Israel-Hamas-Fatah Joint Crisis Committee

1. What is your past Model UN experience?

As co-president of the Model United Nations club at Scarsdale High School, I have participated in PMUNC 2013 on the Bretton-Woods Conference historical committee and the National High School Model United Nations conference (NHSMUN) on the special-committee Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Forum.

2. What do you believe are the three most important issues related to developing a final

framework agreement between Israel and Palestine?

A critical source of contention between Israel and Palestine is the placing of borders between the proposed two-state solution. One possible solution to this issue would be the adoption of the pre-1967 “green line” established by the United Nations, yet several right wing political groups which make up the Israeli coalition government are strongly opposed to this outcome. Similarly, the city of Jerusalem, annexed by Israel after the 1967 war, has been tipped as the desired capital for both sides. A second issue is security: should Israel hand over the West Bank, it insists that it must maintain a permanent military presence in the Jordan Valley, along the border with Jordan. Israel has stated that this military presence is vital to its security as a nation, but the Palestinians say they will not accept a foreign military infringing on their sovereignty. The third issue seems far more trivial, yet it exemplifies the very nature of Israeli-Palestinian relations. Israel has stated that a prerequisite for a final framework is that the Palestinian government recognize Israel as a Jewish state, something which the Palestinians refuse to do. While it seems a simple matter, it is one of the many small points of contention which add up to make peace very difficult.

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

Palestine?

Earlier this year, the rival Palestinian political factions of Fatah and Hamas announced a unity government to revitalize the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). In response, Israel immediately called off the next round of negotiations due to the hostile nature of Israeli-Hamas relations. Certainly this has been detrimental to negotiations between Israel and Palestine because Israel has previously refused to negotiate directly with Hamas, which it considers a terror organization, in favor of negotiating with Fatah, which it sees as a more moderate political group. Now that the two have merged, many in Israel and the US have lost hope of for a solution to come in the near future as prior to the merger, Fatah was widely seen as being the organization which would achieve peace with Israel.

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.

There a multiple potential outcomes of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.The two state solution, widely seen as the most viable option, calls for two separate, sovereign states. Palestine would consist of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and Israel would keep the remainder of the land within its territory today. While this would surely facilitate the governance of both states, Israel has expressed significant concern about this plan due to the possibility of rocket strikes coming from the Palestinian territories, as seen this past summer. Further hampering this solution is Hamas’ stated belief that a Palestinian state should encompass all of Israel, not just the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Another possible solution is to establish a joint Israeli-Palestinian government in a unified Israel. While this would solve the issues of the two state solution, this outcome would come with tremendous negative effects. Aside from both parties harboring deep rooted mistrust of the other, a joint government would likely not get much done in terms of passing laws, much like the US legislature today. The Israelis are concerned about the viability maintaining Israel as a Jewish state while the Palestinians are concerned about truly joint governance and the loyalty of the Israeli security forces. A third outcome would be the establishment of a “Palestinian Entity” much as the Palestinian Authority exists today, with the West Bank and the Gaza Strip being a self-administering quasi-state with partial but not full sovereignty over its borders and citizens. Although this solution could lead to peace, both parties would almost certainly bicker constantly over issues like Israeli settlements and Palestinian self-governing power.

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?

The Israeli state faces near constant criticism from many nations around the world, namely in the Middle East. While historically a Jewish state, Israel has been continuously modernizing since its creation in 1949. With these modernizations come calls for it to become a true, secular democracy. Yet it is vital for Israel to maintain itself as a Jewish state, lest it succumb to the cacophony of its antagonistic neighbors. For Israel to maintain itself as one of the only democracies in the Middle East today, it is vital that Israel adheres as strictly as possible to its constitution while continuing to be a Jewish state.

Sources:

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