

## aA PALESTINIAN NON-MILITARIZED STATE AS A WIN/WIN FOR ALL: SHARING WITH NETANYAHU THE TRUE LESSONS FROM THE COSTA RICAN EXPERIENCE

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Many around the world have been following the press conference between President Trump and PM Netanyahu and perhaps did not catch the use Costa Rica as a good example for a potential Palestinian state. We think that it's worth examining this possibility and Netanyahu's sinister remark. The reason we propose this is because this is a topic that we have been researching for a long while with Palestinian, Israeli and Costa Rican academics: how best to learn from the positive experience of demilitarization of one of Latin America's most democratic republics. We argue that non-militarization is the optimal strategy for Palestine self interest, a choice or a demand that will greatly shape the character of the future state.

In 1948 a massive, armed civilian rebellion was waged in Costa Rica against the fraudulent government lead by engineer Jose Figueres; popularly called Don Pepe. The revolt was successful, allowing the rebels to take control of the country, while suffering about 500 casualties out of a population of less than a million at the time. Instead of a strong police force that could become, like neighboring Panama, a powerful National Guard replacement of an Army, the wise Costa Ricans, self-nicknamed "ticos", establish several separate functional police forces. These forces are Judiciary, border control, urban police, etc. Since the abolishment of the army there were attempted invasions from across the Northern border, coming from the Nicaraguan dictatorship of the Somoza's family. Their alertness and above all, the Inter American Reciprocal Defense Treaty, provided deterrence, including the presence from the Air Force of the much larger countries, such as Mexico or Venezuela.

Since then Costa Rica has not participated in a war nor experience any significant acts of domestic political violence. The "ticos" understood that in order to live happily, and protect their citizens from foreign invasion in a tough neighborhood, was to abolish the military. Instead of investing in war and security, the "old" defense budget in Costa Rica goes into education.

For this political and moral position of strength 4 decades later, Costa Rica's President Oscar Arias was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for "exporting" to the rest of Central America democracy, as self-defense, since according to a proven principle "established democracies do not fight wars with each other", vigorously supported by Natan Sharansky and now Israel's Ambassador: "The case for Democracy".

For this and perhaps other variable Costa Rica ranks 14th in the World Index of Happiness, the first among Latin Americans. Israel ranks even higher, 11th, while the Palestinian Territories rank among the lowest ranking 108th.

Can Israel's Prime Minister dictate to the Palestinians an obligation to follow the Costa Rica example, and just in case, keep the Israeli Defense Force controlling their entire country? Listening to the threatening, patronizing tone and attitude of Netanyahu and his use of forbidding rhetoric, his emphasis on imposing crippling demands, leaving the Palestinian with no choice but to accept his high ruling. Needless to remind him and ourselves of the culture of honor and pride prevalent in the Middle Eastern culture, and perhaps elsewhere.

The Palestinian case has similarities and differences. There is no Palestinian army to dismantle; avoiding the difficult task of dismantling an army and its personal. The current Preventive

Security has no heavy weapons, such as tanks, planes, artillery; hence, Palestine should be “non-militarized” rather than demilitarized. In Costa Rica the abolishment of the army was not a demand of an enemy neighbor, a dictate, Figueres’ declaration was self-proclaimed and popular.

The reason that we have been researching this issue, with some reserved optimism, is because we believe that “Security” is not only a “zero-sum game”, that only Israel can rightfully win. If we put ourselves in the Palestinian shoes, providing security for both, and all parties, could be and should be seen as a “win-win”. From an Israeli perspective, it’s always security first peace later. Thus, we are hoping to make progress on one of the core issues of the conflict, trying to look from a wider perspective of human security, defined by the Canadian government as “freedom from pervasive threats to people's rights, safety and lives”. The conflict is composed of people, by addressing the fears and needs of the individual, we are combating greater national and international security risks.

From previously conducted interviews with political leaders in the West Bank, civil society and top activist, we find that there is overwhelming support for this idea. It seen as enlightened self-interest for the Palestinians. The reason they support a Palestine without military is simple; they want to be a democracy. They do not want to be another arab a kingdom or a military dictatorship. They hope to be much more like Israel than other Arab countries, as refugees, like the Jews, emphasis on education is most important as you can often carry nothing but your own people’s bright head.

The Arab countries have killed more Palestinians than Israelis, in Jordan and Syria. An international force in the Jordan Rift Valley including Israelis defending the Palestinian border from neighboring Arab countries, shielding palestinians from the massacres taking care around them will provide deterrence that a Palestinian force could not offer. Pragmatically they understand that they are no match for these countries, and that an attempt to catch up would require spending unprecedented sums. Realistically, they would have no air space to take off and land fighting plans or naval space from Gaza for reconnaissance and submarines. In this heavily armed Middle East, no money, space or experience can keep us safe, like alliances, international presence and monitoring. If Israel could be part of an international force that present in the Jordan Rift Valley from the threat of non-democratic regimes, this can be seen, and sold, as a blessing to all.

Our wish is that it comes to the attention of our PM and he understand that it is better to discuss non-militarization in a comfort zone for both sides. Our neighbors are closer to the acceptance of a win/win scenario in security, if we handle it with care rather with threats. Even though our leadership is at loggerheads, we have been advancing in this study in cooperation with Palestinian and Costa Rican colleges. One of our colleges is Prof. Amb Rodrigo Carreras, who served twice as Ambassador in Israel, following the footsteps of his late father Prof. Rev Benjamin Nunez who also served twice in Israel.

Dear Bibi, do you want to score points or learn from experience and history? Change the tone from provocation to reconciliation and we will be all glad to put our knowledge to the service of both Israeli and Palestinian leaders. In the meantime, we are going to continue with our research and conduct some simulations with our students at the Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya and Haifa University. Long term security correlates also with human security; can we at least agree on that?

