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** The surnames are listed in alphabetical order.*

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BOOK REVIEW

Seth Anziska

Preventing Palestine: A Political History from Camp David to Oslo

(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018, ISBN: 9780691177397, 435 pp., \$35.00)

The Camp David Accords, signed in 1978 between Egypt and Israel culminating in the Egypt-Israel peace treaty in 1979, have been praised by politicians and scholars alike as a significant turning point in Arab-Israeli peacemaking. This was the first time that an Arab state has signed a peace treaty with the Jewish state, thus making another Arab-Israeli war highly unlikely. As a result of the deal, Egypt recaptured the Sinai Peninsula which had been occupied by Israel since the Six-Day-War of 1967. Moreover, before the start of the process, Egyptian president Anwar Sadat had directly appealed to the Israelis by addressing the Israeli parliament Knesset, notwithstanding his tough rhetoric regarding the necessity for Israel to address the Palestinian issue.

Irrespective of such talk, Seth Anziska in *Preventing Palestine*, directs our attention to the autonomy negotiations conducted between Egypt and Israel as part of the Camp David process (1979-1982) and points out that the Palestinians were to a large extent sacrificed to the national interests of Egypt and Israel. In other words, the roots of Palestinian “statelessness” can be found in the Camp David Accords (300-302), which focused on the resolution of the Egyptian-Israeli dispute by restituting occupied Egyptian territories back to that country and relegating the Palestinian issue to autonomy talks which did not entail the establishment of a Palestinian state in the future.

Furthermore, *Preventing Palestine* offers an in-depth analysis of Palestinian statelessness based on documents, interviews, primary and secondary sources, and introduces us to all the influential protagonists from American Presidents Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George Bush and Bill Clinton to Israeli prime ministers, Palestinian revolutionaries as well mid-level diplomats who conducted American peace efforts in the Middle East. Anziska’s access to the archives in Israel, Lebanon, the UK and the US is extensive, revealing

numerous negotiations between all of the parties concerned. Moreover, we find ample evidence regarding the approach of American presidents to the Palestinian-Israeli question. For instance, Jimmy Carter’s depiction of the settlements as illegal and his call for a Palestinian homeland were quite revolutionary for its time. Nonetheless, this depiction was overturned by Ronald Reagan who argued that the settlements were, in fact, not illegal. Analyzing the inner workings of the American government, Anziska offers a highly readable and incisive analysis of American foreign policy, its main actors including national security advisers as well as the Jewish community in the US with their great interest in Israeli affairs.

It should be added that the book also discusses the 1982 Lebanon War, Operation Peace for Galilee according to Israeli parlance, and how it exacerbated the negative status of Palestinians in that country. In sum, *Preventing Palestine*, analyzed the Camp David Accords in the first few chapters, followed by the Oslo peace process establishing a linkage between those two different peacemaking efforts.

The book is also valuable as the author quite successfully demonstrates the ideological outlook of the Likud Prime Minister Menachem Begin (1977-1983), who perceived the West Bank to be part of the land of Israel, hence he never had the intention to let go of these territories as he considered them to be included in the Jewish homeland. His autonomy plan seems to inform current Israeli leaders from Benjamin Netanyahu to Naftali Bennett both of whom have been the champions of the Israeli settlers in the West Bank and have clinched to the idea of an undivided, complete Land of Israel (Eretz Israel haShelema).

Moreover, Anziska argues that the Oslo Process which resulted in the Declaration of Principles signed between the Palestine Liberation

Organization (PLO) and Israel in 1993 and the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) in 1994, had the Camp David Accords' autonomy framework as its "basis" (3) since Palestinian statehood was never certain according to the step- by- step approach of Oslo. Nonetheless, it was certainly one of the most important topics of the final status talks to be conducted between Israel and Palestine and it was generally understood that an independent Palestinian state was to be established as a result of the Oslo Process. The author seems to disregard this aspect of the assumptions of Oslo since the question of a Palestinian State has been part and parcel of the demands of the PLO and its leader Yasser Arafat ever since the inception of their struggle from the late 1950s until the 1990s. In other words, the PNA was to be a temporary stop on the way to full independence. The fact that such an eventuality has not been achieved to this day does not mean that it was not the main objective of the Palestinians. Therefore, I do not necessarily see a direct link between the Camp David Accords and the Oslo process despite the similarities in the autonomy offered to the Palestinians. The PLO had already declared independence in 1988 and mutual recognition and negotiations with the Israelis were supposed to culminate into an independent state according to the wishes of the Palestinian leadership and the masses. The fact that such an eventuality was not mentioned or guaranteed in the Oslo agreements does not mean that autonomy was the end result of the negotiations.

Despite this caveat, I should point out that the book is multidimensional- encapsulating political history, foreign policy and divergent ideologies prevalent in the US, Israel and Palestine. I should also add that I found the *Preface* to be as important and interesting as the rest of the book, since in the former the author narrates his own personal and ideological journey from a committed Zionist to an objective scholar of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as well as American foreign policy in the Middle East. His observations of the difficulties the Palestinians experienced at the checkpoints were a moment of truth for the recognition of the "other" living in what he considered to be Judea and Samaria as part of the Land of Israel. His firsthand experience in the Gush Etzion settlements and his trips to Israel proper resulted in Anziska to recognize the Palestinian reality and tragedy.

In conclusion, *Preventing Palestine* is a welcome addition to the books on the Middle East peace process, the Arab-Israeli conflict, American foreign policy in the Middle East as well ideology and

domestic politics in the United States, Israel and Palestine. It should be of interest to scholars, students and general readers who are concerned in all the topics mentioned above.

Umut Uzer, Ph.D.

Associate Professor
Istanbul Technical University, Turkey

uuzer@itu.edu.tr