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Op-Ed

## HOW TO RENEW ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN PEACE PROCESS

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**THE US-SPONSORED SEQUENCE OF STEPS** FOR REVITALIZING THE ISRAELI- PALESTINIAN PEACE PROCESS - A STABLE CEASE-FIRE, FOLLOWED BY CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MEASURES, FOLLOWED IN TURN BY A RESUMPTION OF NEGOTIATIONS - IS LOGICAL AND SOUND. UNFORTUNATELY, HOWEVER, THERE IS AN OPPOSITE DYNAMIC AT WORK. The cease-fire is unlikely to hold without renewed trust by each party in the other's intentions, and the trust is unlikely to develop without visible signs of political movement. Under the circumstances, the parties cannot afford to postpone political efforts until violence has stopped and confidence been restored.

While an end to violence on both sides must be vigorously pursued, there is also a desperate need for serious political initiatives.

The key message that each party needs to convey to the leadership and the public is that it continues to be committed to negotiations based on the historic compromise that was envisaged - though not explicitly articulated - by the Oslo agreement.

That compromise is predicated on a decision of the two sides to end the conflict by agreeing to share the land claimed by both through the establishment and peaceful coexistence of two states, in which the two peoples can give political expression to their respective national identities and pursue independent, secure, and prosperous national lives.

The effect of the events leading up to the current Intifada and of the actions and reactions in the course of it has been to erode the trust on each side in the other's commitment to that historic compromise.

Reestablishing a working trust requires explicit articulation of both sides' continuing commitment to the historic compromise in the form of a genuine two-state solution as the end-point of new negotiations.

Initiatives expressing this commitment need to come from all levels of both societies - separately, and, if possible, jointly. They must address four issues if they are to provide the framework for renewed negotiations.

Finality of the two-state solution.

New political initiatives should begin with an affirmation of commitment to the historic compromise that was envisaged by the Oslo agreement. According to this historic compromise, Palestinians recognize the State of Israel within its 1967 boundaries. Israel recognizes Palestinians right to establish an independent state in the West Bank and Gaza, living peacefully alongside of Israel.

Initiatives should be explicit in presenting the two-state formula as a permanent solution, ending the century-long conflict between the two peoples.

Borders and settlements.

It should be made clear that the historic compromise that the Palestinian leadership accepted (formally, at the 1988 meeting of the Palestine National Council in Algiers) and encouraged its public to accept refers to a partition of the land along the 1967 lines, as stipulated in UN Resolution 242. Thus, the Palestinian state envisaged in this compromise would cover the

entire West Bank and Gaza.

Moreover, it has to be a viable state, with contiguous territory (except for the separation of Gaza and the West Bank, which would be linked by a secure corridor), sovereignty over its land and resources, and the ability to govern its population.

Israelis would have to recognize that the Palestinian state, if it is to meet these criteria of size and viability, could not accommodate Israeli settlements spread throughout the country, enjoying extraterritorial rights, served by a separate network of roads, and protected by the Israeli Defense Forces.

Palestinians, in turn, would have to take cognizance of the domestic turmoil that the dismantlement of large numbers of settlements would create for Israel. It would have to be ready to negotiate an exchange of territory, whereby small segments of the West Bank (perhaps 2 to 3 percent) with a heavy concentration of Israeli settlers would be annexed by Israel in return for ceding to the Palestinian state Israeli territory of equal size and value. It would also have to negotiate possible arrangements whereby some Israeli settlers might be allowed to remain in the West Bank under Palestinian jurisdiction.

Jerusalem.

An important element of the historic compromise affirmed by the new political initiatives would be the acceptance of Jerusalem as a city shared by the two peoples and serving as the capital of both states.

Although it would be consistent with UN Resolution 242 to divide the city along the 1967 line, it will be necessary to negotiate some modifications, in light of Israelis' religious and historical attachments to the Old City and of demographic changes in East Jerusalem since 1967.

Accordingly, Palestinians might offer to negotiate arrangements for Israeli sovereignty over the Jewish areas and holy sites within the Old City and over the Jewish neighborhoods in East Jerusalem. Negotiations would also focus on arrangements for governance, security, and municipal services for Jerusalem that would enable it to remain an open city, with free access to the holy sites of all religious communities.

Refugees and the right of return.

Finally, it should be made clear that, for Israelis, the historic compromise means Palestinian acceptance of Israel as a state with a Jewish majority. In this spirit, Palestinians would not insist on a large-scale return of refugees to Israel, recognizing Israeli fears that such a return would threaten the Jewish character and the cohesion of the state.

At the same time, it needs to be clear that, just as Israelis cannot endorse the right of return, Palestinians cannot renounce that right, as it is a central element of the Palestinian national narrative.

Negotiations need to deal with the issue at two levels. At the level of principle, they must find language whereby Israel would acknowledge its share of responsibility and express regret for the plight of the refugees.

At the level of implementation, negotiations would develop a comprehensive program of resettlement and compensation of refugees, according to which a limited number would have the choice to return to Israel and others would be able to settle in the Palestinian state, to stay in their countries of current residence, or to immigrate to other countries around the world.

The specific positions on these issues are well within the range of positions that both Palestinian and Israeli officials were prepared to endorse during and after the Camp David talks. They have also been reiterated by some of the participants in the negotiations over the past few months, although they have not been brought together in a comprehensive initiative. Such initiatives, offered by either or both sides, are sorely needed at this time.

Political initiatives along the lines suggested here could dramatically change the atmosphere and enhance the prospects for renewed negotiations.

By clearly affirming both sides' commitment to a two-state solution as the basis for ending the conflict, they would refute the view, now widely accepted by both publics, that the other is pursuing the maximalist goal of gaining control of the entire country and is not ready to make the necessary compromise for peace. They would thus help to restore each side's belief - eroded by the events of the past year - that there is a credible negotiating partner on the other side.

Moreover, the kind of initiative outlined here might provide a basis for renewing the alliance between the proponents of negotiations on the two sides, which has largely broken down.

Its approach to the major issues - notably borders, settlements, refugees, and Jerusalem - is mindful of the limits on the concessions that either side feels able to make. But it is anchored in the historic compromise as viewed from the perspective of both sides; and it allows for further negotiations, beyond the parameters of the historic compromise, on issues central to the narratives and the internal cohesion of the two societies.

It has great potential for counteracting the general sense of discouragement and despair and for providing a coherent, principled, and mutually respectful framework for the resumption of negotiations.

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Caption: JON KRAUSE ILLUSTRATION

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