

THE SANDERS PEACE PLAN:

A new paradigm for a comprehensive solution to the outstanding problems of the Israeli Palestinian impasse.

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Abstract:

In a two state solution, it would be agreed that there would be a differentiation between residency and citizenship.

All new Arab residents of Israel (present Arab citizens of Israel would be given a choice) would become citizens of Palestine but residents of Israel. All Jews living in Palestine would be citizens of Israel but residents of Palestine.

As in the United States, local residents would be able to vote for local issues, police, education, utilities etc. but only citizens of their states would be able to vote in National elections.

The Outstanding Issues and the Solution: (not in order of importance)

1) The Right of Return:

The Palestinian side feels strongly that some recognition be granted to those refugees and their descendants who lost their land for a variety of reasons in the area that will be the final State of Israel. Prior negotiations have indicated that the Palestinian side would settle for less than 100% resettlement which has caused some deep resentment within the Palestinian community, especially their Diaspora. The Israelis have always indicated that this was a demographic problem which if implemented would destroy the Jewish majority in the Jewish State.

With the solution proposed, Jews would be allowed to live in a new Palestinian State. A formula could therefore be developed which would allow “returning” Palestinians to reside in the State of Israel without in any way disturbing the Jewishness of the State of Israel. Thus the major concern of the Israelis after security, i.e. the worry that demographics would inexorably destroy the State of Israel would be finally resolved. The formula devised should include a number of factors including in some way the numbers of Jews living in Palestine. Under the proposal there is no reason why Jews would not be permitted to buy or lease land in Palestine nor why Palestinians would not have the same rights in Israel, the numbers being subject to agreement by both sides.

2) The Final Boundaries:

The Palestinians have demanded that Israel withdraw completely to the 1967 borders which at present is interpreted as the dismantling of all the Israeli “settlements” in the so-called “West Bank”, “Gaza” and “East Jerusalem”. The Israelis wish to keep Jerusalem as an undivided capital of Israel and not dismantle large “settlement” blocks on the East of the 1967 “borders”.

It has previously been taken for granted by both sides that Jews would not live in a new Palestinian State. This in itself creates enormous problems for “true peace” as distinguished from a “peace treaty” to be established. Under the new proposal, the boundary issue becomes much less important and adjustments around the “1967” borders would be perfectly acceptable to both sides.

3) Economic Viability:

Often ignored by those drafting agreements, for any plan to work, both sides at the end of the day must be economically viable. That means that Palestinians NEED Israel for their markets and for a place to work. Whilst a wall between the two sides might temporarily assuage a security problem, it creates an economic one which cannot be sustained for any lengthy period of time.

4) Security:

Naturally “terrorism” is always cited as the major problem. However the example of the IRA in Northern Ireland where at the most 300 highly motivated members tied down the whole British army for decades requires a salutary and sobering pause for reflection. There are substantially more than that number on both the Palestinian and Israeli sides who are so strongly committed to their respective causes that unless their root problems are addressed, there will always be a security problem. Nihilists would always have to be taken care of in a different way.

5) Settlements:

Since Israel took control of the West Bank, it has been Israeli Government policy to “create facts on the ground” both for direct security considerations and to make the creation of a Palestinian State less than viable. A sizable number of those Israelis who took advantage of Government encouragement and subsidies will do everything in their power to resist resettlement on any terms largely because of religious reasons. For them residency on any part of the land is a Biblical imperative.

Even Hamas has not objected to the concept of Jews living in Arab lands. For true peace to be established it is not just important but imperative that both sides live together as equals, each as citizens of their own State but residents in each others.

6) Jerusalem and the Temple Mount:

Here the problem is essentially one of religion with each side claiming their right to the Temple Mount. The evidence is overwhelming that these conflicting claims are the result of archaeological misunderstandings and further details how these misunderstandings might be resolved is not the subject of this paper but can be obtained from the author.

CONCLUSION:

Geography has dictated that Arab and Jew MUST live TOGETHER for there to be a peaceful future for either group. For that to happen it is essential for each side to recognize the concerns of the other and as far as possible to accommodate those concerns in an agreement.

It is believed that this plan which distinguishes between citizenship and residency does take into account the major concerns of both parties. Once the accepted paradigm that Jews cannot live in a new Palestinian state is abandoned, it is clear that all the outstanding problems can be resolved quite quickly and the result accepted not only by the two sides but by all the “players” in the region.

APPENDIX

COMMENTS On and Off the Record.

Israeli Knesset Member:

“Brilliant”

Leading Palestinian Academic:

“I thought this was a brilliant way of solving both the right of return issue for the Palestinians and the demographic threat to the Jewishness of Israel. Your idea is really the only sensible one, you can never ask the Palestinians to give up the Right of Return or tell the Jews they can never live in Judea and Samaria and you cannot either tell the Israelis that they will lose the Jewishness of the state of Israel.”

Senator George Mitchell

“I do not have any role at present in the Middle East. Should I become involved in the process again you may be assured that your suggestion will be among those considered by all participants.”

Further details of “The Citizenship Plan” can be obtained from the author
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