible but in detail because I find that readers are often annoyed when analysis ends with only vague guesses or now guesses at all about the future. As I see them, they are the following:

The overarching Israeli national policy for its neighborhood is to isolate, expel or weaken its opponents.

- To this end, it will continue to restrict the “Israeli Arab” community and probably will use periods of tension to make the life of members of that community so unattractive that many will emigrate; it will continue to treat the Gaza population harshly even when doing so violates international law and draws international condemnation. It has restricted the population’s access to food and water, curtailed or prevented agriculture and manufacture, cut off access to building materials and even medicines and engaged in almost continuous punitive raids in response to what it regards as provocations. But so far, it has not found a way to dispose of the community as it did in 1948-1949 with the bulk of the population of the former British “mandate.” Emptying Gaza will remain an objective. Under opportune circumstances, Israel will seek to accomplish this objective. However, it recognizes that the only probable destination could be Jordan and putting the large, angry, militant and organized Gaza population into Jordan would be dangerous. I think, therefore, that Israel will continue its current policy, not escalate it;
- The West Bank has always been the prime objective of Israeli expansion. Its long-term objective is to empty it of Palestinians and incorporate it into Israel.
- Unlike the Gaza population, the West Bank people have been divided and weak; so getting them to move can be treated as a gradual process. By placing “settler” communities, building military facilities, creating restricted areas, limiting access to

roads, confiscating village farmlands and other means, it will continue to encourage the migration of the Palestinian community but it will do so on an extended time scale;

- Jordan is the most convenient and most likely destination for the inhabitants of the West Bank. The Jordanian population is already largely composed of former Palestinians and Israel has always regarded it as the terminal Palestinian state. To preserve it for this purpose, Israel will continue to rule it indirectly through the existing, originally British-imposed, regime with which it has maintained covert relations for many years;
- Lebanon proved to be a quagmire for Israel despite the apparent opportunities for intervention offered by its internal hostilities. Its invasion with the support of the Maronite Christians against the Palestinian refugee community and its occupation of the southern, partly Shia areas, galvanized the Hizbollah movement and catapulted it into power in Lebanese politics. It also encouraged the spread of Hizbollah activities into Syria. These have been setbacks for Israeli policy. However, the most tangible Israeli interest in Lebanon, control of the headwaters of the Jordan river, has been secured. Potential disagreements on off-shore oil and gas have already been largely resolved through quiet diplomacy or unilateral action; Therefore, I predict that Israel will put aside its former aggressive policy, just keep a watching brief particularly on the large refugee population while maintaining close relations with the Maronite leadership and only from time to time, show off its overwhelming military power.
- Syrian society is more homogenous than Lebanon's, but, as a result of the civil war and intervention by the United States, Russia, Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Israel, it has come to resemble *politically* and *militarily* the social complexity of Lebanon. Israel's principal objective has been accomplished: it seized the Golan Heights, expelled the Syrian population and settled it with Israelis. Logically, it should seek accommodation and ultimately friendly relations with the existing Alawite regime. Its principal worry is the influence of Iran and the fellow Shia Hizbullah militants. Israel, with the concurrence of the United States will from time to time carry out punitive air raids but will not attempt further ground operations or further acquisitions of territory.
- Egypt has fought four wars with Israel, but those events are hardly more than a memory. Under Sadat's presidency, diplomatic relations began and under Mubarak the army began the process that converted it from a military force to an economic organization. The brief period of Muslim Brotherhood rule was ended by an army *coup d'etat*. Today, Egypt is controlled by a military dictatorship which is notable for its avarice. From an Israeli perspective it is doubly attractive: it is violently opposed to the main Islamic movement, the Brotherhood, and evinces little interest in the pan-Arab policies proclaimed by its former military leader, Gamal Abdul Nasser. I believe that the Israeli leadership will opt for a policy of benign neglect.
- In Iraq, Israel accomplished its principal objective. It was to prevent the emergence of a powerful rival which Saddam Hussain's regime was on the way to becoming. To this end at the behest of the Nixon administration, it supported Iran in its war with Iraq, but in the two Bush administrations' campaigns, the US completely destroyed not only its army but Iraq itself. The remaining objective that should influence Israeli policy is access to Iraqi oil. The Israelis have learned that their need for energy can be accomplished indirectly and economically without major Israeli military or diplomatic activity. Consequently, I believe that Israel will have little interest in Iraq in the coming decade;

- Iran has been singled out as Israel's current existential danger despite previous close and supportive relations. As itself a nuclear power, Israel is determined to remain the sole Middle Eastern nuclear state. But since it is aware that Iran is not close to becoming a nuclear power, this is only a public position. The real concern of Israeli strategists is that left to itself Iran will almost certainly become a significant power. Having itself limited non-nuclear power, Israel has sought to encourage war between the United States and Iran. Unless or until Iran actually acquires a nuclear capability, this will remain Israeli policy. Ironically, I believe that if Iran becomes a recognized nuclear power, Israel will quickly reverse its policy and seek cooperation or at least accommodation.
- The current Turkish regime would like to cast itself as the modern and powerful successor to the Ottoman Empire. Like that empire, it puts great emphasis on stability and order and regards Israel as disruptive of both. Israel has no compelling interests there and will, I believe, play only a subtle, indirect and covert role in Turkish affairs. In the past, it has fished in the troubled waters of the Kurdish independence movement and will almost certainly continue to do so;
- The distant Arabs: Saudi Arabia, under Muhammad bin Salman, is turning itself into an ally against Iran and offers the prospect of economic cooperation. Saudi Arabia offers two attractions to Israel: first, its wealth and relative backwardness offer great economic opportunities and, second, some sort of working relationship or accord would go a long way to ending the cold war between the Israelis and the non-Palestinian Arabs. My hunch is that Israel will move gently and usually behind the scenes to avoid causing a backlash, while being sure that the Saudis remain aware that it carries a big stick and that its intelligence and security services can protect the ruling establishment from internal dissidence and external threat. That seems to be what is happening.
- Russia and China are wild cards. They and Israel share a hostility to Muslims, perhaps will offer profitable economic opportunities, are happily far away and above all are useful in encouraging American cooperation with Israel.
- The USA is far and away the principal concern in Israeli strategy. Such a large portion of the Israeli population has dual nationality that the Israeli joke it that Israel is America's fifty-first state; Israel has received well in excess of \$100 billion in grants and (mainly unrecoverable) loans from the American government and private donors; the arms industries of the two countries are deeply intertwined; America pays for the Israeli intelligence service; the two chief executive, Messrs Trump and Netanyahu, are intimate friends; and they share political goals, working habits and personnel in international affairs. To continue, protect and further enhance this relationship is and will continue to be the fundamental task of each Israeli government and institution. To accomplish this task, Israel has enrolled the American Jewish community, seeks to guide the American media and actively intervenes in every phase of American governance. Its Lobby works at every level of the electoral and legislative process. It has even sought to make criticism of Israel and boycott of those of its goods produced in occupied Palestine illegal in American law. I believe this will continue far into the future; the only danger Israel might face is overplaying its hand. However, the Israelis have always discounted this danger. As early as 1954, they tested what most states consider the limits of interstate relations, or even an act of war, when in the Lavon Affair ("Operation Susannah") they used as commandoes a group of Egyptian Jews to attempt to burn down a US government building and as a "false flag" operation to blame

the attack on Egypt. Much more serious was the 1967 disabling and attempting to sink an unarmed US Navy surveillance ship in international waters. Most of the ship's crew was either killed or wounded. But when the ship managed to send an SOS, President Johnson ordered back the planes sent to try to protect the smoking ruin and rescue the wounded. The attack was certainly was an act of war and from the lack of American response, the Israelis quite reasonably drew the conclusion that there were no limits on what the US government was willing to tolerate. Israel was, in effect granted a license: it could discount all future American warnings and restraints and the policy of its Hard Right has been approved. Israel will not need to repeat those actions as it can accomplish its objectives through other means, but they will remain options.

William R. Polk  
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