

Nancy Pelosi Claims Israeli “Annexation” Will Harm American Security Interests

by Hugh Fitzgerald



The story of her astonishing claim is at the *Jerusalem Post* [here](#):

Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi said on Thursday that she is “concerned” about a possible Israeli move to annex parts of the West Bank.

“Unilateral annexation puts the future at risk and undermines US national security interests,” she said in a webinar hosted by the Jewish Democratic Council of America (JDCA). “It undermines our national security interests and decades of bipartisan policy. We always want it to be bipartisan,” she continued.

The extension of Israel's sovereignty to the "West Bank" – the name Jordan gave in 1950 to those parts of Judea and Samaria it had managed to hold onto during the 1948-49 war – is based on the Palestine Mandate itself. That Mandate assigned to the future Jewish state all of the land from Mt. Hermon in the north, to the Red Sea in the south, and from the Jordan River in the west, to the Mediterranean in the east. At the end of Arab-Israeli hostilities in 1949, the Jordanian army remained in possession of part of Judea and Samaria; Jordan renamed that territory the "West Bank" in order to efface the Jewish connection to the land, much as the Romans nearly 2000 years before had replaced the name "Judea" with "Palestine." When Israel took possession of the "West Bank" after the Six-Day War, this did not create its legal, historic, and moral claim to land where Jews had lived for 3,500 years, but allowed the Jewish state to finally enforce its preexisting claim.

A second, and independent source for the Jewish claim to extend its sovereignty to a considerable part of the "West Bank" is U.N. Resolution 242.

The chief drafter of Resolution 242 was Lord Caradon (Hugh M. Foot), the permanent representative of the United Kingdom to the United Nations from 1964-1970. At the time of the Resolution's discussion and subsequent unanimous passage, and on many occasions since, Lord Caradon always insisted that the phrase "from the territories" quite deliberately did not mean "all the territories," but merely some of the territories:

Much play has been made of the fact that we didn't say "the" territories or "all the" territories. But that was deliberate. I myself knew very well the 1967 boundaries and if we had put in the "the" or "all the" that could only have meant that we wished to see the 1967 boundaries perpetuated in the form of a permanent frontier. This I was certainly not prepared to recommend.

On another occasion, to an interviewer from the Journal of

Palestine Studies (Spring-Summer 1976), he again insisted on the deliberateness of the wording. He was asked:

The basis for any settlement will be United Nations Security Council Resolution 242, of which you were the architect. Would you say there is a contradiction between the part of the resolution that stresses the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war and that which calls for Israeli withdrawal from "occupied territories," but not from "the occupied territories"?

Nota bene: "from territories occupied" is not the same thing as "from occupied territories" – the first is neutral, the second a loaded description. Lord Caradon answered:

"I defend the resolution as it stands. What it states, as you know, is first the general principle of inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war. That means that you can't justify holding onto territory merely because you conquered it. We could have said: well, you go back to the 1967 line. But I know the 1967 line, and it's a rotten line. You couldn't have a worse line for a permanent international boundary. It's where the troops happened to be on a certain night in 1948. It's got no relation to the needs of the situation.

"Had we said that you must go back to the 1967 line, which would have resulted if we had specified a retreat from all the occupied territories, we would have been wrong."

Note how Lord Caradon says that "you can't justify holding onto territory merely because you conquered it," with that "merely" applying to Jordan, but not to Israel, because of the Mandate's explicit provisions allocating the territory known now as the "West Bank" to the Jewish state. Note, too, the firmness of his dismissal of the 1967 lines as nothing more than "where the troops happened to be on a certain night in

1948," that is, nothing more than armistice lines and not internationally recognized borders.

Does Speaker Pelosi understand the legal, historic, and moral claims of Israel to Judea and Samaria (a/k/a the "West Bank")? Does she understand the intent of the Mandate for Palestine, in recognizing those claims, and does she have a firm understanding of the territory that was included by the League of Nations in that Mandate? Does she comprehend, as well, the meaning of U.N. Resolution 242, which allows Israel to make territorial adjustments to ensure its own security? Is she aware that an American military mission, sent to Israel by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, on the orders of President Johnson, to study what territories, at a minimum, Israel would have to retain after the Six-Day War, reported back that Israel would need to keep the Jordan Valley and parts of the West Bank in order to slow down, or prevent, a possible invasion force from the east that could cut Israel in two at its narrowest point; within the 1949 armistice lines, Israel was only nine miles wide from Qalqilya to the sea.

Would comprehending the Mandate for Palestine (especially the Preamble, and Articles 4 and 6), and U.N. Resolution 242, make a difference to Nancy Pelosi? Would she be less quick to lecture Israel on not annexing territory in the West Bank, if she knew Israel had a perfect right to that territory – the Jordan Valley and the settlements – according to both the Mandate, and U.N. Resolution 242?

Pelosi's bizarre claim is that any Israel "annexation" of territory would "harm America's national security interests." She has it exactly backwards. Any annexation by Israel of territory to which it is entitled, and which will increase the Jewish state's ability to protect itself, will contribute to American national security. Deprived of control of the Jordan Valley, forced to surrender some of its settlements, Israel would be much more vulnerable to attack. And though Israel has never asked for a single American soldier to help defend it,

unlike several Arab states, including Saudi Arabia and Lebanon, if it is squeezed back into something like the 1949 armistice lines – i.e., the pre-1967 lines which Abba Eban famously described as “the lines of Auschwitz” – that could make more likely the need, in some future war, for Israel to request American help. That’s not something either Israel, or America, wants. And if Israel were to be squeezed back into something like the 1949 armistice lines, and as a consequence was in danger, in case of war, of being cut in two by an invader from the East, does anyone doubt that if the Israelis ever felt their national survival was at stake, they would use some of their nuclear weapons as a last resort. Does Pelosi want to make such a possibility more likely?

Nancy Pelosi claims that Israel’s annexation of land in the West Bank will harm America’s national security interests; she has things backwards. The better able Israel is to defend itself, the less likely that it will ever have to ask for American aid. And what about the Arab states? Would they be angry with the United States if Israel held onto most or even all of the West Bank? We know that while the member states of the Arab League, for public consumption, have deplored Israeli “annexation,” behind the scenes several of these same states have expressed their support, more muted in some cases than in others, for the Trump Deal of the Century which allows for that Israeli annexation. The ambassadors of three Arab states – Bahrain, Oman, and the UAE – in a sign of support even attended the White House ceremony in which the Trump Plan was rolled out. Though Jordan has denounced any “annexation,” privately Jordanian officials have said they do not want the Palestinians to control the West Bank, for they fear a possible alliance of Palestinians on both sides of the Jordan against the Hashemite monarchy. Two other important Arab states, Egypt and, especially, Saudi Arabia, have lost interest in the “Palestinians” – Crown Prince Muhammad angrily told Mahmoud Abbas to “take whatever deal” he can that the Americans offer – and are more interested in Israeli help,

including the sharing of its intelligence with them, in combating Iran and the Muslim Brotherhood. When the Israelis were about to annex the Golan Heights, it was predicted that all hell would break loose in the Arab countries. Nothing happened. When Trump decided to move the American Embassy to Jerusalem, we were again warned that Arabs and Muslims would be inflamed. Again nothing of the sort occurred.

Now we are being assured that if Israel annexes the Jordan Valley and the settlements, the Arabs will this time really rise up. Why should we believe it? Even in the West Bank, where Mahmoud Abbas insists he has now torn up all agreements with Israel, on the ground there is still security cooperation between the P.A. and Israel. On May 20 it was reported that an unnamed senior Palestinian official sent messages to the Israel Defense Forces and the Shin Bet security service saying that some coordination would continue and that the Palestinian security organizations will continue to do their best to foil terror attacks against Israel. Even if cooperation really is ended, the official vowed that terror groups will not be permitted to act freely in areas under the control of the Palestinian Authority. So there is a lot less to Abbas's threats to "end all cooperation with Israel" than meets the eye. Abbas knows how valuable is the intelligence the P.A. receives from Israel on its deadly rivals Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and their operatives in the West Bank. Will he really want to do without Israeli assistance that on several occasions has even helped to foil plots to murder him and his cronies?

What should Nancy Pelosi in decency do? She should study the Palestine Mandate and its maps. She should remember that even though the League of Nations dissolved in 1946, its successor organization, the United Nations, included in its Charter Article 80 (called the "Jewish people's article"), which recognized the continuing validity of the Mandate for Palestine. And finally, she should study the text of U.N.

Resolution 242, and the authoritative explanation of that text by its main drafter, Lord Caradon. Only when she has thoroughly digested the meaning of both the U.N. Resolution 242 and of the Mandate for Palestine, will she have earned the right to comment on what Israel "should" or "must" do.

She might then say, for example, that "I am well aware that Israel has a right to keep the entire West Bank if it so wishes. I do not challenge that right. But I challenge its wisdom. Wouldn't it be better to keep the territories Israel currently controls, without a formal annexation that will merely serve to roil the Arab world?" I still think she'd be wrong, but at least she would no longer be outrageously, offensively, intolerably wrong.

The Speaker told participants that Democrats are taking "a great pride" in former president Barack Obama's memorandum of understanding, which provides Israel with \$38 billion worth of security assistance over a decade. "That's our commitment. And we continue to have that," she said. "It was signed in 2016 to help Israel defend itself in a variety of ways. And we stand committed to that, but we're very concerned about what we see happening in terms of annexation."

"I'm not a big fan of the Palestinian leadership in terms of their capability to be good negotiating partners," she added. "I wish they could be better. But I think that everybody can be doing better in terms of that." She also sent a barb to the Trump administration's peace plan, saying that it has "nothing in common with the word peace or plan."

Pelosi is "not a big fan of the Palestinian negotiating partners in terms of their capability to be good negotiating partners"? That's a historic understatement. Mahmoud Abbas for the last twelve years refused outright to engage in any negotiations with Israel. He's not been a "negotiating partner" at all. And in 2008, when he negotiated for the first

and last time with the Israelis, he refused Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's offer of 94% of the West Bank, together with Israeli territory equivalent to 5.8% of the West Bank, and on top of that, Olmert also offered to relinquish Israeli control of the Old City to an international body. Abbas refused, and walked out. Pelosi should have told the truth: the Palestinians have shown themselves completely unwilling to seriously engage in negotiations with the Israelis.

Pelosi's brusque dismissal of Trump's peace plan – it has, she said, “nothing in common with the word peace or plan” – is intolerable. It is the first American effort that, had it been accepted, would have led to the creation of a Palestinian state, one which would include 97% of all the Palestinians living in the West Bank. For the first time in their history, the Palestinians would have a state. What's more, according to the Trump Plan, the Palestinians would be given two large swathes of territory in Israel's Negev, along the border with Egypt, to compensate for territory taken by Israel – as is its right under the Mandate – in the West Bank. Further, Gaza would be directly linked to the West Bank part of “Palestine” by traffic corridors. An enormous effort went into the Administration's constructing a viable Arab state, consisting of contiguous territories in the West Bank where 97% of the Palestinians now live, and from which they would not have to move. Speaker Pelosi should look at all the work that went into carving out this state before so airily dismissing it.

Finally, in what is surely the most generous offer of aid in history, the Trump Administration promised that international donors would provide the state of Palestine with \$50 billion dollars in aid; by comparison, the Marshall Plan allotted a total of \$60 billion (in 2020 dollars) not for just one but for sixteen countries. Why does Nancy Pelosi say this carefully worked-out effort was not a “plan”? Has she looked at the maps, and seen with what care the Trump Administration managed to ensure that 97% of the Palestinians now in the West

Bank would be included, in *contiguous* territories forming the state of Palestine, while 97% of the Israelis in the West Bank would be included, without having to move, in the state of Israel. It was a real feat of boundary-drawing. And why does Pelosi say the Trump Plan has nothing to do with “peace” when that is its main goal, to keep the peace between Palestinians and Israelis, by means of both the statehood and the prosperity— that \$50 billion in aid – promised to the Palestinians, and through the demilitarization that would be required of the future state of “Palestine”?

American national security interests will not be harmed but enhanced if Israel and the Palestinians make peace, based on the Trump Plan, and if the Palestinians achieve a level of prosperity in their own state that they would not wish to endanger through war, while Israel’s deterrent power is increased by its permanent control, through annexation, of West Bank territories, and especially of the Jordan Valley, that can help prevent or slow down an invasion from the East. There may be a brief display of displeasure from the Arab street, if the Trump Plan is accepted, but in the corridors of power in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the UAE, Bahrain, and Oman, there will be quiet satisfaction that the Trump Plan has put paid to Palestinian irredentism, given the Palestinians a state of their own, and imposed demilitarization on that state. Israel, more secure than ever, can continue to help them deal with their real worries – the Muslim Brotherhood, the assorted terror groups including Hezbollah (Iran’s proxy), and Hamas (which is merely a branch of the Brotherhood), and above all, Iran.

It is difficult for many Democrats to admit that something good might actually come out of the White House, where they long ago consigned its occupant to the outer darkness. And who has the time to read all that stuff – the Mandate for Palestine, U.N. Resolution 242, Article 80 of the U.N. Charter – or learn about the history of the non-existent negotiations

between Mahmoud Abbas and several different Israeli leaders? Who has the time to find out what the Arab leaders really want, which is not always what they say they want? It's a lot to ask. But try, Speaker Pelosi. Just try.

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