

The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

The Challenge

For decades, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been one of the key sources of global geo-political instability. The perception throughout the Arab and Muslim world that the American government has been unduly biased towards the Israelis, and have blocked the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people, has stirred up an enormous amount of antagonism towards the US. The Pew Global Attitudes Project found that the Middle East was the region of the world where the US was most unpopular, and that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was a key reason for this.¹ This has numerous devastating effects, such as terrorism directed against the United States and its facilities and allies abroad, as well as difficulties in building strong coalitions to counter the economic, environmental, and security threats facing us today.

We must recognize and constructively deal with the antagonism. There exists a universally recognized solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, one which is enshrined in international law, accepted by virtually the entire UN General Assembly,² and has been explicitly accepted by all major Palestinian and Arab actors for decades. The solution is UN Security Council Resolution 242 – the “two-state solution” – which calls for:

1. Withdrawal by the Israeli military from all territories occupied in the June 1967 “Six Day” War.
2. A just resolution of the refugee problem, involving a mix of resettlement and compensation.
3. Cessation of hostilities by all parties in the conflict.

This approach was advanced to the UN Security Council by the Arab states for the first time in 1976, whereupon it was vetoed by the Carter Administration.³ It was explicitly endorsed by the Palestinians at the UN General Assembly in 1988,⁴ but despite having been continually renewed by the Arab states and the Palestinians, most notably at the 2002 Beirut Summit of the Arab League,⁵ it has been consistently rejected by Israel and the US since the early 1970’s.

¹ <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/6/arab-and-muslim-perceptions-of-the-united-states>

² <http://www.un.org/documents/resga.htm>

³ <http://domino.un.org/unispal.nsf/9a798adbf322aff38525617b006d88d7/696d540fd7821bce0525651c00736250?OpenDocument>

⁴ <http://mondediplo.com/focus/mideast/arafat88-en>

⁵ http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/world/monitoring/media_reports/1899395.stm

To illustrate the extreme nature of the US's position on this matter, the resolution is voted on every year by the UN General Assembly, and the US and Israel are the only countries in the world that consistently vote against it. All other parties to the conflict – Hamas,⁶ Hezbollah,⁷ Iran⁸ – have openly stated their acceptance of it.

Such a settlement would mean the resumption of diplomatic ties between Israel and the rest of the Middle East, the commencement of economic, social, and political ties between Israel and the Palestinians, and an enormous reduction in the global instability that has plagued the United States and many other nations for so many years.

The Record of the Democratic and Republican Parties

Both the Democratic and Republican Parties have been equally guilty of blocking the implementation of a universally recognized peaceful resolution. Under the Bush Administration, Israeli settlements on Palestinian land continued apace, the Annexation Wall which appends 12% of the West Bank to Israel was built, and, as Ariel Sharon's troops killed 5,500 Palestinians during the Second Intifada,⁹ George W. Bush's response was to call him "a man of peace."¹⁰

President Obama's position has continued in the same vein. During Operation Cast Lead, the Israeli attack on Gaza described by Amnesty International as "22 days of death and destruction,"¹¹ Obama, days away from assuming office, stated that were rockets raining down on his daughters' heads while they slept, he would do something about it. He was referring only to Palestinian rockets; he made no such qualification about Israeli missiles raining down on Palestinian heads.¹² That statement served as a precursor of the utter disregard for Palestinian rights that Obama has displayed throughout his presidency.

Israel continues to build settlements on what international law recognizes to be Palestinian land – notably in East Jerusalem – without receiving any meaningful censure from the US government, which continues to fund the Israeli government to the tune of \$3 Billion per year, with no threat of cessation. At the same time, President Obama makes comments such as "Jerusalem will remain the capital of Israel, and it must remain undivided," a comment in flagrant violation of international law, which recognizes East Jerusalem to be as much a part of Israel as Washington D.C. is a part of Canada.

⁶ <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB124899975954495435.html>

⁷ <http://www.zcommunications.org/meeting-sayyid-hassan-nasrallah-encounter-with-a-fighter-by-assaf-kfoury>

⁸ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iran/5225705/Irans-President-would-support-two-state-solution-for-Israel.html>

⁹ www.btselem.org/English/Statistics/Casualties.asp

¹⁰ http://www.nytimes.com/2002/04/19/news/19iht-prexy_ed3.html?pagewanted=all

¹¹ <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/report/impunity-war-crimes-gaza-southern-israel-recipe-further-civilian-suffering-20090702>

¹² <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/28/world/middleeast/28diplo.html>

This approach of according Israelis rights that are denied to the Palestinians has ensured that the conflict continues unabated, with increasing insecurity for Palestinians as well as Israelis. In addition, as General Petraeus has stated, the US bias in the conflict foments anti-American sentiment in the Middle East, which increases the threat towards our troops, as well as, ultimately, towards our nation and residents of the U.S.¹³

Incredibly, the GOP reprimands Obama for not being even more biased towards Israeli interests, going as far, in some instances, as to deny the existence of Palestinian people and of Palestinian rights.¹⁴

The failure to constructively address this issue is bipartisan, and can only be fixed by someone not wedded to the interests of the Democratic or Republican Parties and who is willing to challenge the destructive, power of the lobbyist group that exacerbates the drastic bias of both the White House and Congress, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC).

Rocky Anderson's Approach Toward a Solution

With the resolute, principled leadership of Rocky Anderson, long-term peace in the Middle East is possible. Unlike the Obama and Bush administrations, Anderson's administration will make a peaceful resolution of the Israel-Palestinian conflict a top priority.

The longer the conflict continues, the greater the insecurity that will be inflicted on both sides. Unquestioning support for Israeli government actions, misguidedly called 'pro-Israeli policies,' are in fact policies that increase the antagonism throughout the Middle East and Muslim world towards both Israel and the US, which has an array of negative, potentially disastrous, consequences.

As detailed above, the solution to the conflict is simple, and accepted by the whole world, as well as all major protagonists to the conflict, excluding Israel and the US. So long as Israel continues to place primacy on land rather than peace, tensions will continue to rise, and violence will continue to flare. The Anderson Administration would adopt the same principles towards Israel that it would to any and every country – namely, to withdraw diplomatic and financial support if that country is in flagrant violation of international law or abuses human rights. It is unconditional US support that has facilitated Israel's position of land over peace. Making clear that US support is conditional will ensure that Israel is compelled to act in accordance with the law, and accept the universally recognized "two-state solution," thus bringing the conflict to a close.

The benefits will be numerous and accrue to all parties. The Palestinians will have the justice they have been denied for so long, with the opportunity to build their own

¹³ <http://www.haaretz.com/news/u-s-general-israel-palestinian-conflict-foments-anti-u-s-sentiment-1.264910>

¹⁴ <http://www.haaretz.com/news/international/newt-gingrich-palestinians-are-an-invented-people-1.400596>

state. In the Arab and Muslim world, currently being convulsed by democratic forces, a huge and unprecedented amount of goodwill will accrue towards the US, thus aiding our ability to find partners and build coalitions throughout the world in order to meet our key economic, environmental, and security-related challenges. The Israeli people, who have been living for so long in ostracism and insecurity, will finally be able to integrate fully into the Middle East, and to know a life where they are no longer in a state of perpetual war.