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Are the Palestinians Ready for Peace?

Why Arab intransigence makes peace most unlikely.

Just as all the presidents since Harry Truman before him, President Obama is spending much time, effort, and political capital trying to bring about peace between Israel and the Palestinians Arabs. If history is any guide, he will be as unsuccessful in this endeavor, just as every one of his predecessors.

What are the facts?

Many attempts at peace. In order to understand the unlikelihood of peace in the Middle East, it is necessary to trace the history of peace-making attempts between Israel and the Palestinians. Virtually all of them resulted in complete failure. Here is a list of only the most important of such events:

The enmity of the Arabs against the Jews in their midst and the violence against them predates the creation of the Jewish state. There were some peace proposals during the British Mandate (prior to 1948), but they were in vain and deserve little mention in this narrative. Notable was the Peel Commission proposal in 1937, in which the creation of an Arab state was suggested, but the Arabs rejected it.

The most important proposal in the history of peace making was the 1947 U.N. Resolution to create a large Arab state with the Jews receiving two disjointed pieces, consisting mostly of much of the coastline and the Negev Desert. Jerusalem was to be internationalized. The Jews accepted the plan. The Arabs totally rejected it. Instead, they invaded the nascent Jewish state with the armies of five Arab nations, in hopes to "drive the Jews into the sea" (one of their favorite imageries). Of course, that isn't the way it turned out. Instead, about 650,000 Arabs fled the area, mostly under the goading of their leaders. Remarkably, their descendants, even today, are called "refugees," supported by the United Nations, which means mostly by the United States.

Every year for the last 60+ years, the Arabs memorialize the "Nakba" (catastrophe) of the creation of the State of Israel. But, of course, without the war that they imposed on Israel, there would be no "Nakba." Just as Israel, the Arabs would now be able to commemorate the 63rd anniversary of their Palestinian state.

From 1948 to 1967, Jordan occupied the "West Bank." During the nineteen years of their tenure, not a word was

heard about forming a Palestinian state in the area. After the 1967 Six-Day War, in which the Israelis trounced the combined armies of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan, Jordan's occupation of the "West Bank" ended and so did Egypt's occupation of Gaza. At that time, Israel offered the hand of friendship to the Arabs, which was rudely rejected when the Arabs issued the Three No's of Khartoum: No Peace, No Negotiation, and No Recognition of Israel. Another important opportunity that would have radically changed the history of the Middle East was missed.

"If the Arabs had accepted the 1947 partition plan and had not invaded the nascent Jewish state ...they could be celebrating their country's 63rd anniversary of peace..."

Never-ending efforts at

peace. In 1993 and 1995 Israel and the PLO signed the Oslo Accords with the aim of creating a Palestinian state within five years. Israel agreed to withdraw from

parts of the West Bank and Gaza. Israel turned over most of its administration of the territories to the Palestinian Authority (PA). But, the Palestinians violated their commitments, thus scuttling the agreement.

In 2000, Prime Minister Ehud Barak offered to withdraw from 97% of the West Bank and 100% of Gaza. That proposal also guaranteed Palestinian refugees the right to return to the Palestinian state and offered reparations from \$30 billion of international funds that would be collected to compensate them. Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat rejected the deal.

In 2003, Israel's Prime Minister Ariel Sharon agreed to negotiate with the Palestinians according to the "road map" formulated by the United States, Russia, the European Union, and the U.N. The Palestinians never fulfilled their obligation to normalized relations with Israel and to arrive at a comprehensive peace. Another missed opportunity!

In 2005, Israel unilaterally decided to evacuate every soldier and citizen from Gaza. The "reward" for Israel's evacuation was for the Palestinians to launch rockets into Israel from Gaza at an almost daily rate. There were further attempts in 2007 by Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and in 2010 by Prime Minister "Bibi" Netanyahu, but all have ended in failure.

The above chronology is only a partial one, giving only the most important highlights. There have been negotiations, conferences, plans, and meetings almost uninterruptedly. All of them have foundered. The "all-or-nothing" mentality of the Arabs, their unwillingness to recognize Israel as a Jewish state, and the Arabs' expressed desire to destroy the hated Jews, have kept peace from flowering. What a shame! If the Arabs had accepted the 1947 partition plan and had not invaded the nascent Jewish state with the armies of five Arab countries, they would not now have the need today to commemorate their "Nakba." They could be celebrating their country's 63rd anniversary, their enduring peace with Israel, and could be part of the tremendous prosperity that Israel has brought to that region of the world.

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