

FIFTEEN THESES ON A PERMANENT AGREEMENT: THE JEWISH DIMENSION

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Introduction

This discussion paper is structured in the form of 15 theses dealing with the subject of the working group on "A Permanent Agreement: the Jewish Dimension." They express the personal opinion of the author. Their formulation is sharp and the explanations concise, to stimulate debate. Full elaboration is provided in two books.¹

The theses are selected from a larger set so as to fit the working group agenda. They do not presume to deal with the conflict as a whole.

However, not to remain only with general statements, a tentative outline of a recommended Greater Middle East agreement is attached as an appendix.

Thesis One: Deep Conflict Causes Need Understanding and Coping.

The conflict has multiple facets and causes. Arab refusal "to recognize the Jewish People's right to its own country in its historical Homeland" is the crux of the conflict but constitutes more of a symptom than a root cause. Deep causes include: the violence inherent ontologically in every establishment of a new state with a new population in populated areas – in this case, a Jewish state in the "Land of Islam"; religious and traditional attitudes to Jews in Islam (and Christianity); elements of a clash of cultures; humiliation by Israeli victories; collision of territorial imperatives aggravated by "sacred" dimensions; dysfunctional myths

and memories; a violence mindset, with a lot of rage, developing over the years; a good measure of fears; and more.

Also important are Islamic feelings of having been suppressed by the Christian West, which have a real basis in history, and an image of Israel as a bridgehead of the West and especially the US.

These causes must be understood and coped with individually and holistically. Thus, to provide just one example, Israeli avoidance of humiliating Arab actors and demonstrating respect towards Islam are imperative.

Thesis Two: Reaching an agreement with main Islamic actors, or at least a modus vivendi, is very important and perhaps critical.

About 23 percent of the global population is Muslim, while Jews are about 0.2 percent. The global power of Islam is very likely to increase in the 21st century, also within Western countries, despite fragmentation and transition crises. The role of religion is not likely to decrease. Martyr syndromes cannot be excluded. Therefore, reaching an agreement or at least a modus vivendi with main Islamic actors is very important and perhaps critical – all the more so as the 21st century may well be a rather bloody one.

Let me add two points further supporting this thesis:

No global security regime can be relied upon to assure the wellbeing of Israel, either by direct support or by making the 21st century a peaceful one.

Shifts in the global standing and external involvements of the US may reduce the significance of its "special relationship" with Israel, even if this is not likely in the foreseeable future.

All the more so, a shift for the better in Israeli and Jewish People relations with main Islamic actors is a top priority, together with assuring Israeli ability to thrive even if such efforts do not work out, as further discussed below.

Thesis Three:

Without an agreement with main Islamic actors on the Holy Basin, no accommodation is possible.

This should be obvious. Lack of recognition and acceptance of this point by many Jewish Israeli leaders is a clear and serious symptom of motivated irrationality and reality denial, however understandable.

Stubborn facts of reality have to be recognized, with all the tragic choices they require.

Thesis Four:

The Palestinians are not the core of the conflict, however important and, even more so, conspicuous.

The Palestinians are not a strategic security danger for Israel. The interest of Arab and Islamic leaders in them is limited, despite contrary declarations. And there is no moral or realpolitik reason why they should serve as the Islamic actor in respect to the Holy Basin.

This does not lessen the necessity to reach a two-state agreement, for realpolitik and moral reasons and as an essential component of a larger settlement. But it should be embedded in a comprehensive agreement as explained in the following.

Thesis Five:

Only massive intervention with deep historic processes can achieve the critical mass needed to bend them into a desirable direction.

Important features of the systems dynamics of the Arab-Israeli (and Jewish-Islamic) conflict are changing with time, but it has a stable hard core of hostility to the very existence of a Jewish state in the Land of Israel. This is demonstrated, inter alia, by the fact that peace agreements with some Arab states are accompanied by the emergence of new anti-Israeli actors, and by the crucial, continuous role of variant forms of violence and threats of violence in the conflict. Given such a robust violence core, which has a high momentum, only large-scale interventions with deep historic processes can bend the conflict dynamics into a peaceful direction.

Ergo, piecemeal peacemaking is inadequate. A Palestinian state may easily become destabilized and subvert its neighbors, such as Jordan and Saudi Arabia, if not integrated into a larger system agreement.

In terms of an updated version of geopolitics, a minimum area essential for settling the Arab-Israeli conflict includes most of the Greater Middle East.

Thesis Six: The real need is for a comprehensive Greater Middle East agreement within the context of Islamic states.

A Greater Middle East comprehensive agreement is essential because of the core features of the Arab-Israeli conflict and its momentum, as discussed above. But it is also necessary for more pragmatic reasons. Thus, only a comprehensive settlement can solve the Palestinian refugee problem, restrain and if necessary destroy radical fanatic non-state groups, and perhaps cause Iran to change its policy — at least in the longer term.

In some views, Iran may take aggressive steps to try to prevent a comprehensive peace and intensify efforts to develop nuclear weapons because of feeling encircled. However, in any case, Iranian leadership is likely to make a maximum effort to become a nuclear power. And short-term limited aggression is well worth accepting if this is the price for shifting the Arab-Israeli conflict towards a comprehensive peace. But progress towards a comprehensive peace must be accompanied by maximum efforts to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear weapons state, and if these fail than total deterrence is imperative.

Accordingly, the absence of an Israeli statecraft paradigm shift in response to the Arab peace initiative was a serious failure. But this does not mean that all the stipulations of that initiative are acceptable.

Thesis Seven:

Within a comprehensive agreement, a Palestinian state is an essential component. But, by itself, it is not worth Israel giving up its limited bargaining assets. This also applies to Syria.

A Palestinian state is unavoidable. But an agreement with the Palestinians alone is not worth divesting Israel of its limited negotiation assets, which are needed to achieve a comprehensive agreement. An agreement with the Palestinians alone would require Israel to concede a lot for very little in return. This Israel cannot permit itself.

This applies with adjustments to an agreement with Syrian alone. Oscillation in negotiations between Syria and the Palestinians is not serious statecraft. An agreement with only one of them, if achievable, would be unstable. And, giving up very valuable assets for a peace with Syria, without its being linked to a Greater Middle East settlement, is a bad bargain.

It is up to the Palestinians and the Syrians to "bring" with them main Arab and Islamic states and for Israel to demand their joining a comprehensive agreement. The assumption that an agreement with the Palestinians and/or Syria will automatically lead to a comprehensive agreement has no basis in the dynamics of the Greater Middle East and the interests of main Arab states. Therefore, all partial agreements should be rigidly linked in a road atlas to a comprehensive agreement normalizing Israel's standing in the Greater Middle East, with main compromises strictly tied to pre-defined agreed steps towards realizing the agreement as a whole.

Thesis Eight:

Active Jewish Peoplecraft towards Islam is needed.

An appropriate Jewish Peoplecraft² towards Islam is an important component of the proposed approach. It includes support by Jewish communities of Islamic religious rights in Western countries, such as wearing the burqa, building Mosques even at "sensitive" locations, and so on. Not less important are demonstrated respect towards Islam, careful presentation of the common history of being prosecuted by the Christian West, shared projects, social mixing, and more – as adjusted to local conditions.

Thesis Nine: "Permanent" is a misnomer – "relatively stable" is the maximum.

Nothing is "permanent." Most wars break out from "peace," often regarded as rather stable. The Greater Middle East is very likely to be turbulent for at least the 21st century. The Arab-Israeli conflict has deep causes that in the best of cases will persist for quite some time. Therefore, achieving a "relatively stable" Greater Middle East agreement is a maximum feasible achievement, to be followed by a variety of peace stabilization efforts.

Improving relations between the Jewish People as a whole and Islamic actors is an important part of such stabilization activities.

Thesis Ten: All statecraft is a fuzzy gamble. Therefore, success cannot be assured and preparations to cope with failure are essential.

Given the turbulence of the Greater Middle East and its pervasive uncertainty, even the best humanly achievable statecraft is but a fuzzy gamble which may fail. This applies fully to the proposed Greater Middle East peace statecraft paradigm.

This does not undermine the optimality of the proposed paradigm. Even if it fails there will be positive results from an Israeli initiative as such. Therefore, the proposal meets both the "maximax" and the "maximin-minimax" decision criteria, as well as the principle of minimizing regrets and the requirements of prudence.

Thesis Eleven: An innovative Israeli statecraft violence paradigm is an essential counterpart.

Innovative forms of violence, actual or threatened, are sure to accompany progress in the peace process, with opponents of accommodation trying to disrupt it.

But this is a minor problem compared to the dangers of not achieving peace agreements and of destabilization of peace agreements, which cannot be excluded from the domain of possibilities. Therefore, Israel needs a partly novel statecraft violence paradigm which

enables it to assure national security in the absence of peace, copes with actors who do not join peace agreements, deters breaking of peace agreements, and enables it to cope with violence in ways that do not undermine chances of peace but strengthen it.

This subject is outside the scope of the working group, requiring separate consideration (as in my forthcoming Statecraft book).

Thesis Twelve: Real and demonstrated Israeli capacity to thrive even without peace is essential.

To achieve and stabilize a comprehensive peace the Crusader State Syndrome, however incorrect, has to be refuted conspicuously. In part this can and should be done with the help of a redesigned violence paradigm, including the ultimate threat that if Israel, hypothetically, is devastated then most of the Greater Middle East will become a wasteland.

However, more attractive and not less essential is a proven Israeli ability and the ability of the Jewish People as a whole to thrive even if the conflict continues.

It follows, that high quality intra-Jewish-People and intra-Israeli grand policies are of the essence, important by themselves and necessary for reaching and stabilizing accommodation with Islam and peace in the Greater Middle East.

However, as a matter of fact, this requirement is in part very much neglected. This is a grave blunder which needs urgent correction.

Thesis Thirteen: Radical implications for the Jewish People are certain, whether the peace process succeeds or fails.

At issue are not only bitter disagreements and painful traumas accompanying a successful peace process with all its difficult compromises, or accompanying a clear failure of the peace process with all its mutual accusation. Long-term implications are even more demanding.

If the conflict should continue and escalate, this will impose heavily on the Jewish People as a whole, on Israel and on Diaspora-Israel relations. If a comprehensive

peace agreement is reached and stabilized, "normalization" of Israel and less need of Diaspora support may destabilize Israel-Diaspora relations, which in any case are in danger of moving towards some disengagement and possibly a rupture if present Israeli grand-policies towards the Diaspora are not radically revised.

Therefore, the peace process should be accompanied by serious thinking about the implications for the future of the Jewish People and Israel-Diaspora relations, which are sure to undergo transformations, leading to innovative policy paradigms to be implemented urgently.

Thesis Fourteen: Consultative serious discourse by Jewish People forums is urgent.

In principle, Israeli decisions of importance to the future of the Jewish People as a whole should be decided together. Suitable institutional structures should have been set up long ago, but this has not been done. Existing structures are clearly unable to meet such needs, such as in respect to "representativeness."

Reliable Israeli opinion polls³ show that the views of Knesset members on the peace process and related issues do not reflect those of the public at large. If this is the case in a vibrant democracy, all the more so are much larger gaps to be expected in the Diaspora, where a majority of Jews, however defined, are not active in community affairs. Therefore, "participatory democracy" in the Jewish People as a whole has to be limited to consultative discourse, until new institutional structures with a new genre of Jewish People leaders fitting the requirements of the 21st century emerge. But serious consultative discourse on the peace process cannot wait. Organizing a series of consultative forums and meetings, with serious background papers, focusing on the peace processes is therefore recommended – as essential for preserving and strengthening the unity of the Jewish People and its "polity" characteristics. This includes leadership meetings as in part sponsored by JPPI.

Thesis Fifteen: Jewish-Islamic and Israel-Arab relations are a long-term process to be understood and coped with as such.

Statecraft leaps are possible and also essential to try and speed up normalization of the standing of Israel in the Greater Middle East and improve Jewish-Islamic relations, all the more so as failure is likely to have serious, including bloody, consequences.

But whatever is done, the issue is a deeply rooted one and therefore will accompany Israel and the Jewish People as a whole for all of the 21st century and beyond.

Accordingly, needed are: 1) persistence and patience, despite unavoidable breakdowns; 2) concentration on the really important for future-shaping, instead of the conspicuous; 3) very high quality Israeli statecraft and Jewish Peoplecraft by Jewish People leadership and institutions.

All these and additional requirements are not adequately met, to put it mildly – posing troublesome questions on what happened to the "Jewish Brain"⁴ – well worthy of study by JPPI and important to put on the agenda of the next JPPI conference.

On an immediate action level, urgently putting together a small and compartmentalized forum of the best statecraft thinkers in the Jewish People, selected on an individual basis — and there are a number of outstanding ones — may be very useful. This should be done discretely but urgently.

APPENDIX: TENTATIVE OUTLINE OF A GREATER MIDDLE EAST AGREEMENT

1. Israel will withdraw more or less to the 1967 borders, subject to mutually agreed territorial exchanges and borders.
2. An Islamic authority, decided upon by the Arab states in consultation with other Islamic countries, will be in charge of the Islamic parts of the Holy Basin.
3. Jerusalem will be divided taking into account demographic and physical realities, with some areas of shared sovereignty and an integrated municipal coordination authority.
4. A Palestinian state will be established, subject to demilitarization supervised by a combination of NATO, Arab and Israeli forces.
5. A pardon will be given to all prisoners accused of acts relating to the conflict.
6. A vast majority of Arab states and of Islamic non-Arab states will establish full diplomatic relations with Israel together with normalization of all aspects of relations between states as accepted between countries under conditions of full peace.
7. Non-state actors, such as Hezbollah and Hamas, will be invited to join the agreement as part of their country delegations, and given incentives for doing so. Non-state actors refusing to do so will be declared as enemies common to all parties of the agreement, with joint measures to be taken to contain and reduce them.
8. Palestinians in refugee camps will be settled in Greater Middle East countries (including Israel) according to quotas pro rata to populations and territory size, as well as in Western and Asian countries. A global fund will be set up to finance the resolution of the refugee issue.
9. Israel will express regret for its share in causing suffering to Palestinians, while the Palestinian state will express regret for its share in causing suffering to Israelis.
10. All parties to the agreement will abandon all claims for compensation and redress not specifically stipulated in the agreement.
11. The agreement will be open to other Greater Middle East states, with both positive and negative incentives to motivate them to join.

12. Israel will be given reliable security guarantees, including demilitarization of areas from which it withdraws. The US and other main powers will guarantee maintenance of Israeli military capacities to defend itself against any attacks, at its discretion. Fitting security guarantees will also be given to Arab states that so desire.
13. Main powers, NATO and the UN will guarantee the peace agreement and provide hard deterrence against external aggression.
14. Security cooperation between all parties to the agreement against external aggression and domestic subversion will be a formal and informal part of the agreement.
15. The agreement will include a stipulation that joint efforts will be made to move in agreed phases towards a Greater Middle East free of weapons of mass killing after stabilization of the peace and subject to an adequate global security regime.
16. Steps to build up good neighborhood relations will be an integral part of the agreement, including cooperation on shared issues such as water scarcity, exclusion of hate content from text books, introducing Islamic and Jewish culture into Israeli and Arab high school curricula respectively and so on.
17. The agreement will be accompanied by a kind of "Marshall Fund" for its signatories, with emphasis on social development and joint projects — but without efforts to intervene with Islamic types of regimes as various countries may prefer. This fund will also help countries to cover the expenses of executing the peace agreement.
18. Implementation will be in phases over fifteen years according to an atlas linking the various stipulations and their time tables. However some crucial steps will be taken, within five years, to "create facts" reducing opportunities for interruptive opposition to the process.

Endnotes

1. The Arab-Israeli Jewish-Islamic conflict is discussed at length in my forthcoming book *Israeli Statecraft: National Security Challenges and Responses* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011). http://www.amazon.co.uk/Israeli-Statecraft-Challenges-Yehzekel-Dror/dp/0415616301/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1286973554&sr=1-1. The policy aspects are elaborated in a Hebrew publication: מדינאות מדינית-ביטחונית למדינת ישראל: תזכיר למדינאים (רמת גן: אוניברסיטת בר-אילן, מרכז בגין-סאדאת למחקרים אסטרטגיים), יוני 2009 ניתן להורדה מהאתר <http://www.biu.ac.il/SOC/besa/docs/BM3.pdf>
2. I coin the term "Jewish Peoplecraft" to refer to a kind of "statecraft" by the Jewish People.
3. S. Daniel Abraham Center for Middle East Peace (2010). *Public Poll Findings: Positions of the Israeli Public and the Political Leadership (MKs) Regarding a Possible Peace Agreement*. Washington, DC: S. Daniel Abraham Center for Middle East Peace. <http://www.centerpeace.org/Publicpolljan10.pdf>. Accessed 17 August 2010.
4. Discussed in chapter 42 of my forthcoming Hebrew professional mentoring book for Israeli leaders: מנהיג תהיה לנו!: מורה נבוכים למנהיג מכובן יהודי-ציוני (תל-אביב: ידיעות ספרים), 2010.