

The iconic photographs of Jimmy Carter standing between Menachem Begin and Anwar Sadat, and of Bill Clinton flanked by Yitzhak Rabin and Yasir Arafat bear witness that American presidents have been instrumental in the peace-making processes of the State of Israel. In stark contrast, the only person in the picture regarding Jerusalem's status as Israel's capitol yesterday was Donald Trump. As they say, a picture is worth a thousand words. Whereas the Israel/Egypt peace treaty and the Oslo Accords were the results of bilateral negotiations between Israel and its adversaries, President Trump's announcement was a *political* move, rather than a *diplomatic* resolution.

In making his pronouncement, the president assured the world that America is still committed to peace among parties. But how does stamping the issue of Jerusalem "RESOLVED" by fiat advance the peace process? All the regional players agree that Jerusalem is the symbolic jewel in the crown, the last negotiating point. Do the Palestinians have any other option than throwing up their hands? It could be argued that neither Fatah nor Hamas have been forthcoming since the end of the second intifada; but Israel does have a peace agreement with Egypt and with Jordan, and is making inroads through back channels with other governments in the region, too. Can those leaders sustain any of these negotiations if their citizens are protesting in their streets? The Arab Spring has taught us that the anger of the common man is easily combustible and beyond containment, at least for a while. As for the United States, is there any way that it can be perceived as the neutral broker than it has been in the past?

The final question that any committed political Zionist must ask is, is this pronouncement good for the citizens of the State of Israel? Does it advance Herzl's dream of a safe and secure Homeland for the Jewish People? I think not. Israel did not need the world to confirm that Jerusalem is Israel's capitol any more than it needs external affirmation that it is a Jewish State. Demographers can affirm the latter. As for Jerusalem, aside from its spiritual centrality, all the institutions of the State are located in the city. Nor did anyone in Israel's government ask for our president's proclamation. In fact, in anticipation of the possibility of it even before last November's election, diplomats in our (now all-but-defunct) Department of State, and diplomats and officials in Israel declared that such a declaration, which would be compounded by an embassy move, would do more harm than good, and might well prove disastrous.

The national anthem of Israel is HaTikva, the Hope. With our president's precipitous announcement, the hope of peace has been pushed much further into the future leaving the citizens of Israel to bear the full brunt of it all.

Still with hope,

*Lee*