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Alternative to a Nightmare

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In Arie Eliav's vision of IS-FAL-UR regional development after peace, Saudi Arabian (and perhaps even Kuwaiti) oil would be piped to a joint Egyptian-Israeli-Jordanian-Saudi port at the northern terminus of the Gulf of Aqaba, and on to a second urban seaport conglomerate on the Mediterranean.

The Jewish-Arab conflict in the Middle East has its source in the head-on clash of two national movements which, for reasons rooted in history, culture, religion and nationality, lay claim to the same territory.

One of these movements, Zionism, claims Eretz Yisrael; the other, the Arab Palestinian movement, claims *Falasteen*. Both are identical with the territory extending roughly between the Mediterranean on the west and a desert on the east, and from the slopes of Mt. Hermon on the north to the Red Sea in the south. This was Palestine when it came under British mandatory rule after World War I.

Over the years, the conflict spread from this source across the Arab and Moslem world and the Jewish world. Due to its geopolitical location, the region also became an arena of contention between blocs and the superpowers.

It is my belief that the only way to localize and eventually terminate the conflict is to divide this territory between the two national movements and the two people after the bloody warfare of four generations and more.

The Jewish national movement, on its own and by a supreme effort, achieved its political (but not its social and economic) goal in 1948, with the establishment of the State of Israel and the War of Independence. Within the bounds of this state, Zionism can achieve all its aims under conditions of peace.

But Israel must understand that the conflict will not be resolved unless and until Israel and Zionism also recognize the right of the Arab-Palestinian national movement to self-determination in the territory taken over by the State of Israel in the defensive Six Day War, namely, the areas of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

This recognition will lead to peace negotiations with the representatives of the Arab Palestinian national movement, on condition that they, in turn, recognize Israel and sit with it at the conference table to negotiate a complete peace treaty.

The Palestinian Arabs will have to be given the right to determine the nature of the links between themselves and the Kingdom of Jordan, which is a part of the Israeli-Palestinian problem. It will also be their right to determine the manner in which the problem of the Palestinian refugees is handled in their areas, as well as the relationship with the Palestinian diaspora, just as Israel will maintain its unshakeable Zionist connection with the Jewish people all over the world.

The evacuation of the territories will need to be carried out in agreed stages over a period of several years, with an Israeli army presence maintained until it is completed. The territory will remain demilitarized even after the Arab Palestinian movement is granted sovereignty under the joint supervision of Israel/Falasteen or Israel/Falasteen/Jordan. The duration of this demilitarization and supervision will be set by the peace treaty. The purpose of these terms will be to make sure that no elements within or outside the region hostile to Israel will be in the position to threaten its security.

Only when this lengthy process is completed will the peace between Israel and Egypt be a genuine peace, and only then will Israel be able to attempt to achieve peace with Syrian and Lebanon, and establish normal regional relationships.

I am well aware that these ideas are still unacceptable to many sectors in the contending parties. They do not reflect the current stand of Israel's current government or of the leadership of the Palestinian national move-

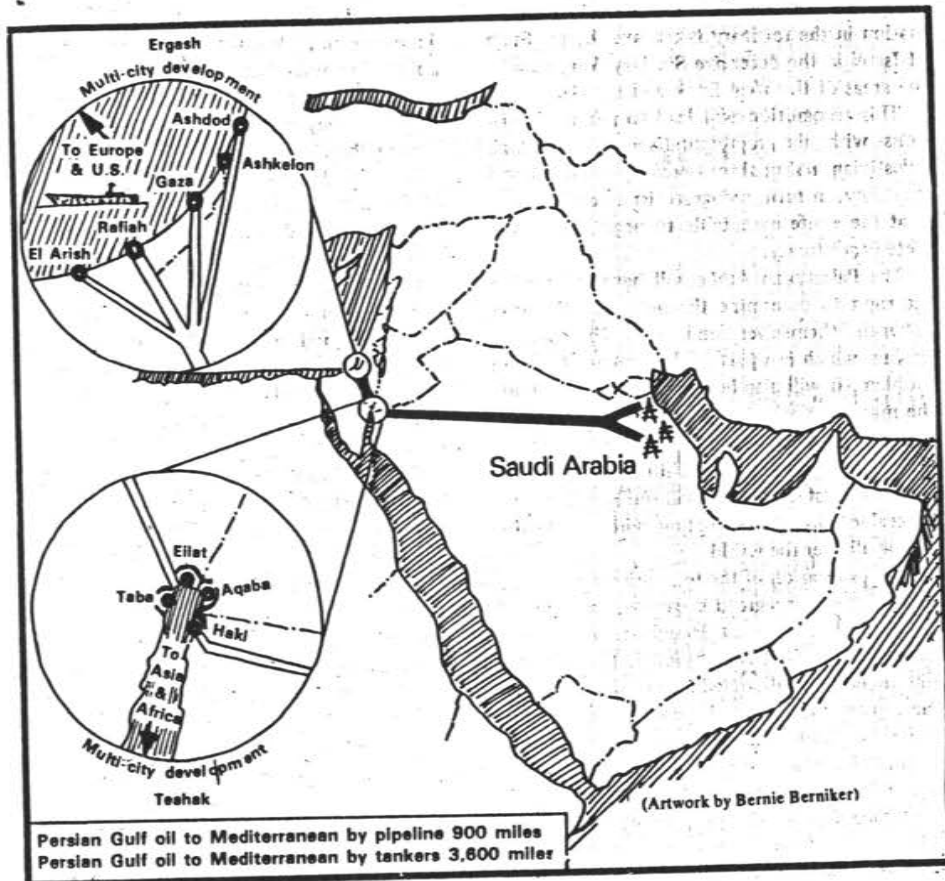
ment. But I am convinced that there is no other way of terminating the conflict.

I accept the fact that the pre-1967 boundaries are not ideal for Israel from the standpoint of security (although they are not as bad as generally presented). I also go along with the view that they are not ideal for the Palestinian Arabs either.

But the decisive factor is that these borders of the State of Israel in which the Zionist goals can be fulfilled already have tremendously important international acceptance. The parties who have agreed to them are the super-powers — the US and the USSR (as stated by them repeatedly and explicitly) — China, all the members of the EEC, and a significant majority of the Third World nations.

Moreover, this agreement takes in (for reasons of sheer realism rather than enthusiasm) quite a few Arab states, headed by Egypt and including Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Sudan and the Persian Gulf Emirates. As against this, *there is not a single country in the world other than Israel itself* which approves of the annexation of the territories and disregards the political problem of Palestinian nationalism. Israel cannot, nor does it have to, face the world in isolation. It can make use of the consensus on the part of almost the entire world community to obtain the optimum conditions (including, primarily, the military supervision terms) for its security. Should Israel go on maintaining its presence in the territories by force, by bolstering the settlements and by annexing land, it will not only subject itself to increasingly ignominious global isolation, but will also find itself in a progressively more intolerable ruler-subject situation in which its military control over the Palestinian Arabs will inevitably become harsher. That situation will completely distort and falsify the image, content and essence of the State of Israel and of Zionism.

In place of this ominous scenario, let me describe what might well happen if both sides were to proceed along the course I have indicated.



Following the first period (likely to last several years) of separate and extremely suspicious existence, bred by decades of bloody conflict, we may hope for the activation of the positive dynamic forces of three entities: Israel, Falasteen and Jordan. These forces will emerge from the common destiny of some seven million Semites, the sons of Abraham, whom fate has brought to a strip of land, sacred to them all, and who are linked by mutual political, economic and social interests.

Without conceding them full sovereignty and independence, a process of cooperation will set in, in many and varied fields. Such a process is not unfamiliar in recent history in other countries no less hostile to each other in their immediate past. In our case, the compactness of the political entities and their unique geographical location will lead to a form of consolidation (call it a confederacy, a common market of some such) of the three. In the course of this process (which may also take years), we

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shall see this consolidation arise, which, for the sake of brevity, I shall call ISFALUR, an acronym of *IS*rael-*FAL*astin-*UR*dun (the Arabic for Jordan).

I should like to describe the centripetal forces which will bring about the emergence and crystallization of ISFALUR, as well as the benefit which (in addition, of course, to the precious reward of peace itself), the three partners will derive from their joint enterprises.

Scanning the ISFALUR map of the future, from north to south, we can visualize four major regional enterprises.

Northern Water Projects

ISFALUR can harness the water sources in the north and regulate them for the general benefit. Assuming peace with Lebanon and Syria as well, ISFALUR will be able to effect a rational regional division of the Jordan waters (and the Litani river, with Lebanon's consent), plus the Yarmuk, turning the Sea of Galilee into a perennial reservoir for irrigating vast additional tracts of land on both sides of the Jordan rift, as well as in southern Israel and the Gaza Strip.

A Jordan Rift Project

This, based on both sides of the river, will produce food for export and building of modern food plants. This project will form the infrastructure for large-scale settlement efforts for Palestinian refugees; agricultural production will form a solid base for the establishment of villages, towns and cities, to absorb myriads of new settlers. The Jordan Rift, like the Jordan and Bet-Shean valleys in Israel, will become a densely populated, highly productive exporting region.

Within the framework of this rehabilitation and development enterprise, to which Israel can offer its experience and expertise, we should examine the feasibility of digging a canal from the Mediterranean to the Bet-Shean valley and southwards. The canal will be a source of hydro-electric power, but its main purpose will be to pour sea-water into artificial lakes with

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large desalination plants on their shores, to add to the supply of water for irrigation. On their shores, too, an inland shipping industry will develop, carrying produce to the Haifa Bay ports. The lakes will also be used for sports, vacationing and recreation. Together with the Sea of Galilee, they will attract multitudes of tourists all over the world.

A Dead Sea Project

The Sea of Salt is ISFALUR's largest natural reservoir and quarry; its three members surround it on all sides. Exploitation of the quarry is still in an elementary stage. The Dead Sea Works in Israel's territory and the small potash plants in the Jordanian sector are only the tips of the saline chemical and metallurgical icebergs. The 1980s and 1990s will undoubtedly witness tremendous technological breakthroughs in the exploitation of new energy sources, as well as advanced chemistry, and the Dead Sea can spearhead these breakthroughs, specifically in the use of solar energy in the chemical industry. The sea, or parts of it at first, can act as a giant mirror able to provide enormous quantities of relatively cheap energy to industry, agriculture, urbanization and tourism along the coast and throughout ISFALUR.

Potash will not be the only mineral — perhaps not even the most important — to be extracted from the Dead Sea. Already bromine is being mined in big quantities, very soon to be followed by the extraction of iodine and many other requirements of the chemical and pharmaceutical industries. But most important of all will be the light metals such as magnesium and aluminium and the rare chemicals needed for the aeronautics and space industries, as well as others based on scientific technology.

The Dead Sea treasures may be readily exploited without impairing the qualities of the area for holiday resorts and health spas. The deposits may be transported to distant localities in the Arava and along the Syro-African rift, to Eilat and Aqaba and to ISFALUR'S Mediterranean ports, when great plants will be con-

structed for advanced chemical industries. In the framework of this project, a canal may be dug connecting the Dead Sea with the Mediterranean and the ISFALUR western shores, to serve as an additional major source of hydroelectric energy.

An Arava Project

This will straddle the Arava region from south of the Dead Sea to the Eilat-Aqaba Gulf. It will involve the construction of a modern transport infrastructure, to include freeways, fast trains and airports. The enterprise will encompass a major agrotechnical industry of modern food production, mainly for European markets. This region will also accommodate chemical and fertilizer industries (utilizing the rich phosphate deposits) and metallurgical undertakings.

New towns, similar to Arad, will be built right down the Arava, on both the Israeli and Falasteen-Jordanian sides, plus new villages and towns capable of absorbing hundreds of thousands of new settlers, among them a refugee population. The future Arava will be a dense and flourishing centre of habitation, like the Mediterranean coastal strip from Rosh Hanikra to the Rafiah area.

The Greatest of the Middle East projects will be the construction of the multi-city complexes and TEAHAK, ERGASH seaports. This will be ISFALUR's crowning achievement, forming as it will a turning point in the development of the entire Middle East. It will be a joint enterprise of five founding states — the three ISFALUR members, Saudi Arabia and Egypt (possibly to be joined by others later).

Let us look at the present geopolitical and economic conditions in the region:

Saudi oil is found in the *northeastern* part of the country, near the Persian Gulf-Arabian Sea. Thence (together with the oil from Kuwait, the Emirates, Iraq and Iran) it is transported in giant tankers to Europe and America through the Strait of Hormuz, around the Arabian Peninsula and up the Suez Canal or around the Cape of Good Hope. As a result of political developments, Hormuz Strait has

become one of the most dangerous waterways in the world, constantly under a threat of blockade.

ISFALUR could offer Saudi Arabia a partial but very significant *alternative* to the Hormuz Strait, and in so doing also achieve enormous regional development for *northwestern* Saudi Arabia and for Egypt's Northern Sinai.

The following are the main features of this alternative:

□ A large proportion of the Saudi oil will be transported via a giant-diameter pipeline network to the area of Hakul, a Saudi fishing village some kilometers south of Aqaba. Haki will be transformed not only into a terminal for this pipeline but also into a major port linked to Jordan's Aqaba, Israel's Eilat, and a fourth port to be constructed by Egypt at Taba.

□ In this joint enterprise, the four cities and seaports will form a new urban conglomerate, which we shall refer to by the acronym TEAHAK.

□ From TEAHAK the Saudi oil, or its refinements (and perhaps also Egyptian, Jordanian and Israeli oil if and where found), will flow via another pipeline toward the Mediterranean to a second urban and seaport conglomerate, consisting of the ports of El-Arish (Egyptian), Rafiah, Gaza (Falasteenian), and Ashkelon, Ashdod (Israeli), which we shall call ERGASH.

From ERGASH the oil will be transported by tanker to European and North American ports. This will be the shortest and most reliable route, as well as the most economical, for the distance of the proposed pipelines from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean is 900 miles, as against 3,600 miles via the Hormuz Strait and around the Arabian Peninsula. Perhaps most important of all is that it will allow the Hormuz Strait to maintain its importance but will divest it of its exclusivity and its resulting dangerous potential.

I see in the establishment of the TEAHAK and ERGASH cities a regional, and even an international goal and challenge comparable to the digging of the Panama and Suez Canals. The two conglomerates will be among the largest and most developed in the Middle East, filling

roles similar to those of Antwerp and Rotterdam in Western Europe. In and around these cities, basic industries — chemical, petrochemical and metallurgical — will arise to serve other industries — pharmaceuticals, plastics, fine chemicals and fine metals. The edifice will be topped with science-based industries, electronics and computers.

TEAHAK and ERGASH, lying at the crossroads of three continents — Africa, Asia and Europe — will be the confluence of three great civilizations — Moslem, Jewish and Christian — and of the tremendous petrodollar wealth and the latent genius of Abraham's children — Isaac and Ishmael.

All these projects may seem like bubbles floating in the air, but even if they are dreams, they can also be implemented by human hands. They are the alternatives to other dreams — nightmares rather — of unceasing murder and bloodshed, which may turn the entire region, perhaps the entire world, into a heap of rubble with a radioactive halo. For this is what Moses, the father of the prophets, sanctified by all the faiths involved in this conflict, had to say — and he said it amid the same rocks, the same deserts and the same seas about which we are speaking.

"I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before thee life and death, the blessing and the curse; therefore choose life..."

A summary of a lecture given by Arie (Lova) Eliav at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard during his recent fellowship at the university. He is currently teaching in an adult education programme at the development town of Or-Akiva.

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