

COMMENTARY

No.223

Friday, 19 September 2014

Reckless Policies, Dire Consequences

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The Netanyahu-led government's announcement of its decision to annex nearly 1,000 acres of Palestinian land in the West Bank between the Etzion settlement block and Jerusalem amounts to nothing less than a reckless and offensive act that only further undermines Israel's moral international standing and has dire future consequences.

Netanyahu's hypocrisy was put on full display when he blamed Hamas for the abduction and gruesome murder of three Israeli teenagers, which subsequently led to the Gaza war, only to expropriate land in the West Bank to punish the Palestinian Authority.

In fact, President Abbas did everything in his power to cooperate with Israeli security forces in the search for the abductors and strongly condemned the abduction. Instead of rewarding him for his efforts to keep the calm in the West Bank throughout the war, for example by freeing some prisoners, Netanyahu usurped another chunk of Palestinian land.

The message Netanyahu sent clearly suggests that he has no scruples, and contrary to his public statement in support for a two-state solution, he has no intentions of ever allowing the Palestinians to realize their aspiration for statehood.

He eagerly joined the extremist right-wing members in his coalition, the overzealous madmen Naftali Bennett and Avigdor Lieberman, whose sole purpose is continuing the colonization of the West Bank at any cost as they pursue their messianic mission with blind devotion, further jeopardizing Israel's very existence.

Beyond that, Netanyahu's action will have ominous repercussions for Israel on many other fronts, which can be overlooked only by a man possessed by a demon which blinds him from discerning between reality and nightmare.

Netanyahu's ill-advised action has undermined Israel's national security as his land grab further weakens the moderate Palestinian camp led by Abbas, and strengthens the extremists led by Hamas and Islamic Jihad, who can now demonstrate that moderation does not pay, justifying their continued violent resistance.

Netanyahu's act was not only deplorable but extraordinarily ill-timed (only days away from the UN General Assembly's annual meeting), leaving Abbas with no choice but to pursue his plans to seek a UN-mandated resolution to end the occupation within three years.

In addition, Abbas will now feel free to turn to the International Criminal Court to seek charges against Israel for gross human rights violations.

The international community, especially European countries and the United States, which matter the most to Israel, are losing patience with Netanyahu and his reactionary policy. They view his latest move not only as harmful to the prospect for a negotiated peace, but a direct contributor to instability in a region which is already in turmoil.

They view Israel as a county that abrogates its democratic values, callously disregarding international laws that govern the rules and responsibilities of occupying power while dangerously eroding its moral standing.

Western Europe in particular has already sounded the alarm and is cautioning Israel that it cannot continue its discrimination against Israeli Arabs and the occupation of the West Bank with impunity.

Moreover, Israel is undermining the strategic interests of its closest and indispensable ally, the US, throughout the Middle East. The US' unwavering support of Israel will have its limits as the US cannot allow itself to be seen as subservient to the whims of irresponsible Israeli leaders.

I do not rule out the possibility that should Israel continue on its current twisted path under Netanyahu, we will sooner than later begin to witness the imposition of sanctions starting with some European states, further isolating Israel from the international community.

Another consequence of Netanyahu's ill-fated policy is the rise of anti-Semitism, a disgraceful, racist attitude that has always existed in one form or another in various degrees.

Any sane individual, however, attributes the latest escalation of anti-Semitism throughout Europe, certainly the Middle East and even in the US, to Netanyahu's and his cohorts' loathsome policy toward the Palestinians.

Even more dangerous is the fact that a growing number of young American and European Jews (the largest pool of potential immigrants to Israel) do not wish to immigrate as they no longer view the country as pioneering, high-spirited, true to democratic values, and one in which they can take pride.

The younger generation of Jews resent the occupation and even more so the repeated violent confrontations with the Palestinians, which have no end in sight. Many feel offended by Netanyahu's policies as they grew up with the tradition of equality, fairness, and moral correctness.

The irony is that while Israel was created as the ultimate refuge for the Jews, determined to safeguard the security and well-being of the Jews anywhere, it has now become a liability.

Jews living in and especially outside Israel find themselves torn between their desire to defend Israel and their apprehension about the continuing occupation and discriminatory policies.

Even more troubling is the fact that hundreds of thousands of Israelis have emigrated from Israel in recent years as they witness their country losing its reason for being. They feel betrayed by their leaders' inability to remain faithful to the country's founding fathers, who sought to build a strong, inclusive, and just nation living in peace and harmony with its neighbours.

Sadly, many Israelis have resigned themselves to live with corrupt leaders, whose hunger for power knows no limits and who have readily sacrificed the welfare of the nation for personal gains and ambition. Is there any wonder why they have lost hope and now want to escape from the country they once were willing to die for?

They cannot envision, and neither can I, how the status quo with the Palestinians can be maintained or "managed" without repeated violence that will only grow in intensity, making Israel a living hell as we have just witnessed from the last Israel-Hamas war.

Ironically, with all his fanaticism and faults, Netanyahu may still be able to change the dynamics of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He should sit down by himself and think without his "chief advisor"—his wife, whose lust for power knows no bounds—and ask himself where Israel will be in ten or fifteen years down the line if the current situation continues to fester.

Perhaps he should also ponder about the legacy he wants to leave behind.

Does Netanyahu want to leave an Israel as an occupying power existing in a constant state of war, a garrison state, controlled by fanatic right-wing and religious leaders, becoming ever more isolated, whose Jewish population is depleting, with no friends, gloomy future, ever more vulnerable while forfeiting the one chance given to the Jews to rise from the ashes of the Holocaust?

Or will it be the country that has everything it takes to become a “light unto the nations.”

Note: This article is published in collaboration with Prof. Ben-Meir’s web portal. Web Link: <http://www.alonben-meir.com/article/reckless-policies-dire-consequences/>

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