

**Harvard Conference Speaker Notes for  
Presentation at the Minda de Gunzberg  
Center for European Studies**

*The Transformation of Intractable Conflicts  
– Perspectives and Challenges for Interactive  
Problem Solving - A Conference in Honor of  
Professor Herbert C. Kelman*

*Panel 1 – Reframing Negotiations: New  
Approaches to a Two-State Solution for the  
Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*

*Delivering a Two-State Solution*

**Dr. George E. Assousa  
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*Thank you Ambassador Petritsch. Professor Kelman, distinguished guests, it is a great honor to be here.*

*Being back here in Cambridge reminds me of my warm friendship with MIT's former President, Dr. Jerome B. Wiesner, and author of the book "Where Science and Politics Meet". Wearing different hats 30 years ago, we considered the future of commercial applications of touch screen technology and initiatives toward resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.*

*Today, I would like to say a few words regarding practical opportunities for a more balanced and proactive process from a Palestinian perspective.*

Israel is an anxious state. We Palestinians will never be able to make peace with Israel, nor achieve our own independence and freedom until we internalize and proactively address this reality. Equally, Israel must fully reconcile itself with the suffering of the Palestinian people. Israel must recognize that the Jewish people's need for a secure home and psychological and physical refuge has both willingly and unwillingly engendered the suffering of the Palestinian people. No peace paradigm or process that fails to honestly integrate these psychological realities can bear fruit, not only for Israelis, but equally and fully for the Palestinian people.

Thus, in my view, having been personally born into these realities – of all places, Jerusalem – peace is a process to be led by two peoples, honestly facing their respective suffering, and working together to jointly bring it to an end. Such process of mutual problem-solving must be energized by genuine bilateral commitment to security, dignity, and justice. Further, such commitment can only become effective by responding to needs and realities, emotional and practical, on the ground, and by generating and reconciling proactive – not reactive – and workable solutions from both sides.

The technical ideas and paradigms of a sustainable peace can thus only be workable if they are deeply anchored in the respective emotional foundations of the conflict. Professor Kelman has been a leading light in articulating this message.

And that is also why, after active participation, at personal cost, in the search for Israeli-Palestinian peace, spanning the past 40 years, I have come to believe in the following. There is a need for taking the peace process – and the never-ending proposals it generates, which have been principally and often eloquently and honestly generated from within the Jewish community – and ensuring it becomes more proactively shaped by both sides, Palestinians and Israelis alike. What's more, Israelis and Palestinians must shape this process not only in words, but also through deeds.

What I would like to humbly propose to you today is a simple paradigm: **a "Dual Democracies" framework for final status negotiations.** As a physicist, and not a politician – albeit with decades' experience in various international political arenas and 22 years' experience participating in the development of the foundations of a renewed Eastern Europe – I have always believed in the search for simple and elegant solutions: solutions that work, based on reality honestly perceived, not as we wish it.

In the current situation in which we find ourselves, all of us who care, you, me, Secretary Kerry and his team, Prime Minister Bibi Netanyahu and his advisers, President Abbas and his people, pressed by time and international pressure, fearful of failure and the looming chasm, must truly come to realize that a failed outcome is not the wish of either of our Peoples, Israelis and Palestinians.

But what do I believe this tells us in practice?

On the one hand, this certainly tells us that continuation of the *status quo* of the last 20 years in the peace process and on the ground will offer no viable Plan A. However, it is also true that simply starting from scratch – tempting though this may be given the history of failure and disappointment – also offers no viable Plan B. Regardless of whether we are talking about a Plan A, a Plan B, or even a Plan C, a middle ground between old and new ideas is needed. **Fresh thinking which nonetheless can pass the litmus test of practically and successfully plugging into the current Kerry process.**

In my view, in this conflict there will never be a permanent solution in which there will not be both Arabs in Israel and Jews in Palestine. **Two democracies. Two co-operative democracies, each with historic and ethnic connection to the land of the other. Each accepting the other through the medium of its own minority. Each expressing attachment to its own irredenta through the medium of the other's minority. Though we may wish separation, the dual Israeli and Palestinian irredentas are a reality which we must manage – harness even – and which we ignore or suppress at our peril. Thus we should look toward a two-state framework in which dual irredentas give birth to dual minorities which themselves are the foundations of dual democracies. Dual democracies in the full sense of the word “democracy” because of the full rights each country accords to all of its citizens in practice as well as in theory.**

The riders of Jerusalem's light train, Israelis and Palestinians – I'm sure you are all aware of the much-contested train which links East to West Jerusalem – they shuttle back and forth between two realities. Through the seam, in mutual temporary acceptance – nascent acceptance – yet in unarticulated mutual mistrust. They are aware, internally, of the following reality: that **there cannot be a permanent and secure peace and prosperity, unless we recognize the full legitimacy of the other, and agree a solution that translates this understanding into fact.**

So where do we go from here? How do we ensure that the train continues to run? How do we go about creating an alternative set of facts on the ground and in the peace process?

Secretary Kerry's untiring efforts have already paved a way forward with his aim to reach a framework for final status negotiations. We will see what it contains, and I have my own opinions on what it should contain. However, a framework is, in principle, the correct way forward. It is indeed a prerequisite for mapping out the way ahead.

Meanwhile, however, hints of understanding are beginning to filter through. Encouragingly, in the context of the ongoing negotiations, in recent months the unmentionable is already being mentioned. I have a selection of thought-provoking

quotes from key figures – hints of understanding of the message I am trying to convey – addressing the reality of the settlement presence, something which cannot and should not be addressed by evacuation and swaps alone. These references make clear that a Jewish presence in Palestine – **and so we are talking about a two-state solution based upon a dual minorities structure** – is now unavoidable.

Coming on board, so far we have for instance: MK Hilik Bar – Chair of the Knesset Caucus for Ending the Israeli-Arab Conflict, Deputy Speaker of the Knesset, and Secretary General of the Israeli Labor Party – we have Dr. Hanan Ashrawi, Prime Minister Netanyahu, Ambassador Leila Shahid, even Minister Ya'alon, Special Envoy Martin Indyk, journalists Daoud Kuttab of *Al-Monitor* and Dan Margalit of *Israel Hayom*, and Secretary Kerry himself.

So we are on our way – or are we?

Israeli suppressed sense of guilt cannot be a strategy. Its continued assertion of the right to the whole land reveals, on the other side of the very same coin, denial of the others' – the Palestinians' – reality and rights, both collective and individual.

Occupation, domination, and dehumanization do not, and will not, lead to security.

But in order to break this vicious cycle, I believe we must do *even* more than just try to reverse the settlement process. Why and how?

The obstacles to such a reversal – and there are logical realities and compelling statistics staring us in the face here – are too large now if they weren't already a long time ago. But further, we can no longer afford to ignore or negate the very structure of this conflict which tells us two things: first, that two peoples, Israelis and Palestinians, Jews and Arabs, have emotional attachment to all of the land, and second, that there is no alternative here than two fully independent states for two peoples.

I believe we must truly flip the settlement process on its head. As I will explain, I see the way forward in the reconciliation of the value and wisdom I hear from both the diplomatic and the academic worlds. The practical and the academic, the technical and the emotional sides of the conflict, all reconciled and harnessed. I am proposing to you that the key to unlocking a resolution to this conflict will, accordingly, come through deepened exploration of the interface between the technical and the emotional aspects of this most challenging of issues, the settler issue.

I put to you that **it is not enough to merely look at a settler right of choice to stay in a Palestinian state as a mechanism to reach a final status agreement.**

Rather, we need to explore the idea of **a settler right of choice as a means of creating value for both sides within the two-state solution, and indeed as an enabling mechanism for give and take in negotiations.** Let us look not only at avoiding the bee's sting, but also seek to extract the bee's honey! In this regard, I will consider briefly three areas: reconciliation, economics, and negotiation dynamics.

So, to look briefly at a settler right of choice and its potential as an agent for reconciliation.

Promoting fully-fledged acceptance by the Palestinians of a Jewish minority in Palestine – we’re envisaging a Jewish minority in Palestine as far more than just as a means of reaching the finishing line in peace negotiations – this could go a long way toward achieving the desired, and necessary, sense of acceptance of the Jewish people between the River and the Sea. While we hear a lot about the need for recognition and acceptance through words, let us consider for a moment mutual recognition through deeds, potentially a far more powerful form of acceptance!

Not only would such acceptance have to be predicated upon assurance of the parallel full integration and transformation of Israel’s Arab minority with full rights, but this **new type of incentive** within the two-state solution, in the form of a vehicle for acceptance, would encourage the achievement of such outcome.

Now, to look at a settler right of choice as a means of providing the two-state solution with truly viable economic foundations.

We should indeed be looking to a broad international coalition to stimulate the Palestinian economy with foreign direct investment. **But we must start with capacity-building in the Palestinian state from the ground up!**

The seeds are already there if we embrace the *Dual Democracies* model. Let us take the EU’s promise in December of a Special Privileged Partnership – I quote: “*an unprecedented package of European political, economic and security support*” – and set it in a two-state solution which, by harnessing the economic potential of the settlement enterprise for mutual Arab and Jewish benefit under Palestinian sovereignty, flips the settlement project on its head, and makes possible an economically viable and dynamic Palestinian state of opportunities for all its citizens.

By this I mean, a Palestinian state with the capacity to absorb refugees and to cope with significant fertility rates in the context of high population densities; a Palestinian state with the economic and social foundations necessary to ensure its own security; a Palestinian state which contributes to Israel’s security.

Now that we can see the EU begin to grapple with the settler issue, the treatment given to this issue by the *Dual Democracies* model would lend the EU a sense of direction on this thorny subject in a way which is consistent with its own values, principally in the domains of minority rights, democracy, and the role it should be playing beyond its borders. As we know, for instance, from experiences in Bosnia, that it is the structure of the political settlement that controls the post-conflict economy, in the *Dual Democracies* paradigm, Israelis, Palestinians, and the international community have a framework within which they can promote a sustainable peace economy from the bottom up.

And now, as for a settler right of choice as a catalyst for an energized and more equitable negotiation process.

Embracing the new modality of allowing settlers to stay as a fully-integrated Jewish minority in a Palestinian state under Palestinian sovereignty, together with its full reciprocity implications, would provide the Palestinians with the bargaining chips they need to enter into a mutually equitable negotiation process. Absent this new modality, the Palestinians have no concessions left to make, and as we know well, negotiations cannot function without give and take.

Let us remember: a more equitable process will serve both sides; Israelis and Palestinians are, after all, two sides of the same coin, and, to use Defense Minister Ya'alon's words, since they are going to have to live together, they will need to learn to benefit from each other. This is truly what win-win means.

We're talking here about Palestinian empowerment over the full range of final status issues – borders, swaps, Jerusalem, refugees, natural resources – and win-win outcomes for both Israelis and Palestinians. A simple and elegant, credible and comprehensive, vision for a separate and accommodative future for Israelis and Palestinians, which the international community will be able to throw its full weight behind.

I deeply believe, and my years of experience with our peoples, Palestinians and Israelis, on the ground and in the diaspora, convince me that the ideas I have summarized here today – which are the distillation of many years' work dating back to the 1970s – are achievable. They are the genuine building blocks of peace, and the core of the region's transformation to a stable, co-operative, creative, and inspired heart of a new Middle East. Indeed, the *Dual Democracies* framework is an anchor for an otherwise dangerously drifting process.

Thank you.