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Spring / 2017

Abbas in Washington: dancing in place or moving forward?

by Daniel B. Shapiro

Writing exclusively for Fathom, *Daniel B. Shapiro, former Ambassador of the United States of America to the State of Israel assesses the 3 May meeting at the White House between Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and US President Trump. Shapiro argues that Abbas is 'going to Washington in a far stronger position than he had any reason to expect' and should now consider taking two further steps: find a way to signal an end to Palestinian Authority salaries paid to terrorist prisoners and their families and tell the President he is ready to enter talks with Israel without preconditions. If he does he can 'leave the White House with the best asset any leader can hope for: the President's support and respect'.*

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas has been written off so many times — by Israelis, by Arab leaders, by his own people — that he is often described as being politically dead. But like a cat with nine lives, he continues to recover just enough from each setback to retain his relevance for yet another round of Middle East diplomacy.

In President Donald Trump's election, Abbas was handed a surprising, even shocking opportunity. But the question, as always with Abbas, is whether he will seize this opportunity and use it to try to achieve a breakthrough, or simply dance to avoid having to make historic decisions and shift the blame to Israel.

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