

For Israel, the Chance to Assert Its Sovereignty Over Its Own Territory May Never Come Again

by Hugh Fitzgerald



Caroline Glick continues her discussion of recent diplomatic developments involving Israel: “At a diplomatic crossroad, it’s time for Israel to act,” by Caroline B. Glick, [Israel Hayom](#), November 20, 2020:

...As for the Palestinians, in his missive, Indyk wrote contemptuously, “Trump’s ‘deal’ [for peace between Israel and the Palestinians] should be taken off the table when he departs the White House.” Biden’s team’s efforts to date indicate they share Indyk’s view and fully intend to begin where Indyk, Kerry and Barack Obama left off four years ago.

In other words, according to Indyk, the Biden administration shouldn't even examine the Trump Peace-to-Prosperty Plan, which was worked out in such detail over several years of hard work, but simply assume there is no part of it that is worth considering, and have it "taken off the table" without examining its contents. After all, Indyk doesn't want to have anything to do that doesn't give the Palestinians everything they want.

But, as Pompeo's visit to Psagot Winery makes clear, for now, Trump's "deal of the century" which supports Israeli sovereignty over the Israeli communities in Judea and Samaria and in the Jordan Valley is still very much on the table.

The leaders of the Israeli communities in Judea and Samaria are calling for the government to use the next two months to normalize the status of Israel's younger communities in the areas. It certainly makes sense to follow their advice with all due haste. It is similarly important for the government to restore the decision-making power for planning and construction schemes in Judea, Samaria and unified Jerusalem to local planning boards.

Glick wants more "facts on the ground": more new settlements, and the enlarging of existing settlements. These would constitute a statement by Israel: "we have a right to this land, based on 3,500 years of continuous settlement, a right enshrined in international law by the Palestine Mandate, that gave this territory to the future Jewish state; it is a right independently granted by U.N. Resolution 242 (Nov, 22, 1967), which allows Israel to keep territory it won in the Six-Day War and needs to retain in order to attain "secure [defensible] and recognizable borders"; a right that can also be derived from the Law of Nations, which gives a state the right to keep territory it won in a war of self-defense." And there is a practical matter, too. It was extremely traumatic to remove 6,000 Jewish settlers from Gaza in 2005. Imagine how

impossible it would be to uproot 600,000 Jews from their homes in East Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria. It cannot be done. These are the “facts on the ground” that have been created during the past four decades.

As for Glick’s insisting that decision-making power for planning and construction schemes in Judea, Samaria and unified Jerusalem be returned to local planning boards, she hopes that will speed up such decisions which tended to be slowed down in the bureaucracy at the national level. Those who live in the immediate neighborhoods of such proposed projects are best able to judge the soundness and justification of such proposals and to act quickly to approve them.

As part of the Obama administration’s explicit efforts to demonize Jewish life in these areas, Obama coerced Netanyahu into agreeing that every new construction project in them would require the prime minister’s signature to move forward. That move, made under duress, should be abrogated immediately.

Imagine if the United States our governors, rather than local authorities, had to sign off on every construction project in their states. It would take forever to win approvals as the proposals percolated upwards to the state house. That, in effect, is what Obama pressured Netanyahu to do, hoping it would slow down the approval process, which is exactly what happened. Right now, Glick argues, while a sympathetic Trump administration is still in office, Israel should abrogate that agreement.

More to the point, in the face of the open hostility Biden’s team is now expressing towards those property rights and towards Israel’s sovereign rights in Judea and Samaria more generally, it would be eminently reasonable, and indeed a matter of great urgency, for the Netanyahu government to

secure Trump's permission to apply our sovereignty to Israel's communities in Judea and Samaria and to the Jordan Valley in the framework of the Trump peace plan....

Glick wants Netanyahu to return to the policy he had been promoting last May, when he announced he would be extending Israeli sovereignty to the Jordan Valley and to the five largest settlement blocs, but then agreed, in order to obtain from the UAE the "normalization of ties," to "suspend" indefinitely that extension of sovereignty. She thinks that the UAE at this point is so committed to the agreement with Israel that it will express its great disappointment if Israel now applies its sovereignty in Judea and Samaria, but not to the extent that it will undo its new ties to Israel, given how many U.A.E. businessmen have already been enthusiastically at work signing deals their Israeli counterparts in dozens of fields, from irrigation and waste water management, to cybersecurity and laser anti-missiles, to solar energy and million-mile batteries. Were Trump to approve Israel's extension of sovereignty to settlements in Judea and Samaria and to the Jordan Valley, this would be his last, parting gift to the Jewish state for which he has already done so much. Glick thinks if this were to happen, there would be only a subdued expression of dismay. For security reasons – having to do with the increasing threat from Iran – it is unlikely that the Gulf Arabs, or Egypt or Jordan, would want to break ties with Israel that are too valuable to them, given the threat from the Islamic Republic. There will, of course, be impotent rage in Ramallah, just as there was when the Arab League dismissed the PA's demand that it censure the U.A.E. and Bahrain for their normalization of ties with Israel; that swift dismissal demonstrated how low the Palestinians had fallen in the estimate of the other Arabs. The Arabs are tired of the Palestinian problem, tired of constant Palestinian demands for financial and diplomatic support, tired of the Palestinians walking away from the generous deals offered by

Barak to Arafat, and by Olmert to Abbas. After decades of tending to the care and feeding of the Palestinians, these Arab states want to promote their own security, their own prosperity – and both can be helped by ever-closer ties to Israel.

Glick focussed on three things that she thinks Israel's policymakers should take into account.

First, the decision by the PA to renew security cooperation with Israel, which was undertaken not – pace Glick – to win favor in the new administration, but reflected new fears about Hamas and PIJ terrorism in the West Bank, ever since the latest Hamas-Fatah agreement broke down. Israel's intelligence on Hamas has been of great value to the PA, and Mahmoud Abbas knows it. Similarly, the PA has finally decided to accept the tax import money collected by Israel on behalf of the PA, after it had for many months chosen not to accept that money because the Israelis insisted on deducting the amounts provided terrorists and their families in the PA's "Pay-For-Slay" program from the tax money to be transferred. Now the PA has done a volte-face, not in order to curry favor with the Biden Administration but because it is flat broke and wants to get its hands on the \$890 million that Israel has ready to hand over.

Second, there was another diplomatic breakthrough between Arabs and Israelis when Abu Dhabi's Crown Prince Mohamed Bin Zayed accepted President Rivlin's invitation to visit Israel, and Bahrain's Foreign Minister came to Israel to open his country's embassy there. Both developments show that those Arabs "normalizing ties" have no intention of letting the martin-indyks of this world get in the way of their furthering these most useful ties, military and economic, with the Jewish state.

As a side matter, but potentially of great significance, was the article by a Saudi lawyer and journalist Osama Yamani in

the journal Ukaz arguing that the “farthest mosque” (al-masjid al-aqsa) from which Muhammad ascended into Heaven on his winged steed al-Buraq, was not located on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem; Muhammad carried out his journey in 621 A.D. and the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem was not built until 705 A.D. Rather, Yamani argues, the true Al-Aqsa Mosque, already existing in 621 A.D., was located at the town of Al-Ju’ranah, some 18 miles northeast of Mecca. Yamani’s article could not have been published without the Saudi rulers approving it; they have the billions with which to promote his argument, for if it were to be widely accepted, it would give the Saudis possession of the three holiest sites in Islam (Mecca, Medina, Al-Ju’ranah) and raise even higher their status within the Umma. It could also lead to Jerusalem losing its current religious significance for Muslims and that, naturally, would diminish Muslim fervor for “reclaiming” Jerusalem from the Jews, something Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman would likely favor.

Third, in the same week, Secretary Pompeo visited – a first for an American Secretary of State – a West Bank settlement in Psagot, and its famed winery. This was a demonstration of the Trump administration’s stated conviction that Israel’s West Bank settlements are not illegal. That reaffirmation is what gives Caroline Glick hope that now, before the very different Biden Administration takes power, the Israelis can persuade the Trump administration to let them apply Israeli sovereignty to Jewish communities in Judea and Samaria, and to East Jerusalem. It’s a gamble. The Israelis would be betting that the Arab states now partnering with Israel will not be diverted from that path, and that others – mainly Saudi Arabia – are so alarmed about Iran that they will keep collaborating on security with Israel no matter what, and might limit themselves to mildly deploring this extension of sovereignty in the West Bank. As for the Biden peace-processors, they are already determined to blame Israel for everything, so their anger at the Jewish state’s extension of sovereignty will be

different not in kind but only in degree. What Glick rightly fears is that this chance to extend sovereignty may never come again; if it is to happen, it must happen now, while Israel still has a friend in the White House.

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