**The failure of Netanyahu's "conflict management" concept**

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The new Israeli government has huge political and ideological gaps. Re-building the ruins left by Netanyahu and his allies following the weakening of the government, the erosion of democracy, and the destruction of the social fabric is the first and foremost challenge facing the Bennett-Lapid government. However, the failure of the "conflict management" concept led by Benjamin Netanyahu requires the government to make a political decision soon, the main point of which is to return to the concept of "conflict resolution".

The difference between conflict management and resolution is in the focus of efforts. The management of the conflict focuses on lowering the flames, extending the time between rounds of fighting, and separating the Palestinians' national aspirations from their personal aspirations for livelihood and freedom of movement - in order to strengthen Jewish settlements and create conditions for the annexation of the West Bank or parts of it. Conflict resolution involves a permanent agreement in which the parties will be required to give up some of their aspirations forever, and at the same time address the issues at the root of the conflict.

Israel has failed to achieve its goals in conflict management: in the Gaza Strip it has to deal with an intensifying Hamas, the West Bank settlement enterprise is far from achieving the conditions that would allow annexation to Israel, and the territorial component of the political right has been lost by with Donald Trump's replacement by Joe Biden.

This political reality presents Israel with two options in relation to its regime. In the first option, Israel will be able to adhere to the creeping annexation policy, but it will accelerate its push to the position of a pariah in the international community, undermine the strategic alliance with the United States, destroy relations with Jordan and Egypt, bring Hamas to the PLO leadership position, turn the Abraham accords meaningless, intensify national tension among Israeli Arabs, distance American Jewry from Israel, and increase anti-Semitism in the world. The world will not get used to annexation, contrary to Prime Minister Naftali Bennett's claims. Israel will be defined as having an apartheid regime and the international community will treat it accordingly, in a way that will charge Israel a high economic, security and social price.

In the second option, Israel will be able to enter the process of rebuilding its relations with the Palestinians: regulate the issue of the Gaza Strip and make moves that will strengthen the stability and governance of the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank so it can establish a united leadership to represent the Palestinian people and resume negotiation towards the signing of a permanent agreement on the basis of international decisions. This policy will involve extensive national preparations for political and physical separation from the Palestinians. As long as Israel sticks to the first option, and avoids switching to the second option, the price it will be required to pay will continue to grow. The government must therefore return to the policy of conflict resolution. Here, however, the roots of the conflict between us and the Palestinians must be examined.

The theory of conflict resolution requires attention to the clarification of the facts, but more than that one must understand the interpretation given to them by the parties, and the public consciousness that has been shaped in light of it over the years.

The Israeli consciousness is built on a narrative that sees "Palestina-Land of Israel" - which included the territory of Israel and the East Jordan (San Remo Conference 1920) the national home promised to the Jewish people in the Balfour Declaration. The promise was based on the international recognition of Jews as a people with a natural right to self-determination in their historical homeland, but consciously ignored the Arabs who constituted the vast majority of the land's inhabitants, in the spirit of the words of British Foreign Secretary James Balfour in August 1919: "Zionism ... is important several times more than the aspirations and prejudices of the 700,000 Arabs living in this ancient land".

According to the Israeli narrative, since 1920 the Zionist movement has "given up" twice in favor of the Arabs. The first concession was in 1922 with the removal of the Transjordan from the application of the Balfour Declaration, and the establishment of an emirate across the Jordan. The historical truth, however, is that in 1922 the British Colonial Minister, Winston Churchill, reiterated: "His Majesty's Government would like to draw attention to the fact that the wording of the International Declaration (Balfour Declaration) does not mean that Palestine as a whole will become a Jewish national home, but that such a national home will be established in Palestine". Indeed, this British move was ratified by the League of Nations.

The second concession was in agreement with the partition decision on November 29, 1947, which stipulated that alongside the Jewish state, which would cover 55% of the land's territory, an Arab state would also be established on 45% of the territory. But even here it is not a waiver of the Zionist movement. First, it was David Ben-Gurion who raised the partition proposal in his letter to British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bowen in February 1947: "The only possible immediate arrangement is the establishment of two states (in the land of Israel), one Jewish and one Arab".

Secondly, the boundaries proposed in the partition proposal were the only way to grant the largest area to the Jewish state without violating the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate. In both it was conditioned that the Jewish state be established "while preserving the civil and religious rights of all the inhabitants of Palestine, regardless of race or religion". Due to the demographic balance in Palestine, which was in a 2: 1 ratio in favor of the Arabs, the borders of the division created in the territory designated for the Jewish state a small Jewish majority of 55%, designed to enable the Jewish identity of the state in a democratic regime. Ben-Gurion well established the status of the partition resolution, declaring the establishment of the state "on the basis of the United Nations General Assembly resolution".

From this point on, the Israeli leadership sought to expand its borders according to the circumstances. The refusal of the Arabs of the land to accept the partition decision, and to go to war together with the Arab states, allowed Israel to expand the state's borders and place them at 78% of 'Palestina' territory. In June 1948, Ben-Gurion declared at a cabinet meeting: "The decision of November 29 is dead. The war will determine the borders of the state". 19 years later, in an unprecedented move, the UN (Resolution 242, after the Six Day War) recognized these borders (the Green Line) and demanded that Israel withdraw only from territories occupied in 1967 under a peace agreement.

The Palestinian narrative is completely different, and we must recognize it even if we do not agree with it. In the eyes of Palestinians, the root of the conflict lies in the Balfour Declaration, which was given to the Jewish people who did not live in their land, nor to the Arabs of the land, who had an absolute majority in it. This is in contrast to the idea of ​​self-determination that stated after the First World War that "a land belongs to its inhabitants and not to its occupiers". In his book 'The Question of Palestine', Edward Said, a senior Palestinian thinker, wrote of the Balfour Declaration: "A declaration whose power is inconceivable, but to one who is clearly aware of the demographics and human reality of Palestine". And the 1964 PLO Convention states that "the aggression against the Palestinian nation and its land began in 1917".

From a Palestinian perspective, all the events since 1917, including the 1948 war, have been a single sequence of moves to defend their rights that were looted in 1917. For years the Palestinians have rejected international decisions recognizing the rights of the Jewish people and rejected all proposals for partition. "We have told the world that we do not agree that tiny Palestine will be divided, and that we intend to fight against it (the partition resolution)," declared Jamal al-Husseini, the representative of the Supreme Arab Committee at the UN Security Council in April 1948. And in 1964, it was stated in the Palestinian Convention: "The Partition of Palestine from 1947 and the Establishment of Israel are rooted in a mistake".

A fundamental and significant change in the Palestinian position took place in November 1988, when the PLO adopted the decision for Partition recognizing a Jewish state, and Resolution 242, which enshrines Israeli sovereignty over the territories occupied during the War of Independence. After 71 years, the Palestinians have undergone a change from a discourse based on 'principles' including the right to self-determination throughout Palestine-Israel, to a discourse based on international decisions, and established among themselves an up-to-date conception of conflict resolution: "The conception of the 78-22". According to them, they gave up 78% of the "homeland of Palestine" in favor of establishing a state of Palestine on 22% of its territory, and not an inch less. Ahmad Qariya (Abu Ala) said in 2000: "The 1967 lines are the border ... We will be willing to talk about small changes in these lines as long as they are completely reciprocal and equal in quality and size".

The tension between the Israeli narrative and the Palestinian narrative has repeatedly increased in attempts to reach a solution to the conflict under the governments of Ehud Barak (Camp David 2000) and Ehud Olmert (Annapolis 2008). Why? Since the narrative that took root in the Israeli consciousness after the Six Day War has already been updated with the Oslo process: the territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip have been transformed from "occupied territories" into "disputed territories".

The annexation of East Jerusalem was a fait accompli, and moreover: Yitzhak Rabin said in the Knesset in October 1995: "The borders of the State of Israel will be beyond the lines that existed before the Six Day War ... first and foremost a united Jerusalem". Prior to the Camp David accord, Ehud Barak believed that the purpose of the negotiations was: "a fair distribution of the territories of Judea and Samaria". And more recently, Trump's 'Deal of the Century', hosted by Netanyahu, has proposed trimming roughly at the 22% that Palestinians perceive to be the little that’s left.

The last decade, which was marked by political stalemate and Israeli control of Area C, which extends over 60% of the West Bank, has given rise to statements that have taken Israeli consciousness further backwards: Area C is now perceived by Israelis as belonging to Israel. And so Bennett repeatedly declares his desire to annex them. These are occupied territories. But the new Israeli consciousness, which developed against the background of such statements, sees the annexation of Area C as a fair move, because 450,000 Jews and about 100,000 Palestinians live in this area. This is despite the fact that more than half of the land is privately owned by Palestinians.

In terms of negotiation, it is clear that in such a reality there is no "space for agreement". Not only between the positions of the parties, but mainly between the perceptions that determine public consciousness. And yet, the good news is that a space of agreement or political maturity for an agreement, are dynamic things. Olmert, for example, a Zionist revisionist, understood that all three goals of Zionism - the Land of Israel, democracy and a Jewish majority - could not be achieved, and told Maariv (in 2012): "Of course, if I could live in any part of the land of Israel, and also live in peace with our neighbors, and also preserve the Jewish character of the State of Israel, and preserve it as a democratic state, and also win the backing of the entire international community - then I would do it. But it is impossible ... Responsible leadership must ... draw the necessary conclusions, shake off a policy of cheap populism and act responsibly and seriously, and not seek quick and easy popularity".

From the other side, too, there is disillusionment and a call to hold on to pragmatic positions. "We are fighting Israel and are striving to bring it to an end, while it is an existing fact and a real entity, which has international relations and friendly relations with most countries of the world", wrote in 2018 Osama Yamani, a jurist and columnist for the Saudi daily 'Okath'.

And what next? It is important to continue to impart knowledge and present the narrative of the other side to the public. According to the latest "Peace Index" published by Tel Aviv University (May 2021), although 57% of the public support negotiating with the Palestinians, 68% do not believe that it will lead to peace with the Palestinians. Also, although 63% oppose the "continuation of the current situation", 46% believe that it has the highest chance of continuing to exist. When the leadership and the public understand the source of the conflict, even if they do not agree or accept the other side's position, there in an opening for change. Expectations from the negotiations become realistic. The prices required for a permanent agreement are more understandable. The statements that shape public opinion become more responsible, more considerate. "Conflict management" or in other words "continuing the existing situation", becomes too expensive and unnecessary, and the way to resolve the conflict is paved.