

Inquiring Minds topic – 5 June 2020

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Trump, Netanyahu unveil plan for 'two-state' Israeli-Palestinian peace

General thoughts on the topic

1. Do I understand the historical narratives of the parties?
2. Am I sensitive to the context of the events that are taking place?
3. Have I ascertained the facts, to the best of my ability?
4. Is there anything about the situation that shows a way forward toward a resolution or the problem or at least its mitigation?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. **Is the plan proposed by the president fair and equitable to both sides of the conflict? Why or why not?**
2. **Is a two-state solution possible and/ or desirable?**
3. **If you were in charge, what would you propose to end this decades long conflict**

A Brief History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

In 1947, the UN voted to allocate 55% of Palestine (basically current Israel) for a Jewish state and 45% for a Palestinian state. At that time, Jews made up one-third of the population of Palestine and owned 7% of the land. They comprised a bare majority within the convoluted borders of the area they were to be given, but it was anticipated that many more Jews would immigrate to the new state. For the Zionists, this 'partition plan' represented the creation of a safe haven from centuries of persecution in Europe. Israel would be the new center of Jewish life, a long-sought opportunity for self-determination.

When the British withdrew in 1948, the Israelis declared independence, which sparked a region-wide war. When the dust settled, the new state of Israel controlled 78% of historic Palestine, Jordan ruled the West Bank, and Egypt had control over the Gaza Strip. More than 750,000 Palestinians -- half the native population of Palestine at the time -- fled or were expelled from

what became Israel.

The Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza were not given citizenship in Israel or equal protection or benefits under the law. Then in 1987, the Palestinian population collectively rose up against Israel's repressive policies. The uprising, which became known as the **first Intifada**, was characterized by mass civil disobedience, general strikes, boycotts, refusals to pay taxes, and Palestinian youths throwing stones at Israeli tanks and soldiers.

In 1988, Arafat agreed to recognize Israel and renounce terrorism. It was a historic compromise. He unilaterally surrendered Palestinian claims to 78% of historic Palestine and agreed to focus aspirations for Palestinian statehood solely on the remaining 22% -- the West Bank and Gaza.

Five years later, in 1993, Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin signed the Oslo Accords, hailed as a blueprint for peace between the two peoples. It was the first time Israelis and Palestinians publicly recognized each other as partners for negotiations toward peace rather than enemies who might be defeated by force of arms. After that, the 'two-state solution' became the mantra of the mainstream.

The Accords created the Palestinian Authority (PA), headed by Arafat and his associates and was based in Ramallah. It had limited administrative and security duties in the West Bank and Gaza while Israel retained control of water, airspace, borders, imports, exports, residency, travel, taxation, currency, etc. This arrangement was supposed to last for a five-year period during which Israel and the PA would engage in trust-building measures and negotiate final-status issues such as East Jerusalem, refugees, borders, and settlements. It was hoped that an independent Palestinian state -- and peace -- would follow. Such was not to be the case.

President Bill Clinton, in his final months in office, met with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Yasser Arafat at Camp David, Maryland, for a last-ditch effort to negotiate a two-state solution. The talks failed and each side blamed the other, and trust broke down completely. The explosive atmosphere reached a flashpoint in September of 2000, when the **second Intifada** erupted. Palestinians launched suicide bombs and other attacks on Israelis in 2000. The resulting violence lasted for years, until a cease-fire was reached. Israel announced a plan to remove all troops and Jewish settlements from the Gaza strip by the end of 2005. In that year, Prime Minister Sharon offered to give all of Gaza to the Palestinians but they said he did not negotiate in good faith. In June 2008, after years of almost daily exchanges of rocket fire between Israelis and Palestinians in the

Gaza Strip, Israel and Hamas signed an Egyptian-brokered cease-fire. The fragile agreement held for most of the remainder of 2008. Israel continued its yearlong blockade of Gaza, however, and the humanitarian and economic crisis in Gaza intensified. After the truce ended in December, rocket fire increased. Israel began an air strike and, on January 3, 2009, a ground invasion. The invasion was widely supported within Israel, but drew international criticism because the attack killed at least 1,400 Palestinians and 13 Israelis. The conflict strained Israel's relationship with the United Nations because mortars hit a school run by the UN, killing more than 40 people. An investigation of the three-week war by the UN found that both the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) and Palestinian groups committed actions equaling war crimes. Israel's government disputed the report. Israel has been involved in repeated violence with Hamas, a Sunni Islamist militant group that assumed Palestinian power in 2006. Some of the more significant conflicts took place beginning in 2008, 2012 and 2014. Clashes between Israelis and Palestinians are still commonplace today. Key territories of land are divided, but some are claimed by both groups. For instance, they both cite Jerusalem as their capital. Both groups blame each other for terror attacks that kill civilians. While Israel doesn't officially recognize Palestine as a state, more than 135 UN member nations do.

January 28, 2020

WASHINGTON — President Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Tuesday unveiled what the president has called “the deal of the century” for a **two-state peace plan** between Israel and the Palestinians.

“Our proposal finds precise technical solutions to make Israelis, Palestinians and the region safer and much more prosperous. My vision presents a win-win opportunity for both sides, **a realistic two-state solution,**” Trump said at the White House, adding that Netanyahu had agreed to negotiations with the Palestinians.

The plan calls for the creation of a **State of Palestine** with its capital in **East Jerusalem**, and more than doubles the territory currently under Palestinian control.

But it also recognizes Israeli sovereignty over major settlement blocs in the West Bank, something to which the Palestinians will almost certainly object.

The Palestinians, in fact, rejected the proposal before its rollout, accusing Trump of being biased in favor of Israel as he has adopted policies that bolster Israel at their expense.

The plan will also call for a four-year freeze on new Israeli settlement construction,

during which time details of a comprehensive agreement would be negotiated.

However, it was not immediately clear if the freeze could be extended if a final deal is not concluded in the four years.

The political outline goes further in concessions to the Palestinians than many analysts had believed was likely.

However, it would require them to accept conditions they have been previously unwilling to consider, such as accepting West Bank settlements.

It builds on a 30-page economic plan for the West Bank and Gaza that was unveiled last June (2019) and which the Palestinians have also rejected.

Under the terms of the “peace vision” that Trump’s son-in-law and senior adviser Jared Kushner has been working on for nearly three years, the future Palestinian state would consist of the West Bank and Gaza, connected by a combination of above-ground roads and tunnels.

“Today Israel takes a big step toward peace. Governments throughout the region [recognize] that terrorism and Islamic extremism are everyone’s common enemy,” the president said in announcing the plan from the White House.

Trump said he wrote to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas telling him that under his plan, there would be a four-year period during which Israel and the Palestinians would negotiate specifics of the boundaries — and that the US would help.

The plan includes a \$50 billion US investment in Palestine, which Trump vowed would create more than 1 million jobs over the next 10 years, empowering the sovereign state.

Trump said he had been personally anguished by the plight of the Palestinian people and called on the country to condemn terror group Hamas and empower itself, saying it was time for this “sad chapter in history to end.”

“They deserve a far better life. They deserve the chance to achieve their extraordinary potential,” Trump said.

“Palestinians have been trapped in a cycle of terrorism, poverty and violence, exploited by those seeking to use them as pawns to advance terrorism and extremism.”

Netanyahu thanked Trump and his delegation as well as American officials who helped negotiate the proposal.

Earlier, thousands of Palestinians demonstrated against Trump’s peace plan hours before its scheduled release at the ceremony at the White House.

While Israeli leaders have welcomed Trump’s long-delayed plan, Palestinian leaders called it dead on arrival and proof that the Trump administration was biased toward Israel.