

Kerry's Israel-Palestine "Framework" is DOA

By [Richard Silverstein](#)

Global Research, February 02, 2014

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I can't think of anything more dry and boring than talking about a diplomatic "framework." It's enough to give diplomacy a bad name. A framework is not a deal, it's not tangible, it doesn't mean much—unless both sides want it to. And usually two sides that can agree on a framework could also agree on a deal, so there's no need for a framework.

Tom Friedman offers his [typically Olympian wisdom](#) in today's column, in which he doles out bits of Kerry's purported framework. I'm sorry for being so blunt, but this sucker is gonna tank, and I'll be happy when it does. That may sound callous. But ultimately, it's not. To explain, I'll juxtapose two short passages from Friedman's summary of the provisions in Kerry's plan in order to point out its fatal flaws:

Has the number of Israeli Jews now living in East Jerusalem and the West Bank become so much larger — more than 540,000 — that they are immovable?...

It [the framework] will call for the Palestinians to have a capital in Arab East Jerusalem and for Palestinians to recognize Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people. It will not include any right of return for Palestinian refugees into Israel proper.

What's so egregious in the calculus of the Kerry plan is the assumption that in order for Palestinians to undo an Israeli injustice, the theft and resettling of their land with half a million Jewish settlers, they must also turn their backs on the prospect of righting another Israeli injustice: the forced expulsion of 1-million Israeli Palestinians in 1948. In this purported framework, what have Israelis given up? Sovereignty over the Territories, land which most Israelis could easily dispense with anyway. So for the average Israeli this is a great deal: he or she gives up something she doesn't really care for anyway and gets a refugee-free Jewish country and a cleansed moral conscience. Such a deal! Who could refuse?

When you read the second paragraph above, you realize that the price the Palestinians are being asked to pay for removing settlements (and only *part* of them), is abjuring all claims for the return of refugees and recognizing Israel as the state of the Jewish people. So the question you must ask is: are the Palestinians that desperate that they would prefer a deal offering half a state and the retreat from sacred Palestinian principles; to no deal at all? My money is on the latter. I'll tell you why.

Clearly, if they had their druthers, Abbas and the rump West Bank Fatah leadership would cave and go for a deal. But I don't believe either Palestinians in the West Bank and certainly

not in Gaza would allow them to do so. I predict an internal Arab Spring or Intifada that would literally prevent leaders from signing a deal. If this were to happen, it would be a good thing.

Whenever Abbas goes too far in caving to Israeli interests, there is a storm of criticism and he retreats. That will happen this time too if he has the effrontery to bargain away Palestinian national rights.

On the Palestinian side, there is simply no leader, when you put the deal this way (and opponents will, trust me), who could support it. That is why no deal is better than this shabby one. Yes, it will mean continuing bloodshed, continuing deterioration of Israel's democratic values, things will get worse. There is no way around this. But there are times, and unfortunately this is one, when one side has too much power and thinks it can lord it over the other. Time will wear down the dominant party and rob it of its superior strategic position.

Palestine will never beat Israel on the battlefield. But like Joshua blowing his horn at the walls of Jericho, those instruments will eventually chip away at the impregnable fortress that is Israel. An advantage will become a deficit. Superiority will turn to desperation and decline. Only then, when Israel's hubris has been humbled, like Pharaoh's heart, will a just, fair negotiated solution be possible.

When Kerry fails, you'll undoubtedly see a picture with Bibi smiling like the cat that swallowed the canary. When peace talks fail it's music to the Likud's ears. They think they can live forever. They think Israel can hold out forever. But the fortunes of nations, like people, rise and fall. You're up one day or decade and down the next. Israeli hubris will lead to overreaching. The world will eventually vote with its feet and abandon Israel, the garrison state. Eventually, it will have no choice but to settle for the half a loaf it probably could've had in 1948 (if not then, then certainly after 1967), if Ben Gurion had conducted affairs differently.

Friedman in concluding his column, warns that the failure of the Kerry project will doom the two-state solution. If it does, it won't be such a bad thing. I say this as someone who once embraced the two state solution. I say it as someone who doesn't really know or understand what will replace it and whether it will be workable. But finally I say this as someone who understands that Israel has made a mockery of the two-state solution; turned it into a Potemkin village behind which sits the wretched refuse of Occupation. You can only dishonor an idea so long before it becomes a rusting, useless hulk.

So I, with a heavy heart, hope for failure for Kerry's initiative. It is the only path to a real solution.

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