

Brookings Institute Report: Toward Peace in the Middle East (December 1975)

Brookings Middle East Study Group. *Toward Peace in the Middle East: Report of a Study Group*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1975. Print.

The study group reached five main conclusions.

1. U.S. interests. The United States has a strong moral, political, and economic interest in a stable peace in the Middle East. It is concerned for the security, independence, and well-being of Israel and the Arab states of the area and for the friendship of both. Renewed hostilities would have far-reaching and perilous consequences which would threaten those interests.
2. Urgency. Whatever the merits of the interim agreement on Sinai, it still leaves the basic elements of the Arab-Israeli dispute substantially untouched. Unless these elements are soon addressed, rising tensions in the area will generate increased risk of violence. We believe that the best way to address these issues is by the pursuit of a comprehensive settlement.
3. Process. We believe that the time has come to begin the process of negotiating such a settlement among the parties, either at a general conference or at more informal multilateral meetings. While no useful interim step toward settlement should be overlooked or ignored, none seems promising at the present time and most have inherent disadvantages.
4. Settlement. A fair and enduring settlement should contain at least these elements as an integrated package:
 - a. Security. All parties to the settlement commit themselves to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the others and to refrain from the threat or use of force against them.
 - b. Stages. Withdrawal to agreed boundaries and the establishment of peaceful relations carried out in stages over a period of years, each stage being undertaken only when the agreed provisions of the previous stage have been faithfully implemented.
 - c. Peaceful relations. The Arab parties undertake not only to end such hostile actions against Israel as armed incursions, blockades, boycotts, and propaganda attacks, but



Figure 1 Zbigniew Brzezinski (shown here c.1977), who would later exercise significant influence on U.S. foreign policy as the Carter Administration's National Security Adviser, was among the academics and diplomats who authored the 1975 report. (Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, no known restrictions)

also to give evidence of progress toward the development of normal international and regional political and economic relations.

- d. Boundaries. Israel undertakes to withdraw by agreed stages to the 5 June 1967 lines with only such modifications as are mutually accepted. Boundaries will probably need to be safeguarded by demilitarized zones supervised by UN forces.
- e. Palestine. There should be provision for Palestinian self-determination, subject to Palestinian acceptance of the sovereignty and integrity of Israel within agreed boundaries. This might take the form either of an independent Palestine state accepting the obligations and commitments of the peace agreements or of a Palestine entity voluntarily federated with Jordan but exercising extensive political autonomy.
- f. Jerusalem. The report suggests no specific solution for the particularly difficult problem of Jerusalem but recommends that, whatever the solution may be, it meet as a minimum the following criteria:
 - 1. There should be unimpeded access to all of the holy places and each should be under the custodianship of its own faith;
 - 2. There should be no barriers dividing the city which would prevent free circulation throughout it; and
 - 3. Each national group within the city should, if it so desires, have substantial political autonomy within the area where it predominates.

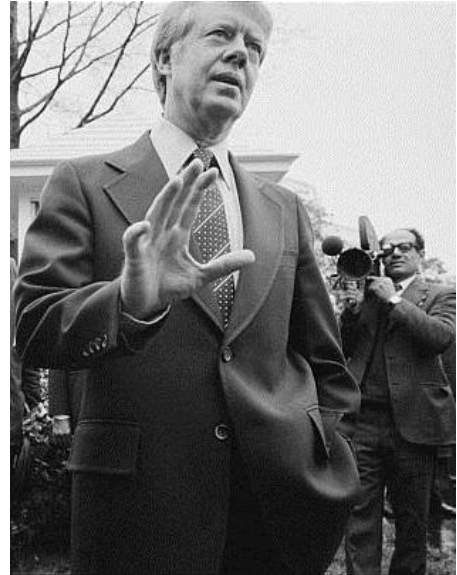


Figure 2 The Brookings Report may have been influential in shaping the attitudes of the Carter Administration towards the Palestinian refugee issue. (Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, no known restrictions).

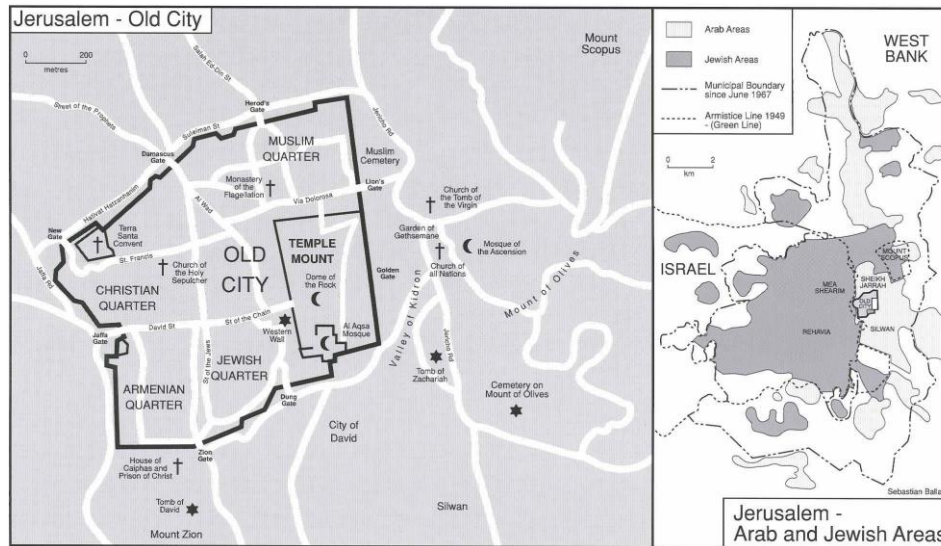


Figure 3 the city of Jerusalem in the wake of the 1967 War-- the Brookings Report did not attempt to resolve this thorny issue. (Map provided exclusively for editor, 1985)

- g. Guarantees. It would be desirable that the UN Security Council endorse the peace agreements and take whatever other actions to support them the agreements provide. In addition, there may well be need for unilateral or multilateral guarantees to some or all of the parties, substantial economic aid, and military assistance pending the adoption of agreed arms control measures.
5. U.S. role. The governments directly concerned bear the responsibility of negotiation and agreement, but they are unlikely to be able to reach agreement alone. Initiative, impetus, and inducement may well have to come from outside. The United States, because it enjoys a measure of confidence of parties on both sides and has the means to assist them economically and militarily, remains the great power best fitted to work actively with them in bringing about a settlement. Over and above helping to provide a framework for negotiation and submitting concrete proposals from time to time, the United States must be prepared to take other constructive steps, such as offering aid and providing guarantees where desired and needed. In all of this, the United States should work with the U.S.S.R. to the degree that Soviet willingness to play a constructive role will permit.

ⁱ Kenneth W Stein interview with Zbigniew Brzezinski , October 30, 1992, Washington, D.C.