

An Alternative Peace Plan

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Mar 2, 2020

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Brief Analysis

The **disenchanted response of much of the Arab world to U.S. President Trump's recently announced Peace Proposal (<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/fikraforum/view/arab-reactions-to-trumps-peace-plan-an-analysis-and-recommendation>)** has highlighted the serious need for alternative visions of a peace process, especially from Palestinians. And as an international community, we need to shake the foundations of this conflict to find peace. The reconciliation and peace that will follow will change relations between our conflicting peoples: so many of our concerns that we find pressing in times of conflict will become less pressing or even ameliorated in peace times.

An alternative is also vital due to the reality that continuing the status quo in the Palestinian Territories (West Bank and Gaza Strip) is a recipe for ceaseless conflict, not to mention an unsustainable condition. While the dangers of the status-quo may be more obvious to Palestinians, Israelis should also come to understand that things will not continue as they are without deterioration: Israel's denial of Palestinian sovereignty and self-determination violates international law and will gradually undermine the status of the state of Israel in the global arena, **fueling anti-Semitism globally. (<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/fikraforum/view/new-forms-of-old-hate-confronting-assads-anti-semitism-in-germany>)**

Thus, I am proposing an alternative peace plan, designed with every intention of being truly just and equitable to both parties. This peace plan, written by an individual and shaped by years of experience, is not designed to be a comprehensive alternative to previous negotiations. Rather, it is designed to put forth just and serious solutions to the most contentious issues of the conflict. It acknowledges the complex history of the basic issues underpinning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, **including the status of refugees (<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/fikraforum/view/deciphering-the-palestinian-position-within-the-un>), Jerusalem, borders, and the sovereignty (<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/fikraforum/view/is-dividing-jerusalem-the-key-to-peace>)** and self-determination rights of Palestinians and Jews throughout the Holy Land. It then suggests a way forward on these issues that are respectful and knowledgeable of both sides' concerns.

Mutual Recognition: Statehood and Borders

The underlying principle of this alternative agreement is that statehood for both populations is a required starting point. A sovereign, independent, and secular State of Palestine will be established in the West Bank and Gaza Strip next to a sovereign, independent, and Jewish state of Israel. Formal statehood will end the occupier-occupied relationship between the two peoples of Palestine and Israel.

While these two states will be mutually recognized and acknowledged, both sides must also recognize the mutual deep historical ties to the land so contested by both parties. Israel will recognize the Holy Land as the homeland of the Palestinian people, and Palestine will recognize the Holy Land as the homeland of the Jewish people. The Palestinians will acknowledge national sovereignty and self-determination of the Jewish people in their ancestral homeland as putting an end to over 1900 years of exile, dispersion and persecution. The Israelis will acknowledge national sovereignty and self-determination of the Palestinian people in their ancestral homeland formulated on the basis of UN Resolution 181, also known as the UN Partition Plan of 1947.

This recognition would also extend to minorities in both states: Palestinians would accept the legitimacy of Jewish historical rights in Palestine and accept a Jewish minority residing in an independent State of Palestine, enjoying full civil rights equal to those of the Arab majority. The Arab minority of Israel will enjoy also full civil rights equal to those of the Jewish majority. Jewish Palestinians in the State of Palestine and Arab Israelis in the State of Israel will be given the option to hold dual citizenship. This mutual recognition will do much to help end the hatred and enmity between both peoples.

Once this mutual recognition is established, basic political parameters between the two states will be established. Israelis will vote for the Israeli Knesset and Palestinians will vote for the Palestinian parliament. Similarly, court cases in Palestine will be judged according to Palestinian laws and court cases in Israel will be judged according to Israeli laws. However, Jews in Palestine holding Israeli citizenship will individually have the option of being extraterritorial, subject to Israeli laws, with Israeli courts trying them according to Israeli private and criminal law. This arrangement would respect the right of Jews not to be subject to Palestinian laws outside the field of public and administrative law.

From a security perspective, the State of Palestine will be de-militarized. The cases of Japan and West Germany after the Second World War demonstrate how the funds that would have otherwise been allocated to military expenditures were instead channeled into building both states' economies, building both nations into two of the most economically powerful and industrially successful countries.

A lack of a standing army will allow the State of Palestine to divert its limited financial and human resources to the development of its economic, scientific, and technological potential. In order to guarantee its security, Israel and Palestine will sign a mutual security pact designed to ensure the safety and security of both peoples. The international community would also assist the State of Palestine to confront religious radicalism, as well as threats from internal and external radical terrorist organizations.

The recognized borders of Israel and Palestine will be equivalent to pre-1967 borders with mutually agreed-upon adjustments and consensual land swaps—a principle both sides have already accepted. Said land-swaps would be equal in size and quality. However, unlike the standard nation-state model, the borders between the two states will be permeable and porous. In today's world, there is a diminishing necessity for borders.

The Palestinian Diaspora, displaced by the 1947-48 and 1967 wars, will be allowed to exercise their right of return to the State of Palestine. However, the demand that these refugees would be allowed to return to their original homes is no longer realistic or practical, given the global, regional, and local developments that have occurred since 1948, which deprived them of their state and Palestinian identity.

For those who choose not to exercise their right to return to a Palestinian state, compensation would be offered,

facilitated by the assets allocated for the implementation of peace. This would be facilitated by a joint-agreement between the State of Israel, the Arab oil-producing countries, and the international community to monetarily compensate Palestinians displaced in wars after 1947. These assets will primarily help facilitate the resettlement and absorption of the refugees in their natural national habitat. This would replace international services such as UNRWA originally designated to help Palestinian refugees. Jewish refugees forced to flee Arab states in the late 1940s and early 1950s will be similarly compensated from the same fund.

Jerusalem

Discussing territorial boundaries and citizenship inevitably lead to the particularly thorny question of the city of Jerusalem. Deciding the status of this ancient holy city to which the three Abrahamic religions are attached, must also be based on mutual respect and the recognition of its unique status. Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike rightfully view Jerusalem as their treasured and cherished city, and this unique religious importance must be recognized, acknowledged and respected in any final agreement.

Jerusalem must also be recognized as a city with a 'dual identity.' Jerusalem's Old City is the 'religious city' mentioned in holy scriptures and with deeply holy sites to all Abrahamic religions. Outside the walls of the Old City—built by the Ottoman sultan Suleiman the Lawmaker more than five hundred years ago—is the 'municipal city' that has been annexed into the broader concept of Jerusalem over the last hundred years. It is this municipal territory that can be shared as two capitals for Israel and Palestine.

The religiously-weighted 'old city' and the more administratively heavy 'municipal city' are radically different in meaning and status. As such, they must be placed under different models of governance. While keeping the city geographically unified—and without the use of modern walls and barbed wire, the Old City of Jerusalem will be placed under the sovereignty of God—the sacred authority all sides acknowledge and respect.

The two federal government structures, their Parliament/Knesset, and Supreme Courts of Israel and Palestine will both be seated outside the Old City, in West Jerusalem and East Jerusalem respectively. The affairs of the overall city would be run on a day-to-day basis by a municipality that represents all Jerusalemites.

The city's religious sacred sites, however, should be open to all. Currently, Muslims are freely allowed to visit Jewish and Christian Holy sites such as the Western Wall and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. As such, non-Muslims would be permitted to enter Muslim Holy sites such as Al-Haram al-Sheriff and Al-Aqsa Mosque.

At present, Jerusalem is physically united but is divided demographically, politically, psychologically, and religiously. And though the present situation reflects these divisions in a 'de-facto' status, this plan proposes granting a mutual de-facto and de-jure status that acknowledges these divisions while providing a way to satisfy both sides' political attachments to the city.

Cooperation and Coexistence

Though this plan proposes statehood, it also acknowledges the unique entwinement already experienced by Israelis and Palestinians.

Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza Strip will have the right to travel freely and to work in Israel. Israelis will be allowed to move freely and work in the independent Palestinian state.

A joint-commission will be created with the task of implementing a peace education curriculum educating people in both states about the history and culture of both Jews and Palestinians—together with the meaning and importance of the Holy Land to each community in preparation for the implementation of this plan. Learning at all levels will be supervised by this joint commission in order to ensure that it is void of indoctrination, hatred, and incitement.

Economic cooperation between Israel and Palestine will aim at securing the welfare and prosperity of both peoples.

Similar to the issue of refugees created by the war in 1948, the international community and Arab oil-producing countries would finance the bottom-up building of Palestinian infrastructures and the economy along with funds diverted from any theoretical military spending.

Shaping a Pathway to Peace

The above sections of the peace plan would be implemented in stages during a mutually-agreed timetable, encouraging both parties to honor previous agreement commitments and building the trust and confidence-building measures vital to any effective peace agreement. The United States, as part of its historical role as a third-party in the negotiations, would supervise the list of steps the two sides should take in the implementation of this plan. The European Union and the international community will also play a positive role in people-to-people engagements.

This proposed alternative peace plan fulfills the Palestinian dream to self-determination in establishing a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital. It also fulfills the Israeli dream of Jewish self-determination in Eretz Israel while keeping Jerusalem united to defuse the legitimate grievances that fuel Palestinian hatred of Zionism. By accomplishing these feats, the drawing of final borders between Israel and Palestine will be far less contentious, as the borders proposed in this plan merely designate where Israeli and Palestinian security services operate—not a civil barrier preventing Israelis or Palestinians from moving throughout their historical homeland.

It is possible—with creative thinking, trust building, as well as fresh, out-of-the-box proposals—for this conflict to come to an end. But for the Arab and the Muslim world to come to accept a Jewish state, Jewish self-determination, and residential rights in the Holy Land, Zionists must reciprocate by recognizing Palestinian sovereignty in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem.

This reciprocal recognition of sovereignty and self-determination rights in the Holy Land is the premise for Jews and Palestinians to believe once again in compromise, peace, and coexistence.

Accepting this peace plan would constitute a breakthrough in the process of forging relations between Israel, the Palestinians, and the Arab as well as the Muslim world.

This is a win-win Peace Plan.

Editor's Note: Given that this article is presented as an alternative peace plan, it is worth noting several major points of agreement with and divergence from the Trump Administration's current proposal. On the one hand, Dajani's plan accepts a controversial aspect of the recent Peace Plan: the recognition of Israel as a Jewish state. Conversely, the alternative plan rejects Trump's plan for Jerusalem and the proposed borders, presenting instead a fundamentally different understanding of how state and municipal borders should function—more along the lines of a European Union model. In contrast to the proposed U.S. peace plan, the Dajani plan also calls for the establishment of a Palestinian state at the start of the peace process as a necessary precondition for further negotiations. ❖

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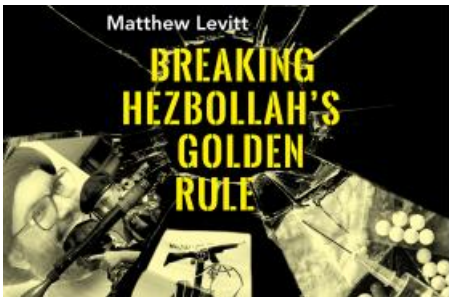
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