

Middle East Notes
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
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The six featured articles and the many related links in this issue of the Middle East Notes focus on the implications of the election of Donald Trump for Israel/Palestine. All the articles express hope, fear and uncertainty on what his policies will be. The possibilities remaining for Obama while still in office to oppose or support an international meeting on resolution of this conflict, or a UN resolution condemning settlements, or even a resolution giving formal recognition to a State of Palestine are also considered. Previous to the articles a book review and recommendation is also offered of *Israel and South Africa: The Many Faces of Apartheid*, edited by Ilan Pappé.

Commentary: The card game being played by Israel, the Palestinians, the US, the EU, Arab Nations and the rest of the world has just been changed unexpectedly from Poker in which all of the participants seemed to be playing with or against each other to Blackjack where now they are discovering that they are playing with or against one dealer: Donald Trump. This is a new game and the dealer and the players have yet to show their hands.

Book Review and Recommendation: [Israel and South Africa: The Many Faces of Apartheid](#), edited by Ilan Pappé, Zed Books (2015). Reviewed by Rod Such in [What makes Israeli apartheid "special"?](#), Electronic Intifada, October 26, 2016

Israel and South Africa: The Many Faces of Apartheid, a collection of essays edited by historian Ilan Pappé takes for granted the validity of the assertion that Israel is an apartheid state.

Instead, what this book explores are the similarities and dissimilarities between Israel today and South Africa during its apartheid era.

Pappé claims that understanding the historical roots of these commonalities and differences is essential to realizing why Israeli apartheid is of "a special type" and has been more difficult to overcome.

While the book opens with essays that provide overwhelming evidence of the apartheid nature of the Israeli state, it concludes with several essays suggesting why new perspectives are needed to defeat this special type of apartheid.

The overlap and differences between Israeli and South African apartheid became apparent in a single year, 1948. That year the white minority South African government proclaimed apartheid (Afrikaans for "apart" or "separate") to be official state policy, establishing laws that rigidly separated whites from the Black majority while claiming 87 percent of the land for whites.

The same year a minority settler-colonial population officially proclaimed the establishment of a Jewish state. Israel's foundation involved the expulsion of 750,000 Palestinians, with the explicit aim of establishing an overwhelming Jewish majority – on more than three-quarters of the land – while rigidly separating itself from the newly created Palestinian Arab minority.

South African apartheid lasted until 1994 when Black majority rule was achieved following an international boycott that included sanctions imposed by US Congress. Yet Israel's form of apartheid persists to this day and Israel is even accorded the status of a "special relationship" with the U.S. government.

Why? The essays in this book suggest that it's precisely the differences in the two types of apartheid that help account for this persistence.

Featured articles:

- The recent [CMEP Bulletin](#) includes links to five articles concerning the Trump election and Israel/Palestine.
 - Noam Sheizaf writes in [972 Magazine](#) that when everyone believed Clinton was going to be the next president, Obama was rumored to be considering several last-minute options to advance Israeli-Palestinian peace. All that went out the window on election day.
 - David A. Halperin and Michael J. Koplow suggest in the [Jewish Journal](#) that to speculate that Donald Trump's victory in the presidential election signals the end of the two-state solution would not be unfounded. Trump's two Israel advisors, David Friedman and Jason Greenblatt, effectively declared the two-state solution dead on arrival in the policy platform they laid out last week.
 - Gideon Levy states in [Haaretz](#) after the US election, one of two things is going to happen. Either Trump will be Trump, or President Trump won't be the Trump we've come to know.
 - Barak Ravid recorded in [Haaretz](#) that in a recent interview with the [Wall Street Journal](#), the president-elect says he wants to do 'the deal that can't be made' for the sake of humanity. He said he will try and achieve peace between Israel and the Palestinians in order to bring an end to what he called "the war that never ends."
 - Luke Baker noted in [Reuters](#) that Israel has formally rejected France's invitation to take part in a Middle East peace conference in Paris later this year, saying it was a distraction from the goal of direct negotiations with the Palestinians.
1. [CMEP Bulletin for November 11, 2016 - Israel Embraces President-Elect Trump](#)

Contains the following articles on Israel and President- elect Donald Trump:

[How Far Will Trump's Unpredictability Disrupt American Policy on Israel? \[Ha'aretz\]](#)

On the day after the US presidential election, Foundation for Middle Peace's Mitchell Plitnick wrote, "The shocking victory of Donald Trump in the American presidential election will reverberate around the world. One place where those reverberations will be felt particularly keenly is Israel. The biggest problem is that no one knows what they will look like. Trump is a true wild card in a way no other incoming president has ever been, especially on foreign policy. He has said a lot of things on the campaign trail, but none of it comes together into any kind of coherent policy, strategy or even a basic direction. We know very little about what he might do."

[Complete List of the Trump Campaign's Promises to Israel \[The Jewish Press\]](#)

The Jewish Press has published a list of the pledges that President-Elect Donald Trump made during his presidential campaign. The article features a joint statement from Jason Dov Greenblatt and David Friedman, Co-Chairmen of the Israel Advisory Committee to Donald J. Trump.

[In Israel, Pro-Settlement Advocates and Rivals of Two-State Solution Are Emboldened by Trump Victory \[Los Angeles Times\]](#)

According to journalist Joshua Mitnick, "Israelis who support settlement expansion in the West Bank hailed Donald Trump's election victory, calling it a milestone that offers Israel's right-wing government a chance to permanently block a two-state solution with the Palestinians. 'The victory of Trump is a huge opportunity for Israel to immediately announce that it renounces the idea of establishing Palestine in the heart of the country,' said Israeli Education Minister Naftali Bennett, the leader of the pro-settler Jewish Home party. 'The era of the Palestinian state is over.'"

[Trump Adviser: New President Won't Force Israeli-Palestinian Peace \[Times of Israel\]](#)

One of President-Elect Donald Trump's top advisers says the new administration will try to solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but without pushing an agreement on either side. "I think he's going to support Israel in a way it hasn't been supported in the Obama administration," Jason Dov Greenblatt told The Times of Israel, as the dust settled from Trump's shocking victory hours earlier.

[Obama's Last Chance of Ending Israeli Occupation \[Al-Monitor\]](#)

Al-Monitor's Akiva Eldar writes that, "The central question concerning politicians and pundits in Israel and the occupied territories these days is what [happens now that] the US presidential election [is over]. What will happen in the transition period starting Nov. 9 and ending with the changing of the guard at the White House on Jan. 20, 2017? Will President Barack Obama veto the UN Security Council resolution recognizing a Palestinian state, or will he make do with yet another speech rebuking Israel? Or perhaps he will prefer a UN vote condemning the Jewish settlements? Either way, any decision Obama makes will have far-reaching implications for millions of people in the Middle East."

2. [Trump's victory leaves Obama with only one option on Israel-Palestine, Noam Sheizaf, 972 Magazine, November 11, 2016](#)

"The Obama administration is probably trying to figure out how to protect its two signature achievements – Obamacare and the Iranian nuclear deal – for the next two years, when the White House and both chambers of Congress will be under Republican control. But it will also need to revisit other issues, such as a widely discussed final move on the Israeli-Palestinian issue. Specifically, the idea of laying out parameters for a final status agreement – either in the form of a major policy speech or via a UN Security Council resolution – might seem out of touch with the new political reality in Washington.

"It is extremely difficult to predict what Donald Trump's actual policies will be – common wisdom is that a weak and poorly informed president depends on the people around and below him – but it's a pretty safe guess that Trump won't continue efforts to broker a final agreement on a two-state solution. The GOP removed the very idea of Palestinian statehood from its platform ahead of the elections. Those around Trump have taken positions in favor of West Bank settlements and against previous efforts to push the Israeli government towards a deal with the Palestinians. Others in the president-elect's circle – probably including Trump himself – have strong isolationist tendencies." ...

"That leaves Obama with one play, and one play only – a Security Council resolution against the settlements. In practice, all it would require of the Obama administration would be to *not* veto a resolution similar to the one it blocked in 2011. Back then, Washington stood alone in opposing a resolution drafted using language the State Department itself used to condemn Israeli settlement activity, and was supported by Israel's allies like Germany and Great Britain.

"A new Security Council resolution, however, could help end Washington's monopoly on the issue and give the international community a new mechanism for containing and confronting Israeli settlement activity. It would signal that there is no vacuum of engagement with the conflict, and that nobody – not even Trump – can give Netanyahu a blank check. It would make the Israeli government think twice before carrying out some of its more far-reaching plans, and thus reduce the potential for violence on the ground." ...

3. [A two-state manifesto in the age of Trump, David A. Halperin and Michael J. Koplow, Jewish Journal, November 10, 2016](#)

“To speculate that Donald Trump’s victory in Tuesday’s presidential election signals the end of the two-state solution would not be unfounded. In response to Trump’s win, Jewish Home leader Naftali Bennett declared, ‘the era of a Palestinian state is over.’ Trump’s two Israel advisors, David Friedman and Jason Greenblatt, effectively declared the two-state solution dead on arrival in the policy platform they laid out last week. Republicans will control the White House and both chambers of Congress, and there will be no desire to prod the Israeli government to take action on two states when the current coalition has zero interest. We are entering into an era in which the political leaders both here and in Israel are skeptical of the two-state solution, to put it charitably, and once you add Hamas’s continued rule over Gaza and Mahmoud Abbas’s weak standing into the mix, getting to two states has rarely looked more out of reach.”

“The two-state idea is still the only way to keep Israel secure, Jewish, and democratic. There is nothing more fashionable than bashing the two-state solution as a utopian anachronism that has run its course. But much like Winston Churchill’s famous dictum about democracy being the worst form of government except for all the others, the two-state solution is still the only viable end point, no matter how difficult or problematic it may be. We have yet to see anyone put forth a workable scenario that can realistically replace it, and the status quo is simply not sustainable indefinitely from a security, demographic, and diplomatic standpoint. “ ...

“The bottom line is that if you believed when you woke up on Tuesday that two states is crucial to Israel’s future, the Trump victory changes nothing. It will make the next four years undoubtedly more difficult, and the political environment is now even worse than it was. But just as you wouldn’t simply sit back and throw up your hands in acceptance of other White House policies that you believe to be disastrous, you cannot afford to do so on this front either. If you care about Israel, and you want to see it remain Jewish and democratic while guaranteeing its security, the two-state solution is the only way. Not doing all you can to make sure that it is preserved as an option going forward is simply irresponsible.”

4. [Opinion Is This the End of the World? Gideon Levy, Haaretz, November 10, 2016](#)

“Confession number one: I hoped that Donald Trump would be elected.

“Confession number two: His election frightens me. It’s enough to think about Rudy Giuliani having a top position in his government, and perhaps influencing his policy toward Israel, to really give one the jitters. My partner Catherine has shut herself in her room, even more angry and terrified: She’s worried about the environment and about the future of her country.”

“I hoped that Trump would be elected because I knew that the election of Hillary Clinton, whose values long ago became distorted, would also mean a continuation of the Israeli occupation. My world is admittedly narrow: The occupation interests me above all else, and to me not much could be worse than a president who would continue to fund it. If she were elected, they should have been popping open the champagne in places like Yitzhar and Itamar. With Haim Saban’s money and the legacy of Barack Obama, America wouldn’t dare exert pressure on Israel. The end of the world, in other words.” ...

“One of two things is going to happen: Either Trump will be Trump, or President Trump won’t be the Trump we’ve come to know. He himself probably doesn’t know which it will be. His victory speech Wednesday hinted at the second possibility. If Trump keeps his word and his promises from the election campaign, it will spell a terrible tragedy for America and the world, and perhaps a small hope for Israel: The original Trump wouldn’t hesitate to disregard Israel, and the result could be to its benefit.” ...

5. [Trump: I Intend to Achieve the 'Ultimate Deal' - Israeli-Palestinian Peace, Barak Ravid, Haaretz, November 12, 2016](#)

“President-elect of the United States Donald Trump said he will try and achieve peace between Israel and the Palestinians in order to bring an end to what he called ‘the war that never ends.’ Trump, who starts his term in office on January 20, made the remarks during an interview with The Wall Street Journal a day after his initial meeting with outgoing President Barack Obama at the White House as part of the process of transferring power to the new administration.

“In the interview with the conservative newspaper, Trump referred to a peace deal between Israel and the Palestinians in business world terms, calling it “the ultimate deal.” “As a deal maker, I’d like to do... the deal that can’t be made. And do it for humanity’s sake,” he added.

“On Wednesday, the Israeli Foreign Ministry distributed a document with a preliminary assessment of Trump's foreign policy to Israeli embassies worldwide. The brief estimated that the president-elect would reduce America's involvement in the Middle East in general and in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in particular.

“The document stressed that Trump's statements regarding the peace process during the campaign do not indicate a coherent policy on the issue.” ...

“The diplomatic process between Israel and the Palestinians will not be a top priority for the Trump administration and it’s reasonable to assume this topic will also be influenced by the staff surrounding him and developments in the field.”

[6. Israel says 'no' to Middle East peace conference in Paris, Luke Baker, Reuters, November 7, 2016](#)

“Israel on Monday formally rejected France's invitation to take part in a Middle East peace conference in Paris later this year, saying it was a distraction from the goal of direct negotiations with the Palestinians.” ...

“Saeb Erekat, a senior Palestinian official, said Vimont had made clear at the meeting that France would issue invitations to the conference in December.

“Nabil Abu Rdainah, a spokesman for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said: ‘We are in favor of holding the conference and we welcome it regardless of whether Israel participates or not.’

“France has repeatedly tried to breathe new life into the peace process this year, holding a preliminary conference in June where the United Nations, European Union, United States and major Arab countries gathered to discuss proposals without the Israelis or Palestinians present.” ...

See also link A - [Palestinians Urge France to Go Ahead With Peace Summit Despite Israeli Objections](#); link B - [Israel Tells France: We Oppose Your Peace Initiative, Won't Attend International Conference in Paris](#); link C - [Trump aides said to warn Obama against 11th hour ‘new adventures’ on Palestinian issue](#)

Other articles of interest:

[A. Palestinians Urge France to Go Ahead With Peace Summit Despite Israeli Objections, Jack Khoury and Barak Ravid, Haaretz, November 07, 2016](#)

'Israel should not be given the chance to sabotage such an international initiative,' a PLO statement said after President Mahmoud Abbas met with France's envoy Pierre Vimont.

[B. Israel Tells France: We Oppose Your Peace Initiative, Won't Attend International Conference in Paris, Barak Ravid, Haaretz, November 7, 2016](#)

Senior Israeli officials repeat Israel's position during meeting with French envoy, who presented France's updated agenda aimed at convening a conference by the end of the year.

C. [Trump aides said to warn Obama against 11th hour 'new adventures' on Palestinian issue, Times of Israel Staff and AFP, November 12, 2016](#)

Outgoing administration urged to not 'even think about' pushing policies in its final weeks that are at odds with those of the president-elect, Politico reports

D. [Ending the occupation would undo Israeli identity as we know it, Inna Michaeli, +972 Blog, October 31, 2016](#)

Bringing an end to 50 years of military rule over the Palestinians will undoubtedly change the face of Israeli society as we know it. Let's welcome that change with open arms.

E. [Palestinian who lost 3 daughters in war talks peace with Rivlin, Itamar Eichner, Ynetnews, November 3, 2016](#)

During a meeting with President Rivlin in Jerusalem, Gaza doctor who lost three daughters to an Israeli tank shell during Operation Cast Lead, espouses the virtues of peace and coexistence, draws medical comparison between conflict and fatal sickness.

F. [Opinion Netanyahu Is Leading Israel to Its Next Political Assassination, Meirav Arlosoroff, Haaretz, November 7, 2016](#)

The only lesson Netanyahu learned from Rabin's murder is that its lessons can be consigned to oblivion if one lies long enough.

G. [Ending the occupation is in the interest of Israelis, too, Uri Weltmann, 972 Blog, November 7, 2016](#)

The occupation is disastrous first and foremost for Palestinians, but it is also disastrous for the Jewish people in Israel. Left-wing politics cannot be based solely on solidarity with the Other.

H. [Amos Oz presents prize to Breaking the Silence, Ilana Curiel, Ynetnews, November 7, 2016](#)

At an award ceremony at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Breaking the Silence was awarded an alternative cash prize after being denied the Berelson Prize in memory of Yitzhak Rabin; 'Sometimes in history, those who were dubbed traitors are in time shown to be trailblazers,' says Oz at the ceremony.