

**The
Washington,
29**

**Palestine

April**

**Center
D.C.
2010**

Professor

John

Mearsheimer:

It is a great honor to be here at the Palestine Center to give the Sharabi Memorial Lecture. I would like to thank Yousef Munayyer, the executive director of the Jerusalem Fund, for inviting me, and all of you for coming out to hear me speak this afternoon.

My topic is the future of Palestine, and 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. As you all know, that land 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, my talk is about the future relationship between Israel and the Occupied Territories.

Of course, I am not just talking about the fate of those lands; I am also talking about the future of the people who live there. I am talking about the future of the Jews and the Palestinians who are Israeli citizens, as well as the Palestinians who live in the Occupied Territories.

The story I will tell is straightforward. Contrary to the wishes of the Obama administration and most Americans – to include many American Jews – Israel is not going to allow the Palestinians to have a viable state of their own in Gaza and the West Bank. Regrettably, the two-state solution is now a fantasy. Instead, those territories will be incorporated into a “Greater Israel,” which will be an apartheid state bearing a marked resemblance to white-ruled South Africa. Nevertheless, 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, which will mean the end of the Zionist dream.

Let me explain how I reached these conclusions.

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 Clinton in late December 2000. It would obviously involve creating a Palestinian state living side-by-side with Israel. To be viable, that Palestine state would have to control 95 percent or more of the West Bank and all of Gaza. There would

also have to be territorial swaps to compensate the Palestinians for those small pieces of West Bank territory that Israel got to keep in the final agreement. East Jerusalem would be the capital of the new Palestinian state. 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.

There are three possible alternatives to a two-state solution, all of which involve creating a Greater Israel – an Israel that effectively controls 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. The scale of the expulsion, however, would have to be even greater this time, because there are about 5.5 million Palestinians living between the Jordan and the Mediterranean.

The final alternative to a two-state solution is some form of apartheid, whereby Israel increases its control over the Occupied Territories, but allows the Palestinians to exercise limited autonomy in a set of disconnected and economically crippled enclaves.

It seems clear to me that the two-state solution is the best of these alternative futures. This is not to say that it is an ideal solution, because it is not; but it is by far the best outcome for both the Israelis and the Palestinians, as well as the United States. That is why the Obama administration is intensely committed to pushing it.

Nevertheless, the Palestinians are not going to get their own state anytime soon. They are instead going to end up living in an apartheid state dominated by Israeli Jews.

The main reason that a two-state solution is no longer a serious option is that most Israelis are opposed to making the sacrifices that would be necessary to create a viable Palestinian state,

and there is little reason to expect them to have an epiphany on this issue. For starters, there are now about 480,000 settlers in the Occupied Territories and a huge infrastructure of connector 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. Many of those settlers however, would fiercely resist any attempt to rollback the settlement enterprise. Earlier this month, *Ha'aretz* reported that a Hebrew University poll found that 21 percent of the settlers believe that "all means must be employed to resist the evacuation of most West Bank settlements, including the use of arms." In addition, the study found that 54 percent of those 480,000 settlers "do not recognize the government's authority to evacuate settlements"; and even if there was a referendum sanctioning a withdrawal, 36 percent of the settlers said they would not accept it.

Those settlers, however, do not have 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. Larry Derfner, a columnist for the *Jerusalem Post*, succinctly summed up Netanyahu's thinking about these matters in a recent column: "For him to divide the land, to divide Jerusalem, to give up Hebron, to send 100,000 settlers packing – that would be treason in his eyes. That would be moral suicide. His heart isn't in it; everything in him rebels at the idea. Our prime minister is constitutionally incapable of leading the nation out of the Palestinians' midst, of fighting the settlers and the Right in a virtual or literal civil war, of persuading Israelis to admit that on the crucial endeavor of their national life for the past 43 years, they were wrong and the world was right."

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 that would be necessary to create a legitimate Palestinian state. Certainly Olmert did not do so when he was prime minister.

But even if they were, it is unlikely that either of those leaders, or anyone else for that matter, could get enough of their fellow citizens to back an effective two-state solution. The political center of gravity in Israel has shifted sharply to the right over the past decade and there is no sizable pro-peace political party or movement that they could turn to for help. Probably 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. And 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.

But even if someone like Livni or Olmert was able to cobble together a coalition of interest groups and political parties that favored giving the Palestinians a real state of their own, they would still face fierce resistance from the sizeable forces that stand behind Netanyahu 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 implement a two-state solution. 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 ideological 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." Plus, 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 criticized 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. But even then, not all of them thought it was a good idea and hardly any of them were enthusiastic about it. Even Barak, who seriously flirted with the idea of creating a Palestinian state at Camp David in July 2000, initially opposed the Oslo Accords. Furthermore, he has been willing to serve as Netanyahu's defense minister, knowing full well that the prime minister and his allies are opposed to creating an independent Palestine. All of this is to say that Zionism's core beliefs are deeply hostile to the very notion of a Palestinian state, and this 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.

Many advocates of a two-state solution recognize this problem, but think that there is a way to solve it: the Obama administration can put significant pressure on Israel to allow the Palestinians to have their own state. The United States, after all, 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. Furthermore, President Obama and all of his principal foreign policy advisors are dedicated to establishing a viable Palestinian state living side-by-side with Israel.

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 U.S. Middle East policy. Alan Dershowitz 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, constructed 250 miles of connector and bypass roads, doubled the number of settlers, and built 30 new settlements. President Clinton did hardly anything to halt this expansion. Indeed, 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.

One might think that Obama is different from his predecessors, but there is little evidence to support that belief. 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 the special relationship. In the month before he took office, he was silent during the Gaza massacre – when Israel was being criticized around the world for its brutal assault on that densely populated enclave.

After taking office in January 2009, President Obama 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 Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his lieutenants on numerous occasions.

In response, Netanyahu made it equally clear that Israel intended to continue building settlements and that he and almost everyone in his ruling coalition 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.

Netanyahu, of course, won this fight. The Israeli prime minister not only refused to stop building the 2500 housing units that were under construction in the West Bank, but just to make it clear to Obama who was boss, in late June 2009, he authorized the building of 300 new homes in the West Bank. Netanyahu refused to even countenance 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 publicly conceded 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 he meekly asked Israel to please exercise restraint while it continued colonizing the West Bank. Fully aware of his triumph, Netanyahu said on September 23, “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. For example, 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 last month, when the Netanyahu government embarrassed Vice President Biden during his visit to

Israel by announcing plans to build 1600 new housing units in East Jerusalem. While that crisis was important because it clearly revealed that Israel's brutal policies toward the Palestinians are seriously damaging American 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 March 21, "building in Jerusalem is like building in Tel Aviv. Our policy on Jerusalem is like the policy in the past 42 years." One day later at the annual AIPAC Conference he said: "The Jewish people were building Jerusalem 3,000 years ago, and the Jewish people are building Jerusalem today. Jerusalem is not a settlement; it's our capital." And just last week, he said "there will be no freeze in Jerusalem," although it does appear that Israel is not building in East Jerusalem for the moment. 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.

In short 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 colonize Palestinian lands. Henry Siegman got it right when he called these fruitless talks "The Greater Middle East Peace Process Scam."

There are two other reasons why there is not going to be a two-state solution. The Palestinians are badly divided among themselves and 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 Jerusalem nor Washington is likely to provide a helping hand. Then there are the Christian Zionists, who are 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 millimeter of Palestine, a situation they believe heralds the "Second Coming" of Christ.

What this all means is that there is going to be a Greater Israel between the Jordan and the Mediterranean. In fact, I would argue that it already exists. 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 racist views toward the Palestinians in their midst. Furthermore, few of Israel's supporters in the United States are interested in this outcome, at least at this point in time. Most Palestinians, of

course, would 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 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 neighbors 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 5.5 million Palestinians living between the Jordan and the Mediterranean 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 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 presents itself. It is apparent from public opinion surveys and everyday discourse that many Israelis hold racist views of Palestinians and the Gaza massacre makes clear that they have few qualms about killing Palestinian civilians. It is difficult to disagree with Jimmy Carter's comment earlier this year that "the citizens of Palestine are treated more like animals than like human beings." A century of conflict and four decades of occupation will do that to a people.

Furthermore, a substantial number of Israeli Jews – some 40 percent or more – believe that the Arab citizens of Israel should be "encouraged" to leave by the government. Indeed, former foreign minister Tzipi Livni has said that if there is a two-state solution, she expected Israel's Palestinian citizens to leave and settle in the new Palestinian state. And then there is the recent military order issued by the IDF that is aimed at "preventing infiltration" into the West Bank. In fact, it enables Israel to deport tens of thousands of Palestinians from the West Bank should it choose to do so. 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 full-fledged apartheid state. As anyone who has spent time in the Occupied Territories knows, it is already an incipient apartheid state with separate laws, separate roads, and separate housing for Israelis and Palestinians, who are essentially confined to impoverished enclaves that they can leave and enter only with great difficulty.

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, who is now Israel's defense minister, said in early February of this year that, "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 Bishop 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 an apartheid state. 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. Let me explain why.

For starters, the discrimination and repression that is 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. It not only makes it easy for the opponents of apartheid to get the real story out to the world, but 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. 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 hardline Israelis and their American supporters are now waging a vicious smear campaign against those human rights organizations that criticize 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, especially 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 would follow suit. 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, but it also guarantees that Israel will remain a strategic liability for the United States. The recent comments of President Obama, Vice President Biden and General David Petraeus make clear that Israel's colonization of the Occupied Territories is doing serious damage to American interests in the Middle East and surrounding areas. As Biden told Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in March, "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 full-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.

Hardline 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 gotten as far down the apartheid road as it has without the help of organizations 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 full-fledged apartheid state. Indeed, many of them are likely to

criticize 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 diehards 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.

Let me elaborate.

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," which are 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 a lot 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 they apply equally to Jews and Palestinians. They could never support an apartheid Israel. They also understand that the Palestinians paid an enormous price to make it possible to create Israel in 1948. Moreover, they recognize 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, favor a democratic bi-national state over the two-state solution.

To give you a better sense of what I mean when I use the term righteous Jews, let me give you some names of people and organizations that I would put in this category. The list would include Noam Chomsky, Roger Cohen, Richard Falk, Norman Finkelstein, Tony Judt, Tony Karon, Naomi Klein, MJ Rosenberg, Sara Roy, and Philip Weiss of *Mondoweiss* fame, just to name a few. I would also include many of the individuals associated with J Street and everyone associated with Jewish Voice for Peace, as well as distinguished international figures such as Judge Richard Goldstone. Furthermore, I would apply the label to the many American Jews who work for different human rights organizations, such as Kenneth Roth of Human Rights Watch.

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 favor 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.

I would classify most of the individuals who head the Israel lobby's major organizations as new Afrikaners. That list would include Abraham Foxman of the Anti-Defamation League, David Harris of the American Jewish Committee, Malcolm Hoenlein of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, Ronald Lauder of the World Jewish Congress, and Morton Klein of the Zionist Organization of America, just to name some of the more prominent ones. I would also include businessmen like Sheldon Adelson, Lester Crown, and Mortimer Zuckerman as well as media personalities like Fred Hiatt and Charles Krauthammer of the *Washington Post*, Bret Stephens of the *Wall Street Journal*, and Martin Peretz of the *New Republic*. It would be easy to add more names to this list.

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 favors the new Afrikaners. When push comes to shove on issues relating to Israel, the hardliners invariably get most of those American Jews who care a lot 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 recognized that the two-state solution is dead and Greater Israel is 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 so unconditional that it overrides any commitment they might have to liberal values.

The critical question, however, is: what will happen to those Jews who comprise the great ambivalent middle once it is clear to them that Israel is a full-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 marginalized over time. And once that happens, the lobby will be unable to provide cover for Israel's racist policies toward the Palestinians in the way it has 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 it looks more and more like white-ruled South Africa. For starters, apartheid is a despicable political system and it is fundamentally at odds with basic American values as well as core Jewish values. This is why the new Afrikaners will defend Israel on the grounds that it is not an apartheid state, and that security concerns explain why Israel has to discriminate against and oppress the Palestinians. But again, we are rapidly reaching the point where it will be hard to miss the fact that Greater Israel is becoming a full-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 surely due 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 another anti-Semitic rampage, because they recognize that this is simply not going to happen here 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 why 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, because of their stunningly high birthrates. It is estimated that the average ultra-orthodox woman has 7.8 babies. As many of you know, the Jewish areas of Jerusalem are increasingly dominated by the ultra-orthodox. In fact, in the 2008 mayoral election in Jerusalem, an ultra-orthodox candidate boasted, "In another 15 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. One final piece of data: about one half of Israeli school children in first grade this year are either Palestinian or ultra-orthodox. Given the high birthrates of the ultra-orthodox and the Palestinians, their percentage of the first-graders – and ultimately the population at large – will grow steadily with time.

Varying birthrates among Israel's different communities are not the only factor that is changing the makeup of Israeli society. There is another dynamic at play: large numbers of Israelis have left the country to live abroad and most of them are not expected to return home. Several recent estimates suggest that between 750,000 and one million Israelis reside in other countries, and most of them are 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 here 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 further strengthened by the fact that American Jews are among the staunchest defenders of traditional liberal values.

The bottom line is 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. And without that protection, Israel is doomed, because public opinion in the West will turn decisively against Israel, as it turns itself into a full-fledged apartheid state.

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 and the Mediterranean.

What is truly remarkable about this situation is that the Israel lobby is effectively helping Israel commit national suicide. Israel, after all, is turning itself into an apartheid state, which, as Ehud Olmert has pointed out, is not sustainable in the modern era. 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, which will be an apartheid state. It makes no sense from either a moral or a strategic perspective. Indeed, it is an exceptionally foolish policy.

What about the Palestinians? I believe that the two-state solution is the best outcome for them as well as the Israelis. However, the Palestinians have little say in whether there will be two states living side-by-side, because they are presently at the mercy of the Israelis, who are the lords of the land. This means that the Palestinians are going to end up living in Greater Israel, which will be an apartheid state. Again, one might even argue that they have already reached that point. Regardless, the Palestinians will obviously have a vested interest in moving away from apartheid and toward democracy as quickly and painlessly as possible. Of course, that will not be easy, but there are better and worse ways to achieve that end.

Let me conclude with a few words of advice to the Palestinians about how they should go about turning Greater Israel into a democratic bi-national state.

First, it is essential to recognize that the Palestinians and the Israelis are engaged in a war of ideas. To be more specific, this is a war about two competing visions of the Middle East: a Greater Israel that is an apartheid state and one that is a democracy. There is no question that the Palestinians have the easier case to make, as it is impossible to sell apartheid in the modern world.

Second, to win this war the Palestinians will have to adopt the South Africa strategy, which is to say that they will have to get world opinion on their side and use it to put enormous pressure on Israel to abandon apartheid and adopt democracy. This task will not be easy because the new Afrikaners will re-double their efforts to defend Israel's heinous policies. Fortunately, their ability to do this is likely to diminish over time.

Third, the Palestinians most formidable weapon in this war of ideas will be the Internet, which will make it easy for them to document what Israel is doing and to get their message out to the wider world.

Fourth, the Palestinians will need to build a stable of articulate spokespersons who can connect with Western audiences and make a compelling case against apartheid. In other words, they will need more Mustafa Barghoutis. The Palestinians will also need allies, and not only from the Arab and Islamic world, but from countries in the West as well. Many of the Palestinians best allies will surely be righteous Jews, who will play a key role in the fight against apartheid in Israel as they did in South Africa.

Fifth, it is essential that the Palestinians make clear that they do not intend to seek revenge against the Israeli Jews for their past crimes, but instead are deeply committed to creating a bi-national democracy in which Jews and Palestinians can live together peacefully. The Palestinians do not want to treat the Jews the way the Jews have treated them.

Finally, the Palestinians should definitely not employ violence to defeat apartheid. They should resist mightily for sure, but their strategy should privilege non-violent resistance. The appropriate model is Gandhi not Mao. Violence is counter-productive because if it gets intense enough, the Israelis might think that they can expel large numbers of Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza. The Palestinians must never underestimate the danger of mass expulsion. Furthermore, a violent new Intifada would undermine support for the Palestinian cause in the West, which is essential for winning the war of ideas, which is ultimately the battleground on which Palestine's future will be determined.

In sum, there are great dangers ahead for the Palestinians, who will continue to suffer terribly at the hands of the Israelis for some years to come. But it does look like the Palestinians will eventually get their own state, mainly because Israel seems bent on self-destruction. Thank you.

Professor John J. Mearsheimer is the R. Wendell Harrison Distinguished Service Professor of Political Science and the co-director of the Program on International Security Policy at the University of Chicago.

This transcript may be used without permission but with proper attribution to The Palestine Center. The speaker's views do not necessarily reflect the views of The Jerusalem Fund.