**Israel-Hamas-Fatah Joint Crisis Committee**

1. What is your past Model UN experience?

I hold a leadership position at my school’s Model United Nation’s team, have competed at a handful of collegiate conferences and won awards at three: Honorable Mention at BUSUN 2012, and Outstanding Delegation at WAMUNC 2013 and WAMUNC 2014.

2. What do you believe are the three most important issues related to developing a final framework agreement between Israel and Palestine?

I believe that the three most important issues related to developing a final framework agreement between Israel and Palestine are a) removal of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, b) renunciation of violence, recognition of Israel and acceptance of previous agreements by Hamas, and of course, c) the borders between Israel and Palestine.

The onus is on both sides to make compromise—given rash decisions by both parties in recent months (to say the least), neither side can be absolved of responsibility. In the end, a final framework ought look similar to what was discussed at the Oslo Accords and 2000 Camp David talks: a return to 1967 borders (although with minor changes, in order to preserve Israeli’s ability to defend its territory).

3. How does the unification of Fatah and Hamas affect negotiations between Israel and Palestine?

The unification of Fatah and Hamas affects negotiations between Israel and Palestine by lending long-term legitimacy to the Palestinians, and rendering void a common excuse given by the Netanyahu government, namely that it is impossible to come to a binding conclusion with a government that doesn’t represent all of Palestine.

However, given Hamas’ culpability in the 2014 Israeli-Gaza conflict and its continued commitment to violence against Israel, Netanyahu’s decision not to recognize the unified government is very understandable—after all, doing so is arguably akin to negotiating with terrorists. (One line in Hamas’s charter reads: ““Muslims will fight the Jews (and kill them); until the Jews hide behind rocks and trees, which will cry: O Muslim! There is a Jew hiding behind me, come on and kill him!”).

4. Please discuss some of the potential outcomes of negotiations between Israel and Palestine (i.e. joint government in one state, two separate states, etc.), and the costs/benefits of each scenario.

I believe strongly that the only true solution to the Palestine-Israel conflict is the two-state solution, which, as Alan Dershowitz points out is “the official position of the Palestinian Authority as well as the Egyptian, Jordanian, Saudi Arabian, and Moroccan governments.” Though, of course it poses disadvantages, such as the possibilities of continued violence, its advantages far outweigh them. And the alternatives, which I shall shortly list are incomparably worse.

First, there is either destruction of Israel or permanent annexation of Palestine—both of these can be dismissed out of hand as racist and, frankly, absurd. They are not solutions that anyone outside of extremists endorse.

Second, there is the admittedly intriguing option of Palestinian territory being annexed by or otherwise incorporated into its neighboring states. However, while this might have been feasible in the 1970’s, when Zuheir Mohsen, a leader of the PLO wrote “The Palestinian people does not exist. The creation of a Palestinian state is only a means for continuing our struggle against the state of Israel for our Arab unity. In reality today there is no difference between Jordanians, Palestinians, Syrians and Lebanese,” by now such a strong Palestinian national identity has formed that such a solution would be rejected out of hand by any Palestinian government (not even to mention Jordanian, Syrian and Egyptian opposition.)

Finally, there is the oft-proposed bi-national state. However, given that the demographics of the area mean that this would result in the end of Israel as a Jewish state, it is not a real solution either. Simply put, Israel was founded for a reason: to provide a safe haven for Jews following millennia of persecution. Were Zionism to be abandoned in deference to the one-state solution, it would be a betrayal of all those who have died defending Israel’s right to exist, and all those who have given their lives so that other Jews will not have theirs taken at any point down the line.

5. How can Israel balance its stated desire to be formally recognized by the international community as a “Jewish state” with its constitutional commitment to democracy? How does this impact the negotiations process?

Israel has one of the most vibrant democracies in the world, with a highly competitive multiparty system turnout for elections surpassing that of the United States or the United Kingdom. Although demographic trends, as Ezra Klein has pointed out, may conceivably pose a problem decades down the line, Israel has long managed to preserve both its identity as Jewish and its democratic political system. A more interesting question to consider is how those of us both in Israel and in the Diaspora balance Zionism with liberalism, which I explore in-depth here: <http://www.stuyspec.com/opinion/for-israel-two-roads-diverge>, if you are interested in taking a glance.

In terms of negotiations, the effect is simple: as I discussed two paragraphs earlier, it rules out the possibility of a bi-national state, because that would also, de facto, mean the end of a Jewish one. Looking forward at potential negotiations, my paradigm is this: Israel must work with the Palestinians far more openly than it has in the past decade (for example, unilaterally withdrawing from the West Bank—or at the absolute minimum not expanding further), and use Hamas’s ebbing popularity as a chance to push for the two-state solution more strongly than it ever has before.