

6.5 MODERN WORLD STUDY: ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

THE WYE RIVER AGREEMENT 1998 (PROVIDED BY COLYTON GRAMMAR SCHOOL HISTORY DEPARTMENT)



Question 1

Objective 1 – The ability to select, organise and deploy information in order to describe, analyse and explain key features of a topic.

Using the sources provided and your own knowledge, answer the following question:

In your assessment, how likely is it that the Wye River Agreement will lead to lasting peace? (20 marks)

Sources: The Independent, Thursday October 22nd 1998

The Guardian, Saturday October 24th 1998

The Observer, Sunday October 25th 1998

Note: Make use of the videos you have watched recently and timeline of the events of 1998.

Source 1

The Independent, Thursday 22 October 1998

MIDDLE EAST peace talks were hanging by a thread last night, poised between total collapse and agreement.

The Israeli delegation to the negotiations, led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, reportedly threatened to pull out, saying that its security needs were not being met.

The US was preparing to put the text of an agreement to Israelis and Palestinians in what amounted to a last-ditch "take it or leave it" gambit. That would put Israel in a highly difficult position, facing the choice of negotiating on to reach a more acceptable text, or leaving, and alienating its only real ally.

Both moves looked like dramatic last-minute negotiating ploys, with agreements only inches away. But officials warned that in the pressure-cooker atmosphere, failure was still possible. President Clinton was assessing whether it was worth intervening again in the talks, another piece of last-minute brinkmanship.

The Palestinians at the talks said that they were broadly happy. But the Israeli officials said that they were deeply unhappy. US officials said that they had been approached by one delegation to discuss departure arrangements and Israeli officials said that Mr Netanyahu was ready to go. Yesterday was his birthday. He was 49.

Jamie Rubin, the US State Department spokesman, would only say that it was a "critical" moment for the talks, which have been going on for seven days. President Bill Clinton, who convened the talks, has

BY ANDREW MARSHALL
in Wye Mills

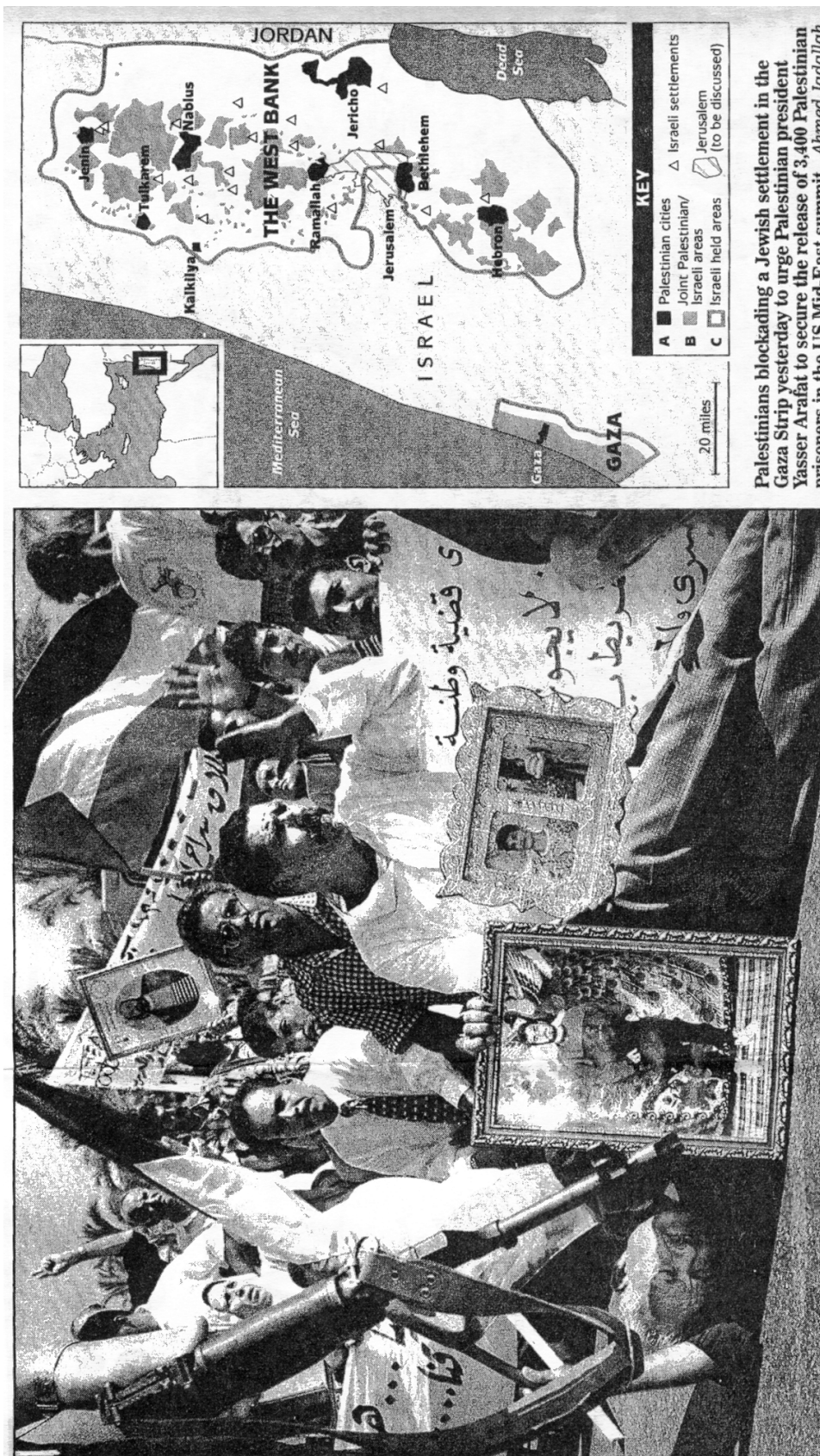
spent 55 hours at the conference centre in rural Maryland. Mr Rubin added: "It is not at all clear that the tough choices necessary to reach an agreement can or will be made."

The plan set down by the Americans covers a further Israeli withdrawal from 13 per cent of the occupied West Bank, and security commitments by the Palestinians in exchange. The Palestinians want to go forward to a new Israeli redeployment, and to prepare the ground for a Permanent Status agreement which would cover Palestinian statehood. Israel is reluctant and wants tougher security guarantees.

The US plan centres on a proposed security agreement, to be policed by the Central Intelligence Agency, which would assess Palestinian arrests of those suspected of attacking Israelis. Israel wants those people extradited for trial in Israel; the Palestinians reject this, and the American compromise would effectively set the US – and the CIA – as arbiter.

Though nobody would confirm or deny it, George Tenet, the CIA director, was thought to have been at talks on Tuesday night involving Mr Clinton; Mr Netanyahu; Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian President; Madeleine Albright, the US Secretary of State; and King Hussein of Jordan – an extraordinary constellation of forces for what was an interim agreement.

Source 1 continued



Palestinians blockading a Jewish settlement in the Gaza Strip yesterday to urge Palestinian president Yasser Arafat to secure the release of 3,400 Palestinian prisoners in the US Mid-East summit. *Ahmed Jadalalah*

The Key question: How much of the West Bank is Israel willing to give up?

Q: *Why are Israel, the Palestinians and the US meeting now in Maryland?*

A: President Clinton has shown greater urgency in trying to broker an agreement between Israel and the Palestinians since the Monica Lewinsky affair. He is hungry for a diplomatic victory and willing to devote time and effort to obtaining it. Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian leader, is threatening to declare a Palestinian state next May, ending the process started by the Oslo peace accords in 1993.

Q: *How much land will the Palestinians get?*

A: The interim agreement of 1995 divided the West Bank into three zones. Palestinians

have full control of zone A. This is only 3 per cent of the land of the West Bank. It includes the cities of Nablus, Ramallah, Jericho and Hebron as well as three smaller towns. Most of the 1.5 million Palestinians on the West Bank live in zone B (see map) where the Palestinians have civilian and the Israelis military control. Zone C is wholly under Israeli control.

Under an American plan accepted by Mr Arafat and Mr Netanyahu, the Israeli prime minister, 13 per cent of the West Bank will be transferred from zone C to B, from full to partial Israeli control; 3 per cent of this will be to a nature reserve, where Palestinians will not be allowed to build.

A further 15.2 per cent will be transferred from zone B to A. This is far less than the Palestinians expected, but six times what they have at present.

The Israeli plan is to keep 60 per cent of the West Bank and ultimately allow the Palestinians to hold 40 per cent of it. The Palestinian enclaves will be surrounded by Israeli-controlled territory on all sides.

Repeated closures have led to a 30 per cent fall in the Palestinian standard of living since the Oslo accords in 1993. The Israeli withdrawal will take place stage by stage as the Palestinians implement security measures.

Q: *What security measures will the Palestinians introduce?*

A: Israel is demanding a reduction in the size of Palestinian police force from 36,000 to 24,000, the arrest of Islamic fundamentalists, the confiscation of arms, and the detention of 30 named Palestinians accused of murdering Israelis. The CIA is to monitor the detention of fundamentalists.

Mr Arafat is resisting the confiscation of weapons and the reduction in the size of his police force.

Q: *Why is Israel asking for the annulment of Palestinian covenant?*

A: Israel holds that the Palestinian covenant calls for its destruction. It was amended in 1996 by Palestinians with the agreement of the previous

Israeli government and the US. Mr Netanyahu holds that it must be amended again. Mr Arafat is expected to agree to change it at the end of the Israeli redeployment.

Q: *What are Palestinian central Palestinian demands other than land?*

A: The Palestinians want to see some 3,000 prisoners released. They also want to see Gaza port and airport opened along with the right to travel between Gaza and the West Bank.

Q: *What will be the political consequences of agreement at Wye?*

A: Mr Arafat will round up members of Hamas, as he has done before. This will be mon-

itored by the CIA. Palestinian public opinion will probably wear this if they see progress on an Israeli withdrawal. The Palestinians will try to ensure that the US and not Israel decides on whether it is fulfilling its security obligations.

The most serious political effect of a West Bank pullback will be on Israeli politics where the settlers and the far right are likely to break with Mr Netanyahu for the first time.

There is no reason for his government to fall, since he should be able to rely on votes from the Labour opposition who back Oslo. The far right and the settlers on the West Bank do not have anywhere else to go.

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