

Pray for success, because Israel will pay the price of Annapolis failure

Gershon Baskin , THE JERUSALEM POST

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The Annapolis process is on its way. This week the permanent status negotiations will formally commence. On December 17 the international community will be convening in Paris to launch the second pillar of the process by committing hundreds of millions of dollars to rebuilding the Palestinian economy and supporting Palestinian institution development. Defense Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian Prime Minister Salaam Fayed together with Israeli and Palestinian security officials are already deeply engaged in beginning to implement the Palestinian obligations of the Road Map. The Israeli side will also have to begin to implement its obligations, firstly removing unauthorized outposts and redeploying outside of the Palestinian areas.

Retired Marine Gen. James Jones has been given his marching orders, and he too, is on the way.

Everyone is skeptical regarding the possibility of success. Israelis and Palestinians are equally doubtful that reaching an agreement is possible and even more suspicious that implementing what is agreed upon and what the parties have already agreed to do in the past will be implemented.

The level of trust between the sides remains below the zero point despite the positive dynamics that have developed between the two leaders. This is completely reasonable - objectively there is absolutely no reason why Israelis and Palestinians should trust each other.

While considering the questionable ability of the sides to get to peace, it is worthwhile to consider the possible and perhaps likely repercussions of failure.

In particular of interest to me is what failure would mean for Israel. There is no way of fully knowing in advance what the future holds, however; it is possible to see current trends and to project forward on that basis.

Today the international community wants the Annapolis process to succeed. Responsibility for failure of the process is likely to be placed on the shoulders of Israel. The international community does not see any symmetry in the Israeli-Palestinian relationship. There is an occupied and an occupier, there is a strong party with a state, a growing economy and a powerful army - and on the other side there is a non-state entity, with growing poverty, a lack of hope and, as a result, religious extremism.

There is already a growing international movement calling for boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel - even now as Israel is engaged in a peace process. It is a small movement lead by the same coalitions that are against globalization and against the war in Iraq. Even though this global movement is presently small and perhaps insignificant, it is being advanced by a tight net of small organizations of activists, many of whom were behind the successful campaign against apartheid. Failure of the Annapolis process is the fuel that these people and organizations are waiting for.

Israel is already investing considerable energy and resources to counter these anti-Israeli trends, particularly in Europe.

THE POLITICAL basis of the anti-Israeli campaigns is support for the so-called one state solution. The use of the word "apartheid" and "apartheid wall" is intentional. The desired outcome is a cognitive and psychological association to be drawn between present day Israel and apartheid South Africa.

The "one-state solution" is translated in their political discourse into "democracy: one person, one vote." Behind this platform is also the total rejection of Israel being defined as the state of the Jewish people.

Parenthetically, I will say that Israel fell into their trap by demanding as a pre-condition to the Annapolis meeting, Palestinian recognition of Israel as a Jewish state. The Palestinian replied by saying "we recognize Israel as a sovereign state, you define your identity. Don't make us define your identity."

Israel did not demand from Jordan or Egypt to recognize the Jewishness of Israel, nor does Israel demand this from any other state. Why do we demand from the Palestinians to define our identity, our identity as a state and as a people is an Israeli question, not a Palestinian one.

A failure of the peace process will lead to a sharp decline of international support for the two-state solution. The current perception that a Palestinian state next to Israel is still viable will diminish sharply. The settlers and their settlement movement will be victorious in putting a final end to the possibility of Palestinian statehood. The crown of their victory will be the demise of the viability of Israel as a Jewish state as well.

Yes, they will control the land of Israel in whatever borders the government of Israel decides unilaterally to control. But their victory will lead to the end of the Zionist enterprise. Israel may try all kinds of patents like "convergence" or other forms of unilateralism, but this will not relieve Israel of its responsibilities under international law for the welfare of the Palestinians living between the Jordan River and the sea. The Israeli "dream" that we can deliver Gaza to the Egyptians and the Palestinians in the West Bank to Jordan has no contact with the political realities of the Middle East.

Without peace with the Palestinians, Israel will be trapped by its own expansionist ideologies and practices with millions of Palestinians within its borders, and like it or not, agree with it or not, the world will perceive Israel as the new apartheid. Once the international community comes to the conclusion that the failure of the peace process automatically implies, that the two state solution is no longer possible, the only option remaining will be the one state solution.

Israel will reject this conclusion. Israel will not automatically agree to commit national suicide as a Jewish state. But the impact of an international movement of solidarity with the Palestinian people and against "apartheid" Israel will have its toll.

Israel will be isolated in international forums. Not only Israeli academics will be boycotted by universities around the world; Israeli companies will be "un-welcome" at international trade fairs.

Israeli civilian aircraft will be denied entry to airports around the world. Israeli products will be removed from the shelves of stores around the world. Israeli tourists may be denied visas and entry to more and more countries. Already IDF officers have the threat of being arrested for war crimes in various countries, including the UK. Imagine the impact of this trend growing around the world.

THERE IS of course no way of proving the accuracy of these projections. Only time will hold the answer. It is clear though, that the above scenario is completely possible. It is not beyond the limits of our imagination and

the limits of international realities. We must all seriously consider each and everyone one of us, what failure to make peace will mean and how that failure will impact on my own life. There are those among us who fear peace, there should be more among us who should fear the failure to make peace.