



Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli conflict since 1967 (Third Edition)
William B. Quandt

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Appendix AB

*President Clinton's Parameters as Presented by Him to the Israeli and
Palestinian Negotiators,
December 23, 2000.*

On Wednesday, I went over general parameters to help focus your negotiations and gave you specific tasks. I know you have been working hard. I have heard reports from Madeleine and Dennis, and frankly, I believe that at this rate you will not get there. We are running out of time and cannot afford to lose this opportunity. I believe it is my responsibility to give you my best judgment of what it will take to narrow your differences on key issues so that leaders can take final decisions. Obviously, you will have to resolve other issues; but if you can resolve these core ones, I believe you will reach a deal.

I want to make clear this is not a U.S. proposal. Rather, it reflects my best judgment of what it will take to conclude an agreement in the next two weeks. If these ideas are not accepted by either side, they will be off the table and have no standing in the future.

I ask you to take these ideas back to your leaders. I am prepared to meet with them separately to further refine them and plan for a summit to conclude an agreement. But it should be clear to them that they should not come here to renegotiate these ideas. They should come here to try to refine them within the boundaries I will set forth. I would like to know by Wednesday if they are prepared to come on that basis.

TERRITORY

You heard from me last time that I believe the solution will need to provide for Palestinian sovereignty over somewhere between 90 and 100 percent of West Bank territory, and that there will need to be swaps and other territorial arrangements to compensate for the land Israel annexes for its settlement blocs.

Based on what I have heard since we last met, I believe the solution should be in the mid-90 percents; I believe you should work on the basis of a solution that provides between 94 and 96 percent of West Bank territory to the Palestinian state with a land swap of 1 to 3 percent; you will need to work out other territorial arrangements such as permanent Safe Passage. As you work out the territorial arrangements, you might also consider the swap of leased land to meet your respective needs.

Given these parameters, you should lose no time in developing final maps consistent with the criteria I laid out last time (e.g., 80 percent of the settlers in blocs, contiguity of territory for each side, minimize annexation and the number of Palestinians affected).

SECURITY

As I said on security the last time, the challenge is to address legitimate Israeli security concerns while respecting Palestinian sovereignty. The key lies in an international presence that can only be withdrawn by the agreement of both sides. My best judgment is that Israeli withdrawal should be phased over thirty-six months while the international force is gradually introduced into the area. At the end of this period, a small Israeli presence in fixed locations would remain in the Jordan Valley under the authority of the international force for another thirty-six months. This period could be reduced in the event of favorable regional developments that diminish the threats to Israel.

On early-warning stations, I believe that Israel should maintain three facilities on the West Bank with a Palestinian liaison presence; the stations would be subject to review after three years, with any change in status to be mutually agreed.

On the emergency deployments, I understand you still have work to do on developing maps of the relevant areas and routes. In defining what would constitute an "emergency," I suggest you think about formulations that refer to "an imminent and demonstrable threat to Israel's national security that requires Israel to declare a national state of emergency." Of course, the international forces would need to be notified of any such determination. On airspace, I suggest that the state of Palestine will have sovereignty over its airspace but that the two sides should work out special arrangements for Israeli training and operational needs.

I understand that the Israeli position is that Palestine should be defined as a "demilitarized state," while the Palestinian side has proposed "a state of limited arms." As a possible compromise formula I suggest you think in terms of a "non-militarized state." This would be consistent with the fact that, as well as a strong Palestinian security force, Palestine will have an international force for border security and deterrence purposes. Whatever the terminology, you need to work out specific understandings on the parameters of the Palestinian security forces.

JERUSALEM AND REFUGEES

I am acutely aware how difficult the Jerusalem and refugee issues are to both sides. My sense, however, is that the remaining gaps are more in formulations than in the practical realities.

JERUSALEM

On Jerusalem, as I said last time the most promising approach is to follow the general principle that what is Arab in the City should be Palestinian and what is Jewish should be Israeli; this would apply to the Old City as well. I urge you to work on maps to create maximum contiguity for both sides within this framework.

We have all spent a lot of energy trying to solve the issue of the Haram/Temple Mount. One thing seems clear to me-the gap does not relate to practical administration of the area but to symbolic issues of sovereignty and finding a way to accord respect to the religious beliefs of both sides. This is nevertheless clearly one of your most sensitive issues and concerns the interests of religious communities beyond Israel and Palestine.

I know you have been speaking about a number of formulations. Perhaps you can agree on one. But I want to suggest two additional approaches that I believe would formalize Palestinian de facto control over the Haram while respecting the convictions of the Jewish people. Under each, there could be an international monitoring system to provide mutual confidence.

1. Your agreement could provide for Palestinian sovereignty over the Haram, and for Israeli sovereignty over either "the Western Wall and the space sacred to Judaism of which it is a part" or "the Western Wall and the holy of holies of which it is a part." There would be a firm commitment by both not to excavate beneath the Haram or behind the Western Wall.

2. Alternatively, the agreement could provide for Palestinian sovereignty over the Haram and Israeli sovereignty over the Western Wall and for "shared functional sovereignty over the issue of excavation under the Haram or behind the Western Wall." That way, mutual consent would be required before any excavation takes place in these areas.

One of these formulations should be acceptable to you both.

REFUGEES

The issue of Palestinian refugees is no less sensitive than Jerusalem. But here again my sense is that your differences are focused mostly on how to formulate your solutions, not on what will happen on the practical level. I believe Israel is prepared to acknowledge the moral and material suffering caused to the Palestinian people as a result of the 1948 War and the need to assist the international community in addressing the problem. I also believe the Palestinian side is prepared to join in such an international solution and that we have a pretty good idea of what it would involve.

The fundamental gap seems to be how to handle the concept of the right of return. I know the history and how hard it would be for the Palestinian leadership to appear to be abandoning this principle. At the same time, I know the Israeli side cannot accept any reference to a right of return that would imply a right to immigrate to Israel in defiance of Israel's sovereign policies on admission or that would threaten the Jewish character of the State.

Any solution will have to address both of these needs. It will also have to be consistent with the two-state approach that both sides have accepted as the way to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. A new State of Palestine is about to be created as the homeland of the Palestinian people, just as Israel was established as the homeland of the Jewish people. Under this two-state solution, our guiding principle has to be that the Palestinian state will be the focal point for the Palestinians who choose to return to the area, without ruling out that Israel will accept some of these refugees.

I believe you need to adopt a formulation on the right of return that will make clear there is no specific right of return to Israel, itself, but that does not negate the aspirations of Palestinian refugees to return to the area. I propose two alternatives:

Both sides recognize the right of Palestinian refugees to return to historic Palestine.

Both sides recognize the right of Palestinian refugees to a homeland.

The agreement would define the implementation of this general right in a way that is consistent with the two-state solution. It would list the five possible homes for refugees; 1) The State of Palestine; 2) Areas in Israel being transferred to Palestine in the land swap; 3) Rehabilitation in host country; 4) Resettlement in third country; 5) Admission to Israel.

In listing these five options, you would make clear that return to the West Bank, Gaza, or the areas acquired through the land swap would be a right for all Palestinian refugees, while rehabilitation in their host countries, resettlement in third countries, or absorption into Israel would depend upon the policies of those countries. Israel could indicate in the agreement that it

intended to establish a policy so that some of the refugees could be absorbed into Israel, consistent with Israel's sovereign decision.

I believe that priority should be given to the refugee population in Lebanon. Taken together the parties would agree that these steps implement Resolution 194.

END OF CONFLICT

I propose that the agreement clearly mark the end of the conflict and its implementation put an end to all claims. This could be implemented through a UN Security Council Resolution that notes that resolutions 242 and 338 have been implemented and through the final release of Palestinian prisoners.

WRAP-UP

I believe this is the outline of a fair and lasting agreement. It gives the Palestinian people the ability to determine their future on their own land, a sovereign and viable state recognized by the international community, al-Quds as its capital, sovereignty over the Haram, and new lives for the refugees.

It gives the people of Israel a genuine end to the conflict, real security, the preservation of sacred religious ties, the incorporation of 80 percent of the settlers into Israel. and the largest Jewish Jerusalem in history, recognized by all as your capital.

This is the best I can do. I would ask you to brief your leaders and let me know if they are prepared to come for discussions based on these ideas. I want to be very clear on one thing. These are my ideas. If they are not accepted they are not just off the table. They go with me when I leave office.

*From Dennis Ross, **The Missing Peace: The Inside Story of the Fight for Middle East Peace**, (Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2004), Appendix pp. 801-805*

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