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Mr. Netanyahu's Offer (I)

Would it bring peace to the tortured Middle East?

In a complete turnabout from previous positions, but probably also yielding to enormous pressure by President Obama, Israel's Prime Minister "Bibi" Netanyahu has declared his willingness to accept a Palestinian state.

What are the facts?

A generous offer. Since the "two-state solution" has long been declared to be the Holy Grail of the Palestinians, one would have expected that Mr. Netanyahu's announcement be greeted with cheers and hosannas. That, however, not surprisingly perhaps, was not the case. In fact, the Palestinians and all others involved declared it to be an insult and a "non-starter." The principal objections were that Mr. Netanyahu insisted that the newly created Palestinian state would have to be totally demilitarized, and that its air space would be available to the IAF (Israeli Air Force); that Jerusalem would remain undivided as the capital of the Jewish state; that the "Palestinian refugees" would, if they so desired, be returned to the newly formed state and not to Israel; that the Palestinians acknowledge Israel as the state of the Jews; and, finally, that he did not commit for the "settlements" to be dismantled. We shall address some of these objections in this message, the rest in a future message.

The "Settlements." Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") is the ancient Biblical homeland of the Jewish people. This area is part of the Palestinian Mandate, which was declared by the Balfour Declaration and by the mandate of the League of Nations, to be the homeland of the Jewish people. After the 1948 War of Israel's Liberation this area remained in possession of the Kingdom of Jordan, which declared sovereignty over the area. The only possible rationale for the conclusion that this area is Palestinian land is that it is encompassed by the 1949 armistice line. There is absolutely no other reason. This area has never been Palestinian land. In fact, never before the creation of the State of Israel has there ever been a Palestinian people or a Palestinian country anywhere in the long course of human history. The Palestinians were never until recent times in any control over the area. At the very most, the area could be described as "disputed." In fact, a very good case could be made that Jews have a better right than the Arabs to live there. What a shame that even the leaders of our country cannot see this fundamental truth. And don't let's forget that over one million Arabs live in Israel unmolested and nobody gets exercised about that.

There is little likelihood that Mr. Netanyahu's generous offer, however it might ultimately be modified, will be accepted by the Arabs. Because, if that were the objective, they could have had their own state for over seventy years. But whatever was offered was never sufficient. As Abba Eban, Israel's former Foreign Secretary, so well put it: "The Arabs will never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity." Sadly, therefore, there is little question that Mr. Netanyahu's generous offer of a separate state for the Palestinians will again be rejected – most likely even being followed by another "intifada."

Demilitarization. Not so long ago, Israel unilaterally evacuated every last Jewish family from Gaza. One would have hoped that the Palestinians, grateful for being rid of the hated Jews and no longer having to suffer their presence, would have shown their gratitude for that "liberation." Instead, almost from the very first day, they bombarded Israeli cities with thousands of rockets. Eventually, the patience of Israel snapped and it invaded Gaza to put a stop to this outrage. It has to be clear to all that having had such bad experience with Gaza, Israel is fully justified to expect that if statehood were ultimately granted to the Palestinians, and if demilitarization were not imposed and strictly supervised, the Palestinians of the "West Bank" would be equally inclined to attack Israel on a daily basis. Instead of being confronted by the insular Gaza, Israel would be surrounded totally by those who are sworn to destroy it.

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Full demilitarization would have to be a key requirement of any Palestinian statehood. Without it, virtually all of Israel – its population centers, its industries, its military installations and its international airport – would be under the gun. Life in Israel would be virtually impossible. How could anybody possibly think otherwise?

Return of the "Refugees." During the 1948 War of Liberation, about 650,000 Arabs, goaded by their leaders, fled the nascent state of Israel. They and their descendants wish to "return" to Israel. That is a bizarre request. The principal purpose of a Palestinian state would obviously have to be the ingathering and settling of the "Palestinian refugees" and not to foist them onto Israel. Injecting them into Israel would undermine the Jewish state and smooth the path to its destruction. And that is, indeed, the rub. The principal intent of the Arabs is not the creation of a state, but, as they repeat over and over, the destruction of Israel, which they call the "cancer on the Arab body." And don't let's forget that about 800,000 Jews, who escaped barely with their lives from Arab countries during the War of Liberation in 1948 and during the Six-Day War in 1967, were quickly absorbed into the state of Israel and are now at least one-half of the total population. The Arabs, in contrast, have kept their "refugees" in miserable refugee camps for the last 60+ years, on the dole of the world – mostly that of the United States.

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