

COMMENTARY

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Bennett: A Demagogue on the Loose

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It is hard to imagine how a devious, delusionary and destructive individual like Naftali Bennett, the leader of the Jewish Home party, can rise to prominence while openly advocating a racist political agenda. His “solution” to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a recipe for obliterating Israel as both Jewish and democratic, and converting it into an apartheid state, reviled by the international community and condemned to live in isolation and disgrace.

No, this is not what Israel was created for, and the fate of the country cannot be entrusted to the hands of a conniving hypocrite like Bennett. He is an imposter whose rainbow political agenda is nothing but a cover for an insidious plan to deprive the Palestinians of a state their own, but little does he realize that it will bring Israel ever closer to self-destruction.

In an arrogant and unflinching manner, he declares that since the Israeli-Palestinian peace process is stuck, it is time for new thinking. Israel should focus, he argues, on improving the lives of the Palestinians by “upgrading Palestinian autonomy in areas A and B,” and goes on to say that the Palestinians will have “political independence” and can run their internal affairs as they see fit.

He is also generous to offer the Palestinians a “massive upgrade of roads and infrastructure, as well as the removal of roadblocks and checkpoints,” and to “build economic bridges... between Israelis and Palestinians.”

But, here is the caveat: “The Palestinian entity will be short of a state. It will not control its own borders.” And the worst is yet to come—his plan is to annex Area C, which represents 60 percent of the West Bank.

From his perspective, the Israeli settlements should continue to expand, starting with the annexation of the main three blocs by “applying Israeli law and asserting national sovereignty in those blocs.”

What this means is that the Palestinians will be allowed to live in cantons in places like Ramallah, Jenin, Bethlehem, and other small cities and villages—provided, of course, they behave themselves and dare not threaten or commit any violent act against Israel.

To be sure, Bennett is offering the Palestinians improved conditions in the same prison where they currently reside. Their “new” prison will now be renovated and better furnished, with open air and even clean, running water.

Bennett does not accept the premise that the Palestinians are entitled to a state of their own, but rather they must settle for the crumbs that Israel tosses them.

After all, he maintains that “we are not occupiers in our land,” and out of compassion the Israelis are prepared to give up a big share of their homeland – a land which is historically theirs. What is more, this is the “Land of Israel,” which has been bequeathed to them in perpetuity by the Almighty.

As a hard core religious, revisionist Zionist, Bennett finds great comfort in resorting to his Saviour. He justifies his twisted political agenda by putting the onus on God: “Public opinion isn’t my compass, the Torah is my compass.” How convenient!

Religious conservatives often like to claim that “If there is no God, everything is permitted.” But as the philosopher Slavoj Žižek has observed, it is precisely the reverse that is the case: “If there is a God, then anything is permitted... it is for those who refer to ‘god’ in a brutally direct way, perceiving themselves as instruments of his will, that everything is permitted” [emphasis added].

Although he admits that the proposal is not perfect, as “it seems to go against everything Israel, the Palestinians and the international community have worked toward over the last 20 years,” it should be the government’s policy, he says, “because there is a new reality in the Middle East.”

Bennett should know that his plan is not only imperfect, it is an illusion, as if the Palestinians have no say and will simply bow to his whims. Under what circumstances will any Palestinian accept the continuing occupation under the guise of self-rule?

Bennett is mired in illusions, as illusions are based on wishes and not reality and one of the predictable psychological consequences of holding onto them is denial; that is, denial of the stubborn reality which refuses to accommodate itself to one’s pipedreams.

The Palestinians want to live in their own independent state—in their homeland as well—and this is the bitter, unshakable reality that Bennett must face. The Palestinians have resisted the existence of Israel for decades and now they have come to accept the two-state solution, precisely “because there is a new reality in the Middle East”—Israel’s unshakable reality.

There is nothing that Bennett or any of his schemers can do to change that, just as much as there is absolutely nothing the Palestinians can do to dislodge Israel.

All that any Israeli leader can justifiably demand is a permanent cessation of all hostilities, which the Palestinians must ensure if they wish to be independent. Any peace agreement ought to be structured in such a way to meet this unqualified Israeli requirement.

For Bennett to invoke the withdrawal from Gaza and the violence that erupted as a case in point, which must not be repeated in the West Bank, is disingenuous and misleading. No one in their right mind should evacuate the West Bank overnight, the way Prime Minister Sharon withdrew from Gaza.

Any negotiated peace agreement with the Palestinians will have to be implemented in stages over a period of at least ten years, with security arrangements fully coordinated with the Palestinians that leaves nothing to chance. This must be coupled with economic developments and cooperation on every level to foster trust and mutually-vested interests.

Only a suicidal Israeli government would follow Bennett’s nightmarish political treachery. For Bennett to become a Prime Minister, or even Defence Minister under another dangerously misguided Netanyahu government, is nothing but a kiss of death to the peace process and foretells the assured destruction of the Jews’ dream to live in a free, secure, and peaceful sanctuary.

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

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