



RESEARCH PAPER

Peace to Prosperity: US Policies towards Israel-Palestine Conflict

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ABSTRACT

The Middle East is one of the most resourceful, regions and has an abundance of oil and gas resources. The region has been indulged in conflict, and civil wars, and is home to political turmoil and Chaos. Israel-Palestine is one of the prolonged conflicts that have destabilized regional peace for more than 7 decades. The US is the key player that has been striving to bring peace in the region and even succeeded to bring conflictual parties to negotiations and ceasefires. Trump's peace plan is bringing dynamic changes in the regional politics of the Middle East. Trump's plan has brought far-reaching implications for the Palestinians and regional states. The research writing is to dig out the Trump peace plan and has focused on its expected implication for Palestinians and the region. Therefore, this research paper is a qualitative research study that uses the methodology of descriptive and historical research and implements the framework of social constructivism. This study analyzes the US interests in the Middle East as well as the implications of deals on Palestinians.

KEYWORDS

Conflict, Israel-Palestine, Middle East, Regional Peace, Social Constructivism, Trump Peace Plan

Introduction

The Israel-Palestine conflict is one of the most longstanding conflicts in the Middle East. The issue has been unresolved even though world powers have tried to resolve the conflict peacefully. United Nations has also failed to resolve the conflict because of a lack of binding force to its resolutions. The US is a major player and has been keenly involved in resolving this long-standing conflict. The US has given various peace plans among which the most renowned are Camp David and Oslo Accords. These plans failed to resolve the conflict and failed to freeze Israel's illegal occupation of Palestine. However, the US continued its struggle for peace and has given plans from time to time. Last year (2020) a new Peace plan 'Peace to prosperity has been given by US premier Donald Trump. The plan is also called Trump's Middle East plan.

Trump's Middle East plan is a proposal to resolve the Israel-Palestinian conflict, which consists of both a Political framework and an Economic framework. The plan was unveiled by Trump along with Israel's premier Benjamin Netanyahu on 28 Jan 2020. As the Trump plan was to resolve the 72 years old ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine peacefully, although no Palestinian representative was involved in this peace plan. This peace plan was denounced by the Palestine on basis of various grounds like it was a unilateral plan and has given a blueprint for Palestinian occupation and more

importantly, disregarded the two-state solution. However recent broke down of the 'Abraham accords' which are US-initiated peace deals between UAE and Israel to normalize their diplomatic relations has sparked heated debate in the Middle Eastern region and the international community. This has left Middle Eastern states in a tug-of-war kind of situation where a new conspiracy start over this Accord as it was clear that more regional states will follow this pursuit of UAE. Middle Eastern region is in the conundrum of Israel's recognition as this has Put Arabian Peninsula at the climax. This also has raised new concerns in the Middle East such as how this plan will benefit Israel's and American hegemonic incentives in the Middle Eastern region. As Trump Peace deal is part of the US grand strategy to diminish the Russian and China's influence in this region which has been deliberately increased under Obama's administration. Historical events would also be explored as this peace deal wasn't the very first deal as before this various agreement deals and armistices E: g 1948 armistice deal between Israel and Palestine, the Camp David accords and Oslo agreements, etc. These deals were nothing more than pieces of paper as Israeli settlement activities remain intact in Palestinian territory. However, the Obama administration also tries to resolve the conflict but failed as both premiers were in the worst relation as Obama want to resolve the conflict based on the 1967 Borders lines. He failed to resolve the conflict but he tried to bring both states to negotiating tables and also convinced Israel to freeze Settlements in the West Bank he succeeded as for 90 days Israel stops settlements in West Bank. During his second tenure, he again arranged several months of direct Israeli-Palestine talks which proved fruitless as they ended without agreement.

The matter of concern is how this peace plan will affect the Palestinian status quo as huge chunks of Palestinian areas have been gone under Israel's control, which has graved the future of Palestine as a separate state. Furthermore, Tug-of-war among Arab states over the Israel de jure status would be catered to as this has negated the two-state solution upon which they have fought past wars against Israel.

The role of the USA in Middle Eastern regional politics would be analyzed that how he is acting as a major player in regional politics of the Middle East and manipulating the peace deals for its regional interests. Therefore, this research paper aims to analyze and find gaps in US peace deals towards the Israel-Palestine conflict, especially the deal of century peace to prosperity as well as to interpret the conflict with a constructivist lens and to highlight the role of the religious identity of Jews as a hurdle in this peace process. It is an attempt to identify the prospects of the US peace deal on regional politics of the Middle East. Therefore, this paper seeks to answer the questions What are the US interests in the region regarding the Palestine-Israel conflict? What are the implications of these deals for Palestinians?

This paper is divided into four sections. The first section discusses the introduction and Literature review, the second section discusses the theoretical framework, the third section discusses the Middle East Peace Plan and US policies, and the fourth section is about discussions, analysis, and conclusion.

Literature Review

Stephen Zunes highlighted the United States of America as a failed state in resolving the Middle Eastern conflicts. The US has further aggravated the Middle Eastern issues to secure its economic, political, and military interests. He has blamed the US for transforming the Middle East into a militarized region by trading millions of worth of arms to Israel and other oil-rich states. The US has fueled the existing grinded situation of the Middle East by supporting illegal Jewish settlements. He has also denied the role of the pro-Israeli lobby in the US that the US has its own political, economic and military interest in the region. To secure these interests the US has maintained its permanent military presence. The Middle East needed to take unilateral action without the US influence (Zunes, 1993).

Michael C. Hudson articulated that for the Middle East, Israel was a more potent threat than the Soviets. The US wanted to secure its oil interests against Soviet influence. The US wanted to cripple the Arab capability of collective response and for this, the US started supporting Israel. The Madrid peace process was initiated to form a new Middle East in which Israel was going to be assigned as a key player in the region. Moreover, Hudson highlighted the three models (bureaucratic, rational and domestic politics) of the Quandt to understand the US foreign policymaking process (Hudson, 1996). Charles D. Smith elaborated Israel's lobby stopped the US from taking any tangible decision regarding the Palestine-Israel conflict. The block politics sprouted in the Middle East and most of the Arab states started falling under the western block. Charles stated that how the US was portrayed as a helpless state who was left with no other option rather than leading the block (Smith, 2006).

Don Peretz articulated that the US peace efforts have been skeptically viewed by both Arabs and Israel. Israel doubted US efforts as pro-Arabian because of the US economic interests. He has portrayed the US approach to resolving the Arab-Palestine conflict as 'evenhanded'. This approach implies the impartial role of the US to resolve the conflict peacefully. The US inclined more toward Israel after its victory in the 1967 war as Israel emerged as an enhanced regional power (Peretz, 1972). Philip H. Gordon highlights the crucial role of the US in any Middle East peace deal. A peace deal can only be initiated with the US help as it will provide watchdogs and some binding rules and regulations. Whether the Middle follows the path of peace or war the US will have to follow both paths. The crucial role of the US in the Palestine-Israel conflict cannot be neglected (Gordon, 2000). White House has issued the report "Peace to prosperity" in which Trump's Middle East peace plan has been explained. Trump's middle east plan is also known as peace to the prosperity of an economic plan to revive the economic collaborations in the region. Trump proposed a peace plan to terminate the 70 years of the Palestine-Israel conflict. Along with economic plans for Palestine state, the security plans have also been negated between the state of Palestine and the state of Israel. Under the economic plan, West Bank would be connected through roads and tunnels to the Gaza strip. The US has also approved the aid of \$50m to rehabilitate the economy and infrastructure of the state of Palestine. This will make Palestine more independent and seek ties with the state of Israel. Along with the economic framework political framework for the state of Palestine is also stated in the peace plan (House, 2020).

Nabil Fahmy criticized the Trump Middle East peace plan. The absence of Palestinians from the peace deal raises various uncertainties regarding the deal. Nabil has objectively pointed out the passive and optimistic sides of the deal. Nabil believes that negotiations are the only solution to the conflict. Jerusalem should be open for all the communities and the Palestine State should be established under pre-1967 borders.

Moreover, direct negotiations should be conducted in presence of UNSC members according to the 2002 Arab peace deal plan. A two-state solution must be supported in the Israel-Palestine conflict (Fahmy, 2020). Gerald Feierstein in his article "Trump Middle East Policy at one year" has discussed the core tenet of Trump's Foreign policy towards the Middle East. He has said that Trump's policy is not much different from Obama's. US position in the Middle East was weakened as Saudis and other Gulf states show resistance towards the Trump move. Gulf states inclined toward Russia for the arms deal was alarming for the US (Feierstein, 2018). The Middle Eastern state's transition from the oil economies will decide their future and interstate relations with the Middle East (Peacock, 2013).

Robert Dormer described how constructivism influenced the discipline of international relations and how existing theories failed to fully comprehend and cater to the shift in the world politics of the 20th century. Constructivism has become the third theory. People's common and mutual interests constitute the identity as corporate, type, and role as enlisted by the Wendt. Moreover, constructivists had also given insight that how an identity differs and can be influenced by internal and external factors. Norms are formulated by the institutions. Wendt, Barnett & Duvall are criticized as the empirical studies have revealed that the application of the central themes of constructivism studies has been focusing on power. As power is a core theme of the realism school of thought. Moreover, constructivism is also connected to rationalism, critics said that this gives rationalism has influenced the constructivist school of thought. Constructivist also fails to elaborate on what norms are and how they function. It is been seen thoroughly that the concepts of the constructivist approach overlap with liberalists and realist schools of thought which elaborates those international relations are formed of homogenous entities (Dormer, 2017).

The article 'Constructivist critique of Mearsheimer's concept of anarchy' is about offensive realism and its compatibility with the constructivist approach. The authors are more inclined to offensive realism and have compared the core tenets of both theories. The authors have also discussed the Wendt theory of constructivism to compare it with offensive realism. As identities, interests, and norms anti-materialistic are the assumptions of constructivism. Constructivist view about power is not in just military terms it can be political, social, economic, or even technological terms. Moreover, the anarchy system does not exist but the state's actions and behavior construct an anarchical system. Constructivist doesn't deny that initial stage of anarchy but they simply confirm that it doesn't lead to power competition. Constructivism is more reliable to study conflicts and international relations on basis of social interaction and shared cultural interactions. Constructivism has shaped the view to tackle the crisis more properly (Vidal, 2019).

Theoretical Framework

This section provides deep insight into the constructivist approach and its core themes. What factors constitute society and how do these factors lead to the social construction of society? Constructivism gives an insight that identities, interests, and norms shape world politics. Moreover, these identities also become the foundation of the conflict between two disguisable identities. The patterns of identities shape the different interests and the state actions and behavior to achieve these interests construct the social construction. The theoretical framework of constructivism and social theory applies to the Israel-Palestine conflict. The section reveals the identity politics between Jews and Arabs.

Constructivism in International Relations

Constructivism is a social modern theory that has covered all the gaps that were left by the old traditional theories. By having a dominant focus on the state, traditional theories have not opened much space to observe the agency of individuals. Agents and agencies are important in social construction where the agents imply individuals and agency refers to the state (Theys, 2018). The state is the main unit of analysis in international political theory. Individual interests and preferences constitute the state and society. Constructivism didn't only focus on individuals, unlike traditional theories. State identities and interests are an important part and constructed by these social structures, rather than given exogenously to the system by human nature as a neo-realist view (Behraves, 2011). Constructivism is important because of its concept of anarchy that is indifferent to the traditionalists. Alexander Wendt and Nicholas Onuf are chief proponents of constructivism and both have explicated the concept of anarchy as a subject to change because of its dynamic nature.

Concept of Anarchy

Anarchy is the deprivation or absence of authority in international politics. The absence of authority renders competition in the international system and competition leads to conflict. The international system is more conflictual than peaceful. Constructivism has vast the concept of anarchy as Wendt has said that "Anarchy is what states make of it," which means the nature of international anarchy appears to be conflictual. The actions and behavior of the states construct the Anarchical system. The constructivist emphasizes the variable character of anarchy. Constructivism holds the view that states' identities and interests in international politics are also subject to change. As anarchy is not constant and the state identities and interests change the anarchy condition also changes in international relations. This means that state behavior and actions constitute the anarchical system. Moreover, the concept of anarchy depends on state interests and preferences as they also determine state enemies and friends. Alexander Wendt describes in his book 'Social Theory of International Politics' the three cultures of anarchy. Each of these cultures has been constructed by the states and their interaction and acceptance of behavioral norms. Such norms continuously shape states' interests and identities (Vidal, 2019).

Concept of Identity

The identity reflects the ideas and profound significance of ideas. As people associate issues with identity. Constructivism says that issues of identity recognition are related to the cultures of society as cultures built different thinking patterns. As people, associate issues with identity "Identities tell you and others who you are and they tell you who others are" (Hopf, 1998). Constructivist has linked identity with history, norms, and culture as they believe that identity is also a socially constituted phenomenon. So, the constructivist view is that identity is socially constituted rather than only exogenously given. Wendt believes that state identity is the main unit of analysis in which individual or agent identity plays a central role.

To understand state identity Wendt has emphasized agent identity that he has divided into two types social identity and corporate identity. Wendt believes that social identity depends upon social interaction as shared interests and actions depend upon it. Social identity is self-constituted by the state or individual through social interactions. Where corporate identity is exogenously given which further depends upon the various factors. States' material interests are distinct from people's ideas about the world.

Sovereignty is a social institution and a state becomes sovereign when it is recognized or accepted by other states and its public. As sovereignty is dependent on others and with the passage of time concept of sovereignty has changed. Identity is dynamic as Wendt puts it, "identities may be hard to change, but they are not carved on stone" (Hopf, 1998).

Interpretation of the Israel-Palestine Conflict

The Israel-Palestine conflict was considered an issue of honor for all the Arabs in the Middle East. But the years of continuous wars shattered the confidence of Arab and over time they realized that the conflict was an issue for those Arabs who are directly concerned with conflict (Palestinian Arabs). Egypt was leading the Arab's front against the Zionist Jews in wars. The conflict between Egypt and Israel was not identical rather it was a material conflict that was resolved in the Camp David accords after the bargaining over the Sinai Peninsula. Arab's identity dispersed to pieces and Palestinians and the conflict transformed from the Arabs-Israel conflict to the Israel-Palestine conflict. This transformation of identity also transformed the conflict. The direct social interaction between Jews and Arabs after 1948 has shaped the identities of both groups. The social construction of conflict was impacted by the religious identity crisis of Zionists and Arabs.

This crisis between both is a hurdle in the peace process and the peace of this conflict over the years is remained unresolved. Despite the struggle for peace by the international actors, the conflict remained unresolved. The material conflict is easy to resolve than the religious or national identity-based conflict because these have deep imprints on the nations to which they can't compromise especially when it comes to religious identity. "Israel agreed to return the Sinai Peninsula was a material conflict that was resolved through agreement to give back the peninsula" (Namli, 2018). It can be said that the identity conflict between Jews and Palestine Arabs is the remaining hurdle in the peace process. The International actors have also sparked this identity conflict, especially in US identity politics. The US is a major player in the arena of the Middle East and has been involved in the peace process. US business and inclination towards one identity by surpassing the other has complicated the conflict rather than resulting in peace. As constructivism has emphasized that state interests and preferences shape its identity and the US and Israel's same interests and preferences have brought them together. Palestinians have suffered more with the involvement of the third party (US identity). Constructivists consider identities significant for survival as "A world without identities is a world of chaos, a world of pervasive and irremediable uncertainty, a world much more dangerous than anarchy" (Hopf, 1998).

The state identity sparked over the recognition and denial of separate state identity. Both are not acceding to accept each other separate state identity neither Israel Jews nor Palestinian Arabs. The contemporary Israel-Palestine crisis is also based on this separate state identity a Jews are denying the separate identity of Arabs in Palestine. The recent crisis between Israel- Palestine over Al-Jarrah is also an embodiment example of an identity crisis between both. The Jews in the Al jarrah crisis have widely proclaimed "Death to Arabs" which gave insight that even in contemporary scenarios the identity is a major dispute between both. Ilan Pappé in his book "On Palestine" has said that "Ethnic cleansing is in the DNA of Israeli Jewish society (Chomsky, 2015). Moreover, Pappé has described the current state of Israel as "The Israel of 2014 is a state that segregates, separates and discriminates based on ethnicity, religion, and nationality (Chomsky, 2015).

Role of United States Identity Politics

The US believes that peace between Israel and Palestine is hard but not impossible and he had continued his struggle for peace. The US has a pro-Israel policy and has been supporting her on a national and international level. As pro-Israel trends get more attention in US policy and that's why Trump becomes US president because of his pro-Israel policy. The involvement of Israel's lobby in US politics is no more behind the wall as the reality has been revealed. Trump brought a drastic change in US Foreign policy towards the Middle East by recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital and moving the US embassy from the city of Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. President Donald Trump has also announced a peace deal that will bring a paradigm shift in regional politics of the Middle East. The peace deal is known as Peace to prosperity in which the US has taken more concrete steps to execute the realistic two-state solution. The deal is known as the 'deal of the century'.

Discussion

The Middle East Peace Plan "Peace to Prosperity"

"Peace to prosperity" is a peace plan to resolve the longest-standing Israel-Palestine conflict. The deal was unveiled by Trump alongside Israel premier Benjamin Netanyahu on 28 Jan 2020 in a ceremony in the White House. The Peace plan "Peace to prosperity" is a 181-page long document that has envisioned improving the lives of the Palestinian and Israeli people. The peace plan consists of a Political and economic framework under which the two-state solution and the borders of an autonomous state of Palestine along with the sovereign state of Israel have been suggested. The peace deal was given to fill up the gaps that were been left out in past or former peace plans. In the deal, the shortcomings of the past deals and the Oslo accords have been accepted and the realistic two-state solution has been opted as a solution to the conflict. Moreover, the deal has tried to cover all those areas of conflict which in past have proved obstacles in the way towards peace. The issue of Jerusalem, Gaza, West Bank, and Jordan valley had tried to be resolved. Mr. Trump has called the deal a win-win situation for both the conflictual parties. However, these convictions to call this deal a win-win situation are unacceptable because the deal itself has opened new prospects and challenges for Middle Eastern regional politics. Acceding to one demand at the cost of others increases grievances, not peace. To understand all pros and cons of the deal it is necessary to unveil the framework of the deal. Then it would be decided that whether the US has played the role of peacemaker or peace breaker.

A Roadmap to Peace

The peace plan consists of two frameworks, a political framework, and an economic framework. The political framework was announced in 2019 in which the political issues between Israel and Palestine regarding the West Bank, Gaza, Jerusalem, and Jordan valley have been entailed. While the economic framework was announced in December 2020 in which it was envisioned to raise the living standards of Palestinians by providing them with \$50 billion in economic aid for the next 10 years. The peace plan has accepted the failure to resolve the conflict and has said that "The time has come to end the conflict, and unlock the vast human potential and economic opportunity that peace will bring to Israelis, Palestinians, and the region as a whole".

Peace to prosperity is a roadmap to peace that has given a blueprint to resolve this longest-standing conflict. The deal context entails that Israel has successfully

resolved its disputes with Jordan and Egypt and is now ready to make territorial compromises with Palestine. Before the deal was published Trump announced some key proposals for the deal that included

- The US will recognize Israel's sovereignty and Jerusalem will remain the undivided capital of the state of Israel.
- The peace plan will provide a conceptual map to draw the future borders of the state of Palestine for which Israel will make territorial compromises. The map will also provide the Palestinian capital in eastern Jerusalem.
- The plan will give Palestinians an opportunity to have a state of their own.
- For the protection of holy sites Israel will work with the king of Jordan.
- No Palestinian and Israeli will be uprooted from their homes.

He ended the speech by saying that "Palestinians are in poverty and violence, exploited by those seeking to use them as pawns to advance terrorism and extremism. They deserve a far better life," (BBC, 2020).

Palestinian's Concerns regarding Peace Plan

The deal was unilaterally broken by Israel and the US without the Palestinian authority's involvement. The future of Palestinians was decided without their participation. The rigorous study has revealed the US biased policy and its inclination towards Israel. Trump has called the deal a win-win situation for both parties but the reality is the opposite. Let's constructively criticize the deal proposals that have posed gloomy impacts on the Palestinians. The reality is pretty different, the proposed state of Palestine under this plan is not a sovereign state. Palestine will be autonomous under Israel's sovereignty, which means the legitimate right to control the Palestinian state and Palestinian lives has been given to Israel. The Palestinian will not be a sovereign entity which means its decision-making regarding internal and external security issues will be dependent on Israel. According to the deal, Israel will protect the Palestine borders as Palestine is prohibited to have military or paramilitary forces. This has raised questions regarding Palestinian security and how a state has become the protector of the realm that once breached it. The most disputable proposal is the city of Jerusalem as the undivided capital of Israel. The other ground on which Palestine has rejected the deal is that the deal is unilateral. Palestinians didn't participate in any of the negotiations between Israel and the US. The future of Palestine couldn't be decided without the participation of Palestine. The US has concerns over the US pro-Israel policy as the US has always prioritized Israel over Palestine. The US-based policy has created grievances among the Palestinian society. The other contradictory proposal that infuriated Palestinians was the denunciation of the right of refugees to return to their homeland. As far as the economic framework is concerned that will be only applicable when the political framework will be accepted by Palestine. The living standard of Palestine can only be raised when there would be a future for the future state of Palestine. As the Palestinian's future is concerned with the survival of the Palestinian state.

Trump Peace Plan and Global Response

The global trends towards the Trump peace plan have been observed as mixed. The plan has been criticized and supported at the same time by many entities. However,

the close allies of the US have praised Trump's role in formulating this comprehensive peace plan. The EU has supported the peace plan and has called the normalization of Arabs relations with Israel a positive attitude. No EU member has categorically rejected the plan but Germany has raised concerns over the peace plan. German Foreign minister Heiko Maas has stated that "only a negotiated two-state solution, acceptable to both sides, can lead to a lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians" (Munayyer, 2020). The plan started a heated debate among the international media. The catchy and controversial proposal of the peace plan divided the international media. BBC has called The Trump peace plan or deal of the century a huge Gamble, as the deal has raised vindictive sentiments. The situation can be hostile or dangerous for the US in the Middle East (BBC, 2020). Qatar-based Arabic news channel; Al-Jazeera has criticized the US peace deal as a "century of failed deals". Senior Political analyst at Aljazeera critiqued the deal as "To call it a "peace plan" is to do injustice to the infamous "peace process" and its many failed "peace plans". It is so much worse, that a better term for it would be an "assault on peace" (Bishara, 2020). The article published in the New York times has accepted the biased policy of the US towards Israel and has called it "A plan that strongly favors Israel" (Halbfinger, 2020). Political scholars and analysts have also participated in this heated debate over the Trump Peace plan. Noam Chomsky is the most renowned political thinker who has extensively criticized the US policies and called it a Rogue state. Chomsky has serious objections to the Trump foreign policy and has said about Trump is "the worst criminal in human history" (Chotiner, 2020). In his book "On Palestine" Chomsky also criticized Israel as "Anyone who does not accede to Israeli-version of the two-state solution is suspected of being anti-Semite." Rashid Khalidi the author of 'The Hundred years war on Palestine' has criticized trump's plan as an outrageous deal for the Palestinians. He has further said that any one-sided formula that will not be based not justice and equality will be inevitably failed (Khalidi, 2020).

Conclusion

For seven decades Palestinians have been fooled by the US that they are going to resolve this conflict. However, the issue was never resolved but the Palestinians had lost more territory, homes, freedom, and lives at the hands of Israel. Israel is not only the sole responsible for Palestinian blood, the US is equally responsible. In the pretext of Trump's plan, it was written that while the Palestinians never had a state so this plan is going to give them the right to have a separate state. Focus on the statement that Palestinians never had a state. History is pretty different from this, in reality, Jews never had a state. The Jews were the most oppressed nation in the 19th century being treated as animals in Europe. If the US wanted it can resolve the conflict at its initial stages by cutting the support to Israel and pressurizing her to stop the illegal occupation. The US can stop conflict by not providing economic and military aid to Israel which to has to increase Israel's capability to win the war against the United Arab Front. Israel and Palestine should accept each other right to have a separate state of their own. The international community should play a positive role by easing the tensions between both conflictual parties and bringing them to the tables for negotiations. Undoubtedly the Trump plan has brought new prospects and challenges for the Middle East. The Israel-Palestine conflict has changed the direction of regional politics. Though the Trump plan had failed to resolve the Israel-Palestine conflict but had succeeded to break the ice between Arab states and Israel. The peace agreements between Arabs and Israel are positive attitudes toward regional peace and stability. Eventually, states had to make peace for their self-betterment. Always in a situation of conflict is stagnant towards their road to peace and prosperity. The deal had brought a few pleasant changes in regional politics. However, leaving the Palestinian issue aside there will be no peace in the region.

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