

U.S./MIDDLE EAST PROJECT

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A LAST CHANCE FOR A TWO-STATE ISRAEL-PALESTINE AGREEMENT

A Bipartisan Statement on U.S. Middle East Peacemaking

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The following recommendations for U.S. Middle East peacemaking were submitted to the administration of President Barack Obama by a bipartisan group of ten former senior government officials: Zbigniew Brzezinski, Chuck Hagel, Lee H. Hamilton, Carla Hills, Nancy Kassebaum-Baker, Thomas R. Pickering, Brent Scowcroft, Theodore C. Sorensen, Paul A. Volcker, and James D. Wolfensohn. All of them are Senior Advisors of the U.S./Middle East Project and members of its International Board, chaired by General Scowcroft.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We urge the next U.S. administration to engage in prompt, sustained and determined efforts to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Previous initiatives having failed, the incoming administration will no doubt be urged to defer or avoid renewed engagement for three reasons:

1. Prioritizing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would distract the new president from efforts to address critical challenges to the nation's security: Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Russia, and threats from terror organizations.
2. Peace cannot be imposed by the U.S.A. or any outside party. The only enduring solution will be one conceived by the parties themselves.
3. Pressing both sides to reach agreement may risk angering domestic constituencies.

We believe all three arguments are invalid.

Today, when our enemies avoid America's military superiority by waging information warfare and terror, an early Arab-Israeli peace is indispensable. Although a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace would not erase Al Qaeda, it would help drain the swamp in which it and other violent and terrorist movements thrive, and eliminate a major source of global Muslim anti-Americanism. Iran would find the strategic advantages it recently gained in the Arab world greatly reduced. Far from being a distraction from other Middle Eastern crises, an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement would significantly facilitate their amelioration.

Conversely, for the U.S. to avoid effective facilitation and mediation is to cede the field to America's enemies who are counting on the Arab-Israeli dispute as the gift that keeps on giving.

According to polls, most Israeli and Palestinian public opinions back a fair settlement, and Arab countries now offer unprecedented support for the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002, spurred by the twin threats posed by Iran and radical Islamist movements, and see substantial strategic value in a comprehensive peace accord. In Europe and elsewhere, a strong U.S. initiative would be warmly welcomed.

A new U.S. effort to reach an Israeli-Palestinian agreement may anger certain domestic constituencies. We do not, however, believe it is beyond the capability of any American President to explain to the American people why this long-running dispute must at long last be ended and why it will take much diplomatic heavy lifting and public expenditure

to make it work. In the end the stakes are too high to pursue a hands-off or arm's-length approach.

Unless the president tackles this problem early it is unlikely to be done at all. Political capital will erode; domestic obstacles will grow; other issues will dominate; and the warring parties will play for time and run the clock.

Failure to act would prove extremely costly. It would not only undermine current efforts to weaken extremist groups, bolster our moderate allies and rally regional support to stabilize Iraq and contain Iran, but would also risk permanent loss of the two-state solution as settlements expand and become entrenched and extremists on both sides consolidate their hold. In short, the next six to twelve months may well represent the last chance for a fair, viable and lasting solution.

To maximize the prospects for success, we urge four key steps, drawing on lessons from past successes and failures.

1. Present a Clear U.S. Vision to End the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: The dispute between the two sides is too deep, and the discrepancies of power between them too vast, for them to solve their conflict without the U.S. acting as a determined outside and evenhanded advocate and facilitator.

The most important step President Obama should take early in his presidency is to flesh out the outlines of a fair, viable and sustainable agreement, based on principles that both Israel and the Palestinians have previously accepted by signing on to UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, the Oslo Accords, the 2003 Road Map, and the 2007 Annapolis understandings. The charge that advancing such principles would constitute improper "outside impositions" is therefore groundless.

The U.S. parameters should reflect the following fundamental compromises:

- Two states, based on the lines of June 4, 1967, with minor, reciprocal, and agreed-upon modifications as expressed in a 1:1 land swap, to take into account areas heavily populated by Israelis in the West Bank;
- A solution to the refugee problem consistent with the two-state solution, that does not entail a general right of return, addresses the Palestinian refugees' sense of injustice, and provides them with meaningful financial compensation as well as resettlement assistance;
- Jerusalem as home to both capitals, with Jewish neighborhoods falling under Israeli sovereignty and Arab neighborhoods under Palestinian sovereignty, with special arrangements for the Old City providing each side control of its respective holy places and unimpeded access by each community to them;

- A non-militarized Palestinian state, together with security mechanisms that address Israeli concerns while respecting Palestinian sovereignty, and a U.S.-led multinational force to ensure a peaceful transitional security period. This coalition peacekeeping structure, under UN mandate, would feature American leadership of a NATO force supplemented by Jordanians, Egyptians and Israelis. We can envision a five-year, renewable mandate with the objective of achieving full Palestinian domination of security affairs on the Palestine side of the line within 15 years.
2. Encourage Israeli-Syrian Negotiations to fundamentally transform the regional landscape and ultimately detach Damascus from its uneasy strategic partnership with Iran. The next administration should be actively involved in direct negotiations between the two sides to try to bring them to closure, even as it works actively on the Israeli-Palestinian track.
 3. A More Pragmatic Approach Toward Hamas and a Palestinian Unity Government: A legitimate, unified and empowered Palestinian side to negotiate with Israel is of importance if any agreement is to be reached and implemented. Direct U.S. engagement with Hamas may not now be practical, but shutting out the movement and isolating Gaza has only made it stronger and Fatah weaker. Israel itself has acknowledged Hamas is simply too important and powerful to be ignored.

In brief, shift the U.S. objective from ousting Hamas to modifying its behavior, offer it inducements that will enable its more moderate elements to prevail, and cease discouraging third parties from engaging with Hamas in ways that might help clarify the movement's views and test its behavior.

Finally, cease discouraging Palestinian national reconciliation and make clear that a government that agrees to a ceasefire with Israel, accepts President Mahmoud Abbas as the chief negotiator, and commits to abiding by the results of a national referendum on a future peace agreement would not be boycotted or sanctioned.

PROPOSED POLICY DIRECTIONS

I. Arab-Israeli Peace in the Context of American Interests and Capabilities

For the better part of six decades American presidents have struggled to define how best to help Israelis and Arabs resolve bitter disputes left behind by wars and dislocations in 1948 and 1967 and deepened ever since. A significant achievement – the creation and sustaining of a democratic Jewish State in the wake of the Holocaust – was accompanied by considerable and ongoing Palestinian suffering. While the intimacy of the American-Israeli relationship is highly valued by Americans and Israelis alike, this very intimacy – compounded by the unresolved consequences of past wars and current controversies – presents policy and security challenges for the U.S. in the Middle East and beyond. At no time since 1948 has this been truer than now, seven years after the 9/11 terror attacks and more than five years after the invasion of Iraq.

We have long had vital strategic interests in the Middle East: Israel's survival; assured access to vital natural resources; the security of strategic transportation routes; and close relations with friends and allies in the Arab world. 9/11 added a new national security dimension to the pursuit of American interests in the Arab-Israeli context. These interests are enduring. Their achievement is facilitated when the U.S. is seen as genuinely pursuing Arab-Israeli peace.

Osama Bin Laden did not commission attacks in New York and Washington, D.C. to “free Palestine.” Yet tens of millions of young men and women in the Arab world and the Muslim world beyond – the products of demographic “youth bulges” in challenged economies – are targeted for recruitment by al-Qaeda and its affiliates partly on the basis of ongoing defeat, injustice and humiliation in the Arab-Israeli context. Some of these recruits have found their way to Iraq. Others no doubt await opportunities to strike at American interests and persons. Sadly, the post-9/11 U.S. waited until the end of the current administration to make a concerted effort to encourage talks between Palestinians and Israelis, even though the invasion and occupation of Iraq produced yet more challenges to America's standing in the Middle East.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has not distinguished itself in its material support for Palestinians in cities, villages and refugee camps. Yet Iran's program of penetrating the Arab world and challenging governments friendly to the U.S. rests in significant measure on exploiting Palestinian misery and grievance. Indeed, its proxy in Lebanon (Hezbollah) bases its so-called “resistance” not only on Lebanese issues, but on its proclaimed desire to “liberate Jerusalem.”

In an era where enemies of the U.S. avoid confronting America's military superiority and instead wage information warfare and practice terror, taking advantage of failed and failing states to kill Americans and defeat American interests, *it is essential that the incoming administration make Arab-Israeli peace a high national security priority from the beginning.* A comprehensive Arab-Israel peace will not erase al-Qaeda.

Yet it would help drain the swamp in which the disease thrives and mutates. Israeli treaties with Palestine, Syria and Lebanon would bring the entire Arab League into the peace camp in line with the Arab Peace Initiative. An Iran still hostile to the U.S. and Israel would find the strategic advantages it has recently gained in the Arab world all but eliminated.

Our relationship with Israel is what makes the U.S. central in brokering a comprehensive peace. Security assistance and strategic dialogue aim to guarantee Israel's "qualitative military edge" over any conceivable array of enemies and strengthen the U.S.-Israel security partnership. Still, within Israel there are strong and vocal minorities opposing peace; not in word, but in deed. Militant settlers and their political supporters want nothing to do with the kinds of compromises – the "painful concessions" in the words of Ariel Sharon – that would create a viable Palestinian state and secure peace with Syria and Lebanon. Theirs is a vision of perpetual conflict over real estate and settlement expansion; warfare welcomed, ironically, as a gift of unsurpassed value by the enemies of the U.S. and Israel. Yet most Israelis understand and appreciate that, at the end of the day, what really matters most for Israel's security is a relationship of trust, confidence and friendship with the U.S. and, in particular, with the President of the United States. A Government of Israel deciding to make the hard compromises and painful concessions for peace simply must be able to say, as a matter of domestic political survival, "The President – and thus the U.S. – is with us and wants us to do this for the cause of peace."

Israel's interlocutors – Palestinians, Syrians and Lebanese – also want and need us "at the table." The only way we can (and have) hurt Israel is when we are AWOL and absent ourselves from the task of helping to create a sustainable, comprehensive peace between it and its neighbors. That which Arab parties need from us is precisely what Israeli peacemakers – representing the majority of Israelis – need: unstinting American moral and material support for a Government of Israel willing to do what must be done to make peace with all of its neighbors. It is the intimate nature of the U.S.-Israel relationship that makes the U.S. and its President absolutely vital in assisting Israel to settle the unresolved issues between it and its neighbors.

At the center of this conflict are two peoples – Israeli and Palestinian – who want and deserve peace after all these years of struggle. Each side believes it is the other that holds the key to peace and the other that must take the decisive first step. Trust and confidence between them – never strong at any time over the past 60 years – have reached a nadir. The U.S. role in these difficult circumstances is to do all it can to help restore trust and confidence by building effective cooperation and limiting breakdowns in the process. Yet, even more, the US will have to convince each side that compromise is essential; it will have to do so insistently and systematically, for there are painful concessions required of all. This will require a careful blend of persuasion, inducement, reward and pressure aimed at changing a "lose-lose" dynamic to one reflecting mutual benefit.

There is a cliché – one that has the merit of truth – to the effect that “Everyone knows, more or less, what the peace treaties will say; the hard part is getting to the signings.” There has been no shortage of unofficial, bilateral drafting of “treaty” language – this is hardly a “wheel” to be “reinvented.” Indeed, the outline of an Israeli-Palestinian accord was crafted during the dying days of the Clinton administration. Yet getting to the end-game will be anything but easy.

Incoming Presidents have many priorities (foreign and domestic) and are fully subject to the unexpected crisis and unplanned-for emergency. While the outgoing administration found ways to avoid consistent and insistent engagement, the centrality of the President in “getting to yes” raises for the conscientious Chief Executive the risk of too much time and exposure being demanded of the Oval Office; the kind of profile that inspired some in the incoming Bush administration to describe President Clinton as “the Israeli-Palestinian desk officer” because of *his* last-minute attempts to make peace. There is no avoiding the decisive role of the President or the necessity of engagement if Americans and their interests are to be protected. Yet no President – especially one inheriting two wars – can afford to be riveted by Arab-Israeli peacemaking at the expense of the rest of the world.

We think that a presidential Special Envoy – someone in whom the President has extraordinary confidence – can help reserve presidential input for truly decisive moments while pressing the parties toward closure. The parties must have confidence in the impartiality of this person and see him or her as someone who speaks authoritatively for the President. Otherwise there will be successful attempts to end-run the Envoy and throw the U.S. facilitation effort into chaos. Discipline is essential: the parties must see the Special Envoy as operating with the full backing of the President and the entire executive branch.

Regardless of how the new administration organizes to deal with Arab-Israeli matters it will not avoid domestic political controversy. There are Jewish-American and Christian Zionist groups that feel comfortable amplifying the positions of Israeli politicians hostile to hard compromise and painful concession. At times the administration may take positions coordinated with an Israeli Prime Minister who may nevertheless feel unable, for domestic political reasons, to acknowledge his or her complicity. Moreover, there are virtually limitless ways in which actions and words emanating from Arab parties can make constructive American behavior look ridiculous. A disciplined American diplomatic approach can inadvertently yield bouts of domestic political unpleasantness that can spill over onto other priorities.

We do not, however, believe it is beyond the capability of any American President to explain to the American people why this long-running dispute must at long last be ended and why it will take much diplomatic heavy lifting and public expenditure to make it work. In the end the stakes are too high to pursue a hands-off or arm’s-length approach. The extremist and terrorist enemies of everything America stands for are counting on the Arab-Israeli dispute to be a gift that keeps on giving. To avoid the difficult tasks of effective facilitation and mediation is to cede the field to America’s

enemies. Seen in this light the often unpleasant and frustrating aspects of Arab-Israeli peace making are considerably less costly than neglect: benign or otherwise.

II. Obstacles to Successful Negotiations

If facilitating and mediating Arab-Israeli peace were easy, peace would have long ago been achieved. The following list of obstacles is impressive, though possibly not comprehensive.

- *Deep distrust at the popular level.* Palestinians feel the crushing, demoralizing weight of occupation and have little confidence in Israel's willingness to lift it voluntarily. Israelis see violence and terror emanating from the Palestinian side as the continuation of a long history of Jews being targeted because they are Jews. Israelis and Syrians see each other as aliens inhabiting different planets. The idea that Israelis and Lebanese could get along if only left alone by others has perhaps long since expired. Even in today's incomplete circle of peace – Egypt, Israel and Jordan – there is precious little warmth at the popular level.
- *Weak governments and chronic disunity in Israel.* The typical Government of Israel is a multi-party coalition whose unifying theme often amounts to no more than a desire to avoid national elections for as long as possible in order to retain control of key ministries. While the desire to perpetuate incumbency often inspires grudging party discipline, disloyalty and back-stabbing are often ubiquitous within cabinets. A prime minister sincerely interested in achieving critical mass for comprehensive peace needs enormous political skills, steady American support (sometimes disguised as pressure), cooperation and good will from Arab parties deeply skeptical of Israeli intentions, and considerable good fortune.
- *West Bank-Gaza/Fatah-Hamas split.* Disunity also plagues the Palestinian side. Since June 2007 Hamas – which has rejected the Quartet's conditions for engagement – has ruled the Gaza Strip. Fatah governs the Palestinian Authority (PA) from the West Bank, but it is not clear how far its writ runs beyond Ramallah. PA President Mahmoud Abbas tries to maintain an uneasy balance between a competent, reforming prime minister (Salam Fayyad) and an incompetent, corrupt old guard. Israeli-Palestinian violence in and around Gaza undermines the prospects for negotiating success and renders impossible the full implementation of any agreement reached. The absence of Palestinian unity – at least in the form of a PA governing all of the occupied territories – makes the negotiating process problematical at best. Israel cannot make peace with only a part of the Palestinian polity, and it is not clear how long pro-peace Palestinian leaders can stay in office.
- *External Negative Influences.* Syria and Iran, through their support for Hamas, other Palestinian “rejectionist” groups, and Hezbollah, actively aim to keep Israeli and Palestinian talks from reaching closure. For Syria the policy dictum

(and palpable fear) since the 1993 Oslo Agreement with respect to the recovery of occupied territory has been quite simple: “Palestine first, Syria never.” For Iran, ongoing Israeli-Palestinian/Israeli-Arab violence offers a golden opportunity to penetrate the Arab world politically (as it has done with considerable success in Lebanon and Syria) and marginalize the U.S. strategically.

- *Ineffective, half-hearted American facilitation.* The belated Annapolis initiative is a sincere but flawed effort to compensate for seven years of American absenteeism from substantive peace talks. It asks Israelis and Palestinians to negotiate in good faith and simultaneously implement Quartet “roadmap” obligations, with no Americans in the room to help with talks and an insufficient, part-time U.S. effort to “monitor” roadmap implementation. It discourages diplomatic efforts aimed at identifying ways – if they exist – to bring elements of Hamas “into the tent.” In effect it hands the power of veto to terrorists and extremists.
- *U.S.-Syrian distrust.* Relations between Washington and Damascus – never warm – went ice cold after the invasion of Iraq and into the deep freeze after the assassination of Lebanon’s Rafiq Hariri. Even though an Israeli-Syrian peace treaty could detach Damascus from the orbit of Iran and clear Israel’s way for peace with the Palestinians and Lebanon, U.S. support for Israel’s approach in this regard has been grudging because of understandable animus toward Damascus (and Tehran) and a lack of appetite for tough, give-and-take diplomacy. Washington has seen Syria as irretrievably in the thrall of Tehran, addicted to state sponsorship of terrorism and a permanent enemy of Lebanese independence and democracy. The administration has hoped that the Special Tribunal created to bring to justice the murderers of Rafiq Hariri would somehow bring the regime in Damascus to heel; an analytical judgment not shared by Israel.

III. Substantive Issues to be Resolved

Israel-Palestine

- *Territory.* Borders of the two states would be based on the 1967 armistice lines. Yet they would likely be adjusted by mutual agreement in order to take into account areas heavily populated by Israelis in the West Bank since 1967 and equivalent areas to be ceded to Palestine in exchange. The Gaza Strip is not under contention, but the amount of the West Bank to be ceded to Israel and the nature of any “swap” to compensate the Palestinian side will be controversial. The aim will be to incorporate large settlement blocs within Israel while preserving Palestinian contiguity both within the West Bank and between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the latter by means of a corridor (whose characteristics await definition) linking the two, in an effort to provide each state with the territorial size determined by the 1967 line.

- *Security.* The borders between the two states must be physically secure and fully controlled for their entire length. A U.S.-led multinational force would likely be essential for a transitional period once a peace agreement is concluded. Palestine would likely be non-militarized. No doubt Jerusalem will require a special security and administrative regime of its own and special arrangements will be needed for the use and regulation of Palestinian airspace.
- *Jerusalem.* Ideally the city would remain physically undivided while accommodating two national capitals, with Jewish holy places administered by Israel and Muslim and Christian holy places administered by Palestine. Yet worsening security conditions accompanying the “Al Aqsa Intifada” beginning in September 2000 have perhaps made it mandatory (at least for a transitional period) for physical controls to secure Israeli and Palestinian areas of control. The formula of Israel governing Jewish neighborhoods and Palestine governing Arab neighborhoods largely works. Special arrangements, however, will be needed for the Old City and the Historic Basin of which it is a part. In some cases (most notably the Temple Mount/Haram ash-Sharif) creative approaches to control merit close examination.
- *Refugees.* For Israelis the “right of return” issue is the ultimate “third rail.” For Palestinians, the entitlement of four million refugees to justice and dignity is an absolute. A formula must be found to protect Israel from an influx of refugees, assist Palestine to absorb as many refugees as possible, and offer Palestinian refugees options for productive and dignified lives in Palestine or elsewhere, closing refugee camps wherever they exist. This will be an undertaking requiring substantial resources. While Arab support will be critical, so will American leadership and Israeli cooperation.
- *Water.* Even during the worst of times Israeli and Palestinian water officials and experts have found it possible to speak and act in ways consistent with the proper administration of a scarce and vital shared resource. Still, terms will have to be reached protecting Israel’s access to aquifers lying largely beneath Palestinian territory while permitting Palestine to develop its water resources to support an expanding population as well as agricultural and industrial development. Desalination can play an important role in increasing municipal water supplies for both parties, and cooperation in the water sector can build strong ties between Israel, Palestine and Jordan.

Israel-Syria

- *Territory.* Syria desires the return of all territory lost to Israel in June 1967. Should Israel comply, Syria would regain the Golan Heights plus about 12 square miles of land in the Jordan Valley, including beach-front property on the northeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee (Israel’s natural reservoir).

- *Water.* Israel wishes to protect its full jurisdiction over water resources in the Israeli part of the Jordan Valley (including the Sea of Galilee) and ensure that a return of the Golan Heights to Syria does not create environmental problems affecting water vital to Israel. Israel also wants Jordan River sources beyond its sovereign control to flow relatively unobstructed. “Syria gets the line, Israel gets the water” is the essence of the tradeoff.
- *Security.* Demilitarization of the Golan Heights and limited forces zones on both sides – all likely to be supervised by multinational forces featuring American leadership – will be mandatory.
- *Access.* Regardless of where the official boundary is placed, Israelis – loath to give up the Golan Heights for any price – will want easy access to the full circumference of the Sea of Galilee.
- *Iran-Lebanon-Hamas.* Israel will want to be certain that the return of territory to Syria in accordance with a peace treaty will be preceded or accompanied by a strategic decision by Syria to participate in no anti-Israeli alliances of any kind. Moreover, Syria would be expected to use its influence to encourage Lebanon to reach a formal peace with Israel and to negate any threats to Israel from Lebanese territory. Finally, (assuming a “Syria first” scenario) Israel would want Damascus to use its influence with Hamas and other Palestinian organizations to facilitate Israeli-Palestinian peace.

ANNEX: ADDRESSING ISRAEL'S SECURITY CHALLENGES

Peace between Israelis and Palestinians will not occur without a two-state solution. Although risk-taking is an essential and unavoidable element of settling long-standing conflicts, Israel will wish to trade little if anything in physical security for a peace agreement creating a Palestinian state. This means that the detailed working out of mutually acceptable security arrangements to help govern and guide the Israel-Palestine bilateral relationship is mandatory.

A state, by definition, possesses a monopoly on the lawful, legitimate use of violence. Yet even in strong, well-established states criminal elements undertake illegal acts – some involving violence – across boundaries into neighboring states. Although Israel may face challenges in this regard in the context of a two-state outcome, clearly it is the Palestinian side that requires (and is currently receiving) outside assistance in the security arena. Beyond the current efforts we expect that, upon the full agreement of the parties, there will be a robust international effort involving outside armed forces for a period of indeterminate length assisting Palestinian authorities in executing their responsibilities in the security sphere and helping them build capacity in order eventually to act without outside assistance.

In the end either the State of Palestine will be fully responsible, accountable and competent in its security responsibilities vis-à-vis its neighbors (especially Israel) or the two-state “solution” will fall short of solving the security problems afflicting Palestinians and Israelis. Indeed, interim security arrangements – albeit those consented to by the Palestinian side in the context of full agreement with Israel – are likely to be very intrusive. These interim arrangements could involve various scenarios and combinations of actors: continued Israeli domination of the security scene; shared U.S., third country, Israeli and Palestinian roles in interim security arrangements; or a leading Palestinian role complemented by close cooperation with Israel and third country support as required.

Whatever the scenario and combination arrived at, the goal should be to build bilateral cooperation and mutual confidence. Interim security arrangements should be fully agreed to by the parties and blessed by a UN Security Council resolution setting out the parameters of international support for the parties. Naturally the U.S. will play a large and perhaps decisive role. Yet it should not act alone – there should be broad participation reflecting international consensus on the importance of supporting the emergence of a truly sustainable two-state outcome.

While potential scenarios and actors are numerous, we can envision a coalition peacekeeping structure under UN mandate featuring American leadership of a NATO force supplemented by Jordanians, Egyptians and Israelis. We can envision a five-year, renewable mandate with the objective of achieving full Palestinian domination of security affairs on the Palestine side of the line within 15 years. Yet we fully understand the complexities of terms of reference, rules of engagement, contributing states, funding and the like. We are less interested in prescribing a specific formula than we are in

emphasizing that, whatever the approach, it must be flexible and yet focus relentlessly on building enduring, positive relationships between the parties themselves. Creating trust and changing attitudes are the central objectives. Failure in this respect would be to substitute one form of occupation for another and to frustrate the implementation of a real two-state *solution*.

In its dying days the Bush administration – in conjunction with its Annapolis peace initiative – took notice of this challenge and launched a constructive initiative involving the appointment of General (Ret.) James Jones as Special Envoy for Middle East Regional Security. As a former Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps, NATO Supreme Commander and Commander of the European Command, General Jones has, since his appointment in November 2007, worked closely with Israelis and Palestinians on a broad range of security issues. He and his staff have also engaged the Government of Israel and other friendly states in detailed discussions of strategic priorities and needs from the perspectives of several regional political-military scenarios.

The Jones team made two critical discoveries early in its tenure: first, it was not inheriting anything resembling a comprehensive, systematic body of work already done by the U.S. Government on Israeli security challenges in the context of a two-state outcome; and second, any specific recommendations produced by such a body of work would be entirely dependent on prevailing conditions, many of which can and should be shaped by vigorous American diplomacy. For example:

- Is there a coherent Palestinian polity with professional, capable security forces willing and able to cooperate and coordinate with Israeli security forces?
- Are there neighboring and other regional states – Egypt and Jordan for sure, but perhaps even others – willing and able to buttress Palestinian security forces and reinforce security cooperation/coordination between the two parties?
- Is the broader regional situation one in which Iran, supported by Syria and Hezbollah, retains the role of spoiler, or will the implementation of a two-state treaty be preceded, accompanied, or followed in short order by a *détente* between Iran and the West (including Israel)?

The one constant in all of this has been Israel's insistence that it will not consent to two-state arrangements unless it concludes that Israel's security will not be substantially harmed by removing the IDF from the West Bank. The dilemma, however, is that West Bank security measures being implemented now by the IDF tend to produce conditions on the ground that prevent the formation of a coherent Palestinian polity with professional, capable security forces willing and able to cooperate and coordinate with Israeli forces.

This is not to say that all or even any of these measures – barriers, check-points, armed interventions into Palestinian populated areas – lack security justifications. Some may be gratuitous and no doubt there are ongoing behavioral issues involving IDF

interface with Palestinian civilians. The key point, however, is that there is a very frustrating and debilitating “chicken and egg” situation in which Israel’s understandable anxiety about suicide bombings and other terrorism has produced a West Bank security regime that, by all accounts, reflects poorly on the PA, creates massive economic hardships and in general makes it hard to envision and implement measures that could support a sustained Israeli-Palestinian security partnership. Absent such a partnership it is difficult to envision a self-sustaining two-state outcome. As noted above, the key task of any interim security arrangements would be to build bilateral trust and confidence to the point where such a partnership could take hold on its own.

In the past, Israel’s security “default position” with respect to withdrawal from occupied territories has centered on securing increased security assistance funding from the U.S. This was certainly the case when Israel returned the Sinai to Egypt. No doubt it would have been the case had Israeli-Syrian negotiations in early 2000 borne fruit. Surely a defense “shopping list” will accompany any serious consideration of withdrawal from the West Bank. Such a list should be received positively and acted upon promptly.

It will be important, however, to stay focused on producing the conditions that will make a two-state outcome acceptable to decisive majorities on both sides. Finding and implementing ways to break the destructive “chicken and egg” dynamic in the occupied Palestinian territories will be far more important than trying to calculate what additional capabilities the IDF will need to counter conventional and unconventional threats. Although there are many difficulties, downsides and complexities associated with large peacekeeping operations, no one sincerely interested in short-circuiting the current destructive dynamic can rule out such a possibility or dismiss the prospect of a major American role in it. We believe that General Jones and his team have not ruled this out.

Although General Jones’ mandate has focused exclusively on the Israel-Palestine track, clearly there would also be a robust American role in implementing the security-related aspects of any Israel-Syria accord. Beyond helping the IDF with improving capabilities designed to compensate for full withdrawal from territory occupied on the Syrian front since 1967, the U.S. would undoubtedly play a vital role in monitoring a demilitarized Golan Heights and providing early warning services to both parties.

In the Israeli-Palestinian context, however, the broad objective is to provide Israelis and Palestinians the security they need without subordinating one to the other. This will inevitably require a robust third-party presence to make a transition from a state of zero bilateral trust and confidence to the point where the parties interact cooperatively and effectively on a state-to-state basis. In order effectively to end 60 years of conflict there is no avoiding the necessity of the outside world resolving and acting to make this transition work between the parties while neutralizing the destructive efforts of potential spoilers.

In our view there is no avoiding a central U.S. role in helping the parties (especially the Palestinian side) meet their security-related responsibilities to each other in the context of two states.

LIST OF SIGNATORIES

Zbigniew Brzezinski	Counselor and Trustee, Center for Strategic and International Studies; former National Security Adviser to President Carter.
Chuck Hagel	Distinguished Professor at the Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University; Former member U.S. Senate.
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Carla A. Hills	Chief Executive Officer of Hills & Company; former U.S. Trade Representative under President George H.W. Bush and former Secretary of Housing and Urban Development under President Gerald R. Ford.
Nancy Kassebaum-Baker	Former member U.S. Senate.
Thomas R. Pickering	Former Senior Vice President, Boeing Corporation; former Under Secretary of State and former United States Ambassador to the United Nations.
Brent Scowcroft	Chair, U.S./Middle East Project; President, Forum for International Policy; President and Founder, The Scowcroft Group; former National Security Adviser to President Gerald Ford and President George H.W. Bush.
Theodore C. Sorensen	Of Counsel, Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP; former Special Counsel and Adviser to President John F. Kennedy.
Paul A. Volcker	Chair of President Obama's Economic Advisory Group; Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Group of Thirty; Honorary Chairman of the Trilateral Commission; former Chairman of the Federal Reserve.
James D. Wolfensohn	Chairman, Wolfensohn and Company L.L.C; former President of the World Bank and former Special Envoy for the Gaza Disengagement for the Quartet on the Middle East.