**The ignorance of Trump envoy Greenblatt is just the tip of the iceberg**[**https://www.haaretz.com/…/.premium-greenblatt-s-ignorance-i…**](https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-greenblatt-s-ignorance-is-just-the-tip-of-the-iceberg-1.7654908?utm_term=20190809-23%3A12&utm_campaign=Shaul+Arieli&utm_medium=email&writerAlerts=true&utm_content=www.haaretz.com%2Fopinion%2F.premium--1.7654908&utm_source=smartfocus&fbclid=IwAR32bF_BZBtLVM7hbw1AvorQdNnViLg1SrGm6QsAvbnMaM3YUrXC7pyPC4I)

**Shaul Arieli, Haaretz Aug. 9, 2019**

In the ocean of international relations, “icebergs” have always popped up that threatened the post-World War II world order and sought to dictate an order based on force rather than decisions by the international community as expressed in UN conventions on issues like occupied territories, human rights, nuclear proliferation and ballistic missiles.

These icebergs, usually in the form of tyrants in Africa, Asia and South America, have largely melted, some sooner and some later, in the warm currents of the international community under the leadership of the United States and Western Europe. This has happened even though these leaders too sometimes sinned by using arbitrary force.
Given the growing weakness of Europe, which is coping with economic crises and an immigration crisis accompanied by the rise of nationalist and racist forces, President Donald Trump’s shirking of the U.S. commitment to be the international community’s “Gulf Stream” once again leaves international relations to the forces of aggression. The Trump administration even switched sides and became a giant iceberg threatening an ice age on the existing order, which is based on the lessons from the world wars.
The July 23 speech to the UN Security Council by Trump’s special envoy to the Middle East, Jason Greenblatt, perfectly reflected the president’s outlook. Though the talk focused on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it also showed the U.S. administration’s take on the international community’s role, and on international law and decisions.
Greenblatt asserted that the three bases of the world order – international consensus, international law and UN Security Council resolutions – aren’t relevant to an Israeli-Palestinian accord. He said: “This conflict will not end on the basis of an ‘international consensus’ about who is right and who is wrong …. This conflict is also not going to be resolved by reference to ‘international law.’ … This conflict will not be resolved by constantly referencing the hundreds of UN resolutions on the issue.”
Greenblatt went on to mix truth with ignorance about Jerusalem’s history – who ruled it? When? How did the city’s borders develop? “There is no international consensus about Jerusalem. And no international consensus or interpretation of international law will persuade the United States or Israel that a city in which Jews have lived and worshipped for nearly 3,000 years and has been the capital of the Jewish state for 70 years is not – today and forever – the capital of Israel". According to Greenblatt, Islam didn’t rule in Jerusalem for 1,300 years, and the Palestinians have no rights in Jerusalem, only aspirations. “It is true that the PLO and the Palestinian Authority continue to assert that East Jerusalem must be a capital for the Palestinians,” Greenblatt said. “But let’s remember, an aspiration is not a right.” Jerusalem, including the Palestinian villages that were annexed to it in 1967, was and will forever be Israel’s capital.

Blind to history I wonder if Greenblatt, who is Jewish, is familiar with the resolution of the 1897 First Zionist Congress that says: “Zionism seeks to establish a home for the Jewish People in Palestine secured under public law.” In his historical blindness, he ignores that the Zionist movement’s call for a homeland for the Jewish people was based on two things: the concept of national aspiration and conditioning its fulfillment on international law and resolutions. As it says in Israel’s Declaration of Independence, the state was founded “on the basis of the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly.”

Greenblatt also confused 1967’s UN Resolution 242 with 1948’s UN Resolution 194 regarding the Palestinian refugees: “That debate has not even bridged the gap between those who construe Resolution 242 to call for the so-called right of return and compensation for displaced Palestinians, and the fact that the world covers its eyes to the fate of the roughly equal number of Jews who were expelled or forced to flee their homes in Arab countries in connection with Israel’s War of Independence.”
If Israel really wanted to resolve the issue of Jewish property, it would stop ignoring the Arab Peace Initiative that has been on offer for 17 years.

Greenblatt, an attorney, tries to blur the legal terminology that applies to the occupied territories, saying that talk of an occupation only makes a solution harder to reach. In his view, which doesn’t distinguish between a legal situation and a diplomatic claim, the territory isn’t occupied but rather disputed. Both sides have claims to it.
He is critical of those who say the territory is occupied – the definition also accepted by Israel’s Supreme Court. He said: “Many would rather rail against the supposed evils of what they routinely call an ‘illegal occupation’ than engage constructively on the disputes that characterize the conflict today. That’s not a productive dialogue.” But from the start, the Trump administration has tried to sweep off the negotiating table the disputes about Jerusalem, refugees and settlements.

Greenblatt asks us not to forget Israel’s generosity: “Let us not lose sight of the fact that Israel has already conceded at least 88 percent of the territory captured by Israel in the defensive war it had no choice but to fight in 1967.” Is this request designed to obtain approval for annexing the remaining 12 percent, following the Trump administration’s recognition of the annexation of the Golan Heights?
Greenblatt forgets that the peace treaty with Egypt is based on Resolution 242, which opens with an affirmation of Article 2 of the UN Charter, which states that the obtaining of territory by conquest is unlawful, including in a defensive war. He also forgets that, because Israel returned Sinai, it removed the threat of a wide-scale war, has since received $200 billion in military and civilian aid from the United States and opened the door to further agreements.

Greenblatt apparently doesn’t know that the international commitment to a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine after World War I was based on three things. The first was the founding of the League of Nations, which was meant to preserve the peace and protect the weaker nations. The second was the denial of occupation and territorial expansion not keeping with the free will of the peoples involved (the imperialist principle). The third was the principle of self-determination, which affirms the natural right of every nation, even if its majority is scattered around the world like the Jews, to establish its own political entity.

Netanyahu à la Trump Greenblatt was very thorough in his effort to promote Trump’s outlook. He referred dismissively to other international initiatives, declaring: “Unilateral steps in international and multilateral fora will do nothing to solve this conflict.” In other words, unilateral measures are possible only in forums such as the Knesset, which is preparing to legislate annexation of parts of the West Bank, or in the form of the PA's dismantling by Mahmoud Abbas under the misguided notion that this would free Israel from the fetters of the Oslo Accords.

Greenblatt urges that “the only way ahead is direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians.” Negotiations from scratch. The way he sees it, there is no history, there are no understandings, no Bill Clinton, George W. Bush or Barack Obama. Trump and Benjamin Netanyahu – these two are the embodiment of the start of history and human progress. He crudely ignores the only possible basis for negotiations, the UN resolutions, especially 242, as the sides have agreed countless times, and ignores the negotiations of the past, most importantly the Annapolis process in which parameters were agreed on to resolve the four core issue: borders, security, Jerusalem and refugees.

It’s not surprising that someone who went from being the leading envoy to the emissary of ambassadors David Friedman and Ron Dermer and the mouthpiece of Jared Kushner and Trump supports Netanyahu’s position. It’s the one Netanyahu announced in a July 10 speech marking the 40th anniversary of the Shomron Regional Council, when he said, “In any peace plan, not a single settlement or a single settler will be uprooted. The army and the security forces will continue to control all the territory up to the Jordan River, and Israel’s capital Jerusalem will remain united.”
It’s not surprising that Netanyahu’s true position came out during the Trump era after it was carefully hidden from Clinton and Obama. It matches Trump’s position and is based on force alone, as Netanyahu said in that speech: “Look what we did in the Golan Heights, what we did in Jerusalem. More to come.”

It’s no wonder that of all the leaders he could have picked for his election campaign, Netanyahu chose a picture of himself with Russian President Vladimir Putin, who shares his worldview. This is the man who, according to the Russian opposition, foreign ministries and Western intelligence agencies, has suppressed his political opponents, the Russian media and civil society organizations. Meanwhile, LGBT groups in Russia are subjected to violence and oppression. There are serious suspicions that Putin was behind the murders of leading opposition figures and journalists. Just last week, hundreds of people protesting the disqualification of opposition candidates from local elections were brutally beaten and arrested.
The icebergs Trump and Putin, like other bad leaders whom Netanyahu has chosen to ally himself with and show reverence for during his latest term, view human society as a jungle where the weak are to be devoured, not as a unique society whose order should be based not on force but on equality, solidarity and partnership.
The 2020 election in the United States will determine which way the world is heading – toward an ice age in international relations or a thaw. In next month’s election, Israel can divorce itself from the belligerent worldview and go back to respecting the rules that won its establishment and international recognition.