

Document 6: Proposals by Secretary of State Dulles for a Settlement in the Arab-Israel Zone, 26 August 1955

One of the first things I did as Secretary of State was to go to the Middle East. I wanted to see for myself that area so rich in culture and religious tradition, yet now so torn by strife and bitterness. So, in the spring of 1953, I visited Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Upon my return I spoke of the impressions gathered on that trip and of the hopes which I held as a result of talks with leaders and people there.

Some of those hopes have become realities. At that time the Suez Base was a center of controversy and of potential strife. Now, as a result of patient effort, in a spirit of conciliation, the problem of the Suez Base has been successfully resolved.

Another problem which was then concerning many of the leaders in the Middle East was that of the security of the area. It was clear that effective defense depended upon collective measures and that such measures, to be dependable, needed to be a natural drawing together of those who felt a sense of common destiny in the face of what could be a common danger. Here, too, there has been some encouraging progress.

A third problem which called for attention was the need for water to irrigate land. I mentioned in my report the possibility that the rivers flowing through the Jordan Valley might be used to make this valley a source of livelihood rather than dispute. Since then Ambassador Eric Johnston has held talks with the governments of countries through which the River Jordan runs. They have shown an encouraging willingness to accept the principle of coordinated arrangements for the use of the waters. Plans for the development of the valley are well advanced. Ambassador Johnston is on his fourth visit to the countries concerned in an effort to eliminate the small margins of difference which still exist.

A beginning has been made, as you see, in doing away with the obstacles that stand in the way of the aspirations of the Middle Eastern peoples. It is my hope – and that is the hope of which I would now speak – that the time has come when it is useful to think in terms of further steps toward stability, tranquillity, and progress in the Middle East.

THE ARAB-ISRAELI PROBLEM

What are the principal remaining problems? They are those which were unresolved by the armistices of 1949 which ended the fighting between Israelis and Arabs. Before taking up these problems specifically, I would first pay high tribute to what the United Nations has done to preserve tranquillity and to serve humanity in the area. Despite these indispensable efforts, three problems remain that conspicuously require to be solved.

The first is the tragic plight of the 900,000 refugees who formerly lived in the territory that is now occupied by Israel.

The second is the pall of fear that hangs over the Arab and Israel[i] people alike. The Arab countries fear that Israel will seek by violent means to expand at their expense. The Israelis fear that the Arabs will gradually marshal superior

forces to be used to drive them into the sea, and they suffer from the economic measures now taken against them.

The third is the lack of fixed permanent boundaries between Israel and its Arab neighbors.

There are other important problems. But if these three principal problems could be dealt with, then the way would be paved for the solution of others.

These three problems seem capable of solution, and surely there is need. Border clashes take an almost weekly toll of human lives and inflame an already dangerous mood of hatred. The sufferings of the Arab refugees are drawn out almost beyond the point of endurance. The fears which are at work, on each side, lead to a heavy burden of armament, which constitutes a serious drag on economic and social progress. Responsible leaders are finding it hard to turn their full attention and energies to the positive task of creating conditions of healthy growth.

Serious as the present situation is, there is a danger that, unless it improves, it will get worse. One ill leads to another, and cause and effect are hard to sort out. The atmosphere, if it worsens, could becloud clear judgments, making appear attractive what would in fact be reckless.

Both sides suffer greatly from the present situation, and both are anxious for what they would regard as a just and equitable solution. But neither has been able to find that way.

This may be a situation where mutual friends could serve the common good. This is particularly true since the area may not, itself, possess all of the ingredients needed for the full and early building of a condition of security and well-being.

The United States, as a friend of both Israelis and Arabs, has given the situation deep and anxious thought and has come to certain conclusions, the expression of which may help men of good will within the area to fresh constructive efforts. I speak in this matter with the authority of President Eisenhower.

PROPOSED LOAN TO ISRAEL

To end the plight of the 900,000 refugees requires that these uprooted people should, through resettlement and – to such an extent as may be feasible – repatriation, be enabled to resume a life of dignity and self-respect. To this end there is need to create more arable land where refugees can find permanent homes and gain their own livelihood through their own work. Fortunately, there are practical projects for water development which can make this possible.

All this requires money.

Compensation is due from Israel to the refugees. However, it may be that Israel cannot, unaided, now make adequate compensation. If so, there might be an international loan to enable Israel to pay the compensation which is due and which would enable many of the refugees to find for themselves a better way of life.

President Eisenhower would recommend substantial participation by the United States in such a loan for such a purpose. Also he would recommend that the United States contribute to the realization of water development and irrigation projects which would, directly or indirectly, facilitate the resettlement of the refugees.

These projects would, of course, do much more than aid in the resettlement of refugees. They would enable the people throughout the area to enjoy a better life. Furthermore, a solution to the refugee problem would help in eliminating the problem of recurring incidents which have plagued and embittered the settlements on both sides of the borders.

COLLECTIVE SECURITY MEASURES

The second problem which I mentioned is that of fear. The nature of this fear is such that it is hardly within the capacity of the countries of the area, acting alone, to replace the fear with a sense of security. There, as in many other areas, security can be assured only by collective measures which commit decisive power to the deterring of aggression.

President Eisenhower has authorized me to say that, given a solution to the other related problems, he would recommend that the United States join in formal treaty engagements to prevent war or thwart any effort by either side to alter by force the boundaries between Israel and its Arab neighbors. I hope that other countries will be willing to join in such a security guaranty, and that it would be sponsored by the United Nations.

By such collective security measures the area could be relieved of the acute fears which both sides now profess. The families located near the boundaries could relax from the strain of feeling that violent death may suddenly strike them; the peoples of the area whose standards of living are already too low would no longer have to carry the burden of what threatens to become an armaments race if indeed it does not become a war; the political leadership of the area could devote itself to constructive tasks.

PROBLEM OF BOUNDARIES

If there is to be a guaranty of borders, it would be normal that there should be prior agreement upon what the borders are. That is the third major problem. The existing lines separating Israel and the Arab States were fixed by the armistice agreements of 1949. They were not designed to be permanent frontiers in every respect; in part, at least, they reflected the status of the fighting at the moment.

The task of drawing permanent boundaries is admittedly one of difficulty. There is no single and sure guide, for each of two conflicting claims may seem to have merit. The difficulty is increased by the fact that even territory which is barren has acquired a sentimental significance. Surely the over-all advantages of the measures here outlined would outweigh vastly any net disadvantages of the adjustments needed to convert armistice lines of danger into boundary lines of safety. In spite of conflicting claims and sentiments, I believe it is possible to find a way of reconciling the vital interests of all the parties. The United States would be willing to help the search for a solution if the parties to the dispute should desire.

If agreement can be reached on these basic problems of refugees, fear, and boundaries, it should prove possible to find solutions for other questions, largely economic, which presently fan the flames of hostility and resentment.

It should also be possible to reach agreement on the status of Jerusalem. The United States would give its support to a United Nations review of the problem.

I have not attempted to enumerate all the issues on which it would be desirable to have a settlement; nor have I tried to outline in detail the form which a settlement of any of the elements might take. I have tried to show that possibilities exist for an immeasurable improvement and that the possibilities do not require any nation taking action which would be against its interests, whether those interests be measured in terms of material strength or in terms of national prestige and honor. I have also, I trust, made clear that the Government of the United States is disposed to enlarge those possibilities by contributions of its own, if this be desired by those concerned.

Both sides in this strife have a noble past, a heritage of rich contributions to civilization; both have fostered progress in science and the arts. Each side is predominantly representative of one of the world's great religions. Both sides desire to achieve a good life for their people and to share, and contribute to, the advancements of this century.

At a time when a great effort is being made to ease the tension which has long prevailed between the Soviet and Western worlds, can we not hope that a similar spirit should prevail in the Middle East? That is our plea. The spirit of conciliation and of the good neighbor brings rich rewards to the people and to the nations. If doing that involves some burdens, they are burdens which the United States would share, just as we would share the satisfaction which would result to all peoples if happiness, contentment, and good will could drive hatred and misery away from peoples whom we hold in high respect and honor.

Source: *Department of State Bulletin*, no. 33, 5 Sept. 1955, 378-80; reproduced in Hurewitz, *Diplomacy*, II: 395-8.

Document 7: Sir Ivoe Kirkpatrick Minute: *The Middle East*, 30 October 1955

EGYPT

Egypt constitutes the most difficult problem. We should not write her off or drive her irrevocably into Russia's arms. On the other hand it would be a mistake to give the impression that blackmail pays.

An attempt should be made to detach Egypt from Russia. But it would be a mistake to make representations to Nasser at this stage. If he were to reject them, relations with Egypt would be exacerbated. If he complied, we should not be ready with measures to reward him and relations would once more deteriorate.

Moreover reports from Cairo describe Nasser as being intoxicated with the popularity which defiance of the West has brought him. The moment does not seem propitious.

Finally, an approach to Nasser now would be regarded in Turkey, Iraq and elsewhere as appeasement. It would be better to fortify the Northern Tier before undertaking any move in Cairo.