

A Model for Israeli-Palestinian Peace

At a moment when Turkey is involved in a host of problems, its fight against the Kurdistan Workers' party in southeast Turkey, friction with Russia, uncertain involvement in the war against ISIS, and purported secret negotiations with Israel, it can still render service to the cause of international peace. It could indicate how the process leading to the creation of Turkey could encourage Palestinian authorities to enter into peace negotiations with Israel.

Turkey evolved from the Ottoman Empire that had lasted from the 15th century until World War I. The Ottoman power had been diminishing for over a century, and in 1908 the Young Turk Revolution took effective control, limited the powers of the Sultan and ruled through a military group. After a number of wars, with Italy 1911-12, with Balkan countries, 1912-13, the Empire chose the wrong side in World War I by fighting on the side of the Central Powers, (primarily Germany and Austro-Hungary) against the Allied Powers (UK, France, Italy, Belgium, Russia for a time, and the U.S.).

After WWI, the military leader Mustafa Kemal Ataturk led the Turkish National Movement and established a provisional government in Ankara in 1921. The last Ottoman Sultan Mehmed VI was deposed on November 1, 1922 by the National Assembly and fled to San Remo, Italy. To settle the conflict that had existed between the Ottoman Empire and the Allied Powers because of the world war a peace conference as held at Lausanne, Switzerland, beginning in November 1922..

The provisional government sent representatives, headed by Ismet Inonu, to the conference.

The conference concluded with the Treaty of Lausanne on July

24, 1923, which the Turkish leader Arafat called "a diplomatic victory unheard of in the Ottoman history." The treaty ended the conflict in which Turkish forces were involved, and defined the border of the new Turkish Republic. Turkey gave up all claims to the rest of the Ottoman Empire; in return, the Allied Powers (UK, France, Italy, Japan, Greece, and Romania) recognized the independence and sovereignty of Turkey.

By the Treaty, which also defined the boundaries of Greece and Bulgaria, Turkey lost various territories. There had already, in January 1923 in Lausanne, been a population agreement between Turkey and Greece, largely based on religious identity.

Turkey renounced claims on territory outside its agreed boundaries. It lost Cyprus that had remained de jure Turkish though it had been leased to Britain after the Treaty of Berlin in 1878. It lost Egypt and the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan that was also de jure Turkish but had been under British control. Turkey ceded all claims to Syria and Iraq, and also, though not explicitly, claims to territory south of Syria and Iraq, including what is now Israel. The result was the creation of a number of Arab states, most of which are now involved in conflict, and many of which are failing states.

From the story of the creation of Turkey a parallel can be drawn of what Palestinian authorities should do if a peace agreement is ever to be reached with Israel. What is most important about the Treaty and perhaps makes it unique in that the losing power, now called Turkey, came to the negotiating table with its concerns and objectives but without preconditions. It bargained in good faith and accepted the result. As a result a new state emerged, acceptable in the international world.

Indeed, the Turkish representatives at the conference behaved as, and were treated as, equals. The head of the Turkish group, Inonu, later to become prime minister (November 1923-

November 1924), and President (1938-1950), raised objections to procedures and drafts, was adept at delay, and feigned deafness to avoid confrontations. He challenged the British delegate, Lord Curzon the Foreign Minister, by ascending the rostrum and stating that he hoped that "all the peace demands would prevail in the conference and we would make peace that would be fair to everyone."

Why can't the leaders of the Palestinian authorities behave did as those nationalistic Turks did almost century ago? Like the rulers of the Ottoman Empire they choose to be on the losing side of so many conflicts, but unlike the Turks have persisted in refusing to reach a compromise solution and international recognition by the negotiating process. Like the Turks they would profit by coming to the table without preconditions, by playing an equal role in the give and take of negotiations and by agreeing to abide by the results.

Instead, we have the regrettable statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Palestinian Authority, Riyad Malki, in Tokyo on February 15, 2016 that "We will never go back and sit again in a direct Israeli-Palestinian negotiations." The PA prefers the negative approach ignoring any negotiating process, and engaging violations of the 1993 Oslo Accords. Its positive contribution has been encouraging the BDS movement against Israel.

Malki's statement is a reminder of the irresponsible statement in October 1947 by Abdul Rahman Azzam, Secretary of the Arab League. He declared that the establishment of a Jewish state would lead to "war of extermination and momentous massacre...it will be distinguished by 3 serious matters, the shortest road to paradise...an opportunity for vast plunder...avenging the martyrdom of Palestinian Arabs."

Will the Palestinian leaders be interested in building a stairway to paradise? They have the opportunity now that the French have proposed a diplomatic initiative to prepare an

international peace conference to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Palestinians might reflect on the nature, significance, and success of the Lausanne Treaty. In the meantime, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who stated on January 1, 2016 that "Turkey needs a country like Israel" will make his mark in international politics by persuading Palestinian leaders that they should have the same need.