

# RUSSIA MOOTS WEST ASIA MEET AS U.S. RESETS PALESTINIAN TIES

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Russia backed a Palestinian proposal for a West Asia peace conference, suggesting on Tuesday it could be held at ministerial level in spring or summer, as the U.S. said it would move towards renewing ties with the Palestinians under Joe Biden.

The U.S. — which had sided with Israel under the administration of Donald Trump — said on Tuesday it intended to “restore credible U.S. engagement with Palestinians as well as Israelis.”

Recalling that Moscow had backed Palestinian leader Mahmud Abbas’ idea for international talks in early 2021 when he first proposed it in September, Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov offered ideas about who could be invited.

“We propose holding an international, ministerial-level meeting in spring-summer 2021,” Mr. Lavrov told a UN Security Council meeting held by videoconference.

The roughly 10 participants would include Israel, the Palestinians, the four members of the so-called West Asia diplomatic quartet (Russia, the UN, the U.S. and the EU), along with four Arab states — Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates, Mr. Lavrov said.

“It would also be important to invite Saudi Arabia, which is behind the Arab peace initiative,” he added.

China voiced its support for Russia’s idea at the UN meeting, but most other participants did not offer an opinion on the proposal.

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