PROJECT MUSE®

Autonomy as State Prevention: The Palestinian Question after Camp David, 1979–1982

Seth Anziska

Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development, Volume 8, Number 2, Summer 2017, pp. 287-310 (Article)

Published by University of Pennsylvania Press
DOI: *https://doi.org/10.1353/hum.2017.0020*

For additional information about this article
https://muse.jhu.edu/article/665530

Access provided by University College London (UCL) (26 Sep 2017 09:59 GMT)

Seth Anziska

Autonomy as State Prevention: The Palestinian Question after Camp David, 1979–1982

Introduction

Scholars have long explored the legal and institutional continuities that inhere in the transition from the era of late empire to the rise of nation-states, underscoring how external rule produced particular trajectories of Arab state formation.[1] Extensive violence in Iraq and Syria today has directed much of that attention to the influence of British and French mandatory rule on the emergence of nation-states in the region.[2] One striking feature of this transition was the rhetoric of self-determination and purportedly time-limited, developmental intervention that the mandatory powers used to extend control over local populations after the fall of the Ottoman Empire in 1918. In asserting a role as protector of nations emerging from the postwar partitions, the League of Nations helped neutralize local struggles for independence.[3]

The conceptual framework of "transformative occupation" in the modern Middle East illuminates the techniques of foreign rule within these wider imperial histories while linking them to ambitious programs of development.[4] Whether in the name of civilization or modernity, whether by a colonial or mandated power, imposing the practices of Western governance on "backward" peoples and space characterized transformative occupation regimes.[5] In this essay, I examine how a particular practice within the political and diplomatic repertoire of transformative occupation—the promotion of local autonomy—was successfully deployed in the Israeli-Palestinian arena. Autonomy had long been used as a technique of foreign indirect control across the British Empire, from the Princely States of India to West Africa under High Commissioner Frederick Lugard.[6] The context of Israel's post-1967 rule over the territories—which began well after the end of empire, the mandates, and the major waves of decolonization—can shed new light on the relationship between late twentieth-century occupation and the persistence of prolonged statelessness. Echoing the invocation of limited self-rule over fifty years earlier, Israel proffered autonomy as a benevolent solution to the Palestinian question in American-led negotiations with Egypt beginning in the late 1970s. Simultaneously expanding control over the Occupied Territories, Israeli leaders transformed both the political subjects under their rule and the physical ground they inhabited.

For many Israelis and their supporters abroad, the capture of the Sinai Peninsula, West Bank, Gaza Strip, Golan Heights, and all of Jerusalem in June of 1967 was greeted with ecstatic revelry, seeming to fulfill the redemptive hopes of messianic Zionism.[7] At the same time, the expansion of Israel's territory raised profound political

and demographic questions for Israeli leaders.[8] During cabinet discussions about the future of the newly occupied territories in the weeks after the war, the issue of how to manage the Palestinian population took on central importance. A "decision not to decide," as the Israeli historian Avi Raz explains, ensured control over the territories themselves while avoiding a political resolution to the national or territorial fate of the Palestinians.[9]

Israel's deliberate indecision was met with external pressure to address the status of both the territories and their inhabitants. Influenced by the broader sweep of decolonization in the global south and the aftermath of the Vietnam War, a small number of American officials began to recognize the necessity of limited Palestinian rights by the late 1970s.[10] The election of Jimmy Carter as U.S. president in 1976 helped cement this paradigm shift. Carter saw the dispute between Israel and the Palestinians as the heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and he downplayed the hitherto dominant interpretation based on interstate tensions between Israel and rivals like Jordan and Syria. The president and his advisors believed that this issue had to be tackled head on, speaking openly of the need for a Palestinian "homeland" for the first time in March 1977.[11]

This approach fit within a wider attempt to position the United States as an arbiter of human rights on a global stage.[12] In applying this framework abroad, the Carter administration's record often fell short of its rhetorical aims, particularly in the Middle East.[13] Nevertheless, the success of the Camp David Accords in September 1978 stands out as a leading example of America's renewed diplomatic promise. After thirteen days of secret negotiations between Carter, Israeli prime minister Menachem Begin, and Egyptian president Anwar al-Sadat at the rural Maryland retreat of Camp David, the outline of an Egyptian-Israeli peace deal was reached.[14]

Camp David's less well known agreement, *A Framework for Peace in the Middle East,* contained guidelines to establish Palestinian autonomy and a set of principles that would govern Israel's relations with all its Arab neighbors. The agreement included specific language to "recognize the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and their just requirements."[15] In brief remarks before the official signing of the Accords, Carter reiterated the importance of Palestinian self-determination, reminding his audience "of the hopes and dreams of the people who live in the West Bank and Gaza Strip." Exactly what this meant in political or territorial terms was left intentionally vague, its precision limited to forcing the parties to decide on a process guaranteeing full autonomy for Palestinians within a period of five years.[16] This temporally circumscribed period during which Palestinians might earn greater legitimacy harkened back to the temporalities of the mandate era, when external rule was invoked as a necessary means for civilizing a native population seeking self-governance.[17]

Following Camp David, the ensuing diplomatic effort to address the Palestinian question began with the launch of negotiations over autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. These talks, convened by Egypt and Israel under U. S. supervision, were held intermittently in the Middle East and Washington, D.C., between May 1979 and August 1982. Although from their inception they excluded representatives of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and local Palestinians—Egypt purported to

represent them, acceding to Israeli pressure on the format of negotiations, while Palestinians and several Arab states opposed negotiations altogether—the talks were the first sustained political consideration of Palestinian self-determination after 1948.

Despite their significance, the autonomy talks are largely absent from historical accounts of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.[18] Among the leading studies, the Israeli historian Benny Morris dismisses autonomy as a "nonstarter," while other scholars downplay or ignore the negotiations in the wake of Camp David.[19] Dominant narratives of the peace process instead trace the beginning of a serious engagement with the Palestinian question to the Madrid and Oslo negotiation of the 1990s.[20] This lack of serious attention to the diplomatic mechanisms that constrained Palestinian self-determination in the 1970s and 1980s obscures the centrality of that period to the contemporary condition of statelessness.

Those who do examine this earlier period, like one recent study of the Carter administration's approach, paint a more sympathetic portrait of American attempts to create a process leading to "genuine Palestinian self-determination" by challenging the Begin government on settlement expansion and territorial withdrawal.[21] But as I will suggest here, the U.S. role in the autonomy talks—and the very substance of the negotiations themselves—actively undermined the prospects of a solution to the Palestinian question. In reassessing Camp David's aftermath using newly released archival sources that illuminate these pivotal discussions around the Palestinian question, autonomy's conceptual and political salience complicates the notion of Carter's summit as "heroic diplomacy."[22] For the Palestinians, it proved a crucial moment of disenfranchisement.

Autonomy, as a political, diplomatic, and conceptual instrument of transformative occupation, became the ground upon which Israel cemented indefinite control over the Occupied Territories without any expiry date or formal annexation. During the talks, American and Egyptian officials adopted an Israeli version of limited autonomy as a solution to the Palestinian question. This approach stressed the concept of individual rights for "Arab inhabitants" of the Occupied Territories while precluding territorial control or the possibility of statehood.[23] In proffering autonomy as an alternative to self-rule, Israeli diplomats sought to mitigate criticism of the occupation while simultaneously extending Israeli state sovereignty beyond the 1967 borders. Combined with a marked increase in settlement construction, the successive rounds of negotiations effectively solidified Israeli control in the territories and blurred the demarcation of a border, helping prevent Palestinian state formation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.[24]

After first examining the conceptual lineage of autonomy and its promotion by Israel's Likud government in the late 1970s, I explore the trajectory of the autonomy talks in their formative early months. Hamstrung by divergent aims and structural disparities, the talks collapsed, after more than three years of meetings, during Israel's 1982 war in Lebanon. Yet their process and their failure alike illuminate the contours of Israeli and American diplomacy toward the Palestinian question. Autonomy, as later rounds of peace negotiations would reveal, became the dominant framework for discussions of Palestinian self-determination. Israel's selective invocation of a seemingly benevolent attitude toward the "Arab population" in the Occupied Territories,

coupled with the broader diplomatic practice of deliberate state prevention, links post-1948 developments with earlier patterns evident during the mandate era.

The Emergence of Palestinian Autonomy

Likud leader Menachem Begin's 1977 election as prime minister of Israel shocked the Labor-party dominated politics of the country.[25] An heir to the revisionist founder Ze'ev Jabotinsky, Begin was a believer in the "Greater Land of Israel" ideology that encouraged Jewish settlement in the West Bank. Seeing this territory as central to Israeli identity, he always referred to it using the biblical names of "Judea and Samaria."[26] After these areas were conquered in 1967, Begin was deeply opposed to granting "Arab inhabitants" political rights or any form of territorial control that could lead to Palestinian statehood.[27] But running counter to this exclusivist line of thinking was Begin's more inclusive conception of nationalism, based in part on the European model of Giuseppe Garibaldi and Giuseppe Mazzini, who had elevated a progressive version of the nation-state that should provide individual rights to minorities.[28]

Autonomist thinking, as the historian Dimitry Shumsky emphasizes, has a rich precedent in Jewish history, as a vehicle for a cohesive minority group to organize itself culturally and politically, albeit with limited sovereignty. It figured prominently in the Zionist approach to political formations in Palestine, along with statist perspectives.[29] Together, the influence of Jabotinsky's "Greater Land of Israel" revisionism and the discourse of liberal nationalist thinkers fed Begin's emerging conception of Palestinian Arabs as a minority rather than a self-determining political entity. This tension engendered a shift in Begin's thinking by the time he was elected prime minister ten years later.

In late December 1977, having reconsidered his blanket opposition in 1967, Begin presented his version of an autonomy plan for the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza Strip to the Israeli Knesset. Begin's plan was nonterritorial, proposing autonomy through the election of administrative councils by "Arab inhabitants" of the territories. These councils' purview was to be areas like education, housing, transport, agriculture, and health. But in distinguishing between local administrative operations and sovereign control, security and public order would remain entrusted to Israeli authorities.[30] Residents of these areas, regardless of existing affiliations, would be eligible for Israeli or Jordanian citizenship. In the speech announcing his plan, Begin implored, "We have a right and a demand for sovereignty over these areas of *Eretz Yisrael* [the Land of Israel]. This is our land and it belongs to the Jewish nation rightfully." The prime minister opposed any engagement with the PLO, asserting, "We do not even dream of the possibility—if we are given the chance to withdraw our military forces from Judea, Samaria and Gaza—of abandoning those areas to the control of the murderous organization that is called the PLO . . . This is history's meanest murder organization, except for the armed Nazi organizations."[31]

Begin believed that his version of autonomy would provide a solution that could bypass direct annexation and uphold liberal claims of protecting a national minority. He defended his views in a May 1977 interview with *Time* magazine. "What is wrong with a Jewish majority living together with an Arab minority in peace, in human

dignity, in equality of rights? I believe that we can live together. It is not an occupied country, as people understand that horrible term. We let them live in their homeland."[32] Begin's pretense of providing the local population with cultural and economic autonomy drew on the old colonial discourse of limited self-determination for native inhabitants. Simultaneously, the prime minister asserted that Israeli citizens maintained the right to purchase land and settle in the Occupied Territories, ensuring their transformative domination of the very same geographic space.[33] The "unilateral declarations" appended at the bottom of the original 1977 draft autonomy plan made the limitations of such an approach very clear.

> A) Under no circumstances will Israel permit the establishment in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza District of a 'Palestinian State.' Such a state would be a mortal danger to the civilian population of Israel and a grave peril to the free world.
>
> B) After the end of the transitional period of five years Israel will claim its inalienable rights to sovereignty in the areas of Eretz Israel: Judea, Samaria and the Gaza District.[34]

These declarations, we should note, contradicted the initial, pre–Camp David American and Egyptian conceptions of autonomy, which envisioned granting some undetermined form of political rights to the Palestinians.

During the Camp David summit that followed in 1978, Egyptian president Anwar al-Sadat spoke openly of resolving the Palestinian issue, while Begin and his advisors pushed to dislodge the matter from any final Egypt-Israel peace treaty. Indeed the pursuit of a bilateral agreement with Egypt became a diplomatic coup that neutralized external Arab threats to Israel and also helped to avoid peacemaking with the Palestinians. In his assessment of Camp David, William Quandt, a member of Carter's Middle East team and the leading American expert on the summit, explains that in signing the accords, Israel secured retention of the West Bank. "For Begin, Sinai had been sacrificed, but Eretz Israel had been won."[35]

Critics of the Camp David process gradually recognized this outcome, speaking out forcefully against Sadat's treatment of the Palestinians. The Palestinian scholar Edward Said argued that the Egyptian president had abandoned pan-Arab and Palestinian interests by making peace with Israel and viewed the resulting autonomy proposal as a cover for Israeli domination over Palestinians through the premise of "continued national non-independence."[36] The PLO Executive Committee announced its "total rejection" of the accords on September 18, 1978, and on October 1, leaders from the territories declared autonomy was an "open plot" against Palestinian rights, especially self-determination.[37] PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat warned that any supporters of Sadat would "pay a high price," later describing the autonomy idea as "no more than managing the sewers."[38]

The PLO had reason to worry about the meaning of Camp David. Some months later, President Carter would publicly declare, "We've never espoused an independent Palestinian state. I think that would be a destabilizing factor there."[39] Carter's legal counsel, Robert Lipshutz, questioned Sadat and other Arab leaders' insistence on the inviolability of Palestinian statehood. In Lipshutz's view, "They all fully recognize that it's in their worst interest to see that happen. I think their public posture is in their

judgment required for the time being because of their own inter-Arab relationships." In his own private assessment, Carter's legal counsel argued that the best outcome was a "federation of some type" with Jordan.[40] It was clear that neither the Israelis nor the Americans would support a PLO-run Palestinian state.

In this U.S.-Israeli consensus on preventing Palestinian statehood, autonomy played a key conceptual and diplomatic role, establishing a flexible basis for transformative occupation that systematically dislocated territory from population. Diachronically it would defer Palestinian political rights, while synchronically it would suffocate the discursive life of sovereignty claims. Along these lines, while negotiating the final details of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty in March 1979, Begin expanded on the implications of autonomy in discussions with President Carter. "We must be sure that no Palestinian state will emerge from the autonomy," Begin implored. "Had we thought that out of autonomy a Palestinian state would arise we would never have suggested it. We will not accept a Palestinian state . . . We are speaking of autonomy, not sovereignty, not a state."[41] The Israeli prime minister was deeply concerned that the United States would attempt to secure territorial control for Arabs in the West Bank and Gaza Strip by agreeing to a more expansive view of autonomy. "We are not talking about autonomy for or to the West Bank and Gaza, but only for the inhabitants. It is written so . . . If the self-governing authority provides full autonomy to the West Bank, this means that the territory has full autonomy, and Israel will have no right to be there. But we do have that right, because this is the land of Israel."[42]

Carter recognized the incompatibility of Begin's vision with the reality on the ground. The land itself, in Israel's configuration, was pivotal for Jewish settlement and therefore separated from any autonomy arrangement. This double process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization evokes the shifting forms of territorial control that characterized Eastern Mediterranean border zones in the mandate period, never fully resolved in the post-1948 West Bank.[43] During his final effort to secure the peace treaty with Egypt, the United States president held meetings in Cairo and Jerusalem in March 1979. His discussion with Begin and Israel's minister of agriculture, Ariel Sharon, underscored his growing concern that autonomy discussions provided cover for burgeoning settlement expansion in the Occupied Territories. Carter told Begin and Sharon of his worry that the discussions over autonomy were advancing without Palestinian or Jordanian participation, which signaled, "in effect, that almost in perpetuity Israel can retain complete control over the West Bank area." He added the concern that Sharon, with Begin's explicit support, indicated he would put "a million Jewish settlers on the West Bank," which would make it "impossible" for the Palestinians to participate in the discussions. "I have no way of looking into your hearts and souls and see how deeply you want to proceed with the self-government that the Prime Minister himself proposed," Carter told Sharon and Begin. "But something has to be done to assure those who live on the West Bank and Gaza."[44]

The Israeli prime minister responded with a robust defense of his vision for autonomy, reinforcing the notion that it was compatible with settlement expansion and insisting it could not lead to a state. "I believe it is one of the most beautiful, human ideas ever proposed by Zionism and Judaism, because we were a persecuted people and we understand another people, and we want not to interfere in their daily

affairs." In using this rhetoric, Begin posited the quotidian needs of local residents as apolitical, in contrast to the more politically expansive, temporally dynamic, and developmental needs of Israel:

> What we need is security, and may I respectfully say that if my friend, the Minister of Agriculture [Ariel] Sharon spoke about a million Jews in Judea and Samaria, he didn't mean any wrong, Mr. President. The number of Jews living in Judea and Samaria is not an obstacle to the autonomy for the Arab inhabitants . . . Why can't Jews and Arabs live together? In Haifa they live together; in Nazareth they live together. This is the idea: to live together. But the Arabs will have autonomy. We will not interfere with their affairs. We want to make sure that there is security and there is no Palestinian state.

Sharon, the architect of Israel's settlement expansion as agriculture minister in the Likud government, reinforced Begin's point. Drawing on a long-standing trope that denied Palestinian national identity, Sharon asserted that Jordan was the Palestinian state: "We want the autonomy; we are ready to go very far, but there will never be a second Palestinian state, and I think it is important to make it clear now, in order to prevent misunderstanding in the future."[45]

The Likud government's response to the Palestinian struggle for self-determination had been to launch a dramatically successful effort to settle Jews in the territories captured in 1967. Equating the settlers with Palestinian Arabs in Israel, Sharon asked Carter how he could prevent Jews from settling beyond the 1967 borders, given the number of Palestinian Arabs within Israel itself. "Altogether in this part of the world, I don't see any possibility whatsoever to draw any geographical line which can divide between Jewish population and Arab population, because we live here together." Such logic of equivalence between settlers and the Palestinian citizens of Israel suggested a retroactive justification of population exchange and the simultaneous denial of an interstate occupation beyond the 1967 borders. Neither did Sharon shy away from his boastful prediction of one million Jewish settlers in the territories:

> Believe me, Mr. President, when I use this figure of one million, saying that in 20–30 years I hope that one million Jews will live there, Mr. President, I can assure you, they will live there. There's nothing to do about it. They will live there and if we said that we believe that in Jerusalem, what we call the Greater Jerusalem, it is a crucial problem for us, to have one million Jews, they will live there, and they will live in what we call the area of Gush Etzion, in Tekoah, in Maaleh Edomim. They will live there. There is nothing to do about it. We were very careful to settle Jews, and that is what we are doing now.[46]

The exchange of views during this meeting highlights how Israel successfully delineated the limits of its position on Palestinian autonomy while asserting the centrality of settlement expansion, and all in the context of United States–led negotiations over a peace treaty between Israel and Egypt.

When Carter returned to Egypt to secure Sadat's final approval for the treaty, Begin gave an interview with Israel Radio evening news that clearly stated his intentions in the territories. "There will be no border through Eretz Israel," Begin

remarked. "And I think this is one of the finest concepts of Zionism and Judaism: we want to live in peace with our neighbors in Eretz Israel."[47] It was a frank explanation of Begin's long-standing revisionist position on the land itself, predicated on the total erasure of the 1967 Green Line. Israel's occupation would both expand its borders and serve as the definitive means to prevent the emergence of a Palestinian state. Such an approach was distinct from Begin's benevolent rhetoric about the "Arab inhabitants" of these territories, who he kept insisting would enjoy the autonomy arrangement.

Carter finally witnessed the signing of an Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty in Washington on March 26, 1979. In a personal letter to the United States president several days before the signing, the Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev outlined his deep antipathy toward the idea of a separate peace, with his most pointed criticisms concerning the fate of the Palestinians:

> Let us face the truth. All what is happening now means an actual departure from a solution of the Palestinian problem. It was simply drowned in various political maneuvers which may appear subtle to some but in fact are not in any way tied—neither from political nor from humane viewpoints—to the legitimate demands of the Arab people of Palestine. What kind of peace is that if more than three million people who have the inalienable right to have a roof over their heads, to have their own even a small state, are deprived of that right. This fact alone shows how shaky is the ground on which the separate agreement between Israel and Egypt being imposed by the United States is built.[48]

Brezhnev's warning, like the expansionist assertions of Israeli leaders, would continue to resonate during the opening round of the autonomy negotiations, which followed two months after the treaty's signing.

The First Round

Egyptian and Israeli delegations met in the southern Israeli city of Beersheba on Friday afternoon, May 25, 1979, for the first round of autonomy talks.[49] Early that morning, the Israeli army evacuated the northern Sinai town of El-Arish in coordination with the Egyptian army, completing an agreement to begin negotiations one month after the exchange of the instruments of ratification of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty.[50] Dr. Joseph Burg, Israel's minister of interior, and General Kamal Hassan Ali, the Egyptian defense minister, led their respective delegations in the talks, held at Ben Gurion University. U.S. secretary of state Cyrus Vance and Carter's special envoy to the Middle East, Robert Strauss, headed the American delegation.

Strauss, who had been chairman of the Democratic National Committee and successfully completed the Tokyo Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations as U.S. trade representative, was a political figure deeply sympathetic to Israel.[51] According to an internal Israeli memo, Strauss's belief in Israel's conception of its own security would ensure his loyalty on matters as sensitive as the fate of Jerusalem. "He is the man who will go to the President [Carter] close the door behind him and say the city will not be divided into two, and we must find an acceptable solution to the problem. He will do this, of course, after he hears and discusses Israel's position and feeling on

the topic."[52] Burg, the leader of Israel's National Religious Party, was selected in part to safeguard Begin's coalition allies, but also as a signal that the prime minister viewed the autonomy issue as an internal Israeli domestic problem, not a matter for the Foreign Ministry to deal with.[53]

Speaking on behalf of Egyptian prime minister Mustafa Khalil, who was unable to attend, General Ali opened the meeting. He invoked President Sadat, who "has emphasized repeatedly that the Palestinian problem is the heart and crux of the entire conflict." Ali articulated guidelines to underpin the talks, emphasizing the need for Palestinian participation in determining their own future. "Only the Palestinians themselves can make such a decision, for self-determination is their God-given right. Our task is merely to define the powers and responsibilities of the self-governing authority with full autonomy and the modalities for electing it."[54] In a method parallel to the Israeli use of autonomy, the Egyptians thereby deployed a sacralized yet abstract concept of self-determination, as distinguished from procedural, yet politically decisive responsibilities, as a means to defer direct engagement with the Palestinians.[55] This tactic served their immediate agenda as benevolent protectors of Palestinian rights, even as Sadat had all but cast the Palestinians aside in signing a bilateral treaty with Israel.

Despite occasional clashes, Egyptian acquiescence to the narrow Israeli and American positions on Palestinian autonomy continued throughout the duration of the negotiations. For instance, during a subsequent round of talks held at Alexandria's San Stefano Hotel, Egyptian prime minister Mustafa Khalil got into a disagreement with his Israeli interlocutors over the mechanisms for implementing autonomy on the ground. Egypt believed that any Self-Governing Authority established in the Occupied Territories should have legislative, executive, and judicial powers, while the Israeli position was limited to budgetary and regulatory powers. The Israelis also insisted on inserting language that emphasized autonomy was only for the *inhabitants* of the West Bank and Gaza "and not to territory." Khalil knew this was a ruse to strip autonomy of all meaning, arguing that in the Camp David Accords "it was never mentioned that it [will] apply to inhabitants and not territory." Yet despite his reservations, Khalil acceded to the Israeli interpretation of Camp David, particularly on the question of Palestinian statehood. "We have to be careful in our phrases," Khalil remarked to Burg. "I cannot come and say powers and responsibilities that could lead to forming an independent Palestinian state." Burg quickly replied, "On this I would go along with you. This is the point." It was a clear indication that even for Egypt, the outcome of the autonomy talks cohered with Israeli and American priorities to avoid the possible emergence of a Palestinian state.[56]

For the PLO leadership, following the talks from a distance in Lebanon, the implications of autonomy were distressingly clear. Yasser Arafat, the chairman of the PLO, conveyed his views to the United States government via a secret back channel.[57] Arafat, seeking global recognition of the Palestinian plight, recognized that the PLO had to shift from armed resistance to a negotiated settlement. But he described the Camp David Accords as nothing more than "meaningless negotiations about some permanent colonial status for the Palestinians under Israeli rule." The PLO leader

warned of the "massive build-up of U.S. arms to both Israel and Egypt, and preparations of another Arab-Israeli war which Begin is doing everything to provoke though his attacks on South Lebanon. That is not a treaty for peace—it is a treaty for war."[58]

Arafat was equally dismissive of autonomy, which he called "a farce," instead suggesting an alternative path. "If there is a clear platform for serious, comprehensive peace negotiations," Arafat remarked to U.S. officials, "we will of course take part." In Arafat's view, that platform should include three major points.

1) Human rights for the Palestinians;
2) The principle of the right of return for the Palestinians;
3) The right of the Palestinians to have our own state.[59]

In the wider context of an emerging discourse on human rights in the 1970s, the PLO demands echoed similar political struggles across the globe. For more than a decade, Arafat upheld these demands, eventually securing the PLO's return to the West Bank and Gaza Strip with the signing of the Oslo Accords. But this eventual acceptance of limited self-rule through the establishment of the Palestinian Authority diluted the central elements of the Palestinian national struggle, bumping up against the ceiling of autonomy first laid out by Begin in 1977.[60]

The absence of Palestinian participation in the autonomy meetings, which continued until their conclusion in 1982, was noted from the inception.[61] U.S. diplomats, despite their continuing public pronouncements on the importance of Palestinian economic and political rights, in fact privately supported Palestinian exclusion from the negotiations.[62] And as vacuous as the Egyptian and American endorsements of Palestinian self-determination may have been, they were still met with an overwhelmingly negative Israeli response. In his opening speech, Burg remarked that at the heart of autonomy "lies the conviction that the Palestinian Arabs should and must conduct their own daily lives for themselves and by themselves." But he stressed a conceptual distinction. "What I must make clear and what must be understood from the outset is that autonomy does not and cannot imply sovereignty . . . we must, by definition, reject a-priori an independent Palestinian statehood. Israel will never agree, and indeed, totally rejects the propositions, declarations or establishment of a Palestinian state in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza District."[63] Israel's overarching priority, as successive rounds made clear, was to keep the talks in motion and embed a hegemonic definition of autonomy without enabling Palestinian sovereignty or statehood.

Burg's position throughout the talks rested on a dramatic narrative of Israel's security needs. "No hostile element or agent or force dare control the heartland of this land to threaten the lives of its city dwellers and villagers and thereby hold a knife to the jugular vein of Israel."[64] In Israeli diplomatic parlance, Palestinians often denoted the PLO, and as Begin himself would tell Strauss, "The PLO is beyond the pale of human civilization."[65] Until the conclusion of the negotiations, then, no Palestinians would participate in a discussion about their own future, nor would a joint Jordanian delegation that might mitigate concerns about PLO involvement. A confidant of Burg at the time, the American Jewish leader Henry Siegman, later recalled discussions

during which the Israeli minister of interior admitted that the mere existence of the talks was a mechanism for "shooting the dog" of Palestinian autonomy.[66]

Autonomy into the 1980s

Domestic considerations in the United States coupled with several crises abroad, including the onset of the Iranian revolution, precipitated Carter's disengagement from the autonomy talks by the end of 1979. Ambassador Sol Linowitz, the lead U.S. negotiator who had replaced Ambassador Strauss, worked diligently to reconcile the central divisions between Egypt and Israel in a bid to achieve some tangible results for the Palestinians although he too precluded statehood.[67] During a meeting in Cairo in January 1980, the Egyptian and Israeli delegations presented Linowitz with varying models of autonomy to break the deadlock over the permissible degree of Palestinian self-rule. Israel's model was entirely functional—the establishment of what was called a "Self Governing Authority (Administrative Council)" for Palestinians to deal with shared issues, while residual sovereignty remained with Israel. This functionalism reflected a persistent employment of autonomy as a political and discursive tool to diminish the possibility of sovereignty. Egypt's autonomy model, however, was based on the mode of civil administration used by the Israeli military government and was intended to provide Palestinians with actual power for self-rule, in the form of exclusive authority over land *and* inhabitants. Conceptually, the Egyptian model was akin to a mandate for the development of an eventual independent state after an interim waiting period.[68]

Linowitz selected the Israeli model as the basis for continuing negotiations, and the Egyptians reluctantly agreed.[69] Secret documents reveal prior meetings between the United States and Israeli delegations to prepare and adopt the Israeli position paper, with U.S. ambassador James Leonard telling Israeli representatives "We will ask you, and even suggest to you, some formulations in conformity with what you gave to us."[70] Egypt's acquiescence reflected Sadat's underlying personal trust in the United States' ability to extract concessions from Israel during the course of the negotiations. Leading members of Sadat's delegation at Camp David had, however, attacked this confidence. Egypt's foreign minister, Mohammed Ibrahim Kamel, warned Sadat about the autonomy provisions of Camp David just before resigning in protest. "We are only deceiving ourselves if we say this project will end in the realization of a just solution to the Palestinian cause, for Israel will use it as an instrument and a source of support to liquidate the issue in accordance with its expansionist intentions."[71]

While Kamel's warnings evoked the skepticism of other critics like Brezhnev, Sadat was primarily concerned with achieving a peace deal with Israel and with securing U.S. backing for internal reforms in his country. He believed Egypt in the post-Nasser era was "encumbered with worries and problems," and that its public utilities were "in a state of collapse."[72] These domestic concerns fueled Egypt's turn away from Soviet patronage in the wake of the 1973 War and culminated in Sadat's decision to pursue a bilateral agreement with Israel.[73] But the Egyptian president also became increasingly vocal about Begin's intransigent stance toward implementing Camp David. In conversations with Carter during the summer of 1980, Sadat demanded that the Israeli prime minister agree that "Jerusalem is negotiable, stop the settlements, and

take care of the human rights of the Palestinians." Recording this conversation in his diary, Carted noted: "I don't believe he [Begin] will do any of these things, and has dug himself a hole very damaging to Israel."[74]

This tense diplomatic environment and Sadat's domestic preoccupations contributed to a feeble Egyptian stance in the negotiations. In a further indication of the increasingly asymmetrical nature of the autonomy talks, the Egyptians were often excluded from key meetings between the Israeli and American delegations. Records of these bilateral meetings highlight a pattern by which Palestinian concerns were rendered subsidiary to Israeli priorities. Among these priorities was ensuring that negotiations over possible Palestinian autonomy did not undermine the physical expansion of settlements in the Occupied Territories.

One example of what this linkage enabled can be found in the minutes of a meeting between U.S. ambassador Linowitz and the full Israeli delegation in Jerusalem on September 2, 1980. Turning to the rapid expansion of Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories, Linowitz asked Ariel Sharon to explain the status of settlement development and the rationale of expansion in light of their sensitive role in the autonomy talks. "We are finishing the skeleton," Sharon answered, anticipating the announcement of four further settlements. In one of the clearest expressions of what these settlements were intended to achieve, Sharon then outlined his aims:

> You have to take into consideration, and again I am saying why I believe we have to hurry, why I believe that we have to finish it before the coming elections in Israel: the facts that were created in the areas, the skeleton, the map that exists practically in the area now does not allow any more and will not enable in the future any territorial compromise. I don't see any possibility of territorial compromise. There are many possibilities of political answers or, let's say modifications, but I cannot see any territorial compromise. I don't see now any area that can be handed to anybody having this skeleton practically in the area.[75]

The "skeleton" Sharon helped design and implement on occupied Palestinian land was a means to ensure none of the land could ever be ceded to the Arab inhabitants. This framework of the settlement project, and its deployment as a prerequisite even for diplomatic discussion of autonomy, was explicitly meant to prevent any cession of territory by Israel, or the creation of a Palestinian state, interlinked objectives that have been achieved and maintained up to the present day.

The Israeli government had already accelerated plans for this expansion at the time of the Camp David summit. Not long after Begin returned from the cloistered thirteen days in rural Maryland with Sadat and Carter, the director general of his office, Eliyahu Ben-Elissar, gathered a secret committee of high-level Israeli officials to devise a position on the future of the Occupied Territories.[76] Fearful as they were of Camp David's implications, Ben-Elissar's committee swiftly completed their task in just three months, agreeing on a basic outline for any peace talks related to the Palestinian question. This included the territorial retention of 250,000 acres of "state land" in the West Bank, continued control of underground water resources, and special jurisdiction for Jewish settlers in the territories.[77] The specter of the public

autonomy negotiations had in fact triggered a new round of internal Israeli decision-making intended to strengthen the Israeli government's hold on the land beyond the Green Line.[78] This dialectic—working internationally to deploy autonomy as a means of dealing politically with Palestinians on the one hand, and locally developing settlements to extend Israeli territorial sovereignty on the other—clearly illustrates the mechanics of a transformative occupation at work. Sharon's affirmation to Linowitz in the autonomy meeting of September 1980 was merely the instantiation of this process within the Unites States–Israel bilateral discussion.

American diplomats were fully aware of the consequences. As Linowitz later wrote in his memoir, "Palestinian autonomy would have little meaning if Israel could continuously redefine its security needs with reference to the land supposedly under the self-governing Palestinian authority."[79] Like Israel's "decision not to decide" on the fate of the territories after the 1967 War and the suggestion of a time-limited period in which to implement autonomy, the recurring rounds of negotiations, structured by the blurred concepts of Israeli security and Palestinian autonomy, served as a floating mechanism to defer clear decision making on legal rights, national sovereignty, or final state borders. Despite misgivings, minutes of the autonomy meetings in which Linowitz participated clearly demonstrate that when confronted with Israeli actions, the leading U.S. diplomat was unable to halt or reverse expansion in any meaningful way.

Succumbing to foreign policy missteps and economic troubles at home, Carter lost the 1980 presidential election to former California governor Ronald Reagan. In a final report on the state of the autonomy talks, Linowitz assessed the prospects of their success in a new administration. He told Carter that much had been achieved in the successive rounds of negotiations, aside from five core issues: "1) Source of power; 2) Water and land rights; 3) Jewish settlements; 4) Security; and 5) East Jerusalem."[80] Given the effort that had been expended in dozens of meetings, this extensive list underscored the effectiveness of Israeli tactics in negotiating autonomy along such narrow lines. There was a slim possibility that these issues would be tackled anew amid the shifting ideological priorities of the Reagan White House.

Carter, who had sacrificed a great deal of political capital by offering limited support for some form of Palestinian self-rule during his tenure, was bitterly disappointed with the failure of the autonomy talks. During his final meeting with Israel's ambassador to the United States, Ephraim Evron, the outgoing president lamented the state of affairs. "I don't see how they [Israel] can continue as an occupying power depriving the Palestinians of basic human rights, and I don't see how they can absorb three million more Arabs into Israel without letting the Jews become a minority in their own country. Begin showed courage in giving up the Sinai. He did it to keep the West Bank."[81] It was a clear-eyed assessment, borne out by the rhetoric and policies of the Israeli government throughout the negotiations, both of which had been condoned by the acquiescent mediation of Carter's own administration.

Whatever hope there had been at Camp David for the just adjudication of Palestinian concerns evaporated with the arrival of the new administration in Washington. Reagan and his advisors returned to the Cold War rhetoric of earlier decades, situating the Middle East as an arena of Soviet influence. Palestinians, viewed with great

suspicion and often with outright hostility by conservative critics of the Camp David process, were painted as Soviet proxies undeserving of self-determination.[82] The United States' alliance with Israel, however, was deemed strategically important for the first time, and settlements were no longer viewed as illegal.

Alexander Haig, the new secretary of state, was a leading proponent of these views, which shaped his approach to the remaining meetings of the autonomy negotiations. Personally chairing the last meeting of the negotiators in Jerusalem on January 28, 1982, Haig remained silent as Ariel Sharon laid out his settlement expansion plans in the West Bank. Prime Minister Begin gloated that he had withstood Carter's admonitions on the question of settlement legality: "Mr. Ronald Reagan put an end to that debate. He said, the settlements are not illegal. A double negative gives a positive result. In other words, they are legal or legitimate."[83] Haig sat quietly throughout Begin's remarks.

Such tacit agreement with Israel's semantic and legal shift on the status of the Occupied Territories was manifest in the administration's blind eye toward settlement expansion. Five thousand Jewish settlers lived in the West Bank when Begin entered office in 1977, and over eighty thousand by the late 1980s. In the interim, commuter towns and bypass roads for settlers bisected the actual ground upon which Palestinian sovereignty could ever be achieved. By several accounts, the consolidation of this matrix of Israeli control would prove irreversible.[84] Coupled with the diplomatic and political promotion of a narrowly functionalist and nonterritorial definition of autonomy, the ongoing land appropriation and settlement expansion served to undercut any basis for possible Palestinian statehood.

Conclusion

The 1979–82 autonomy negotiations reveal a great deal about the nature of Israel's expansion beyond the 1967 borders, and the diplomacy that sustained it. The very idiom in which these talks were rooted—autonomy not sovereignty, limited self-rule—exacerbated political realities on the ground and dismantled the political mechanisms for a just resolution to the Palestinian question. Like the notion of self-determination that featured in the mandate system after World War I, autonomy for the local inhabitants of the Occupied Territories was diluted to a point where it signaled indefinite Israeli control rather than a means to eventual self-government. In large measure, the blueprint for the limited degree of Palestinian sovereignty that might ever be reached in a negotiated settlement was first sketched out by Begin, Burg, Sharon, and members of the Israeli negotiating team, as well as through the acquiescence of U.S. and Egyptian diplomats working alongside them.

In this manner, the autonomy negotiations offer insight into the workings of a transformative and durable postwar occupation regime in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, one that denies Palestinians sovereignty while upholding the rights of Jewish settlers in the same geographic space. While visible evidence of this occupation is well documented, the evolution of its intellectual, legal, and political framework is only recently coming under sustained scrutiny.[85] In recovering the history of the autonomy talks, the rationale and political-conceptual dynamics animating Israel's treatment of Palestinians in the territories become clearer, as does the tacit, and often explicit,

acceptance and encouragement of this behavior by other actors. By emphasizing individual rights and deterritorialized autonomy, rather than allowing for collective self-determination after Camp David, the Israeli government and their compliant U.S. and Egyptian counterparts helped solidify a non-national, nonstatist arrangement for Palestinians. Echoing the colonial construction of mandatory rule as a purportedly time-limited stage of communal development, the Camp David–era politics of autonomy and its attendant five-year implementation window served to defer the Palestinian national question indefinitely by positing the occupied population as unsuitable for self-rule.[86]

Alongside renewed attention to the conjoined moment of Israeli state formation and the onset of the Palestinian *nakba,* or catastrophe of 1948, a focus on the post-1967 occupation era fortifies the link between Israeli territorial expansion and the ongoing condition of Palestinian statelessness.[87] Deployed as a tool to manage an increasingly restive local population, autonomy was promoted in tandem with an expansionist practice of settlement construction in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. These practices transformed the physical landscape of the territories in the late 1970s and 1980s. Well before the onset of the peace process in the 1990s, the possibility of political sovereignty for Israel's occupied population had already been truncated. By examining the genesis of autonomy in the early stages of these negotiations, I am therefore suggesting we rethink the conventional periodization of the peace process to account for these prior decades. There is a direct line between the autonomy talks, presented as the first serious attempt to address the post-1948 Palestinian question on an international stage, and the post-Oslo reality that has become entrenched in their wake.

The eventual collapse of the autonomy talks in 1982 during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon marked the continuation of a political process of state prevention with the military goal of destroying the PLO. By removing the Palestinian question from serious diplomatic consideration from Camp David through the late 1980s, Israeli leaders were able to draw on alternative strategies for dealing with the Arab inhabitants of the Occupied Territories within a non-national context.[88] Certainly, the pace of the PLO's internal evolution from armed struggle toward political negotiation affected their international standing as well. After the outbreak of the first Intifada in 1987, when the Palestinian struggle for self-determination reached a wide global audience, Reagan was compelled to open an official dialogue with the PLO.[89] This rapid shift was accelerated by the end of the Cold War and the United States–led coalition victory in the First Gulf War, after which President George H.W. Bush initiated multilateral negotiations to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict at the 1991 Madrid Conference. It was the first time that Palestinians were included in substantive discussions over their political fate. Along with the Oslo Accords of 1993, this nascent peace process was viewed as a viable mechanism to address Palestinian self-determination and Israeli national aspirations in the same frame.[90]

Throughout all of these efforts, the imprint of the autonomy talks remained. Oslo, with its focus on limited self-rule for Palestinians, reproduced the narrow conception of autonomy advanced by Israel during negotiations more than a decade earlier. Begin's autonomy plan, as both records from his time in office and later discussions

make clear, became the basis for the U.S. and Israeli negotiating positions—and the birth of the Palestinian Authority—in the years that followed.[91] Among Palestinian negotiators at the Madrid Conference, there was deep suspicion of American attempts to revive this model. Many of those same negotiators felt betrayed by Yasser Arafat's subsequent acceptance of the Oslo Accords, which reified the notion of limited self-rule and mirrored Begin's original ideas presented in 1977.[92] The logic of Oslo, which maintained Israeli control over Palestinian movements in key areas of the territories while respecting the autonomy of individual enclaves, bred a condition that Eyal Weizmann has incisively called "prosthetic sovereignty."[93] This condition has engendered official opposition to the notion of a fully sovereign Palestinian state, even as Israeli leaders have claimed to embrace a "two-state solution" to ending the conflict.[94]

Looking back on autonomy from the contemporary vantage point of a fractured Palestinian polity, we can more clearly discern how the historical absence and active prevention of sovereignty endures as a primary obstacle to Palestinian self-determination. The failure of the peace process underscores the devastating twin impact of, on the one hand, prolonged political disenfranchisement through the development of flexible political concepts, such as autonomy, that marginalize sovereignty claims and, on the other hand, the physical encroachment of settlements on the ground, which blur political boundaries via a mechanism of "de facto annexation."[95] Autonomy's purchase helps explain how and why Palestinian statelessness was perpetuated in the wake of Camp David, and may go some distance in explaining why meaningful Palestinian statehood remains elusive today.

NOTES

I am grateful to Dirk Moses and Simon Jackson for their rigorous feedback and collaborative editing, and for organizing the conference where this special issue was first conceived. For invaluable comments and suggestions, I also thank the external reviewer, Tareq Baconi, Rashid Khalidi, Fredrik Meiton, Derek Penslar, Aaron Rock-Singer, Natasha Wheatley, and the members of Columbia University's Middle East history workshop, *Siyagh*.

1. The literature on colonial legacies in the Middle East is extensive; see, for example, Philip S. Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism, 1920–1945* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987); Ussama Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Joseph A. Massad, *Colonial Effects: The Making of National Identity in Jordan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001); and Elizabeth F. Thompson, *Justice Interrupted: The Struggle for Constitutional Government in the Middle East* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2013).

2. See Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation-Building and a History Denied* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005); Susan Pedersen, "Getting Out of Iraq—in 1932: The League of Nations and the Road to Normative Statehood," *American Historical Review* 115, no. 4 (October 2010): 975–1000; Daniel Neep, *Occupying Syria under the French Mandate: Insurgency, Space, and State Formation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); and Andrew Arsan and Cyrus Schayegh, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of the History of the Middle Eastern Mandates* (London: Routledge, 2015).

3. See Timothy Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil*, 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 2013), 66–85; and Antony Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty, and the Making of International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 115–95.

4. See the introduction to this special issue. On alternative models for organizing regions in the wake of empire, see Samuel Moyn, "Fantasies of Federalism," *Dissent*, Winter 2015.

5. See the respective contributions of Jacob Norris, Nida Alahmad, and A. Dirk Moses in this issue.

6. See Frederick D. Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1922); Michael Crowder, "Indirect Rule: French and British Style," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 34, no. 3 (July 1964): 197–204; Kevin Grant and Lisa Trivedi, "A Question of Trust: The Government of India, the League of Nations, and Mohandas Gandhi," in *Imperialism on Trial: International Oversight of Colonial Rule in Historical Perspective*, ed. R. M. Douglas, Michael D. Callahan, and Elizabeth Bishop (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2006), 21–43; and Andrew Porter, "Trusteeship, Anti-Slavery, and Humanitarianism," in *Oxford History of the British Empire,* vol. 3, *The Nineteenth Century*, ed. Andrew Porter and Wm. Roger Louis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 199–222.

7. See Gershom Gorenberg, *The Accidental Empire: Israel and the Birth of the Settlements, 1967–1977* (New York: Times Books, 2006); and Tom Segev, *1967: Israel, the War and the Year that Transformed the Middle East* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2007).

8. On the history and practices of the occupation, see Eyal Weizmann, *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation* (London: Verso, 2012); Neve Gordon, *Israel's Occupation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); and Ariella Azoulay and Adi Ophir, *The One State Condition: Occupation and Democracy in Israel/Palestine* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2013).

9. Avi Raz, *The Bride and the Dowry: Israel, Jordan, and the Palestinians in the Aftermath of the June 1967 War* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2012), 44. In his incisive study, Raz documents the Israeli treatment of Palestinian refugees after 1967 and demonstrates that there was a deliberate attempt to appropriate the captured territories (the "dowry") while getting rid of as many Arab inhabitants as possible (the "bride").

10. See Victor V. Nemchenok, " 'These People Have an Irrevocable Right to Self-Government': United States Policy and the Palestinian Question, 1977–1979," *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 20, no. 4 (2009): 595–618. For the rise and growing visibility of the PLO in the international context of the late 1960s and early 1970s, see Paul Thomas Chamberlin, *The Global Offensive: The United States, the Palestine Liberation Organization, and the Making of the Post-Cold War Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

11. This was on March 16, 1977, during a question and answer session at a town hall meeting in Clinton, Massachusetts. For the transcript, see *The American Presidency Project*, UC Santa Barbara, accessed July 15, 2014, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=7180. When Carter spoke about a "homeland," it was far less than a state. Parallels abound with the British government's promise of a "national home" for the Jews in 1917 and the rhetoric of the League of Nations.

12. The rise of human rights in the 1970s is now a burgeoning subfield. For crucial framing, see Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010), 120–75; and Jan Eckel and Samuel Moyn, eds., *The Breakthrough: Human Rights in the 1970s* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013). On the domestic United States context, especially the role (and limits) of the Carter presidency, see Barbara J. Keys, *Reclaiming American Virtue: The Human Rights Revolution of the 1970s* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard

University Press, 2014). For a regional critique, see the roundtable "Problematics of Human Rights and Humanitarianism," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 48, no. 2 (May 2016): 357–86.

13. On Carter's shortcomings, see Derek N. Buckaloo, "Carter's Nicaragua and Other Democratic Quagmires," in *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s*, ed. Bruce J. Schulman and Julian E. Zelizer (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008), 246–64; and Bradley Simpson, "Denying the 'First Right': The United States, Indonesia, and the Ranking of Human Rights by the Carter Administration, 1976–1980," *International History Review* 31, no. 4 (December 2009): 788–826.

14. See William B. Quandt, *Camp David: Peacemaking and Politics* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1986); and Lawrence Wright, *Thirteen Days in September: Carter, Begin, and Sadat at Camp David* (New York: Knopf, 2014). The better known of the two final accords, *A Framework for the Conclusion of a Peace Treaty between Egypt and Israel*, provided the basis for a bilateral Egyptian-Israeli peace deal. Sadat sought the return of the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt, and Begin sought normal diplomatic relations and the opening of the Suez Canal to Israeli ships.

15. See Walter Laqueur and Barry Rubin, eds., *The Israel-Arab Reader: A Documentary History of the Middle East Conflict*, 7th ed. (New York: Penguin Press, 2008), 223.

16. As William Quandt explains, the key was to "refashion Begin's autonomy plan into a proposal for an interim regime for the West Bank and Gaza that would offer the Palestinians a serious measure of self-government. The proposal would include a clear commitment to a second phase of negotiations toward the end of the transitional period to resolve the questions of borders, sovereignty and Palestinian rights in accordance with UN resolution 242—territory for peace—and Carter's promise at Aswan that Palestinians should have the right to participate in determining their own future." Quandt, *Camp David*, 212.

17. On the role of the mandate in circumscribing Palestinian nationalism, see Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006). On the context of colonial development, see Jacob Norris, *Land of Progress: Palestine in the Age of Colonial Development, 1905–1948* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). For the British creation of local and limited citizenship for Palestinians during the mandate (lacking civil or political rights), see Lauren Banko, "The Creation of Palestinian Citizenship under an International Mandate: Legislation, Discourse and Practices, 1918–1925," *Citizenship Studies* 16, nos. 5–6 (2012): 641–55.

18. In several crucial articles published soon after his stint in the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research dealing with autonomy, the political scientist Ian Lustick provided contemporaneous accounts that outlined the United States' role in the talks. See Lustick, "Kill the Autonomy Talks," *Foreign Policy*, no. 41 (Winter 1980–81): 21–43; "Israeli Politics and American Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, December 1, 1982; and his more recent intervention, "Two-State Illusion," *New York Times*, September 15, 2013.

19. Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881–2001* (New York: Vintage Books, 2001), 488. See also Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000), 380–83; William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict since 1967* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005), 237–40; and Mark Tessler, *A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).

20. See, for example, Dennis Ross, *The Missing Peace: The Inside Story of the Fight for Middle*

East Peace (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005); Aaron David Miller, *The Much Too Promised Land: America's Elusive Search for Arab-Israeli Peace* (New York: Bantam, 2008); Martin Indyk, *Innocent Abroad: An Intimate Account of American Peace Diplomacy in the Middle East* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2009); and Daniel Kurtzer, ed., *The Peace Puzzle: America's Quest for Arab-Israeli Peace* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2013).

21. See Jeremy Pressman, "Explaining the Carter Administration's Israeli-Palestinian Solution," *Diplomatic History* 37, no. 5 (November 2013): 1117–47. Others who have written about the autonomy talks did so without access to the primary records of the negotiations, which have only recently been opened to researchers. See Shlomo Gazit, *Trapped Fools: Thirty Years of Israeli Policy in the Territories* (London: Frank Cass, 2003); Harvey Sicherman, *Palestinian Autonomy, Self Government, and Peace* (Washington, D.C.: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1993); Ilan Peleg, *Begin's Foreign Policy, 1977–1983: Israel's Move to the Right* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987); Gershon R. Kieval, *Party Politics in Israel and the Occupied Territories* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1983); Mark A. Bruzonsky, "America's Palestinian Predicament: Fallacies and Possibilities," *International Security* 6, no. 1 (Summer 1981): 93–110; and Avi Plascov, *A Palestinian State? Examining the Alternatives* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1981). One important study of autonomy's ideological underpinnings, based on Israeli sources, is Ziv Rubinovitz and Gerald M. Steinberg, "Menachem Begin's Autonomy Plan: Between Political Realism and Ideology [Hebrew]," *Public Sphere* 6 (2012): 75–94.

22. See Kenneth W. Stein, *Heroic Diplomacy: Sadat, Kissinger, Carter, Begin and the Quest for Arab-Israeli Peace* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

23. Menachem Begin himself preferred this formulation, as opposed to "Palestinian," which would denote a nation. My usage here is intended to reflect the Israeli conception at the time.

24. There has been a great deal of skepticism in recent years about the efficacy of the 1967 border as a basis for negotiations, or the practical possibility of a two-state solution. See, for example, Mehran Kamrava, *The Impossibility of Palestine: History, Geography and the Road Ahead* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2016); Yehouda Shenhav, *Beyond the Two-State Solution: A Jewish Political Essay* (London: Polity, 2012); Azoulay and Ophir, *The One State Condition*; and Sari Nusseibeh, *What Is a Palestinian State Worth?* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011). The mechanics of this blurring are explained in architectural terms by Weizmann in *Hollow Land.* For Hamas's view regarding the distinction between 1948 and 1967 borders, see Tareq Baconi's essay in this issue.

25. Alan Dowty, "Zionism's Greatest Conceit," *Israel Studies* 3, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 1–23.

26. On Begin's background and career, see the comprehensive biography by Avi Shilon, *Menachem Begin: A Life* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2012). For a study of his ideological worldview toward settlement in Israel and across the Green Line, see Arye Naor, "'A Simple Historical Truth': Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip in Menachem Begin's Ideology," *Israel Affairs* 21, no. 3 (July 2015): 462–81. On Begin's pre-1967 approach, see Amir Goldstein, "Menachem Begin and 'The Whole Land of Israel' until the Six Day War [Hebrew]," *Cathedra* 126 (2007): 103–28; and Nadav G. Shelef, "From 'Both Banks of the Jordan' to the 'Whole Land of Israel': Ideological Change in Revisionist Zionism," *Israel Studies* 9, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 125–48.

27. Minutes, cabinet session, June 19, 1967, A/8164/8, Israel State Archives, Jerusalem (ISA).

28. Colin Shindler, *The Triumph of Military Zionism* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006), 12. See also C. A. Bayly and Eugenio F. Biagini, eds., *Giuseppe Mazzini and the Globalization of Democratic Nationalism, 1830–1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 2008); and

Giuseppe Mazzini, *A Cosmopolitanism of Nations: Giuseppe Mazzini's Writings on Democracy, Nation Building, and International Relations*, ed. Stefano Recchia and Nadia Urbinati (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2009).

29. See Dimitry Shumsky, "Brith Shalom's Uniqueness Reconsidered: Hans Kohn and Autonomist Zionism," *Jewish History* 25, nos. 3–4 (2011): 339–53; and "Leon Pinsker and 'Auto-emancipation!': A Reevaluation," *Jewish Social Studies* 18, no. 1 (Fall 2011): 33–62.

30. Reprinted in Laqueur and Rubin, *The Israel-Arab Reader*, 218–20.

31. Laqueur and Rubin, *The Israel-Arab Reader*, 220.

32. Cited in Rubinovitz and Steinberg, "Menachem Begin's Autonomy Plan," 83–84.

33. A copy of the original document on which Begin sketched his autonomy plan was donated by the deputy of his General Directorate to the archives at the Menachem Begin Heritage Center in Jerusalem (MBC). It shows a direct link between Begin's original ideas in 1977 and the accepted starting point of the Egyptian-Israeli negotiations that began two years later. See "Proposals for the Introduction of Full Autonomy for the Palestinian Arabs, Inhabitants of Judea, Samaria and the Gaza District, and for the Preservation of the Rights of the Jewish People and Israel's Security in these Areas of Eretz Israel (Palestine)," handwritten copy [Hebrew and English], Nadav Aner Donation, MBC.

34. Cable, top secret, May 3, 1979, MFA/6915/11, ISA.

35. Quandt, *Camp David*, 256.

36. Edward W. Said, *The Question of Palestine* (London: Vintage, 1992), 182–238. See also Rashid Khalidi, "The Palestine Liberation Organization," in *The Middle East: Ten Years after Camp David*, ed. William B. Quandt (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1988), 261–78.

37. Sicherman, *Palestinian Autonomy,* 36.

38. Ibid., 35.

39. The President's News Conference, May 29, 1979, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed July 15, 2014, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=32406&st=&st1.

40. "Reminiscences of Robert Lipshutz," *Ethnic Groups and American Foreign Policy Project,* Columbia University Center for Oral History, Feb. 15, 1978, 25–26.

41. "Minutes of a Meeting between Prime Minister Begin and President Carter at the White House, Washington D.C., Friday March 2, 1979, 10AM," A/4156/6, ISA.

42. "Summary of President's Meeting with Prime Minister Begin, The Cabinet Room, March 2, 1979, 10AM-12:40 PM," Brzezinski Donated Collection, Subject File, box 36, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA (JCL).

43. For a fascinating study of the "contrasting territorial logics" at work in the mandate-era Levant, see Cyrus Schayegh, "The Many Worlds of 'Abud Yasin; or, What Narcotics Trafficking in the Interwar Middle East Can Tell Us about Territorialization," *American Historical Review* 116, no. 2 (April 2011): 273–306.

44. "Meeting between the President of the USA, Mr. Jimmy Carter and Delegation, and Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Delegation, March 11, 1979, 11:30 AM, Prime Minister's Office, Jerusalem," MFA/6868/7, ISA.

45. These quotations are all from the March 11, 1979, meeting transcript in MFA/6868/7, ISA.

46. Sharon's statements are also from the Jerusalem meeting on March 11 in MFA/6868/7, ISA.

47. Begin interview with Israel Radio, Cable, MFA/6868/7, ISA.

48. Letter, Leonid Brezhnev to Jimmy Carter, March 19, 1979, Declassified Document Reference System (Farmington Hills, Mich.: Gale Group, 2006).

49. King Hussein of Jordan did not accept the invitation to participate, leaving Egypt in charge of the discussion over the fate of the Palestinians.

50. This was agreed to in the joint Begin-Sadat letter of March 26, 1979, that accompanied the signing of the Israeli-Egyptian treaty.

51. In his diary, President Carter had remarked on Strauss's initial selection, "If anyone can keep these negotiations on track and protect me from the Jewish community politically, it's Bob Strauss." See entry for April 24, 1979, Jimmy Carter, *White House Diary* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010), 315. On Strauss, see Kathryn J. McGarr, *The Whole Damn Deal: Robert Strauss and the Art of Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011).

52. Letter [Hebrew], Zvi Rafiah to Israeli Ambassador to US, Washington, April 26, 1979, Subject: Bob Strauss, A/4339/6, ISA.

53. This is confirmed by Eliyahu Ben Elissar, the director general of Begin's office, in his memoir, *Lo Od Milhama* (No more war) (Or Yehudah: Sifiyat Ma'ariv, 1995), 199.

54. "Meeting of Committee on Autonomy, Friday May 25, 1979, 2:45 PM, Ben Gurion University, Beersheba," A/4318/1, ISA.

55. On the contradictory uses and meanings of self-determination, and the importance of examining its variegated history, see Bradley Simpson, "Self-Determination, Human Rights, and the End of Empire in the 1970s," *Humanity* 4, no. 2 (Spring 2013): 239–60.

56. All quotations in this paragraph are from "Minutes of Session 2, Committee on Autonomy, San Stefano Hotel, Alexandria, Sept. 26, 1979, 6:45 PM," MFA/6897/5, ISA.

57. Despite a ban on direct diplomatic communication with the PLO put in place by Henry Kissinger in 1975, the CIA maintained regular contact with members of the organization for security discussions. See Kai Bird, *The Good Spy: The Life and Death of Robert Ames* (New York: Crown, 2014). For more on the back channel, see the records of U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon John Gunther Dean at the Jimmy Carter Library.

58. "Summary of two evenings of talk with Yasir Arafat- July 24, 25, 1979," undated report, NSA Brzezinski Material, box 49, file 6, Palestine Liberation Organization 5/79–10/80, JCL.

59. See ibid.

60. See Edward Said, *The End of the Peace Process: Oslo and After* (New York: Vintage, 2001); and Avi Shlaim, "It's Now Clear: The Oslo Peace Accords Were Wrecked by Netanyahu's Bad Faith," *Guardian*, September 12, 2013.

61. Vance addressed it at the opening of the talks. See "Meeting of Committee on Autonomy, Friday May 25, 1979, 2:45 PM, Ben Gurion University, Beersheba," A/4318/1, ISA.

62. In one secret conversation with Israeli Minister Burg, U.S. ambassador Strauss stated, "As far as we are concerned we agree that for the moment, for the next few months, we can get along without Palestinians . . . We must put the dowry together and assume that we will find the bride." Excerpt from "Secret: Record of a Meeting Held on Tuesday September 11, 1979 between Dr. Burg and Mr. Robert Strauss," A/4316/7, ISA.

63. "Meeting of Committee on Autonomy, Friday May 25, 1979, 2:45 PM, Ben Gurion University, Beersheba," A/4318/1, ISA.

64. See the meeting minutes of May 25, 1979, in A/4318/1, ISA.

65. See Strauss-Begin talks, Sept. 12, 1979, A/4316/7, ISA.

66. Henry Siegman, "Hurricane Carter," *The Nation,* January 4, 2007; and personal interview with the author, Pound Ridge, New York, January 14, 2012.

67. See Paul Hoffman, "Israel Debates Palestinian Self-Rule as Negotiations with Egypt Near," *New York Times,* May 20, 1979; David K. Shipler, "Toughest Mideast Peace Issue: Palestinians," *New York Times,* March 22, 1980; and "The 'Autonomy' Stall," editorial, *New York Times,* April 18, 1980. Linowitz was a seasoned diplomat who had previously negotiated the Panama Canal Treaty for Carter in 1977.

68. Sicherman, *Palestinian Autonomy,* 45. While both models employed a waiting period, the Egyptian version suggested something akin to the process of the Permanent Mandates Commission (PMC) established by the League of Nations. Although the PMC had no coercive power, only the ability to convoke global attention and foster norms, as Susan Pedersen has argued, parallels between the autonomy proposals and Class A mandates are worth considering.

69. As Linowitz later stressed privately to a critic of the ongoing talks, "Both Egypt and the United States have emphatically stated to Israel that they (and we) view such an autonomy as precluding the creation of an independent Palestinian state." Ambassador Sol Linowitz to Esther Baruch, April 4, 1980, Sol Linowitz Papers, box 51, folder 12, "Correspondence 1980, A-G," Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C. (LOC).

70. See "Record of a Meeting which Took Place at the Minister of Interior on Sunday, January 27, 1980, at 5:00 PM," A/4316/10, ISA.

71. Mohammed Ibrahim Kamel, *The Camp David Accords: A Testimony by Sadat's Foreign Minister* (London: KPI, 1986), 366.

72. Ibid., 367.

73. On the impact of 1973, see Craig Daigle, *The Limits of Détente: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1969–1973* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2012). On domestic opposition to peace with Israel in Egypt, see Dominic Coldwell, "Egypt's 'Autumn of Fury': The Construction of Opposition to the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Process between 1973 and 1981" (M.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 2003).

74. August 2, 1980, Carter, *White House Diary,* 453.

75. "Meeting between Ministerial Committee for Autonomy talks and U.S. Special Ambassador, Mr. Sol Linowitz, Sept 2, 1980, 11:30 AM, Cabinet Room, Prime Minister's Office, Jerusalem," A/4316/14, ISA. On Sharon's role as "master builder" of the settlements, see David Landau, *Arik: The Life of Ariel Sharon* (New York: Knopf, 2013), 153–81.

76. The first meeting was on September 28, 1978; the Ben-Elissar Report was delivered on December 28, 1978. See A/4181, folders 9, 10 and 17, ISA. Ben-Elissar would go on to become Israel's first ambassador to Egypt after the 1979 peace treaty was signed.

77. See William Claiborne, "Israel Plans Narrow Arab Autonomy," *Washington Post*, December 1, 1978.

78. For the details of the Ben-Elissar meetings, see "Commission to Prepare for Judea, Samaria and Gaza Negotiations, Minutes of the First Meeting, October 1, 1978" [Hebrew], A/4181/17, ISA; "Timetable for Establishing Self-Government in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza" [Hebrew], letter from Dr. Binyamin HaLevi to Prime Minister Begin, November 19, 1978, A/4181/9, ISA; and "Settlement Plan in the Areas of Judea, Samaria, and the Gaza Strip" [Hebrew], letter from Shimon Ravid to Eliyahu Ben Elissar, A/4181/12, ISA.

79. Sol M. Linowitz, *The Making of a Public Man: A Memoir* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1985), 226.

80. Ambassador Sol Linowitz to President Jimmy Carter, "Progress in the Autonomy Negotiations," RAC Project Number NLC-128-9-5-7-8, JCL. An alternate, sanitized version, withholding Linowitz's concerns about the future prospect of the autonomy talks under Reagan, was released to the public. See Sol M. Linowitz Papers, box 10, folder 5, Jan.–July 1981, LOC.

81. January 15, 1981, Carter, *White House Diary*, 508.

82. Hermann Eilts, the United States ambassador to Egypt at the time, said this about the impact of Reagan's election on the autonomy talks: "Then came a new Administration with a different sense of priorities. The whole idea of autonomy talks that flowed from Camp David was given short shrift . . . and the Reagan administration, it seemed, really didn't care. It had strategic consensus and the Soviets on its mind, things of that sort." Oral history of Ambassador Hermann Eilts, *Frontline Diplomacy,* LOC.

83. "Meeting between Committee on Autonomy, Chairman Dr. J. Burg, Minister of Interior and U.S.A. Secretary of State, Mr. Alexander Haig, January 28, 1982, 8:10 AM, Cabinet Room, Government Secretariat, Prime Minister's Office, Jerusalem," MFA/6898/8, ISA.

84. For background and figures on the settlement numbers, see Gorenberg, *The Accidental Empire*; Idith Zertal and Akiva Eldar, *Lords of the Land: The War over Israel's Settlements in the Occupied Territories, 1967–2007* (New York: Nation Books, 2007); and Meron Benvenisti, *The West Bank Data Base Project 1987 Report: Demographic, Economic, Legal, Social, and Political Developments in the West Bank* (Jerusalem: West Bank Data Base Project, 1987). The best political reporting on the expansion was by former United States ambassador to Israel Samuel Lewis. See cable, Sam Lewis to George Shultz, et al., Feb. 2, 1982, folder "Israel Settlements, 1982," box 90494, Geoffrey Kemp Files, Ronald Reagan Library, Simi Valley, Calif. (RRL).

85. Some leading examples are Azoulay and Ophir, *The One-State Condition;* Lisa Hajjar, *Courting Conflict: The Israeli Military Court System in the West Bank and Gaza* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); David Kretzmer, *The Occupation of Justice: The Supreme Court of Israel and the Occupied Territories* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002); and Weizman, *Hollow Land*. Ra'anan Alexandrowicz's 2011 documentary film *Shilton Ha'Chok* (The Law in these parts) painstakingly reconstructs the development of the legal regime in the territories during this period.

86. Several Israeli leaders now embrace formal annexation and invoke autonomy for Palestinians. See David Remnick, "Letter from Jerusalem: The Party Faithful," *New Yorker,* January 21, 2013; Tal Kra-Oz, "The New One State Solution," *Tablet Magazine*, January 7, 2013; and most recently the head of the Jewish Home party, Naftali Bennett, who called for "autonomy on steroids." See "With Peace Talks Dead, Right-Wing Turns to Talk of Annexation," *Jewish Daily Forward,* April 29, 2014; and "Bennett Backs Palestinian Autonomy 'On Steroids,'" *Times of Israel*, June 4, 2016.

87. For a global reframing of 1948, see Rashid Khalidi, "1948 and After in Palestine: Universal Themes?" and the entire special issue of *Critical Inquiry* 40, no. 4 (Summer 2014), "Around 1948: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Global Transformation," ed. Leela Gandhi and Deborah L. Nelson. On situating 1948 in the context of forced migrations, see Alon Confino, "Miracles and Snow in Palestine and Israel: Tantura, a History of 1948," *Israel Studies* 17, no. 2 (Summer 2012): 25–61. A pioneering work that recasts Israeli state formation by examining the contradictions of citizenship through 1967 is Shira Robinson, *Citizen Strangers: Palestinians and the Birth of Israel's Liberal Settler State* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2013).

88. Among them was the failed "Village Leagues." See Menachem Milson, "How to Make

Peace with the Palestinians," *Commentary* 7, no. 5 (May 1981): 25–35; Yehuda Litani, " 'Village Leagues': What Kind of Carrot?," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 11, no. 3 (Spring 1982): 174–78; Salim Tamari, "In League with Zion: Israel's Search for a Native Pillar," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 12, no. 4 (Summer 1983): 41–56; and Hillel Cohen, "Village Leagues: Failed Framework, Conceptual Victory and the Lost Peace" [Hebrew], *The New East* (2014): 251–77. Another strategy was targeting local mayors in the Occupied Territories; see Moshe Ma'oz, *Palestinian Leadership on the West Bank: The Changing Role of the Mayors under Jordan and Israel* (London: Frank Cass, 1984).

89. This was one of Reagan's final acts in office, a startling move given his administration's vocal opposition to the organization.

90. See Uri Savir, *The Process: 1,100 Days That Changed the Middle East* (New York: Vintage, 1998).

91. See Rashid Khalidi, *Brokers of Deceit*: *How the U.S. Has Undermined Peace in the Middle East* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2013), and the papers of the Palestinian delegation to Madrid posted online at the Institute for Palestine Studies, accessed July 15, 2014, http://www.palestine-studies.org/ppd.aspx.

92. In two separate interviews this link was conceded: first by Ruth Lapidoth, the Israeli Foreign Ministry's legal advisor to the Autonomy Negotiations in Jerusalem on February 13, 2012, and then by former Madrid Conference spokeswoman and now PLO executive committee member Hanan Ashrawi in Ramallah, on February 27, 2012.

93. Weizmann, *Hollow Land*, 155–57. On Oslo's method of control, see Gordon, *Israel's Occupation*, 169–96.

94. Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu made this very clear in his press conference on July 11, 2014: "I think the Israeli people understand now what I always say: that there cannot be a situation, under any agreement, in which we relinquish security control of the territory west of the River Jordan." See David Horovitz, "Netanyahu Finally Speaks his Mind," *The Times of Israel*, July 13, 2014.

95. See Ian S. Lustick, "Israel and the West Bank after Elon Moreh: The Mechanics of De Facto Annexation," *Middle East Journal* 35, no. 4 (Autumn 1981): 557–77.