

Trump's New Deal for the Middle East and Netanyahu's fingerprints

Shaul Arieli, Haaretz, June 24, 2018

Netanyahu's fingerprints in the "Trump plane outline" for Middle East peace, which is taking shape these days, cannot be mistaken. It is easy to recognize the similarity between Netanyahu's positions and the expected American proposal - but this is a typical surrender to the totalitarianism of the now. Netanyahu's positions are nothing more than a repetition of Israel's positions presented since 1967 regarding the future of the West Bank. But while most of these positions eroded as starting points and were adapted to possible areas of agreement in order to reach a historic compromise, in the past 25 years Netanyahu has been stubborn in his positions, which not only prevents the settlement of the conflict but also reversed the progress achieved by his predecessors.

According to various sources, Trump's "ultimate deal" will include the following principles: united Jerusalem as the capital of Israel (while "conceding" by Israel of four or five neighborhoods outside the separation barrier), as Netanyahu promised in the 2015 elections ("We will forever preserve a united Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty"). The Jordan Valley will remain under Israeli control, as Netanyahu announced in October 2017 ("The Jordan Valley will always be part of the State of Israel, we will continue to settle it"). The number of Israeli settlement blocs will rise and expand, as Netanyahu promised his ministers in June 2011 ("the blocs of the national left are not my blocs"). On the issue of security, Netanyahu's position, which was presented in his speech at the Saban conference in December 2015, was adopted ("The only solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the establishment of a demilitarized Palestinian state") and Palestinian refugees will not return to Israel at all, as Netanyahu declared in his 2009 Bar-Ilan speech ("The refugee problem must be resolved outside the borders of Israel").

The first that sought to settle the conflict with the Palestinians after the Six-Day War, not through Arab countries, was Minister Yigal Allon. In the Eshkol government debates, he objected to the Jordanian option, saying: "We played with the Hashemite House and paid for it dearly. I am afraid it is repeating itself, the last thing being the return of one inch of the West Bank to Jordan". Alon proposed a Palestinian state in the West Bank, without an external border controlled by Israel. "I take the maximum possibility, not Canton, not an autonomous region, but an independent Arab state

agreed between us and between them in an enclave surrounded by Israeli territory ... even independent with its own foreign policy". The united Jerusalem that was just created will remain the capital of Israel. Gaza will be annexed to Israel immediately after its refugees are resettled outside of the Land of Israel, as one of Defense Minister Dayan's proposals states: "Take them and resettle them in East Jordan".

Second was Prime Minister Menachem Begin, who signed with the Egyptian president, Anwar Sadat, at Camp David in 1978, the framework agreement for Palestinian autonomy, the principles of which are identical to those of the Oslo agreement signed in 1993. Although Begin argued that at the end of the interim period of Palestinian autonomy, he would demand an annexation to Israel, at a cabinet meeting on June 18, 1967, about a week after the Six-Day War, he opposed the idea of autonomy on the logical grounds that "the concept of autonomy leads to a Palestinian state in the hard logic of things (...) If we say autonomy, it is an invitation to an independent Arab-Palestinian state, typical of how the goyim will understand it. "

Yitzhak Rabin's speech in October 1995 presented his view of the permanent status agreement with the Palestinians, which fits Trump's initiative like a glove: "We see the permanent solution within the territory of the State of Israel including most of the territory of the Land of Israel ... and next to it a Palestinian entity ... that is less than a state ... The borders of the State of Israel, at the time of the permanent solution, will be beyond the lines that existed before the Six-Day War ... First and foremost a united Jerusalem, which will also include Ma'aleh Adumim and Givat Ze'ev as the capital of Israel ... The security border will be placed in the Jordan Valley. (And also) changes that will include the inclusion of the Gush Etzion bloc, Efrat, Beitar and other settlements, most of which are located east of what was the Green Line (...) and settlement blocks".

At the same time, it should be remembered that Rabin then tried to approve the Interim Agreement in the Knesset on the weight of a single vote. More important is the fact that Rabin's approach was gradual, and it is reasonable to assume that he understood the prices required to settle the agreement, as he wrote: "I prefer interim agreements with a period of testing between stages, based on the (negative) experience of advancing all at once for a final agreement". Also, "the move to real peace is a process, not a one-time act". But his murdered a month later by a Jewish fanatic, prevented him from holding any negotiations on a final agreement.

Netanyahu, who was elected in 1996, had already published in 1995 that "the autonomy plan under Israeli control is the only alternative to preventing these dangers, which are hidden in the 'peace' plan of the Oslo agreement". He conducted a successful battle for withdrawal from and delay of the Oslo Accords, paying for it in the concession of Hebron in 1997 and others in Area C under the Wye Memorandum in 1998, as he explained during his visit to the home of a bereaved family during the second intifada. That same year Netanyahu managed, in a cheap political maneuver, to approve in the government the "map of national interests" that Israel would not give up in a permanent settlement that covered half of the West Bank.

Ehud Barak offered a similar proposal at Camp David in 2000 to that of Rabin in 1995: "An area of no less than 11% (including the Jordan Valley and the outer border), in which 80% of the settlers live, will be annexed to Israel, and we will not transfer sovereign territory (There will be no exchange of territory) ... for a few years, Israel will control about a quarter of the Jordan Valley, in order to ensure control over the crossings between Jordan and Palestine". In Jerusalem, he made do with suggesting to Clinton that "in the Old City, Arafat will have sovereignty over the Muslim Quarter and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher ... possibly the Christian Quarter as well" and the Palestinian villages annexed to Israel in 1967 without East Jerusalem.

Barak changed his position, and in 2001 in Taba spoke in different terms after he adopted the Clinton proposal of December 2000. The Israeli proposal spoke of the annexation of 6 percent of the West Bank, the partition of Jerusalem, the demilitarization of the Palestinian state and the return of the Palestinian refugees to it.

Ehud Olmert continued this trend, and in the Annapolis process he completed it into agreed parameters with the Palestinians for a final status agreement: 1967 lines and agreed territorial swaps, dividing Jerusalem into two capitals, a demilitarized Palestinian state and the settling of the refugee issue by their return mainly to the state of Palestine.

At the point at which negotiations were stopped, at the end of 2008, the Palestinians proposed an exchange of between 1.9% to 4% of land, annexing to Israel 63-80 percent of the Israelis, which would be able to stay in their homes: annexation to Israel of Jewish neighborhoods in Jerusalem (excluding Har Homa), the Western Wall, the

Jewish Quarter, half of the Armenian Quarter, and the rest of Mount Zion, a demilitarized state and the return of 80,000 to 100,000 refugees to Israel.

Netanyahu, who was reelected, reversed the progress in one stroke. The false Bar-Ilan speech in June 2009, which brought hope to many who did not bother to go into detail, received the best interpretation from the Prime Minister's father, Ben-Zion Netanyahu, who said a month later: "Benjamin does not support a Palestinian state but only on conditions that the Arabs will never accept. I heard it from him". Later on, his son ruled that Jerusalem would not be up for negotiation and that the 1967 lines would not serve as a basis for the exchange of territories. In an interview in 2015, he declared that "under the conditions they currently want, a Palestinian state is out of the question".

It seems that Trump chose to ignore the progress made during the negotiations at Camp David, Taba and Annapolis, as Jason Greenblatt must have shown him and Jared Kouchner, and as outgoing Foreign Secretary John Kerry summed up in a closed speech in Dubai last year: "We must have will in order to make peace... Olmert, Barak, Rabin and Peres have indicated ways to achieve it". Trump ignores what Kerry went on to say: "Israel doesn't have leaders who want to make peace ... Most members of the current cabinet of the Israeli government have declared publicly that they will never be in favor of a Palestinian state", and he wishes to enlist the government of Israel through an unacceptable proposal made by ambassador David Friedman's doctrine of illusion.

In order to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, mediators are certainly needed as well as two sides who are interested in solving it. The American proposal, if there is one, will be "fanning the flame" and push both sides to barricade themselves in their positions. The Palestinians will reject it outright and the Israeli government will use it to the fullest in order to "prove" that there is no partner. Therefore, the Israeli and Palestinian publics have no choice but to hope that Trump will present a fair proposal based on the negotiations, similar to previous proposals by US presidents - Carter, Clinton and Bush junior - or that he will keep his proposals to himself.