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Facts & Logic About the Middle East

March 6, 2018

Palestinians reject Trump administration's Israel-Palestinian peace plan before they see it

Dear Friend of FLAME:

Greetings from Washington, DC, where I'm attending the AIPAC policy conference, the largest gathering of pro-Israel advocates outside of Israel. A major source of the buzz here concerns rumors spurting out about terms of the White House's long-anticipated [Israel-Palestinian peace plan](#).

While the plan hasn't been officially released—and the administration denies any truth to the rumors—terms were probably [leaked by Saudi Arabia](#), with whom U.S. mediators have been consulting as they develop proposals.

Whatever the source and however accurate the rumors, the Palestinians have made it clear they [hate the deal](#) in every way. Here are the purported highlights of the Trump plan:

- Recognition of a Palestinian state, with its capital in East Jerusalem
- Jerusalem's Old City will be placed under international protection
- Large settlement blocs will remain in about 10% of Judea and Samaria (all in area C of the West Bank), presumably under Israeli sovereignty
- Israel will retain control of the Jordan Valley but will turn over control of areas A and B—where most Palestinians live in the disputed territories—to the Palestinian Authority.
- A land bridge under Israel's sovereignty will connect the West Bank with Gaza
- Egypt will take over responsibility for security in the

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- Palestinians will relinquish the "right of return" for Palestinian refugees and their descendants, as well as all property claims inside Israel
- The U.S. will lead an effort to raise \$40 billion to aid development of the new state

Presumably, this "deal" would include Arab recognition of Israel as the homeland of the Jewish people—a notion that has driven the Palestinians apoplectic for decades.

While Israel has been wisely mute on these terms, we can imagine the major areas of discomfort: Dividing Jerusalem (which Netanyahu has promised will never happen) and putting the heart of it under international protection (protection from what?); plus a smaller piece of Judea and Samaria than Israel would like (Netanyahu is said to prefer 15% of the territories).

The Palestinians, however, are already fulminating wildly about the Trump proposal—though of course they haven't seen an official version. Saeb Erekat, long-time Palestinian negotiator and spokesperson, calls the proposal a framework for an apartheid single state.

Beneath the Palestinian Sturm and Drang has to be a) the Arabs' utter rejection of a Jewish state and b) their fantastical 70-year promise that all five million *descendants* of the original Palestinian refugees (only about 30,000 of the originals remain alive) will "return" to Israel and thus effect a demographic coup d'etat.

This week's FLAME *Hotline*-featured article provides a valuable perspective on how likely the Trump administration will be to make any progress with the Palestinians . . . or the Israelis for that matter.

Both leaderships have more to gain in the short term by forestalling such talks. What's more, as the writers make clear, neither Israeli nor Palestinian populations seem anxious for peace talks. Yet, despite it all, they conclude Mr. Trump could surprise us all and force some positive changes, if not a full-blown peace.

I hope you'll forward this concise analysis to friends, family and fellow congregants to help them understand what it would take for Israelis and Palestinians to get serious again about peace.

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I hope you'll also quickly review the P.S. immediately below, which describes FLAME's latest *hasbarah* campaign to directly [urge the President and U.S. Congress](#) to back up their rhetoric on Iran with definitive action. I hope you agree with and will support this message.

Best regards,

Jim Sinkinson

President, Facts and Logic About the Middle East (FLAME)

P.S. As you know, Iran has become the largest state sponsor of global terrorism and the most dangerous enemy of the U.S. What's worse, the Islamic Republic continues to spread its jihadist tentacles throughout the Middle East, and now has armed forces on Israel's borders in Syria and Lebanon. No wonder FLAME has created a new editorial message — "[We Must Stop Iran Now](#)"—which is about to start running in mainstream magazines and newspapers, including college newspapers, with a combined readership of some 10 million people. In addition, it is being sent to every member of the U.S. Congress and President Trump. If you agree that this kind of public relations effort on Israel's behalf is critical, I urge you to support us. Remember: FLAME's powerful ability to influence public opinion—and U.S. support of Israel—comes from individuals like you, one by one. I hope you'll consider giving a donation now, as you're able—with \$500, \$250, \$100, or even \$18. (Remember, your donation to FLAME is tax deductible.) To donate online, just go to [donate now](#). Now, more than ever, we need your support to ensure that the American people, the U.S. Congress and President Trump stay focused on—and take actions against—Iran's threat to our country, Israel and the entire world.

As of today, more than 15,000 Israel supporters receive the FLAME Hotline [at no charge](#) every week. If you're not yet a subscriber, won't you join us in receiving these timely updates, so you can more effectively [tell the truth about Israel](#)? Just go to [free subscription](#).

**Why a Two-State Solution for Israel and the
Palestinians Is Closer Than You Think**

by Ami Ayalon, Gilead Sher and Orni Petruschka,
Washington Post, February 28, 2018

As President Trump welcomes Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to the White House next week, opinions have never been more dour about the possibility of peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

The Trump administration says it is working on a plan, but its intended transfer of the U.S. Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and its open criticism of Palestinians' quest for statehood have driven the Arabs from the bargaining table. Meanwhile, support for a two-state solution has slipped to 46 percent among Israelis and Palestinians, and each population votes for politicians who oppose a deal. Likud, the party leading Israel, says it is uninterested in negotiating. (Indeed, many of its members and their coalition partners say they prefer various schemes to annex substantial parts of the West Bank.) Netanyahu is facing corruption allegations that could remove him from office, but a successor would probably commit to the same positions.

Yet things are not as hopeless as they seem. A survey last month by Tel Aviv University's Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research and the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, suggests that the Trump administration could devise a plan both publics could support. For those committed to Israel's security and character as a Jewish and democratic state, the survey's finding that "both sides prefer the two-state solution to all other conflict resolution options" gives several reasons for optimism.

The poll identifies concrete policy incentives that, if added to the basic terms of plans put forward over the past 18 years, would dramatically increase support for a new proposal. For example, 44 percent of Israeli Jews who oppose a two-state solution would change their minds if the Palestinian government commits to maintaining Israeli-Palestinian security cooperation, including sharing intelligence with Israeli security forces, preventing attacks and arresting terrorism suspects. Adding this element to a peace plan would increase Israeli support from 46 to 59 percent.

Among Palestinians who are opposed, 39 percent would change their minds and support an agreement if Israel recognized the "Nakba," the exodus of Palestinians who fled or were expelled from their homes in 1948 during what Israel calls its War of Independence, as well as the suffering of these refugees, and if Israel provides compensation to them.

(This does not require Israel to grant the refugees a right of return to Israel, a justifiable dealbreaker for Israelis.)

Including this provision in a plan would boost Palestinian backing to 62 percent.

Some incentives appeal to both sides. The most noteworthy ones, which would also advance U.S. interests, involve a regional approach. Making the Israeli-Palestinian agreement part of the framework of the Arab Peace Initiative would change the minds of 37 percent of Israelis and 24 percent of Palestinians who originally opposed an agreement. And including formal guarantees by the United States, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, which would create a joint commission to ensure proper implementation by both sides, would induce 39 percent of Israeli Jews who initially opposed the agreement to support it and 27 percent of Palestinians to do likewise.

A third component that appeals to both sides: ensuring that Palestine would be a democracy. This would change the minds of 40 percent of Israeli Jews and 37 percent of Palestinians to support an agreement.

In a Catch-22 finding, the most significant reason people oppose a two-state solution is their perception that it is not feasible. So, if the Trump administration's plan is demonstrably realistic and feasible, Palestinians and Israelis will support it.

These findings demonstrate that flexibility and open attitudes still exist on both sides and that the right policies can reverse rejection of a two-state package by Israelis and Palestinians. Both sides have shown a complete absence of political courage for a decade, and if the Trump administration hopes to surmount this cowardice, it will need proposals that allow the leaders to attract popular support while still making hard choices.

Still, progress is unlikely until the White House rehabilitates relations with the Palestinian leadership and repairs the damage caused by the Jerusalem declaration. That requires a fair and balanced plan, including terms referring to the Jerusalem area as hosting capitals of both states with a special regime over the Old City.

If Trump's team uses the survey's findings to carefully craft a plan that will garner the support of a majority of people on both sides, and regionally, the administration may well find that the people will drag their recalcitrant, spineless leaders into a process gradually leading to two states for two

peoples. Even if it does not result in an ultimate, final-status deal, that would still be a historic achievement.

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