The State of Israel has its 70th Anniversary

In May 2018 The State of Israel is celebrating the 70th anniversary of its establishment. Over these past decades, which is not a long time in historic terms, the Israeli citizens have achieved considerable success, first and foremost, in cutting-edge technologies, in the social and economic sphere. Anyone who comes to the country may make sure that is true. Visiting the historical places which are found all around here, going on tours, many visitors pay their respects to the hardworking and determination of the simple Israelis, the original settlers who managed to turn the previously barren soil into a flowering oasis.

To tell the truth, one has to admit that these seven past decades were not calm and serene for the State of Israel, its people experienced hard times more often than not, and the rare periods of living in peace quickly changed to tragic and dangerous ones. And now as well, Israel is going through another dramatic stage of its history, which has to do with the long-unresolved, complicated by many tight knots, Middle East conflict.

In 1947, when the UN General Assembly discussed the fate of Palestine, an English mandated territory, two approaches surfaced. One group of countries called for establishing a unified Jewish-Arabian state in place of this British colony. The other group which got the upper hand in the end advocated a different approach: to establish two separate states, one Arabian and one Jewish, provided that their borders be clearly documented by the UN resolutions.

The Arabian countries disagreed with the UN decision and started a war against Israel. The war ended by a humiliating defeat of the Arabian armies; the Arabian State of Palestine failed to emerge.

In June 1967, as a result of the Six-Day War, as it is now called, Israel occupied a number of the Arab territories and greatly expanded its territory. Later, in October 1973, there was another war, which did not end well for the Arabian States.
All the years that followed, despite the ongoing multi-format Arab-Israeli conflict settlement process, saw the same extreme tension of various degree in the region. The Palestinians are most vulnerable: at the moment, they have to agree to having their state established on some 22% of the former mandated Palestine territory, which is about twice as small as the one stipulated by the 1947 UN resolution.

However, the current situation and the future prospects do not look too good for the Jewish state either. The incumbent right-wing Israeli leaders are de-facto not going to give the land to the Palestinians in full, even the Western bank of the Jordan river. The left-wing parties, which are quite strong in Israel, insist on the necessity of reaching an agreement with the Palestinians, giving the territories back to them and providing assistance in establishing the State of Palestine.

The prospects of this decision do not give much hope. The Israeli-Palestinian peaceful settlement dialogue has been inactive for several years. And the recent decision by US President Donald Trump to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of the Jewish state and to move the US embassy there made the already very difficult situation as bad as ever (as it is known, the UN member states do not recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and most of the foreign embassies are located in Tel Aviv).

To confirm East Jerusalem’s status as the capital of the future State of Palestine is the key issue not only for the Palestinians and the Arabs, but for the whole Muslim world. This has to do to a great degree with the fact that the third most important Muslim shrine, the Al-Aqsa Mosque, is located in East Jerusalem (it is an accepted premise that this was the place where Muhammad ascended to heaven from to receive the Holy Quran).

Celebrating the State of Israel’s establishment anniversary this year fell on the same date (late March) as the new demographic data were published by the Israeli authorities monitoring the occupied territories. For the first time in history, the number of Arabs and Jews living on the Israel-controlled land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea reached par, comprising 6.5 million of either group. The birth rate in Palestinian families is considerably higher than that of the Jewish ones, as a result, in the not-so-distant future, Arabs are going to comprise the majority of the population. This is how the ethnic breakdown and the essence of the Jewish state are going to change gradually. This, in its turn, means that, according to the international law, the Palestinians must be provided with the right to vote and to be elected in Parliament, which hypothetically may lead to the power transition to the Arab Palestinians in Israel. Thinking in this fashion led the left-wing Israeli forces to conjecture that, since the ultranationalists would never tolerate it, Israel will likely and sadly turn into an apartheid state.

This fact, among many others, testifies exactly how serious and alarming the problem of Israel’s future is. Insights into the recent history highlight the unfailing actuality of this problem even more, as well as the necessity for great efforts to resolve it.

Let us remind you of several historical episodes in this relation. In his 1896 book Der Judenstaat (“The Jews’ State”), the founder of Zionism Theodor Herzl advocated the idea of mass Jew migration from Europe into the Israel land (he took it for granted that the Jews had failed to integrate into the European states and therefore needed to establish one of their own). Let us note that Herzl considered migration to Argentina as a possible backup plan.

In 1917, the British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour published his famous Declaration on establishing a Jewish national home in Palestine. At that historical moment, its main goal was an attempt to mobilize the American Jews in order to exert pressure on US President Woodrow Wilson and make him play a more active and decisive role in the WWI.

In 1937, over 80 years ago, the British Government Commission headed by Lord Peel recommended establishing two states in the mandated territory of Palestine, but the idea was rejected at the time by the Jews, because at that time the Jewish population comprised dozens of thousands, while the Arab population comprised hundreds of thousands.

The incumbent Israeli leaders are facing very tough challenges. The opposition forces, first and foremost leftist, are calling to face the truth. Today, as many in Israel keep warning the government, the demographic clock is ticking relentlessly, and that means that a time bomb is being placed into the very idea of Israel as a state. And now, before the Rubicon has been crossed, the historical initiative needs to be taken in order to reach an agreement with the Palestinians on the territorial division and the establishment of the State of Palestine. There is still time, for now, but tomorrow it will be too late.

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