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The Future of Palestine: Righteous Jews vs. the New Afrikaners'

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One of the most important issues in world politics today is the future of Palestine. By that I mean the future of the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, or what was long ago called Mandatory Palestine. That ground is now broken into two parts: Israel proper, or what is sometime called "Green Line" Israel; and the Occupied Territories, which include the West Bank and Gaza. In essence, the future of Palestine revolves around the relationship that develops between Israel and the Occupied Territories.

We are not just talking about the fate of those lands, of course; we are also dealing with the future of the peoples who live there, who include the Jews and the Palestinians who are Israeli citizens, as well as those Palestinians who live in the Occupied Territories.

My story is straightforward. Contrary to the wishes of the Obama administration and most Americans – and this includes many American Jews – Israel is not going to allow the Palestinians to have a real state of their own in Gaza and the West Bank. Regrettably, the two-state solution is now no more than fantasy. Instead, those territories will be formally incorporated into a Greater Israel, which will be a full-blown Apartheid state bearing a marked resemblance to white-ruled South Africa. Yet a Jewish Apartheid state is not politically viable over the long term. In the end, it will become a democratic bi-national state, whose politics will be dominated by its Palestinian citizens. In other words, it will cease being a Jewish state, and this will mean the end of the Zionist dream.

Potential Ways to Configure Palestine

Given present circumstances, there are four possible futures for Palestine. The outcome that gets the most attention these days is the two-state solution, which was described in broad outline by President Bill Clinton in late December 2000 and would involve the creation of a Palestinian state operating side by side with Israel. For this to be viable, Palestine would need to control 95 percent or more of the West Bank and all of Gaza, with East Jerusalem as its capital. There would also have to be territorial swaps to compensate the Palestinians for any small pieces of the West Bank that Israel was allowed to keep in the final agreement. The Clinton Parameters envisioned certain restrictions on the new state's military capabilities, but it would control the water beneath it, the air space above it, and its own borders – to include the Jordan River Valley. Finally, the Palestinians and Israelis would have to use clever language to deal both with Palestinian claims to “Right of Return” and with Israeli culpability for the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who were expelled from their homes in 1948. A small number of those refugees and their descendants might be allowed to return to their homes inside Israel for symbolic purposes, but the overwhelming majority would live in either the new Palestinian state or another country.

There are three possible alternatives to a two-state solution, all of which involve creating a Greater Israel – an Israel that officially includes the West Bank and Gaza. In the first scenario, Greater Israel would become a democratic bi-national state in which Palestinians and Jews enjoy equal political rights. This solution has been suggested by a handful of Jews and a growing number of Palestinians. However, it would mean abandoning the original Zionist vision of a Jewish state, since the Palestinians would eventually outnumber the Jews in Greater Israel.

Second, Israel could expel most of the Palestinians from Greater Israel, thereby preserving its Jewish character through an overt act of ethnic cleansing. This is what happened in 1948 when the Zionists drove roughly 700,000 Palestinians out of the territory that became the new state of Israel, and then prevented them from returning to their homes. Following the Six Day War in 1967 Israel expelled

between 100,000 and 260,000 Palestinians from the newly conquered West Bank and drove 80,000 Syrians from the Golan Heights. This time, however, the scale of the expulsion would have to be even greater: there are now about 5.6 million Palestinians living between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea.

The final alternative to a two-state solution is some form of Apartheid, whereby Israel would increase its control over the Occupied Territories whilst allowing the Palestinians to exercise limited autonomy in a set of disconnected and economically crippled enclaves.

The two-state solution is the best of these alternative futures. By no means an ideal solution, it is nonetheless by far the best outcome for the Israelis and the Palestinians, as well as the United States. That is why the Clinton, Bush and Obama administrations have all been deeply committed to it. Nevertheless, the Palestinians are not going to get their own state any time soon. They will instead end up living in an Apartheid state dominated by Israeli Jews.

Israel and the Two-State Solution

The main reason that a two-state solution is no longer a serious option is that most Israelis are unwilling to make the sacrifices that would be necessary to create a viable Palestinian state. There is little reason to expect them to have an epiphany on this issue. To begin with, there are now around 500,000 settlers in the Occupied Territories, who have brought with them a huge infrastructure of connecting and bypass roads, not to mention settlements. Much of that infrastructure and large numbers of those settlers would have to be removed to create a Palestinian state – and the settlers would fiercely resist any attempt to roll back the settlement enterprise.

A March 2010 poll conducted by the Truman Institute at Hebrew University found that 21 percent of settlers believe that “if the government decides on a comprehensive evacuation of settlements”, Israelis should “resist it by all means”. Presumably this would include the use of arms. In addition, the pollsters found that 54 percent of settlers do not recognise the government's “authority to decide to evacuate or

not evacuate settlements"; even if there was a referendum sanctioning a withdrawal, 36 percent of settlers said they would not accept it.

Those settlers, however, have no need to worry about the present government trying to remove them. Prime Minister Netanyahu is committed to expanding the settlements in East Jerusalem and indeed throughout the West Bank. Of course, he and virtually everyone in his cabinet are opposed to giving the Palestinians a viable state of their own.

One might argue that there are prominent Israelis like former Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni and former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert who openly disagree with Netanyahu and advocate a two-state solution. While this is true, it is by no means clear that either of them would be willing or able to make the concessions necessary to create a legitimate Palestinian state. Olmert certainly did not do so when he was prime minister, although he was serious about negotiating with the Palestinians in pursuit of a two-state solution.

Even if some Israeli leader was seriously committed to creating a Palestinian state in the Occupied Territories, it is unlikely that he or she could garner enough public support to make a deal work. Over the past decade the political centre of gravity in Israel has shifted sharply to the Right, and there is no sizeable pro-peace political party or movement that they could turn to for help. Perhaps the best single indicator of how far to the Right Israel has moved in recent years is the shocking fact that Avigdor Lieberman is employed as its foreign minister. Even Martin Peretz of the *New Republic*, who is well known for his unyielding support for Israel, describes Lieberman as "a neo-fascist" and equates him with the late Austrian fascist Jorg Haider. There are other individuals in Netanyahu's cabinet who share many of Lieberman's views about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; they just happen to be less outspoken than the foreign minister.

Even if someone like Livni or Olmert were able to cobble together a coalition of interest groups and political parties that favoured a genuine two-state solution, they would still face fierce resistance from the sizeable forces that stand behind Netanyahu and his allies today. It is even possible, which is not to say likely, that Israel would be engulfed by civil war if some future leader made a serious attempt to give the Palestinians a real state of their own. An individual with the

stature of David Ben Gurion or Ariel Sharon – or even Yitzhak Rabin – might be able to stand up to those naysayers and push forward a two-state solution, but there is nobody with that kind of standing in Israeli politics today.

In addition to these practical political obstacles to creating a Palestinian state, there is an important psychological barrier. From the start, Zionism envisioned an Israeli state that controlled all of Mandatory Palestine. There was no place for a Palestinian state in the original Zionist vision of Israel. Even Yitzhak Rabin, who was determined to make the Oslo peace process work, never spoke about creating a Palestinian state. He was merely interested in granting the Palestinians some form of limited autonomy, what he called "an entity which is less than a state". Furthermore, he insisted that Israel should maintain control over the Jordan River Valley and that a united Jerusalem should be the capital of Israel. Also remember that in the spring of 1998 when Hillary Clinton was First Lady, she was sharply criticised for saying that: "It would be in the long-term interests of peace in the Middle East for there to be a state of Palestine, a functioning modern state on the same footing as other states."

It was not until after Ehud Barak became prime minister in 1999 that Israeli leaders began to speak openly about the possibility of a Palestinian state. Still, not all of them thought it was a good idea and hardly any of them were enthusiastic about it. Even Barak, who flirted seriously with the idea of creating a Palestinian state at Camp David in July 2000, initially opposed the Oslo Accords. Indeed, he has been willing to serve as Netanyahu's defence minister for the past three years, knowing full well that the prime minister and his allies are opposed to creating an independent Palestine. All of this is to say that the core beliefs of Zionism are deeply hostile to the notion of a Palestinian state, and this mindset makes it difficult for many Israelis to embrace the two-state solution.

In short, it is difficult to imagine any Israeli government having the political will, much less the ability, to dismantle a substantial portion of its vast settlement enterprise and create a Palestinian state in virtually all of the Occupied Territories, including East Jerusalem.

President Obama and Israel

Many advocates of a two-state solution recognise this problem, but think that there is a way to solve it: the Obama administration needs to come up with a clever strategy for putting pressure on Israel to allow the Palestinians to have their own state. Once the right strategy is found, it should be a relatively easy task to move Israel in the right direction. After all, the United States is the most powerful country in the world and it should have great leverage over Israel because it gives the Jewish state so much diplomatic and material support.

But this is not going to happen, because no American president can put meaningful pressure on Israel to force it to change its policies toward the Palestinians. The main reason is the Israel lobby, a remarkably powerful interest group that has a profound influence on US Middle East policy. Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz, a staunch supporter of Israel, was spot on when he said: "My generation of Jews ... became part of what is perhaps the most effective lobbying and fund-raising effort in the history of democracy." That lobby, of course, makes it impossible for any president to play hardball with Israel, especially on the issue of settlements.

Let's look at the historical record. Every American president since 1967 has opposed settlement building in the Occupied Territories. Yet no president has been able to put serious pressure on Israel to stop building settlements, much less dismantle them. Perhaps the best evidence of America's impotence is what happened in the 1990s during the Oslo peace process. Between 1993 and 2000, Israel confiscated 40,000 acres of Palestinian land, built 250 miles of connector and bypass roads, doubled the number of settlers, and established thirty new settlements. President Clinton did hardly anything to halt this expansion. Instead, the United States continued to give Israel billions of dollars in foreign aid each year and to protect it at every turn on the diplomatic front.

It is tempting to think that Obama is different from his predecessors, but there is hardly any evidence to support that belief and much to contradict it. Consider that during the 2008 presidential campaign, Obama responded to charges that he was "soft" on Israel by pandering to the lobby and repeatedly praising America's special

relationship with Israel. In the month before he took office in January 2009 he was silent during the Gaza massacre – at a time when Israel was being criticised around the world for its brutal assault on that densely populated enclave.

Since taking office, President Obama has clashed with Prime Minister Netanyahu four times: in each case Obama backed down and Netanyahu won the fight. Shortly after the administration came to power, the president and his principal foreign policy advisors began demanding that Israel stop all settlement building in the Occupied Territories, to include East Jerusalem, so that serious peace negotiations with the Palestinians could begin. After calling for "two states for two peoples" in his Cairo speech in June 2009, President Obama declared: "it is time for these settlements to stop." Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had made the same point one month earlier when she said: "We want to see a stop to settlement construction, additions, natural growth – any kind of settlement activity. That is what the president has called for." George Mitchell, the president's special envoy for the Middle East, conveyed this straightforward message to Prime Minister Netanyahu and his advisors on numerous occasions.

In response, Netanyahu made it clear that Israel intended to continue building settlements and that he and almost everyone in his government opposed a two-state solution. He made but a single reference to "two states" in his own speech at Bar Ilan University in June 2009, and the conditions he attached to it made it clear that he was talking about giving the Palestinians a handful of disconnected Apartheid-style Bantustans, not a fully sovereign state.

Naturally, Netanyahu won this fight. Not only did the Israeli prime minister refuse to stop building the 2,500 housing units that were under construction in the West Bank; just to make it clear to Obama who was boss, in late June 2009 he authorised the building of 300 new homes in the West Bank. Netanyahu refused even to countenance setting any limits on settlement building in East Jerusalem, which is supposed to be the capital of a Palestinian state. By the end of September 2009 Obama conceded publicly that Netanyahu had beaten him in their fight over the settlements. The president falsely denied that freezing settlement construction had ever been a precondition for resuming the peace process, and instead meekly asked Israel

to please exercise restraint while it continued colonising the West Bank. Fully aware of his triumph, Netanyahu said on 23 September: "I am pleased that President Obama has accepted my approach that there should be no preconditions."

Indeed, his victory was so complete that the Israeli media was full of stories describing how their prime minister had bested Obama and greatly improved his shaky political position at home. As Gideon Samet wrote in *Ma'ariv*: "In the past weeks, it has become clear with what ease an Israeli prime minister can succeed in thwarting an American initiative."

Perhaps the best American response to Netanyahu's victory came from the widely read author and blogger, Andrew Sullivan, who wrote that this sad episode should: "remind Obama of a cardinal rule of American politics: no pressure on Israel ever. Just keep giving them money and they will give the US the finger in return. The only permitted position is to say you oppose settlements in the West Bank, while doing everything you can to keep them growing and advancing."

The Obama administration was engaged in a second round of fighting over settlements in March 2010, when the Netanyahu government embarrassed Vice President Biden during his visit to Israel by announcing plans to build 1,600 new housing units in East Jerusalem. While that crisis clearly revealed that Israel's brutal policies toward the Palestinians are seriously damaging US interests in the Middle East, Netanyahu rejected President Obama's request to stop building settlements in East Jerusalem. "As far as we are concerned," he said on 21 March, "building in Jerusalem is like building in Tel Aviv. Our policy on Jerusalem is like the policy in the past forty-two years." One day later at the annual AIPAC Conference he said: "The Jewish people were building Jerusalem three thousand years ago, and the Jewish people are building Jerusalem today. Jerusalem is not a settlement; it's our capital." Meanwhile, back in the United States, AIPAC got 333 congressmen and 76 senators to sign letters to Secretary of State Clinton reaffirming their unyielding support for Israel and urging the administration to keep future disagreements behind closed doors. By early July, the crisis was over. Obama had lost again.

The third fight came soon thereafter in September 2010. Ten months earlier, the Israelis had agreed to a partial building freeze in the

West Bank, although not in Jerusalem. That gesture had been enough to convince the Palestinians to resume negotiations that September with the Israelis over the future of the Occupied Territories. Talks began in early September. However, there was a major problem: the partial building freeze was due to expire in late September. Obama went to great lengths to convince Netanyahu to extend the freeze so that the talks could continue. Netanyahu refused and the negotiations collapsed just as they were getting started.

The fourth round of fighting took place in May 2011 when President Obama gave a major speech calling for the establishment of a Palestinian state based on the 1967 borders. The Netanyahu government, however, had made it clear beforehand that talking specifically about the 1967 borders was unacceptable, even though everyone has long understood that any meaningful agreement would have to be based on those borders with minor adjustments where necessary. Netanyahu and his American supporters responded by lambasting the president; this included a televised meeting where the Israeli prime minister lectured the president about the flaws in his thinking about the peace process. Subsequently, Netanyahu went to Capitol Hill, where he was treated like a conquering hero. Obama, facing a tough election in 2012 and deeply fearful of losing support in the American Jewish community, quickly backed off from pressuring Israel and instead decided to offer unconditional support.

The president's toadying quickly became apparent in the summer of 2011 when it became clear that Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas intended to approach the United Nations in September to ask for formal recognition of a Palestinian state based on the 1967 borders. This move was consistent with Obama's goal of achieving a two-state solution. But the Netanyahu government, which has no interest in seeing the Palestinians get a viable state of their own, was adamantly opposed to the plan, and put enormous pressure on the Obama administration to thwart the Palestinians. Not surprisingly, the United States went to great lengths to discourage Abbas from going to the United Nations; when that failed, Obama vowed to veto the application in the Security Council.

It is manifestly clear that President Obama is no match for the lobby. The best he can hope for is to re-start the so-called peace

process, but most people understand that these negotiations are a charade. The two sides engage in endless talks while Israel continues to colonise Palestinian lands. Henry Siegman got it right when he called these fruitless talks “The Greater Middle East Peace Process Scam”. And whether Obama is re-elected or a Republican moves into the White House, this situation is not going to change after the 2012 presidential election.

There are two other reasons that there will not be a two-state solution. Deeply divided among themselves, the Palestinians are not in a good position to make a deal with Israel and then stick to it. That problem is fixable with time and help from Israel and the United States. But time has run out and neither Tel Aviv nor Washington is likely to provide a helping hand. Then there are the Christian Zionists, a powerful political force in the United States, especially on Capitol Hill. They are adamantly opposed to a two-state solution because they want Israel to control every square millimetre of Palestine, a situation they believe heralds the “Second Coming” of Christ.

Israel's Future

The inevitable conclusion all of this will be the formation of a Greater Israel between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. In fact, I would argue that de facto it already exists, as Israel effectively controls the Occupied Territories and rules over the Palestinians who live there. The West Bank and Gaza have not yet been incorporated de jure into Israel proper, but that will eventually happen – certainly in the case of the West Bank. When it does, that will complete the transformation of Green Line Israel into Greater Israel.

But who will live there and what kind of political system will it have? It is not going to be a democratic bi-national state, at least in the near future. An overwhelming majority of Israel's Jews have no interest in living in a state that would be dominated by the Palestinians. And that includes young Israeli Jews, many of whom hold clearly bigoted views toward the Palestinians in their midst. Furthermore, few of Israel's supporters in the United States are interested in this outcome at this point in time. Most Palestinians would, of course,

accept a democratic bi-national state without hesitation if it could be achieved quickly. But that is not going to happen, although, as I will argue shortly, it is likely to come to pass down the road.

Then there is the possibility of ethnic cleansing, which would certainly mean that Greater Israel would have a Jewish majority. But that murderous strategy seems unlikely, because it would do enormous damage to Israel's moral fabric, its relationship with Jews in the Diaspora, and to its international standing. Israel and its supporters would be treated harshly by history, and it would poison relations with Israel's neighbours for years to come. No genuine friend of Israel could support this policy, which would clearly be a crime against humanity. It also seems unlikely because most of the 5.6 million Palestinians living between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea would put up fierce resistance if Israel tried to expel them from their homes.

Nevertheless, there is reason to worry that Israelis might adopt this solution as the demographic balance shifts against them and they start to fear for the survival of the Jewish state. Given the right circumstances – say a war involving Israel that is accompanied by serious Palestinian unrest – Israeli leaders might conclude that they can expel massive numbers of Palestinians from Greater Israel and depend on the lobby to protect them from international criticism and especially from sanctions.

We should not underestimate Israel's willingness to employ such a horrific strategy if the opportunity presented itself. It is apparent from public opinion surveys and everyday discourse that many Israelis hold racist views of Palestinians, and the Gaza massacre in the winter of 2008–9 makes clear that they have few qualms about killing Palestinian civilians. It is difficult to disagree with Jimmy Carter's comment in June 2009 that “the citizens of Palestine are treated more like animals than like human beings.” A century of conflict and more than four decades of occupation will do that to a people. And, of course, the Israelis engaged in a massive cleansing of the Palestinians in 1948 and again in 1967. Still, I do not believe Israel will resort to this horrible course of action.

The most likely outcome in the absence of a two-state solution is that Greater Israel will become a fully fledged Apartheid state. As

anyone who has spent time in the West Bank knows, Israel essentially has an Apartheid system up and running there, with separate laws, separate roads, and separate housing for Israelis and Palestinians. The latter are essentially confined to impoverished enclaves that they can leave and enter only with great difficulty. However, because the Occupied Territories have not been fully integrated into Israel, one can plausibly argue that the Tel Aviv has not yet gone all the way down the Apartheid road.

Israelis and their American supporters invariably bristle at the comparison to white rule in South Africa, but that is their future if they create a Greater Israel while denying full political rights to an Arab population that will soon outnumber the Jewish population in the entirety of the land. Indeed, two former Israeli prime ministers have made this very point. Ehud Olmert, who was Netanyahu's predecessor, said in late November 2007 that if "the two-state solution collapses," Israel will "face a South African-style struggle." He went so far as to argue that, "as soon as that happens, the state of Israel is finished." Former Prime Minister Ehud Barak said in February 2010: "As long as in this territory west of the Jordan River there is only one political entity called Israel it is going to be either non-Jewish, or non-democratic. If this bloc of millions of Palestinians cannot vote, that will be an Apartheid state."

Other Israelis, as well as Jimmy Carter and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, have warned that if Israel does not pull out of the Occupied Territories it will become an Apartheid state like white-ruled South Africa. But if I am right, the occupation is not going to end and there will not be a two-state solution. That means Israel will complete its transformation into a full-blown Apartheid state over the next decade. In the long run, however, Israel will not be able to maintain itself as such. Like racist South Africa, it will eventually evolve into a democratic bi-national state whose politics will be dominated by the more numerous Palestinians. Of course, this means that Israel faces a bleak future as a Jewish state.

Selling Apartheid in the West

One problem that Israel will face is that the discrimination and repression that are the essence of Apartheid will be increasingly visible to people all around the world. Israel and its supporters have been able to do a good job of keeping the mainstream media in the United States from telling the truth about what Israel is doing to the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. But the Internet is a game changer. Not only does it make it easy for the opponents of Apartheid to get the real story out to the world; it also allows Americans to learn the story that the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* have been hiding from them. Over time, this situation may even force these two media institutions to cover the story more accurately themselves.

The growing visibility of this issue is not just a function of the Internet. It is also due to the fact that the plight of the Palestinians matters greatly to people all across the Arab and Islamic world, and they constantly raise the issue with westerners. The Arab Spring is likely to intensify this support for the Palestinians, because future Middle East leaders will be fearful of alienating their publics if they do not back the Palestinian cause to the hilt. It also matters very much to the influential human rights community, which is naturally going to be critical of Israel's harsh treatment of the Palestinians. It is not surprising that hard-line Israelis and their American supporters are now waging a vicious smear campaign against those human rights organisations that criticise Israel.

The main problem that Israel's defenders face, however, is that it is impossible to defend Apartheid, because it is antithetical to core western values. How does one make a moral case for Apartheid, particularly in the United States, where democracy is venerated and segregation and racism are routinely condemned? It is hard to imagine the United States having a special relationship with an Apartheid state. Indeed, it is hard to imagine the United States having much sympathy for one. It is much easier to imagine the United States strongly opposing that racist state's political system and working hard to change it. Of course, many other countries around the globe will reach the same conclusion, probably before the United States, because of the power of the lobby in Washington. This is surely why

former Prime Minister Olmert said that going down the Apartheid road would be suicidal for Israel.

Apartheid is not only morally reprehensible, it also guarantees that Israel will remain a strategic liability for the United States. Numerous American leaders, including President Obama, Vice President Biden and CIA director David Petraeus, have emphasised that Israel's colonisation of the Occupied Territories is doing serious damage to American interests in the Middle East. As Biden told Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in March 2010 during the vice president's controversy-filled visit to Israel: "This is starting to get dangerous for us. What you're doing here undermines the security of our troops who are fighting in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. That endangers us, and it endangers regional peace." This situation will only get worse as Israel becomes a fully fledged Apartheid state. And as that becomes clear to more and more Americans, there is likely to be a serious erosion of support for the Jewish state on strategic grounds alone.

Hard-line Israelis and their American supporters are aware of these problems, but they are betting that the lobby will defend Israel no matter what, and that its support will be sufficient to allow Apartheid Israel to survive. It might seem like a safe bet, since the lobby has played a key role in shielding Israel from American pressure up to now. In fact, one could argue that Israel could not have got so far down the Apartheid road without the help of organisations like AIPAC and the Anti-Defamation League. But that strategy is not likely to work over the long run.

The problem with depending on the lobby for protection is that most American Jews will not back Israel if it becomes a fully fledged Apartheid state. Indeed, many of them are likely to criticise Israel and support calls for making Greater Israel a legitimate democracy. That is obviously not the case now, but there are good reasons to think that a marked shift in the American Jewish community's thinking about Israel is in the offing. This is not to deny that there will be some die-hards who defend Apartheid Israel; but their ranks will be thin and it will be widely apparent that they are out of step with core American values.

American Jews and Greater Israel

American Jews who care deeply about Israel can be divided into three broad categories. The first two are what I call "righteous Jews" and the "new Afrikaners", clearly definable groups that think about Israel and where it is headed in fundamentally different ways. The third and largest group is comprised of those Jews who care about Israel, but do not have clear-cut views on how to think about Greater Israel and Apartheid. Let us call this group the "great ambivalent middle".

Righteous Jews have a powerful attachment to core liberal values. They believe that individual rights matter greatly and that they are universal, which means that they apply equally to Jews and Palestinians. They could never support an Apartheid Israel. They understand that the Palestinians paid an enormous price to make it possible to create Israel in 1948. Moreover, they recognise the pain and suffering that Israel has inflicted on the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories since 1967. Finally, most righteous Jews believe that the Palestinians deserve a viable state of their own, just as the Jews deserve their own state. In essence, they believe that self-determination applies to Palestinians as well as Jews, and that the two-state solution is the best way to achieve that end. Some righteous Jews, however, favour a democratic bi-national state over the two-state solution.

On the other side, we have the new Afrikaners, who will support Israel even if it is an Apartheid state. These are individuals who will back Israel no matter what it does, because they have blind loyalty to the Jewish state. This is not to say that the new Afrikaners think that Apartheid is an attractive or desirable political system, because I am sure that many of them do not. Surely some of them favour a two-state solution and some of them probably have a serious commitment to liberal values. The key point, however, is that they have an even deeper commitment to supporting Israel unreservedly. The new Afrikaners will of course try to come up with clever arguments to convince themselves and others that Israel is really not an Apartheid state, and that those who say it is are anti-Semites. We are all familiar with this strategy.

The key to determining whether the lobby can protect Apartheid Israel over the long run is whether the great ambivalent middle sides

with the new Afrikaners or the righteous Jews. The new Afrikaners have to win that fight decisively for Greater Israel to survive as a racist state.

There is no question that the present balance of power favours the new Afrikaners. When push comes to shove on issues relating to Israel, the hardliners invariably get most of those American Jews who are concerned about Israel to side with them. The righteous Jews, on the other hand, hold considerably less sway with the great ambivalent middle, at least at this point in time. This situation is due in good part to the fact that most American Jews – especially the elders in the community – have little understanding of how far down the Apartheid road Israel has travelled and where it is ultimately headed. They think that the two-state solution is still a viable option and that Israel remains committed to allowing the Palestinians to have their own state. These false beliefs allow them to act as if there is little danger of Israel becoming South Africa, which makes it easy for them to side with the new Afrikaners.

This situation, however, is unsustainable over time. Once it is widely recognised that the two-state solution is dead and Greater Israel has become a reality, the righteous Jews will have two choices: support Apartheid or work to help create a democratic bi-national state. I believe that almost all of them will opt for the latter option, in large part because of their deep-seated commitment to liberal values, which renders any Apartheid state abhorrent to them. Of course, the new Afrikaners will fiercely defend Apartheid Israel, because their commitment to Israel is unconditional, so it overrides any commitment they might have to liberal values.

The critical question, however, is this: what will happen to those Jews who comprise the great ambivalent middle once it is clear that Israel is a fully fledged Apartheid state and that facts on the ground have made a two-state solution impossible? Will they side with the new Afrikaners and defend Apartheid Israel, or will they ally with the righteous Jews and call for making Greater Israel a true democracy? Or will they sit silently on the sidelines?

I believe that most of the Jews in the great ambivalent middle will not defend Apartheid Israel but will either keep quiet or side with the righteous Jews against the new Afrikaners, who will become

increasingly marginalised over time. Once that happens, the lobby will be unable to provide cover for Israel's racist policies toward the Palestinians in the way it has done in the past.

There are a number of reasons why there is not likely to be much support for Israel inside the American Jewish community as that country looks increasingly like white-ruled South Africa. A despicable political system, Apartheid is fundamentally at odds with basic American values as well as core Jewish values. This is why the new Afrikaners will claim that security concerns explain Israeli discrimination against and oppression of the Palestinians. But as we have seen, we are rapidly reaching the point where it will be hard to miss the fact that Israel is becoming a fully fledged Apartheid state and that those who claim otherwise are either delusional or disingenuous. Simply put, not many American Jews are likely to be fooled by the new Afrikaners' arguments.

Furthermore, survey data shows that younger American Jews feel less attachment to Israel than their elders. This is due in part to the fact that the younger generations were born after the Holocaust and after anti-Semitism had largely been eliminated from American life. Also, Jews have been seamlessly integrated into the American mainstream, to the point where many community leaders worry that rampant inter-marriage will lead to the disappearance of American Jewry over time. Not surprisingly, younger Jews are less disposed to see Israel as a safe haven should the goyim go on an anti-Semitic rampage, because they recognise this is not going to happen in the United States. That perspective makes them less inclined than their elders to defend Israel no matter what it does.

There is another reason that American Jews are likely to feel less connected to Israel in the years ahead. Important changes are taking place in the demographic make-up of Israel that will make it more difficult for many of them to identify closely with the Jewish state. When Israel was created in 1948, few ultra-orthodox Jews lived there. In fact, ultra-orthodox Jews were deeply hostile to Zionism, which they viewed as an affront to Judaism. Secular Jews dominated Israeli life at its founding and they still do, but their influence has been waning and is likely to decline much more in the decades ahead. The main reason is that the ultra-orthodox are a rapidly growing percentage of

the population, due to their stunningly high birthrates. It is estimated that the average ultra-orthodox woman has 7.8 babies. In fact, in the 2008 mayoral election in Jerusalem, an ultra-orthodox candidate boasted: "In another fifteen years there will not be a secular mayor in any city in Israel." Of course, he was exaggerating, but his boast is indicative of the growing power of the ultra-orthodox in Israel.

An additional dynamic is changing the make-up of Israeli society. Large numbers of Israelis have left the country to live abroad and the majority are not expected to return home. Several recent estimates suggest that between 750,000 and one million Israelis reside in other countries, most of them secular. On top of that, public opinion surveys indicate that many Israelis would like to move to another country. This situation is likely to get worse over time, because many secular Jews will not want to live in an Apartheid state whose politics and daily life are increasingly shaped by the ultra-orthodox.

All of this is to say that Israel's secular Jewish identity – which has been so powerful from the start – is slowly eroding and promises to continue eroding over time as the ultra-orthodox grow in number and influence. That important development will make it more difficult in the years ahead for secular American Jews – who make up the bulk of the Jewish community in the United States – to identify closely with Israel and be willing to defend it when it becomes a full-blown Apartheid state. Of course, that reluctance to back Israel will be reinforced by the fact that American Jews are among the staunchest defenders of traditional liberal values.

The Bottom Line

It seems clear that Israel will not be able to maintain itself as an Apartheid state over the long term, because it will not be able to depend on the American Jewish community to defend its loathsome policies toward the Palestinians. Without that protection, Israel is doomed, because public opinion in the West will turn decisively against it. Thus, I believe that Greater Israel will eventually become a democratic bi-national state, and the Palestinians will dominate its politics, because they will outnumber the Jews in the land between

the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea.

What is truly remarkable about this situation is that the Israel lobby is effectively helping Israel to commit national suicide. What makes this situation even more astonishing is that there is an alternative outcome which would be relatively easy to achieve and is clearly in Israel's best interests: the two-state solution. It is hard to understand why Israel and its American supporters are not working overtime to create a viable Palestinian state in the Occupied Territories and why instead they are moving full-speed ahead to build Greater Israel. It makes no sense from either a moral or a strategic perspective. Indeed, it is an exceptionally foolish policy.

There are obviously great dangers ahead for the Palestinians, who will continue to suffer terribly at the hands of the Israelis for years to come. But it does look as though the Palestinians will eventually get their own state, mainly because Israel seems bent on self-destruction.