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On February 21, 1991, Daniel Ellsberg visited Columbia to voice his opinions concerning the Gulf War, at which time he made himself available to this writer and answered questions concerning national security.

Dawn Zuroffis a Barnard College senior.

Is the Current Middle East Peace Process a Step Towards War?

By Leron Kornreich

The purpose of the state of Israel is to ensure the strength, growth, and security of the Jewish peoples and to provide a bastion of democracy in a region that is infested with military dictatorships. The proceedings within the peace process in the Middle East must be viewed with these considerations in mind. "Occupied territories" is a misnomer. The West Bank is not a sovereign country and, under international consensus, it never has been. It is, therefore, incorrect to call it occupied because one cannot occupy something that does not rightfully belong to anybody. Rule of the territories is simply disputed. Many of the obstacles towards reaching a compromise arise because of the contradictory aims of Arab and Israeli leadership. Israel's goal is to reach an agreement without compromising its security. The Arab leaders are adamant about attaining the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the Golan Heights, which poses a direct threat to Israel's security. The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), the terrorist group

responsible for the hijacking of the Achille Lauro in 1988 and countless other attacks, declared its goal as "eliminat[ing] the Zionist presence in Palestine" in article 15 of the PLO Covenant Against Israel. Opposing views such as these are often close to irreconcilable, making the peace process a long and arduous journey.

Obstacles To Peace

The PLO now claims that their sole objective is to gain a homeland in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip. However, the PLO was formed in Egypt in 1964, three years before Israel even gained the West Bank. It is, therefore, impossible to conclude that the primary objective of the PLO is only to attain the West Bank, because the conflict began before Israel controlled the West Bank and was over Israel's "right to exist" and not the Palestinian's claimed right to the territories. In fact, it is clearly stated in article eight of their covenant that their objective is "the retrieval of Palestine and its liberation through armed struggle."

If the issue at hand was really land, the Palestinians would have formed a state when given the opportunity was given under the 1948 partition plan. The struggle is over conflicting religious ideologies. The land is only a premise for the conflict. The Arab consensus is that Israel does not have the right to exist because it is a Jewish state. Their hostility towards Israel is rooted in their aversion to any Jewish presence, no matter what its size or location. Former Israeli Ambassador Abba Eban questions the longevity of a peace struck between Israel and the surrounding nations when one of the first steps in the process is gaining recognition of Israel as a country.

"Israel's legitimacy is not suspended in midair awaiting acknowledgement...There is certainly no other state, big or small, young or old, that would consider mere recognition of its 'right to exist' a favor, or a negotiable concession." (Davis 1)

Perspective

Despite the amount of news coverage that it receives, Israel is geographically a small country. When considering security, every inch of land should be a potential buffer against attack. The West Bank added strategic depth to Israel,

"Occupied territories" is a misnomer.

providing an additional 31 mile buffer between Israel and Jordan at Israel's narrowest point. Without it, there are only nine miles of land between Israel's eastern border and the Mediterranean, making it easy to split Israel in half during an attack. In addition, heavily-populated and industrialized areas of Israel would be exposed. The West Bank's deep valley provides natural protection against attack, making it a barrier against a ground assault from Jordan. Israel's hesitation

at giving away this land to the Palestinians is based primarily on strategic concerns. (Danziger and Rosen 47-54)

The Golan Heights is also strategically valuable to

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Israel. It overlooks a great deal of Israel and could provide an enemy with the strategic advantage of being able to shell the part of Israel located directly below, as the Syrians had done for years. When the Syrians controlled the Golan Heights, it was also extremely difficult for Israel to defend itself against attack because it had to send its forces up a steep incline in order to repel attack. (Danziger and Rosen 47-54)

Israel needs to be sure that it will not be sacrificing its safety in the name of a temporary peace by giving up strategically valuable land, and the fact that no guarantee toward Israel's security has been provided is a great obstacle to peace.

"Palestinian Pragmatism"

What is now referred to as the new "Palestinian pragmatism" is, in essence, the Palestinians' agreement to enter into the peace talks for the sake of expediency. Gaining a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip would facilitate the acquisition of the rest of Israel, which is their ultimate goal. It is clearly stated in article two of the PLO Covenant Against Israel and several other times throughout the covenant that "Palestine with its boundaries that existed at the time of the British Mandate is an indivisible territorial unit." This means that any Palestinian state would not be limited to the West Bank and Gaza Strip, but would extend across all of Israel. In a 25 January 1988 interview, Yasser Arafat's lieutenant, Salah Khalaf, told the Lebanese newspaper *Al-Safir*:

[T]he Palestinian state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip does not contradict [the PLO's] ultimate strategic aim, which is the establishment of a democratic state in the entire territory of Palestine, but rather is a step in that direction. (Davis 136)

As for Khalaf's claim that a Palestinian state would be democratic, there is no reason to believe that it would be anything less than a military dictatorship. The PLO has always been intolerant of any opposition. In practice, it does not allow for freedom of expression. In 1979, Arabs were assassinated for merely voicing support of Israel's peace treaty with Egypt. (Davis 132) In addition, not a single Muslim democracy exists in the Middle East, so that there is no Arab paradigm for a potential Palestinian state to follow.

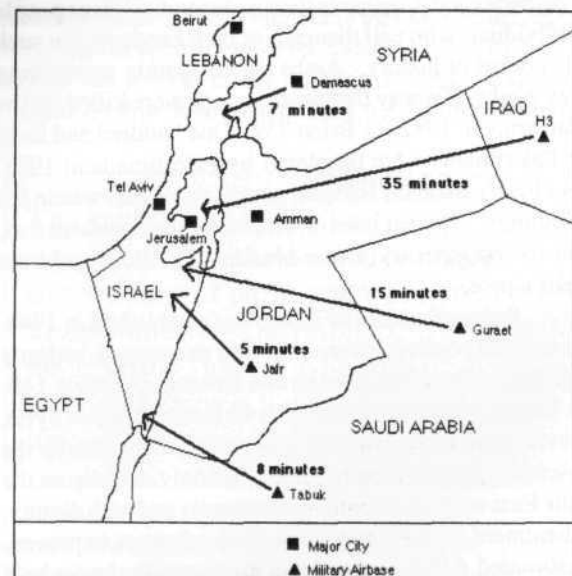
Although many people view the new Palestinian

pragmatism as a realization that they cannot insist on all-or-nothing, but should "settle" for the West Bank and Gaza Strip, their pragmatism lies in their conceding to the disputed territories with their eyes on the rest of Israel as the next step. As Hanan Ashrawi, a speaker on behalf of the Palestinians at the peace conference, said, "[w]e have learned that you cannot have everything you want when you want it, immediately." (*Newsweek* 34) This implies that if they take what they can now, they will continue to fight for the rest of Israel. The only change in Palestinian attitude that has evolved with this "pragmatism" is a change of tactics. Instead of sticking steadfastly to the tenets of article nine in the PLO Covenant Against Israel, which states that "armed struggle is the only way to liberate Palestine," they have chosen a different means to achieve that same end.

Imbalance in a Potential Palestinian State

Although an Arab citizen of Israel can live with full democratic rights in Israel, as many currently do, the same right to live securely within a Palestinian state would not be equally extended towards Jews. The treatment of Jews in Arab states is abhorrent and can be viewed as an insight into what the nature of their treatment would be in a Palestinian state. Furthermore, Muslim inhabitants of Arab countries, such as the Kurds, are so often treated inhumanely by Arabs that it would be absurd to assume the treatment of Jews would be any better. (Davis 158-159)

This discrimination stems from the structure of governments in the Middle East. Israel is the only democracy



within the region. Decisions made within its governing body are discussed by the pluralistic voices of the parties in the Knesset. The tyrannous Arab governments within the Middle East are subject to the whims of harsh dictators such as Saddam Hussein and Hafez al-Assad. The harsh policies of

these governments are not limited to international relations. They are infamous for crushing domestic insurrections severely, such as the internal revolt in Syria in 1982 in which an estimated 25,000 people were killed in the city of Hama. (O'Brien 739)

Non-democratic countries cannot be assessed using democratic standards. Public policy is only such in name and, in actuality, is the manifestation of one individual's opinion. The dictator's opinion is binding. One problem that stems from such a framework is the inevitable instability of a potential peace process. If the current leader dies or is assassinated, there is no guarantee that the next to seize power will pay any regard to an agreement reached by his predecessor, since there is no system of checks and balances as there is in a democracy. In order for peace to be long-lasting, it must be dependent on more than just an individual's caprice.

Arabia-The Islamic World Review wrote in 1983: "The Palestinian card was played in the past by Nasser, and nowadays by Qaddafi, Saddam Hussein and Hafez Assad..." (Davis 103-131) The idea of Arab unity is a myth. The 21 Arab countries surrounding Israel refused to absorb their Palestinian-Arab brethren, thereby creating a refugee problem. By maintaining a Palestinian refugee problem, they manipulate the Palestinians in order to sway international sympathy in their favor. They do not welcome Palestinians into their countries, even in Jordan, which is a true Palestinian state with over half of its inhabitants being Palestinian. In Black September 1970, 3,400 Palestinians were killed by Jordanians.

Individuals are being pawned about in a manner that degrades and disregards their rights and needs as people by individuals who call themselves their brothers, but such is the course of history. Arabs are constantly persecuting fellow Arabs. Twenty thousand Syrians were killed by the Syrian army in 1982. (O'Brien 739) One hundred and forty nine Palestinians were murdered by Palestinians in 1991. (*News Brief*) Saddam Hussein gassed the Kurds within his own country. The list goes on and on and one realizes that, given the opportunity, these Muslim leaders would treat Israelis worse.

Before the state of Israel was established in 1948, Jews in Arab countries were violently persecuted, unjustly taxed, and were subject to limited freedoms. (Davis 140-141) The inhumane treatment of Jews led them to flee Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Libya, and many other Muslim states by the thousands. They settled in Israel, the only country in the Middle East where they could live securely and with dignity. The treatment of Jews in Arab countries has not improved. An estimated 4,000 Syrian Jews are currently being held hostage in Syria. They do not have the internationally recognized human right to travel freely. If they are permitted to leave for business reasons, they must leave their family and money as insurance of their return. Arab leaders have a history of mistreating Jews within their countries, which provides further evidence as to how they would treat Jews within a Palestinian state.

On a Positive Note

It is possible to achieve a lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians, and more precisely between Jews and Muslims, because the current situation is so intolerable to all parties involved. If the Arab countries recognize Israel as a legitimate state and an attempt from all sides is made to socialize the coming generations into understanding and guide them away from hatred, then a lasting peace will be achievable. As with many events throughout history, it is up to the new generation to bring forth change. The mere fact that respective Israeli and Palestinian supporters are now willing to discuss their differences and make an effort to find a common ground on which to base future peace agreements is a big step towards the direction of understanding.

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heron Kornreich is a Barnard College first year student.

Making Votes Count: Proportional Representation and Political Equality in Voting Systems

By Michael J. Smith

What is held to be democracy or rule of the people above all is what results from the sort of justice that is agreed to be democratic, which is all having an equal share on the basis of number.

—Aristotle, *Politics* 6.2.9

Representative government, like all possible forms of government, is imperfect. A perfect form of government or of democracy is possible only in a Utopia. In the twentieth