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Article 1.

Bloomberg

## **Is Israel an Apartheid State?**

Jeffrey Goldberg

April 29, 2014 -- So, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry made a mistake by thinking that a meeting of the Trilateral Commission was off-the-record. Is there anything holy in this world? What next? Will the Illuminati be giving TED talks? Are the Elders of Zion going to take questions on C-Span?

In a fit of candor, Kerry told the commissioners (if that's what you call them) that a one-state solution (so-called) for the Israel-Palestine conundrum either leads to "an apartheid state with second-class citizens -- or it ends up being a state that destroys

the capacity of Israel to be a Jewish state.” (A full report on Kerry’s remarks can be found at the Daily Beast, whose reporter apparently taped the remarks.)

Carefully coordinated, entirely spontaneous bursts of outrage ensued, not only from Republicans and Israelis, but also from Democrats. “Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East and any linkage between Israel and apartheid is nonsensical and ridiculous,” tweeted Democratic Senator Barbara Boxer of California.

I will dissent from Boxer’s critique, both because I believe that Kerry is a pro-Israel secretary of state who worries about the Jewish state’s future, and because I myself have used the word “apartheid” not only to describe a possible terrible future for Israel, but also as a way of depicting some current and most unfortunate facts on the ground.

In a 2004 New Yorker article I described how the settlement movement was slowly destroying the idea of a Jewish democratic state of Israel:

[Ariel] Sharon seems to have recognized -- belatedly -- Israel’s stark demographic future: the number of Jews and Arabs between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea will be roughly equal by the end of the decade. By 2020, the Israeli demographer Sergio Della Pergola has predicted, Jews will make up less than forty-seven per cent of the population. If a self-sustaining Palestinian state -- one that is territorially contiguous within the West Bank -- does not emerge, the Jews of Israel will be faced with two choices: a binational state with an Arab majority, which would be the end of the idea of Zionism, or an

apartheid state, in which the Arab majority would be ruled by a Jewish minority.

A de-facto apartheid already exists in the West Bank. Inside the borders of Israel proper, Arabs and Jews are judged by the same set of laws in the same courtrooms; across the Green Line, Jews live under Israeli civil law as well, but their Arab neighbors -- people who live, in some cases, just yards away -- fall under a different, and substantially undemocratic, set of laws, administered by the Israeli Army. The system is neither as elaborate nor as pervasive as South African apartheid, and it is, officially, temporary. It is nevertheless a form of apartheid, because two different ethnic groups living in the same territory are judged by two separate sets of laws.

I suppose this passage makes me an enemy of Israel, in the same way Kerry is an enemy of Israel, and in the same way that the former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak (who is also Israel's most decorated soldier) is an enemy of Israel, because Barak has also warned about the dangers of the status quo: "As long as in this territory west of the Jordan River there is only one political entity called Israel," he said in 2010, "it is going to be either non-Jewish, or non-democratic. If this bloc of millions of Palestinians cannot vote, that will be an apartheid state."

Few of the conditions I described in that 2004 article have changed, but I have decided, for a number of reasons, to try to avoid using the term apartheid to describe the situation in the West Bank. One, deployment of the word doesn't start conversations, it ends them. (Former Middle East negotiator George Mitchell taught me this lesson.) Real enemies of Israel -- Muslim supremacists of Hamas, anti-Semites in the Boycott,

Divestment and Sanctions movement and so on -- use the term “apartheid” not to encourage a two-state solution that would end official discrimination on the West Bank, but to argue for the annihilation of Israel.

Two, to describe the West Bank as an experiment in apartheid is insulting to the actual victims of South African apartheid, who lived under a uniquely baroque and grotesque set of race-based laws. (I owe a number of friends from South Africa for this insight.)

And three, to describe Israel as an apartheid state, or as a state on the road to apartheid, does not adequately capture the complexity and contradictions of Israel today. In most of Israel -- the pre-1967 Israel, not the occupied West Bank -- Arabs have more rights as citizens than they have in most any Arab country. There is still discrimination, and state resources are still distributed unfairly, but Arabs serve in the highest reaches of all branches of government. In fact, an Arab judge presided over the rape trial of a former president of Israel. As difficult as the facts of that case were to stomach, there was great happiness in Israel that an Arab citizen could send an Israeli president to jail without discernible complaint, even from the Israeli right.

The problem is not inside Israel; the problem is on the West Bank. The settlers who entangle Israel in the lives of Palestinians believe that they are the vanguard of Zionism. In fact, they are the vanguard of binationalism. Their myopia will lead to the end of Israel as a democracy and as a haven for the Jewish people. The regime they help impose on Palestinians is cruel, unfair and unnecessary. Rather than label this regime in an incendiary fashion, I now prefer simply to describe its

disagreeable qualities.

But if Kerry, following Barak's lead, wants to warn about a possible apartheid future for Israel, I'm not going to condemn him as anti-Israel. Israeli leaders must open their minds to the possibility that he has their long-term interests at heart.

Jeffrey Goldberg is a columnist for Bloomberg View writing about the Middle East, U.S. foreign policy and national affairs. He is the author of "Prisoners: A Story of Friendship and Terror" and a winner of the National Magazine Award for reporting.

[Article 2.](#)

CNN

## **Israel, Kerry is one of your best friends**

Jeremy Ben-Ami

April 30, 2014 -- Israel is safe once more from the threat of "apartheid" -- the word, that is. U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry has clarified comments made in a closed-door meeting last week, and he stated clearly that Israel is not an apartheid state.

But Kerry's dire warning, and the future the secretary was

predicting for Israel, lingers. That point seems lost amid this week's onslaught against Kerry, as members of Congress and Israel advocates raced to prove their pro-Israel credentials with their outrage.

The histrionics over the secretary's remarks are yet one more sign of how fundamentally broken American politics are when it comes to Israel. Vast energy is poured into defending Israel from an inappropriate word. Yet nowhere near enough energy is devoted to promoting policies that will actually protect and save Israel's Jewish democracy in the long run.

Labels aside, Israel is maintaining the longest military occupation in the world. In the territory occupied in 1967, Jewish residents enjoy all of the benefits of Israeli democracy, while Palestinian residents in the same territory lack basic rights of citizenship.

Many predict the number of non-Jews in the land between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River soon will be greater than the number of Jews, and everyone from President Barack Obama to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has come to understand what this means.

Without a two-state solution to this conflict, Israel draws ever closer to an unfathomable choice: Forsake its democracy by establishing rule of a Jewish minority over a non-Jewish majority, or forsake its Jewish character by granting equal rights to all residents under its control.

That's the future that former Israeli Prime Ministers Ehud Olmert and Ehud Barak warned about when they invoked the specter of apartheid, and it's that future that Kerry has been

working tirelessly to avert with his Israeli-Palestinian peace initiative. It's a choice that draws sadly closer, now that Kerry's efforts have passed their initial nine-month deadline, and the parties have resumed the familiar cycle of provocation and retaliation.

To question Kerry's commitment to Israel over a word, after everything that he's done to help Israel, is absurd. No U.S. leader has done more to help Israel gain acceptance in the international community and ensure its long-term peace and security.

What friends of Israel should really be asking themselves is not whether they are doing everything they can to protect Israel from being called certain names, but whether they are doing everything possible to secure its future as the democratic home of the Jewish people by bringing about a two-state peace.

Sadly, this question is conspicuously absent from our politics.

Many politicians' reflexive defense posture at times like this allows our friends and family in Israel to continue believing that the root of their problems is anti-Israel bias rather than the expansionist policies a right-wing minority is foisting on their country. They need to hear that the policies of that minority are out of sync with the values and the interests of the United States, and that staying the present course risks the foundations of the relationship between the two countries.

Shooting the messenger does Israel no favors.

Friends of Israel should start by thanking Kerry for his commitment to Israel and supporting him as he seeks to break

the present impasse in negotiations.

And if we can channel as much passion and energy into ending the conflict as we do into protecting Israel from painful words, Israel may yet stand a chance.

Jeremy Ben-Ami is the president and founder of J Street, the political arm of the pro-Israel, pro-peace movement.

Article 3.

The Guardian

## **Binyamin Netanyahu would rather stay in power than pursue a peace deal**

Aluf Benn

April 30, 2014 -- Israel's prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, wants to stay in power for as long as possible. He deploys a zero-risk strategy aimed at keeping his rightwing political base behind him, while convincing the public that he alone could lead the country in times of regional turmoil. This week, Netanyahu overcame a key challenge to his coveted political stasis. The deadline for US-sponsored Israeli-Palestinian talks passed, while Netanyahu's governing coalition remained intact.

Netanyahu missed an opportunity. He could have leveraged his

unchallenged leadership to make headway towards peace, freed Israel from the moral and political burden of its endless occupation in the West Bank, and drawn the country's permanent borders. The Israeli public would widely support any peace programme endorsed by Netanyahu. And for the first time in his turbulent 30-year career, Bibi could have been the national hero, leading from the centre, rather than remaining the aloof master of PR.

But Netanyahu wasn't interested. Even when shown polls indicating that a peace breakthrough would make him extremely popular, he shrugged and kept looking to the right, to make sure his base was still there. The scar from his first term – when the left and far-right joined to topple him following the Wye River accord he signed with Yasser Arafat – wouldn't heal.

Recent attempts to make peace faced huge challenges. Since the collapse of talks at Camp David, in 2000, Israeli mainstream opinion has accepted the "no partner" narrative, which holds that the Palestinian leadership is not willing nor able to compromise. This belief has kept Netanyahu's policies unchallenged in Israel.

Two things were different this time. First, there was the unexpected energy and motivation of US secretary of state John Kerry. Second, the threat of boycott and sanctions against Israel moved from the fringe of the western left to the mainstream conversation, following the EU ban on funding for Israeli settlements. This created a potential stick to push Netanyahu toward flexibility.

But it wasn't enough to secure a deal. True to form, Netanyahu smiled at the American initiative, waiting to see whether Kerry

carried a big stick or was merely on a freelance fishing expedition. When Kerry announced the resumption of talks in July 2013, the Israeli leader said that the two-state solution was important to prevent a "binational state". But soon enough, Bibi realised that Kerry lacked presidential backing, and Israel launched expanded settlements and launched a smear campaign against Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. Netanyahu's demand for Palestinian recognition of Israel "as a Jewish state" appeared to be a non-starter, blocking any progress.

The breaking point came with the issue of Palestinian prisoners, convicted for pre-Oslo terrorist murders, including 14 Israeli citizens. That was Abbas's price for the talks. The far-right party in Netanyahu's coalition threatened to leave if they were released. Theoretically, Netanyahu could have formed a different, pro-peace coalition, but he didn't want to repeat the Wye River experience. So he sided with the far-right and defaulted on the prisoner release, and Abbas responded in kind, by signing a reconciliation deal with Hamas. This prompted Netanyahu to call off the talks – and close ranks in his coalition, where even the moderates preferred to blame Abbas and keep their cabinet seats. President Barack Obama declared a six-month time out. Bibi was off the hook again.

Then came the latest, unexpected act. Following his failure, Kerry was recorded warning that without a two-state solution, Israel risked becoming an "apartheid state". After a day of uproar fuelled by the pro-Israel lobby Kerry issued a mild expression of regret, but it couldn't erase the effect: the dreaded a-word has entered the room, and it's now there to stay.

Netanyahu avoided the political risk of peacemaking, and kept

his coalition together. But eventually, he won't escape the deeper strategic question: how to prevent the risk of a binational state, and save Israel's democracy and Jewish character, now that the door of negotiations is shut.

Aluf Benn is the editor-in-chief of Haaretz. Formerly, he was the Israeli daily newspaper's diplomatic editor.

Article 4.

TIME

## **With Status Quo On Its Side, Israel Happily Rejects Peace**

Dr. Saeb Erekat

April 29, 2014 -- During nine months of negotiations, Israeli officials have constantly questioned our ability to make peace. World leaders visiting Tel Aviv have been faced with rhetorical questions like “Shall we make peace with Gaza or the West Bank?” or statements like “Mahmoud Abbas does not represent all Palestinians.” Last week, after we announced our national reconciliation agreement, Israel contradicted its own argument: suddenly peace was impossible due to Palestinian unity.

During the early 1980s, Israel’s excuse was the Palestinian

Liberation Organization's refusal to recognize Israel. In 1988, we recognized Israel on 78% of historical Palestine, a deeply difficult and historic concession. Twenty-six years later, the number of Israeli settlers within the remaining 22% has tripled. Next, Israel's excuse was lack of Arab recognition. In 2002, the Arab League introduced the Arab Peace Initiative, offering recognition from 57 Arab- and Muslim-majority countries in exchange for Israel's respect for UN resolutions. Israel's response? More settlements. Most recently, the Israeli government came up with a further qualification—that we should recognize Israel as a Jewish state, safe in the knowledge that this could not be accepted. Rather than being afraid of not being recognized, it seems Israel is afraid of recognition.

Today, Netanyahu and those representing him, including Lapid, Ya'alon, Lieberman, Bennett and Ariel, are creating a new excuse to avoid the necessary decisions for peace. This Israeli government, which continues its settlement activities all over Palestine, is trying to blame national reconciliation for its own failure to choose peace over apartheid.

First and foremost, reconciliation is an internal affair. Not a single party in Netanyahu's government has recognized Palestine. Nor have we asked them to. Political parties do not recognize states. Governments do.

Secondly, reconciliation and negotiations are not mutually exclusive. Reconciliation is a mandatory step in order to reach a just and lasting peace. The agreement ratifies the PLO's legitimacy to negotiate with Israel, honors all Palestinian commitments and obligations towards international law and previous agreements and calls for the formation of a national

consensus government comprising independent professionals. This government is not going to negotiate with Israel: its sole mandate will be to prepare for elections, provide services and build institutions.

Palestinian reconciliation can be rejected only by those who aim to perpetuate the status quo. This is precisely what the government of Israel has been doing during nine months of negotiations: killing 61 Palestinians, advancing more than 13,000 units in Israeli settlements, conducting almost 4,500 military operations on Palestinian land, demolishing 196 Palestinian homes and allowing more than 660 settler terror attacks against Palestinians.

Being consistent with its policies on the ground, Netanyahu's government has refused to recognize the 1967 border or even put a map on the table proposing Israel's idea of its final borders. Netanyahu has ensured that he is unable to do this by surrounding himself with the most extremist sectors in Israel, including the settler movement, from which he selected his foreign minister, housing minister and the Knesset speaker. In fact, 28 out of 68 members of his government reject the two-state solution entirely, while others "accept it with reservations," meaning something very different to two states as stipulated under international law. Israel's claim that negotiations have been halted due to Palestinian reconciliation is completely disingenuous.

Frankly, it is difficult to understand how anyone could expect us

to negotiate with such a government. And yet we have, in good faith, offering concession after concession for the sake of peace. Once again, we have held up our end of the bargain. Once again, the Israeli government has not. The truth is simple: Israel refuses to negotiate sincerely because, as long as the status quo is so beneficial to it, Israel has no interest in a solution. Without firm signals from the international community, Netanyahu's occupation and colonization policies are incentivized.

With Palestine's new international status, we will continue shaping our country as a peace-loving nation that respects human rights and international law, a commitment already assumed during the announcement of national reconciliation. This includes our right to make use of international forums in order to end Israeli violations and achieve the fulfillment of our long overdue rights.

Meanwhile, the ruling coalition of Israel should stop wasting its energy on excuses and start realizing that apartheid is not a sustainable option. Israel's rejection of Palestinian national unity has little to do with Hamas and a lot to do with its own unwillingness to do what is needed for a just and lasting peace.

Dr. Saeb Erekat is a member of the Palestinian Liberation Organization Executive Committee and Head of the Palestinian Negotiations Team.

## **The PLO-Hamas Unity Agreement: an Opportunity for the United States and Israel**

Juan Cole

May. 1, 2014 -- The unity agreement announced last week between Hamas and the Palestine Liberation Organization drew swift, negative reactions from Israel, including suspending its participation in the U.S.-sponsored peace talks. Israel said flatly it would not negotiate with a team that included those dedicated to its destruction.

The response by the United States to the deal was less draconian (indeed, the Israeli government officially called the U.S. statement “weak,” further fraying relations between the two). Still, the State Department did express its “disappointment” in the agreement and found it “troubling.” It stood by the Quartet’s previous conditions for accepting such a pact: Hamas’s formal recognition of Israel, acceptance of previous PLO-Israel agreements, and renunciation of violence.

For both Israel and the United States, though, the new agreement might actually present more opportunities than dangers.

Hamas-PLO reconciliation efforts have dotted the political landscape since they fought a short, intense civil war in 2007.

Street battles in Gaza between the two began after Hamas's victory in the 2006 Palestine Authority legislative elections, which broke the monopoly of the PLO and its dominant faction, Fatah. In the 2007 civil war, Hamas forces overwhelmed PLO fighters and took control of the Gaza Strip.

Even as the fighting flared and then in the years following, almost every conceivable power in the region—Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Turkey—tried to mediate the dispute and repair the rupture in Palestinian politics. The agreements they brokered sound like a geography of Mideast cities: the Mecca Agreement, Sana'a Agreement, Cairo Agreement (2011), Doha Agreement, and another Cairo Agreement in 2012. Two of these were actually signed by Hamas and the PLO, but in the end every one of them fell apart.

A variety of issues have divided the two—power-sharing arrangements, procedures for elections, arrests of opponents, personalities, and more. The current agreement addresses some of these—a unity government within five weeks, elections in half a year, a restructured PLO, and mutual release of prisoners.

It is not clear if this agreement will have any more staying power than previous ones. But there are powerful motivations—probably stronger on the Hamas end—to make this one stick. Hamas has faced numerous setbacks, including falling support in the Gaza Strip and the challenge of other Islamic groups, which claim that Hamas has lost its revolutionary ardor. Also, in the wake of the Arab Spring, Hamas broke with Asad's regime in Syria, forcing it to move its headquarters from Damascus. This move led to a souring of relations with Asad's (and its own) principal backer, Iran.

The break with Iran might have been offset by the electoral success in Egypt of the Muslim Brotherhood, the group that originally spawned Hamas. But the Brotherhood's government, led by Mohamed Morsi, was noticeably cool to Hamas. And, once the Egyptian military ousted Morsi, Hamas's relations with Egypt completely unraveled, leaving it with no major patron. A rapprochement with the PLO could open the way for Hamas's acceptance by Arab states lined up against Syria and Iran.

The PLO also has good reasons to seek reconciliation. Its popularity has plummeted through the repeated failures of negotiations with Israel. Engagement with Israel held clear opportunities, but it was also perilous. The largest risk was being seen as Israel's handmaiden. With the recent round of talks, led by Secretary of State John Kerry, all but dead, unity with Hamas could reinvigorate the PLO and reestablish its credentials as the sole representative of the Palestinian people in their struggle against the occupation.

U.S. and Israeli rejection of the unity agreement and their policies aimed at continuing Hamas's isolation may be shortsighted. For one, these policies could drive Hamas towards reconciliation, with Iran. There have been soundings of Hamas-Iran fence-mending for several months. The Hamas-PLO agreement, cheered by a group of Arab countries deeply opposed to Iran, would almost certainly scuttle any Hamas-Iran reconciliation. Hamas's defection to the anti-Asad, anti-Iran Arab camp would work in favor of the United States and Israel, helping to break Iran's efforts to reestablish its bloc stretching from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean.

What may be equally important is that, just as the U.S. and

Israel moved the PLO of the 1980s away from its own vow to destroy Israel, they have the opportunity to nudge Hamas in that direction now. While Hamas will not accept formal recognition of Israel, its incorporation into the PLO and a unity government would involve its agreement to past and future PLO agreements with Israel, including the end of armed conflict and the establishment of Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Additionally, incorporating the Gaza Strip back into the Palestine Authority will put a partner with which Israel has cooperated on the West Bank back in charge of Gaza.

Participating in a unified Palestine government would enable Hamas to engage in a long-term truce, or hudna, with Israel, something Hamas leaders have alluded to for years, without officially recognizing Israel. For the United States and Israel, the Hamas-PLO agreement could provide a path out of the seemingly endless Palestine-Israel conflict, rejuvenate their own frayed alliance, and focus on the larger and more dangerous Iranian and Syrian issues.

Joel S. Migdal is professor at the University of Washington's Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies and author of the recently published Shifting Sands: The United States in the Middle East (Columbia University Press).

Article 6.

Al Jazeera

## **Palestinian unity: The bottom line**

## Scott Field

1 May 2014 -- In many ways it was a surprising move. With US Secretary of State John Kerry emphasising Israeli intransigence, it seemed the Palestinians might, for a change, actually win the blame game that is ritually enacted upon the unravelling of the peace process. Why, then, would President Mahmoud Abbas choose to throw in his lot with internationally reviled resistance group Hamas and hand an easy victory to Israel? By welcoming the US-listed terrorist group back into the Palestinian political tent, he has guaranteed that the blame will be largely diverted from Israel and thus squandered any strategic advantage on offer.

That he chose to do so is surely a sign he believed there would in fact be little strategic fruit for the Palestinian cause to be harvested from continuing the US-sponsored talks. Most disturbing from a Palestinian point of view, these negotiations had failed to suggest that there would ever be a Palestinian capital in a shared Jerusalem, a deal no Palestinian leader intent on political survival could dare to take before their people.

It also suggests that Abbas has learned from previous acts of disobedience towards the Americans - such as signing on to a host of international conventions, as he did recently - that going against US wishes no longer has the painful consequences it once did. With Kerry's last roll of the dice, US custodianship of the peace process finally seems to be slipping away. An international law and human rights-based approach is now becoming much more attractive for the Palestinians.

But there is also a deeper root to Abbas' action, one that speaks to a fundamental flaw in the fabric of the peace process itself, at least as formulated and pursued by successive US administrations.

Inside Story - Palestinian unity deal: What is at stake?

Flaw in the process

That flaw is the deliberate exclusion of the Palestinian faction Hamas from a legitimate place in Palestinian politics and by extension from involvement in the peace process. The US-brokered talks have consistently ignored a core tenet of conflict resolution: That any successful process must include a viable strategy for dealing with "veto players" - those willing and able to derail a peace process by violence. Hamas is, of course, the veto player par excellence of the Palestinian scene. Along with Jewish right-wingers they did much to ensure the Oslo process would meet a violent demise. But as Paul Pillar recently noted, to exclude Hamas by citing its history of terrorism is to substitute a disingenuous slogan for a meaningful policy.

After a decade of backsliding and bloodshed, an historic opportunity to redress this omission was offered up in 2006, when Palestinian elections brought Hamas to power in a surprise landslide win. Had the peace process custodians grasped the veto player nettle then, henceforth Hamas' attempts to change the status quo could have been diverted from bombs and bullets into legislative proposals and municipal responsibilities. The moderate and extremist Palestinian factions could have mutually checked and balanced one another under the same political roof, much as they do in Israel today, or any functioning democracy.

A single political address to receive Israeli demands would have been established, removing one of the key excuses for inaction on all sides.

Instead, at the behest of a US Congress seemingly more intent on articulating uncompromising Israeli positions than on resolving the conflict, Hamas was essentially cast into outer darkness, under a flawed theory of change that has since proven a failure. If the Hamas veto players were deprived of political legitimacy and periodically repressed militarily, the thinking went, they would eventually wither and disappear. Meanwhile their more pliable Fatah brethren in the West Bank would scoop up the dividends of peace and win over their populace to embrace acceptable US-Israeli positions.

Especially shocking, then, that word of the Palestinian reconciliation deal should come just as Kerry was set to address a dinner in Washington convened precisely to discuss the distribution of those dividends. To say it spoiled the participants' appetites would be an understatement.

### West Bank-first approach

And most inexplicably of all to the architects of this "West Bank-first" peace process, it came at a time when Hamas' regional fortunes were at an all-time low. With their parent organisation the Muslim Brotherhood reeling from a violent counter-revolutionary backlash led by Egypt and Saudi Arabia, their economy throttled by a joint Israeli-Egyptian siege and a restive population in Gaza looking for political alternatives, the stage could not have been better set for the triumph of the West Bank-first model. How then, could it have failed?

West Bank-first fails because it seeks an external Palestinian peace with Israel that is predicated on internal Palestinian fragmentation and political decay. Its advocates underestimate how fiercely opposed Palestinian society is to political disunity, and how stubborn their leaders will be in seeking to overcome it. The Israeli far-right, which embraces principles every bit as odious to the international community's standards of justice and human rights as those of their Palestinian equivalents, today sits comfortably in the Knesset, controls ministries and pushes a legislative agenda. And, whatever one thinks of their politics, this is the right and proper state of affairs in a democratic polity where the votes of the citizenry are respected. By contrast, tumbleweed has been blowing for years through the corridors of the dilapidated Palestinian Legislative Council in Ramallah, where the last shreds of democratic legitimacy were quietly but very consciously allowed to expire years ago.

There is good reason to be cautious about whether the current effort at Palestinian reconciliation will fare better than the numerous attempts of recent years. And nobody should be under any illusion that the road to a peace agreement that includes all Palestinian factions will be anything but long and arduous. But neither should we indulge any longer in the policy illusion that has dominated thinking in Washington for most of the last decade - that a durable peace can be built on an approach that seeks to manipulate Palestinian politics from outside and cherry-pick those who may be considered legitimate actors.

If the current Palestinian reconciliation agreement marks a turning point away from that thinking, then it just might be the first real breakthrough in the peace process we have seen in a long time.

Scott Field is a Visiting Scholar at the Institute for International Studies, University of California, Berkeley.

Article 7.

The Washington Post

## **U.S. is abetting chaos in Egypt**

Editorial Board

30 April, 2014 -- FOR MONTHS, the Obama administration has been pleading with Egypt's military government to take minimal steps to justify the full resumption of U.S. aid, including the release of imprisoned foreign journalists and secular pro-democracy activists. The generals, Secretary of State John F. Kerry said this year, "need to help us to help them." However, the regime of Gen. Abdel Fatah al-Sissi did just the opposite, pressing forward with political prosecutions and preparing new "counter-terrorism" laws that would criminalize virtually all opposition to the government.

The administration's response has been a cave-in. Last week it announced that it would transfer 10 Apache helicopters to Cairo that it held up last year, reversing its previous position that the delivery of major weapons systems depended on "Egypt's progress toward an inclusive, democratically elected civilian government." Separately, it notified Congress that it was

proceeding with \$650 million of the \$1.5 billion in aid for Egypt in this year's budget to fund ongoing contracts and items connected to counterterrorism, border security and nonproliferation.

Technically, the administration's action may have been justified under the legal terms governing aid to Egypt, which allow for some funding to go forward even if the State Department does not certify that the country is carrying out a promised transition to democracy. But more broadly, the policy is indefensible. In effect, the United States is giving the Sissi regime a vote of confidence even as it installs the most repressive regime Egypt has known in at least half a century.

Not surprisingly the aid delivery has met bipartisan resistance in Congress. Sen Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), the chairman of the appropriations subcommittee that oversees the State Department, announced that he was putting a hold on the funding, and Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) also voiced opposition. They were right to do so.

Mr. Kerry no longer contends, as he did for months after July's military coup, that the Sissi regime is "restoring democracy." But the administration argues that it should still support narrow U.S. security interests in Egypt, including maintaining the security of the Suez Canal and combatting al-Qaeda-linked militants operating in the Sinai Peninsula. That is what the Apaches are for: The Egyptian army has been making heavy use of the 35 U.S.-made helicopters it already possesses to fight in the Sinai.

Some 350 police and soldiers have been killed by insurgents in

the Sinai since July. But the regime's heavy-handed response may be doing more harm than good. Fragmentary reports have counted scores of civilian deaths and hundreds of homes destroyed in Apache attacks; the reports are fragmentary because journalists seeking to report on collateral damage are censored or arrested. As David Schenker of The Washington Institute for Near East policy observes, additional Apaches may increase the terrorist body count but also support among the Sinai population for al-Qaeda.

In broader terms, the regime's attempt to eliminate all opposition — including peaceful, secular and democratic forces — is doomed to failure. The United States only abets further chaos in Egypt by backing it. Mr. Leahy said that he would hold new U.S. funding “until we have a better understanding of how the aid would be used and we see convincing evidence that the government is committed to the rule of law.” Those are appropriate tests.