

**A Study in Multilateral Diplomacy:  
The Madrid Conference (1991), and After**

**Thesis submitted for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
at the University of Leicester  
by**

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**June 2006**



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## **Acknowledgements**

I am completely in debt to Almighty the most compassionate the most merciful who gave me the ability to carry out this research, without which I could never have done this work at all. I also wish to extend my deepest gratitude and thanks to Professor Geoff Berridge who generously sacrificed his precious time and energy to help me; his invaluable advice was significant to bring this study up to the required standard.



## **Abstract**

**Author: Ahmed Bahaa El-Din Ibrahim**

**Title: A Study in Multilateral Diplomacy:**

**The Madrid Conference (1991), and After**

### **Subjects Covered:**

The study is basically concerned with the multilateral diplomacies in the Middle East conflict in general and the Madrid Conference 1991 in particular. It focuses on the Madrid format i.e. the ceremony, the Bilateral tracks, and the Multilateral tracks. As for the ceremony, it addresses the impact of the Gulf War II on convening the Madrid Conference and James Baker's shuttle diplomacy. The Bilateral tracks illustrate the Israeli negotiation process with joint Jordanian- Palestinian, Syrian, and Lebanese delegations. The Multilateral tracks touches cross border issues, namely arms control, economic cooperation, water, refugees, and environment. It also compares the multilateral diplomacies in the Middle East conflict with important examples of the same kind of diplomacy in the past, notably at Westphalia (1648), Vienna (1815), Versailles (1919) and San Francisco (1945).

### **Abstract:**

Following his victory in the Gulf War II, the US President, George Bush, called for an international conference to settle the Middle East conflict. The conference format that was chosen was fully consistent with the Israeli peace initiative in 1989. During the Clinton administration, the peace process scored tangible progress on the joint Jordanian-Palestinian track, i.e. the Oslo Accords in 1993, and with the Israeli-Jordanian Peace Treaty in 1994. However, the Syrian and Lebanese tracks got nowhere. Following the Barak-Arafat Camp David II Summit in July 2000, the peace process was kept on hold with the outbreak of the Palestinian Uprising II in September. The study aims at assessing the outcomes of the Madrid Conference and drawing lessons from 10 years of negotiations. It should enable politicians and diplomats to detect points both of strength and weakness in the negotiation process and therefore permit them to exploit it more intelligently in the future.



## **Preface**

This study is the result of more than five years' research. It is a response to a growing sense of concern about the Middle East conflict. It does not contain all the answers to all the questions about this conflict, but it does represent an attempt to take stock of what we know - and what we need to know. It touches the conflict on a pilot basis with specific attention to those events that have made a concrete impact on the negotiating process. Of course, its chief concern is the multilateral diplomacies throughout the course of the conflict in general and the Madrid Conference 1991 in particular. The study focuses on the UN role, the role of third parties, and the Arab-Israeli negotiating style; it also makes comparisons with other examples of multilateral diplomacy where these seem instructive.

The author of this study has deep experience of the Middle East conflict. He served in the Egyptian Foreign Ministry (the Palestine Department) from 1992 to 1995. During this period, his major task was to follow each round of the Bilateral tracks of the Madrid Conference (Washington talks) and the Oslo secret channel. He had the opportunity to meet many Palestinian, Israeli, and American key figures involved in the negotiations. In addition, he participated in some rounds of the Multilateral tracks as a member of the Egyptian delegation. For example, he participated in the Arms Control and Regional Security Working Group (ACRS) where he submitted a paper in the name of his state, and took part in some rounds of the Refugees Working Group (RWG). However, for obvious professional reasons, the author will reflect his own experience only in description and analysis of the negotiation process.



The study begins with an outline of the history of the negotiations in the Middle East conflict from the early Palestinian-Israeli encounters in 1913 until the Madrid Conference in 1991. Part A is devoted to an exploration of the preparatory diplomacy for convening the Madrid Conference, its format, and sessions. The chapters of Part B offer a portrait of the bilateral Israeli negotiations with Palestinians, Jordanians, Syrians, and Lebanese on territorial settlements. Part C consists of six chapters on the all-important issue of designing a new Middle East order in the post-Middle East conflict era.



## Abbreviations

AA	Al-Ahram
ACRS	Arms Control & Regional Security Working Group
AIPAC	The American Israeli Public Affairs Committee
AH	Al Hayat
AW	Al-Ahram Weekly
CBMs	Confidence-Building Measures
CFC	Clorox Flora Carbon
DFPI	Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel
DOP	The Declaration of Principles
DPPQ	Documents and Papers on the Palestinian Question
EC	The European Community
ECDWG	The Economic Cooperation & Development Working Group
EU	The European Union
EWG	The Environment Working Group
FT	Financial Times
GCC	The Gulf Cooperation Council
Hamas	The Movement of Islamic Resistance
HT	Herald Tribune
IAEA	The International Atomic Energy Agency
IMF	The International Monetary Fund
IPJ	International Politics Journal (Al-Siyasa Al Dawliya)
ISGA	Interim Self-Government Agreement
NFZ	Nuclear Free Zone
PA	The Palestinian Authority
PLO	The Palestinian Liberation Organization



PNC	The Palestine National Council
P5	The Permanent Members in the UN Security Council
RWG	The Refugees Working Group
SLA	The South Lebanese Army
UNCCP	The United Nation Conciliation Commission for Palestine
UNSCR	The United Nation Security Council Resolution
UNEP	The United Nations Environment Program
WMD	The Weapons of Mass Distractions
WRWG	The Water Resources Working Group



## Introduction

The Madrid Conference is the last attempt at multilateral diplomacy to settle the Middle East conflict, one of the most significant in the post-1945 world. This conflict gained outstanding importance following 11 September 2001, especially after Al-Qaida II<sup>1</sup> statements that without peace in the Palestinian territories there would be no peace in the United States and its allies' territories. If it is to be settled by peaceful means, the lessons of Madrid - as well as the lessons of earlier Arab-Israeli negotiations - must be fully understood.

Like most attempts to resolve a regional conflict, that in the Middle East started by means of intensive bilateral negotiation.<sup>2</sup> Once this failed,

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<sup>1</sup> Following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, the US adopted the theory of the prominent British historian, Bernard Lewis, '*the Arc of Crises*.' The latter called for employing the Islamic fundamentalist ideology to fight against the Communist one in Afghanistan. For this reason, Al-Qaida I was established with CIA money; Pakistan military intelligence offered military training to volunteers from the Islamic world. Upon US request, Saudi Arabia sent thousands of volunteers, one of whom was Osama Ben-Laden. At that time, he used to pay regular visits to the West, including the UK. Following the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, Ben-Laden return to Saudi Arabia and started to have problems with the Saudi royal family on its policy regarding the Gulf War II 1990. He completely rejected its approach; Riyadh got the US army involvement in the war to free Kuwait from Iraqi occupation. He offered an army of Islamic volunteers to do so - the Afghani model. According to Islamic law, in case of a Moslem-Moslem conflict, it is completely forbidden for any of the antagonists to ask for assistance from non-Moslems. Yet the royal family dismissed his offer, in part because it was under tremendous American pressure, and in part because it was anxious about having such an army on its territory; the army could topple the royal family, once it had freed Kuwait. Ben-Laden left Saudi Arabia for Sudan, but he was forced to leave it under pressure on the Sudanese government from the Saudis and Egyptians. He had no alternative but to go back to Afghanistan where he met the head of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, Ayman El-Zawahiry (In protest at the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty 1979, the Islamic Jihad Organization regarded Sadat, as a traitor, and vowed to topple him.) In 1998, both Ben-Laden and El-Zawahiry agreed to establish "*The International Front for Fighting against Jews and Crusaders*" i.e. Al-Qaida II. Palestine was a key issue in its program. In 2000, it planned to attack most of the Israeli sites in Jordan simultaneously - The Millennium Operation. However, this was foiled by Jordanian intelligence.

<sup>2</sup> The first Palestinian-Zionist negotiations took place in 1913. Unfortunately, the minimum demands of the antagonists could not be made to coincide. For its part, Zionism had a firm belief in the need for a Jewish state in Palestine rather than a multi-ethnic society in which



a role was sought for third parties.<sup>3</sup> Finally, large-scale multilateral diplomacy took over: the St James Conference 1939,<sup>4</sup> the London Conference 1946,<sup>5</sup> culminating in the Madrid Conference in late 1991.

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Palestinians and Jews enjoyed equal rights and duties. During the Arab-Zionist negotiations from 1913 to 1930, the antagonists were competing for British endorsement. They were also busy making tactical alliances inspired by the doctrine that '*my enemy's enemy is my friend*.' Zionists supported some Arab political leaders, newspapers, and parties (Farmers Parties) to displace the extremists. Palestinians, in turn, were occasionally calling for solidarity with native-born Jews. By late 1931, the Zionists had a detailed card-index of some 800 Palestinians and pan-Arab negotiators. The Palestinians realized that the moderate Zionist leaders were not strong enough to deliver the goods. For this period, see Neil Caplan, *Futile Diplomacy: Early Arab-Zionist Negotiation Attempts 1913-1931*, Vol. I (Cass: Vanier College, Montreal) 1985.

<sup>3</sup> Following the Arab riots of August 1929, the former British Representative in Trans-Jordan (1921-24), John Philby, proposed the establishment of an Arab-Jewish state under the British mandate. This initiative, which was endorsed by the Arab leaders, split the Zionists. The moderates, led by the President of the Hebrew University, Dr Judah Magnes, welcomed the proposal but the hard liners, headed by the Jewish Agency's David Ben-Gurion, totally rejected it on the ground that it did not live up to Zionist aspirations. It also lacked adequate official British support.

<sup>4</sup> The Palestinian revolution from 1936 to 1939 did not receive any support from the Arab leaders. On the contrary, Saudi Arabia and Transjordan asked the Palestinians to stop their riots, giving Britain an opportunity to re-consider its policy. The Palestinians answered positively but Britain failed to take any action so that the revolution broke out again. Thus, the Colonial Office was forced to consider a Jewish proposal for a peace conference seriously. The conference format was a separate parallel discussion between the UK and the Arabs on one hand, and the Zionists on the other; although such discussion might eventuate in a general conference. On 7 February 1939, the St James Conference took place in London. It resulted in two direct informal meetings between the Zionists and some Arab delegations. It also witnessed both inter-Palestinian and Zionist conflicts. For the Palestinians, the moderate group led by Fakhri An-Nashashibi had to face the Mufti, al-Hajj Amin al-Husaini party. The moderate Zionists figures headed by Magnes were in trouble with Ben-Gurion. The hardliners on both sides were the winners. The Zionist delegation was shocked by the active involvement of the Colonial Secretary, MacDonald, who shared some Arab assumptions instead of pressuring them to approve Zionist plans. The British strategy was to force the antagonists to engage in serious negotiations. However, due to the absence of agreement, the UK had to impose a solution: the White Paper to limit immigration to Palestine. This was rejected by the Zionists and coldly received by the Palestinians. MacDonald concluded that the Zionists had failed to co-operate with the Arabs in the last twenty years simply because they could rely on British support. He rejected the Ben-Gurion premise that stronger British endorsement of the Zionists would lead to better chances for an accord by forcing the Arabs to accommodate their demands. For this period, see Neil Caplan, *Futile Diplomacy: Arab-Zionist Negotiation and the End of the Mandate*, Vol.2, Cass: Vanier College, Montreal, 1985.

<sup>5</sup> The London Conference was a by-product of the report of the Anglo-American Committee of inquiry in November 1945, which represented the first real American involvement in the conflict. The Committee's report called for four cantons in Palestine (Arab, Jewish, Jerusalem, and Negev) but the Arabs rejected the idea and it was as a result of this that the conference was called. The Arab League agreed to come but insisted on the White Paper as a basis for negotiations. The Zionists, however, refused to participate because the UK hesitated to include any partition plan on the agenda. During the conference, Britain



This was co-sponsored by the United States and the USSR, and was attended by the parties to the conflict, namely, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, the Palestinians, and Israel. The UN, the European Community (EC), and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) attended as observers. The conference was just a ceremonial session after which the antagonists would pursue negotiations in two tracks: the '*Bilateral tracks*', which aimed at settling the territorial conflicts; and the '*Multilateral tracks*' for designing the future of the region in the post-war era.

However, the Middle East conflict started long before the Madrid Conference. Following the assassination of the Tsar of Russia, Alexander II, in March 1881, a series of massacres took place against Jews.<sup>6</sup> By 1914, over 2 million had fled to the United States. In his book *Auto-Emancipation*, the Russian Jewish scholar, Leon Pinsker, confirmed that anti-Semitism could only be contained in a society where Jews were the majority. Nathan Birnbaum first used the word '*Zionism*' in an article published in 1886, referring to the re-establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. In 1894, Theodor Herzl, who was the founder of modern Zionism, launched a press campaign to release Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish officer in the French army, convicted behind closed doors of espionage

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proposed a scheme of economic cooperation to develop the Arab World in return for the Arabs' approval of the Anglo-American Committee report. But the Arabs said that they would never betray Palestine for economic benefits. The British Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, made it clear that any settlement not enjoying Jewish support would ruin the conference. Meanwhile, Arab unanimity was broken by the Lebanese Maronite stance, which had been in favor of establishing a Jewish state in Palestine. In January 1947, the second round took place in the form of parallel two-track diplomacy: Anglo-Arab and Anglo-Zionist discussion. This also reached a deadlock. For this period, see Neil Caplan, *Futile Diplomacy: Arab-Zionist Negotiation and the End of the Mandate*, Vol.2, Cass: Vanier College, Montreal, 1985.

<sup>6</sup>. For this period see Ritchie Owendale, *The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Wars*, Second Edition, Longman, London & New York, 1984, 1992, A.R. Butz, *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century*, Translated to Arabic by The Egyptian General Organization for Information, Cairo, 1975, & Lenni Brenner, *Zionism in the Age of Dictators*, Cawrence Hill-Croom Helm, 1983, Published in Arabic by the Arab Research Establishment, Cairo, 1985.



for Germany. He believed that the Jewish officer was a victim of growing anti-Semitism in Western Europe and therefore the only outlet was to grant Jews a political center in Palestine. Until the 1960s, many Jews were differentiating between Judaism as a religious belief, and Zionism as a political movement emanating from the World of Jewry. Since the 1967 War, both Israel and the World Zionist Movements pushed for the elimination of any distinction: Zionism equals Judaism. This was a great success for Zionism; it extended the privileged position that Jews enjoyed in America and Europe after World War II to Israel itself.

During the mid-1800s, Britain was planning to establish a '*Jewish Ulster*' in the Arab world for the sake of serving the empire's security. Yet this was not possible before the containment of the strong Egypt of Mohammad Ali. Indeed, Cairo was forced to sign the treaty of 1840, following its defeat in 1839 by Britain, Russia, Prussia, and Austria at Navarino Battle. For Europe, the essence of the treaty was to prevent Egypt from being a modern country. Cairo had to open its market to international trade. As a result, it would be in debt to the West. The latter would be in a position to stop Egypt from becoming a developed country. On the other hand, Egypt must be cut off from the Levant as well. Once Egypt became a British protectorate in 1882, London encouraged Jewish immigration to Palestine. Nevertheless, the new settlers focused on controlling certain points rather than living in Arab cities, as had been the case with the old settlers. They established their own independent society apart from the Arab one. This attitude heightened Arab fears and was the point of departure for the Middle East conflict.

During World War I, the World Zionist Movements launched intensive talks with key political powers. For the first few years of the war, most of the World Zionist Movements sided with Germany, including those in the United States. Germany was ready to intercede



with Turkey about a Jewish state in Palestine. However, the Turkish response was cool, and in August 1917, the Turkish commander in Palestine confirmed to Zionist leaders in Germany that he was hostile to the idea of a Jewish Palestine. Meanwhile, the Zionist leader Chaim Weizmann was conducting fruitful talks with key figures in British political life, including Herbert Samuel, a Cabinet Minister and a former Jew with good relations with Jewish communities. By April 1917, British political leaders believed that an alliance with the Zionist movement would have important advantages: Zionists in Russia would work for guaranteeing the continuation of the war against Germany; Zionists in the United States could speed up the American participation in the war; Zionists in Germany, who controlled pivotal economic sectors in the country, would work against Berlin. Of course, this conviction became clearer following the Bolshevik Revolution on 17 October 1917, which took place with tangible German support; Berlin was aiming at neutralizing Moscow's position - a decision was immediately taken by the new government. On 2 November 1917, the British Foreign Secretary, Arthur Balfour, responded with his well-known letter to Lord Rothschild, in which *"the UK committed itself to using her best endeavors to facilitate the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people."* Balfour argued that this would eliminate any possibility of Jewish support to Germany. By now, it was clear to the Zionists that their interests were better served by Britain, and therefore that they should switch their allegiance to London. Adolph Hitler later accused the Jews of undermining Germany during World War I, toppling the German Emperor via their control of the Social Democratic Party.

During their early negotiations with the Arabs, the Zionists had swiftly concluded that the Palestinians were more difficult to deal with than Arabs were from elsewhere. This was understandable because the



Palestinians were the owners of the disputed land. In consequence, direct negotiations with the Palestinians were to be avoided, and separate agreements sought with other Arabs in order to apply pressure on them.<sup>7</sup> The priority, however, as was well illustrated during the Rhodes Armistice Talks in 1949,<sup>8</sup> was negotiations with the '*ring states*', rather than with Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and the Gulf states. Israel also adopted a pragmatic attitude on the question of negotiating with the Arab states separately or collectively, adopting the one course or the other as it suited

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<sup>7</sup>. Caplan, *Early Arab-Zionist Negotiation Attempts 1913-1931*, pp. 23-34.

<sup>8</sup>. Following the 1948 War, these talks were held under UN Chairmanship. Dr Ralphe Bunche, who had become the UN mediator following the assassination of Count Bernadotte by the Israel terrorist group, the Irgun, rejected Jerusalem as a venue, preferring instead the more neutral location of Rhodes. On 6 January 1949, the talks started on the Israeli-Egyptian track. However, while the Egyptians were prepared to deal with the Israelis in private they were extremely sensitive about publicity. The Egyptian public was not even aware that the talks were going on. After a few days, the Egyptian press started to tell half of the story: an Egyptian delegation had gone to Rhodes to confer with Bunche. This reflected a total divorce between the government and its people regarding this significant issue. As for negotiating strategies, the Israelis employed harsh confrontation tactics to push the talks to a deadlock, at the same time accusing the UN mediator of bias. To relieve Israeli pressure on him, Bunche revised his initial compromise draft to make it closer to the Israel opening position. This induced the Israeli delegation at last to engage in serious negotiations (meet half way based only on the revised draft), with the Egyptians facing the prospect that any refusal on their part to agree would bring UN pressure onto their own heads. These talks were quite outstanding from a political point of view. They would open the door for the rest of the ring states - the more hostile Syria excepted - to be engaged in negotiations with Israel. During the Israeli-Jordanian talks, the Israelis received a telegram from King Abdullah of Transjordan that he wanted to hold direct discussions with them, a proposal that was warmly welcomed by Tel-Aviv. They subsequently agreed in the Jordanian city of Shuneh to implement their secret agreement in the form of instructions to their delegations in Rhodes. This turned the Rhodes talks into a theatrical performance. Meanwhile, the Iraqi government, which risked falling if it entered into direct negotiations with Israel, preferred to give King Abdullah of Jordan a mandate to negotiate on its behalf. Finally, Syria was forced to negotiate with Israel by virtue of US pressure but, unlike the previous talks, these negotiations were carried out in an atmosphere of tension and mutual accusations, with neither party ready to commit itself to a proposal that might be rejected by the other. As for the Palestinians, being excluded from the talks, they were completely upset. The Mufti of Jerusalem sent a memorandum to all Arab governments in the name of the Gaza Government, accusing them of betraying the Palestine cause and threatening not to respect the Armistice Agreements signed by them with Israel. For this period, see "Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel (DFPI)", *Armistice Negotiations with the Arab States, Israel State Archives*, Vol. 3, December 1948-July 1949, edited by Yemima Rosenthal, Jerusalem, 1983.



its interests.<sup>9</sup> Israel also came to be deeply hostile to UN involvement in Middle East diplomacy, and quickly came to appreciate the need to have the sympathy of the United States government and coordinate policy with it.<sup>10</sup>

The Palestinians themselves were not merely a problem for Arab-Israeli diplomacy because of their alleged intransigence but also because of the issue of how to define them and how - if at all - to represent them in any negotiations. They participated in the St James Conference in 1939 but boycotted the London Conference in 1946 on the ground that the Anglo-American Committee report called for cantonization, which they did not regard as a basis for negotiations. They were excluded from the Rhodes Armistice Talks because the talks aimed only at establishing armistice agreements between Israel on the one hand and the Arab ring states on the other. According to the UN Security Council Resolutions

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<sup>9</sup>. In the Rhodes Armistice Talks, the Israeli negotiating strategy was to weaken the Arab front by dividing them into separate tracks: Israel would negotiate with Egypt the area in which it fought against the Egyptians but would not discuss Galilee with the Egyptians or Negev with the Syrians. Despite the fact that this attitude contradicted the military reality (Egypt, for instance, had forces in Hebron under the Arab Legion i.e. Jordan) the Rhodes format took the form of a '*one-by-one formula*.' This was, among other reasons, because of the Arabs' failure to establish a unified diplomatic leadership for negotiations as had been the case with the 1948 War. By contrast, Israel asked for a collective negotiation of the question of war captives. The ratio of prisoners of war between Israel and Egypt was 1:6 in favor the former; it was 1:7 in favor of Transjordan. Hence if Israel had negotiated this question with Egypt separately, it would have failed to counterbalance with Tansjordan. See "Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel..." 1983.

<sup>10</sup>. The lessons drawn by the Israelis from the Rhodes Armistice Talks had a significant impact on the forthcoming multilateral negotiations. In the first place, the UN mediator had been observed to have an extremely significant power to turn the international community against one of the antagonists, which had caused Israeli deep worry. In the second, US support for Israel had been seen to be crucial in applying pressure on Egypt (a special envoy of the US president, Harry Truman, went to Cairo and urged King Faruq to approve the agreement as it stood). In the third place, the US had played a significant role as a prime third party; it was always in contact with the antagonists, putting pressure on them to reach an agreement. Meanwhile, both France and Russia were kept in the dark. Furthermore, Bunche himself was an American citizen with close ties with Washington, keeping it well informed and advising it how to move. In short, full American-Israeli coordination would be indispensable in any coming multilateral diplomacy. See "Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel ..." 1983.



242<sup>11</sup> and 338,<sup>12</sup> the Geneva Conference's basic goal was to establish peace in the Middle East and the Palestinian question should thus be given first priority. Nevertheless, the US Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, had realized that no progress could be achieved at that stage. Therefore, the agenda had to be readjusted by including other reachable terms such as the issue of the disengagement between military forces following the 1973 War.<sup>13</sup> Hence, the Palestinian participation would be a liability rather than an asset. Of course, this was the stance of neither the USSR nor the EC. The former was for direct participation of the Palestinian representative in the conference,<sup>14</sup> while the latter called for considering the Palestinians' legitimate rights within any comprehensive settlement.<sup>15</sup> However, the USSR and the EC were not in a position to have their way. To make matters much worse, the PLO itself had no homogenous position regarding the question of participation because it was made up of six groups, each one having its own ideology.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>.The 1967 War yielded the most significant document in the Middle East conflict i.e. UNSCR 242. This called for: (1) inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war, (2) the need to work for a just and lasting peace, (3) withdrawal of the Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict, (4) every state in the area has the right to live in peace within secured and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force, and (5) reaching a just settlement of the refugees problem. The drafting was proposed by the UK so that it was colored by its own style of diplomacy i.e. ambiguity. It aimed at meeting everybody's demands: for the Arabs, confirming the principle of inadmissibility of territory by force, which meant complete withdrawal up to 4 June line; for Israel, it should live in borders free from threats, which implicitly referring to possible modification of this withdrawal due to its security needs. Yet the Palestinians were the fundamental loser: the document disregarded any political dimension of the Palestinian question, referring only to the refugee problem.

<sup>12</sup>.The 1973 War yielded UNSCR 338, which called for immediate cease-fire. It also called the antagonists for starting peace negotiations based on UNSCR 242.

<sup>13</sup>.Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*(Little Brown and Company, Boston & Toronto, 1982), pp. 750-2.

<sup>14</sup>.Ismail Sabri Maqled, "The Soviet Situation in the Peace Negotiations", *International Political Journal- Al-Siyasa Al-Dawliya (IPJ)*, Vol. 36, April 1974, pp. 100-6.

<sup>15</sup>.Nazira Al-Afandi, "The Linkage between the European Interests and the People in the Middle East", *IPJ*, Vol. 36, April 1974, pp. 107-19.

<sup>16</sup>.Adnan Al-Hamd, "The Palestinians and Self Determination", *IPJ*, Vol. 36, April 1974, pp. 81-5.



As for the non-Palestinian Arabs, from early on they showed a desire to advance their own interests at the expense of the Palestinians,<sup>17</sup> which meant that the Arab front was fragile and Zionist penetration of it easier. Nevertheless, they shared with the Palestinians a suspicion of pro-Zionist bias on the part of outside third parties (not least because of the presence of Jews in their ranks), and a belief that the Zionists were neo-crusaders to be driven from the region.<sup>18</sup>

As for the outside parties themselves, serious diplomatic intervention only took place following a threat to their interests. These interventions rested heavily on the offer of economic inducements to the Arab states to recognize the state of Israel (including offers of help to promote regional economic cooperation, notably in water). The offer of guarantees of new and permanent political boundaries to replace the old armistice lines also began to play a part, especially after the United States took over from Britain the role of leading third party in 1948. However, these interventions regularly failed because of their reluctance to put adequate pressure on the Zionist hard liners.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>. Caplan, *Futile Diplomacy: Early Arab-Zionist Negotiation Attempts 1913-1931*, pp.49-61.

<sup>18</sup>. In mid-September 1947, Abba Eban opened discussion with the Secretary General of the Arab League, Abd al-Rahman Azzam, who refused to accept a *fait accompli* and stressed that Zionism was a temporary phenomena: "*Centuries ago, the Crusaders established themselves in the Middle East against our will, and in 200 years we rejected them. This was because we never made the mistake of accepting them as a fact.*"

<sup>19</sup>. Three years after the Rhodes Armistice Talks, the US launched its first shuttle diplomacy in the Middle East. On 7 October 1953, President Eisenhower appointed Eric Johnston, then Chairman of the Advisory Board for International Development of the Technical Cooperation Agency, as a personal representative of the President, with the rank of ambassador to conclude a regional cooperation agreement to develop the Jordan River basin among the riparian states i.e. Israel, Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan. His shuttle diplomacy was conducted in four rounds within two years. It established the foundation for US diplomacy in the Middle East: economic aid to Arabs conditional upon cooperation with Israel. The Arab reaction was negative. The mission was regarded as another indication of the pro-Israeli nature of American foreign policy. On the other hand, the Israeli Foreign Minister, Moshe Sharett, perceived the mission as an opportunity to establish cooperation with the Arabs, eventually leading to political recognition. Yet Israel should not give any concessions regarding its water allocation for this cooperation. Soon after the conclusion of the first round (from 22 October to 3 November 1953) the Israeli ambassador to the UN confirmed that if the Arabs continued to oppose regional cooperation



The Middle East conflict is multidimensional. It is an ethnic conflict because it is a struggle between Zionist Jews and Arabs. It is a decolonization conflict: Arabs fought to free their occupied territories. It is a border conflict between Israel and the ring states. It is a struggle for hegemony between Israel and the Arab states, especially Egypt. In addition, most significantly, it is an ideological conflict because Israelis regarded Arab nationalism and Islamic fundamentalism as significant threats to the existence of the Jewish state; in contrast, Arabs perceive Zionist ideology as an expansionist colonial movement aiming at annexing as much as possible from their territories. In the art of multilateral diplomacy, the presence of the ideological factor makes conflict resolution much harder. The Münster-Osnabrück negotiations (1643-48) were extremely tough because of the presence of the ideological factor - Catholicism versus Protestantism. Likewise, the San Francisco negotiations in 1945 failed to establish an international order that would bring real peace to the world for the same reason, this time Capitalism versus Communism. In contrast, the Congress of Vienna in

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for the next three years, Israel would go ahead with its plan to divert the Jordan River. During the third round that began on 27 January 1955, Johnston offered Israel 95 percent of what it had asked in the regional cooperation plan. Nevertheless, the Israelis rejected the offer, confirming that what they had asked for was the minimum demand. The Israelis adopted an offensive negotiation style, whereas the Arabs were almost defensive in both negotiations and wars. The Suez Crisis in 1956 brought the Johnston mission to an end. This failure was due to two main reasons. In the first place, the economic cooperation on water could not be divorced from political reality. Furthermore, the US did almost nothing to avoid military clashes between Syrian and Israel, which turned the Arab public opinion against any direct or indirect cooperation with Israel. In the second, lack of good coordination between the Secretary of State and the personal representative of the US President was clear. On 25 August 1955, Johnston returned to the region but his task was made difficult by the speech of John Foster Dulles, then Secretary of State. On the following day, Dulles announced that in order to secure a lasting and stable peace in the Middle East, the US would assume some of the expense for regional water development projects. This statement fueled Arab suspicions that the Johnston plan was just a trap to guarantee Arab recognition of Israel. It is worth noting that Johnston did not seek the advice of Britain, which had recently left Palestine - six years only. This reflected the US insistence monopolizing any settlement of the Middle East conflict. See Miriam R. Lowi, *Water and Power: The Politics of a Scarce Resources in the Jordan River Basin*, The Press Syndicate of University of Cambridge.



1815 was successful, among other reasons, because of the absence of the ideological factor.

In the literature on multilateral diplomacy, it is usually stressed that multilateral conferences are inaugurated by '*plenary session*' which include all participants. Typically, these create one or more committees, dealing with credentials, the agenda, drafting, and so on. The committees can debate, negotiate, and make recommendations to the plenary but cannot make decisions on its behalf.<sup>20</sup>

Multilateral conferences are usually preceded by two stages: '*preparatory negotiation*' on modalities (e.g. ceremonial protocol); and '*preliminary negotiations*' on sustentative issues but not to the point of reaching final agreement. Formal negotiations include '*corridor diplomacy*' where delegations engage in informal talks and caucus meetings aimed at mutual persuasion. Delegations may also distribute a '*non paper*', which is an informal text to facilitate the process of negotiating an agreement. It is usually not a proposal and does not commit its author. '*Reading*' is an important part of the process of multilateral negotiations to reach an agreement, by which the parties concerned go through a draft to determine which part of it can be provisionally agreed upon and which cannot. In the second reading, the provisionally agreed portions of the draft are not re-opened and negotiations focus on the sections not yet agreed.

A '*Declaration*' is a formal statement of special significance issued by ministers or delegates at the closure of a multilateral conference. It could be legally binding but usually is not. It is sometimes followed by a '*declaratory interpretation*' by a state to spell out its

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<sup>20</sup>.The following three paragraphs on "the definition of multilateral diplomacy" draws on the authoritative account by Ronald A. Walker & Brook Boyer, *Multilateral Conferences and Diplomacy: A Glossary of Terms for UN Delegates*, United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), Switzerland, 2005.



interpretation of one or more of the provisions of the declaration. The declaratory interpretation places emphasis on the points of disagreement within the declaration itself. Multilateral conferences are sometimes concluded by a '*final act*' at the end of the conference, including a report on the conference with special consideration to any decisions or declaration, which came out of it.

In bilateral conferences, the stronger party exploits the asymmetry through bargaining strategies. However, this is more difficult in multilateral conferences where the presence of additional parties often serves to neutralize, or at least diminish, the power gap. Since a greater number of parties are involved, it is normally difficult to establish compromise solutions. In some cases, multilateral conferences could be viewed as bilateral or trilateral ones.<sup>21</sup>

Both ad hoc and permanent multilateral conferences tend to raise similar questions of procedure namely, venue, participation, agenda, public debate versus private discussion, and what decision-making process to employ.<sup>22</sup> Venue is of special importance where the creation of a permanent conference, or international organization, is concerned. Nevertheless, it is also significant for some huge ad hoc conferences, where sophisticated logistics are needed i.e. communication systems, hotels, and the like. Venues are sometimes assisting the publicity of the conference subject. Botswana, for example, was chosen as the site for the 1983 meeting of the signatories of the Convention on Endangered Species.

Participation in UN permanent conferences is usually open for all.

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<sup>21</sup>. Ulf Lindell, *Modern Multilateral Negotiation: The Consensus Rule and Its Implications in International Conferences*, Studentlitteratur, Lund, Sweden 1988. pp. 22-3.

<sup>22</sup>. Except where mentioned the following paragraphs on "the literature of the multilateral diplomacy" relies for details on the authoritative account by G.R. Berridge, *Diplomacy: Theory and Practice*, Palgrave Macmillan, 3rd edition, London, 2005.



Yet participants in ad hoc conferences are usually important states with direct interests in the subject of the conference. For example, the Geneva Conference on Indo-China in 1954 was limited to the United States, the USSR, France, Britain, Communist China, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and the Vietminh. There is noticeable resistance to including representatives of bodies other than states in conferences dealing with the termination of military hostilities and territorial settlements. The Afghan *mujahidin* were not present at any stage of the Geneva Talks on Afghanistan in the 1980s. In all cases, delegations to permanent and ad hoc conferences should submit credential documents signed by their Head of State or Government that enable them to negotiate on behalf of their states.<sup>23</sup>

The agenda is the list of items to be discussed in multilateral conferences, and is slightly different in ad hoc and permanent ones. In the former case, it may influence a state's decision to attend or not the conference - not, if it includes embarrassing items. The wording of agenda items is also - for instance, '*Chinese aggression against Vietnam*' rather than '*the situation concerning China and Vietnam.*' The agenda problem is peculiar in permanent conferences. The participants are first provided with a general agenda to be translated later into a working agenda by the most influential members before each session. Those states which do not like it can only decide not to attend the session with difficulty since they have already accepted permanent membership. Even one of the Permanent members in the UN Security Council (P5) cannot veto the inscription of an item on the agenda because this is a procedural rather than substantive matter.

When debate takes place between large numbers of delegations in

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<sup>23</sup>. Walker, *Multilateral Conferences and Diplomacy*., p. 8.



public without prior agreement in private, the speakers will tend to address their domestic audience rather than each other. This was the case with both the UN General Assembly and the formal meetings of the UN Security Council. Even closed plenary sessions of conferences are of little benefit when a hundred states are represented and the corridors outside are crawling with journalists and lobbyists from NGOs. In the International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo in September 1994, there were 182 participating countries; any of them could easily have revealed the course of negotiations in the closed sessions. This has led to increased employment of sub-committees, private sessions, and informal consultations. The UN Security Council itself has met informally in private and the P5 have caucused in secret since the mid-1980s.

In bilateral diplomacy, the unanimity method is the only method available for decision-making. By contrast, multilateral conferences provided the opportunity to make decisions by majority voting as well i.e. the UN organizations. Some international organizations require weighted voting while others employ special majorities and yet others require only simple majorities. In the UN Security Council, an affirmative vote of only nine of fifteen members is required for a decision on a procedural question. However, decisions on all other issues require an affirmative vote of nine members including the P5. The weighted vote proved to be unacceptable in the UN General Assembly where all states are supposed to be equal. Yet it is acceptable in specialized economic organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Multilateral diplomacy employs decision making by consensus, especially following its successful employment at the Third UN Conference on the Law of the Sea in the period from 1973 until 1982. It is important, here, to illustrate the nuance between



consensus and unanimity. The former may include members who do not register any formal objection to a proposed decision whereas unanimity implies broader enthusiasm for it. Nowadays, consensus has become the normal practice in the UN Security Council; abstentions and absence are interpreted as a way to pass resolutions by consensus.<sup>24</sup>

The chief aim of this thesis is to examine the following main hypotheses in particular. First, that if key actors are able to implant a state in a specific region, they will also be able to cultivate peace in the area. Second, even if the implanted state remains very different in terms of ideology, values and culture, peace in the region will still be attainable. Third, the more democratic is a state, the more powerful it is in the negotiation process. Fourth, the more dictatorships are prevented from acquiring weapons of mass destruction, the more safe is the world. Fifth, the stronger a state, the fewer security arrangements it will require. Sixth, if fundamentalists and nationalists take office, negotiations will be tougher. Seventh, if Egypt advocates a certain stance in the conflict, the Arabs will follow the same approach sooner or later. Eighth, if one actor makes an unexpected gesture to achieve a psychological breakthrough, the other side will respond in kind. Ninth, if Israel reaches agreement with actors with which it has less complicated problems (Jordan, Lebanon), the actors with which it has more significant ones (Syria, Palestinians) will be eager to adhere to a peace treaty at any cost. Tenth, the more the negotiations are carried out through secret channels, the more fruitful they are. Eleventh, the more a state enjoys democratic institutions, the more political stability it has in terms of its negotiating position, strategy, and tactic. Twelfth, the more a third party applies pressure on the Arabs to accommodate the Israelis' terms of peace, the

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<sup>24</sup>. Lindell, *Modern Multilateral Negotiation...*, p. 176.



more peace is within reach. Thirteenth, if a third party called for a conference with no plenipotentiary authority, the tactic of the pressure cooker (the summit's momentum) would be quite enough to conclude a settlement. And fourteenth, if Israel advocated the step-by-step approach (partial settlements with the Arabs), the peace window would be much wider to reach a comprehensive settlement. In order to examine these hypotheses, the author employs a methodology based on the historical analytical approach.

A rough blueprint for the Madrid Conference had been provided at Geneva in 1973 but its achievements had been modest (the first Egyptian and Syrian disengagement agreements with Israel in 1974)<sup>25</sup> and it was abandoned by Jimmy Carter following Sadat's visit to Jerusalem in 1977.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>.The Egyptian-Israeli Military Working Group (MWG) that took place in 26 December 1973 directly following the Geneva ceremony went in a vicious circle. As for the co-chairmen's attitude, the USSR was marginalized because of Sadat's new policy towards the US; he put all cards in Kissinger's pocket. The latter aimed at preventing any progress in Geneva for two reasons: first, he wanted to deny the Soviets any credit for concluding a disengagement agreement; secondly, the settlement should be achieved under the American auspices only. On 4 January 1974, the Israeli Defense Minister, Moshe Dayan, visited Washington and handed a proposal for disengagement agreement with Egypt. Kissinger decided to present it to Sadat as a pure American proposal. Sadat was shocked because he expected more from Kissinger. Nevertheless, the latter confirmed that he made a lot of effort to get Israel's approval to this proposal. He promised Sadat to get more concessions from Israel in the future. In short, Kissinger's strategy was "*to present to Egypt the initial Israeli plan as something influenced by the United States and already taking account of Egyptian views.*" Sadat made Kissinger's mission easier because he set a time limit for finalizing the disengagement agreement; he was willing to conclude the agreement before his trip around the Arab world, one month later. On 20 January 1974, Kissinger visited Damascus. "*Syria was willing to negotiate, indeed afraid to be left out.*" Unlike Egypt, the US could not exclude the USSR from the disengagement negotiations on the Syrian front. "*[Asad's] negotiation style –not so different from the Israeli's, much as both of them would hate the compromise.*" Hence, Kissinger had to put pressure on Syria and Israel to make concessions. Kissinger admitted secretly that only Syrians and Israelis were worth being equal to each other. In August 1975, Kissinger resumed another round of shuttle diplomacy between Cairo and Tel-Aviv. He could get the second Egyptian-Israeli disengagement agreement signed in September 1975. It stipulated a limited Israeli withdrawal from Sinai, and the determination of the two parties to reach a final peaceful solution through negotiations within the framework of the Geneva Conference. See Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, Little, Brown and Company, Boston & Toronto, 1982.

<sup>26</sup>.On this period, see William B.Quandt, *Camp David Peace Making and Politics*, Published by the Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C., 1986.



## **Part A THE MADRID CONFERENCE**

### **1-Prelude**

### **2-The Conference, 1991**



## **Chapter 1**

### **Prelude**

This chapter illustrates the Geneva Conference 1973 format and aftermath with special attention to the events with a significant impact on the Madrid Conference 1991. It aims to answer these questions: why had the Madrid Conference not taken place in the 1980s? Why did it take place in 1991? It also sheds light on James Baker's shuttle diplomacy following the Gulf War II 1990 with reference to Henry Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy after the 1973 War.

#### **Pre- Madrid Conference**

Despite the fact that there were several attempts to settle the Middle East conflict following the 1967 War, they all failed. The conflict was almost at the bottom of the two super powers' agenda, whereas Vietnam, détente and arms control came at the top. Besides, Anwar Sadat's secret talks with the US National Security Advisor, Henry Kissinger, in 1972 were not successful. Egypt was not in a position to put its terms of peace on the table of negotiations i.e. full Israeli withdrawal to 4 June lines. Moreover, both Israel and Syria were reluctant to be engaged in peace negotiations for different reasons. As for Israel, negotiations would lead to concessions –withdrawal; Syria believed in Nasser's motto: what has been seized by power could only be restored by power. In other words, the Geneva Conference 1973 was impossible before the October War 1973. Nevertheless, the latter



dramatically changed the entire situation: the conflict had already jeopardized the US strategic interest i.e. Arab oil supply; the USSR was willing to play a key role in the forthcoming multilateral diplomacy, and Egypt was in a position to be heard.

The antagonists diverged on the Geneva Conference format. The Arabs were for an international conference of plenipotentiary authority under the UN auspices, while Israel stipulated a ceremonial act followed by direct bilateral negotiations with each Arab state. Besides, the United States and Israel agreed to marginalize both the USSR and the UN, and to exclude the EC from the Geneva Conference 1973. Indeed, the UN was only an observer and the EC was not invited at all. Of course, this was impossible without Sadat's new strategy based on putting all his cards in the hands of the Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger. The latter became the maestro of the Geneva Conference and exploited his shuttle diplomacy to penetrate the Arab front - already fragile due to mistrust among different Arab actors i.e. Syria and Jordan. The United States was working as an Israeli advocate without committing itself to the Arabs i.e. offering only vague promises. This was essential for Israel to impose its priorities on format and agenda. It is worth mentioning, here, that Israel was worried about the US-USSR détente policy and its repercussions on the conference; the two superpowers might impose a settlement on the antagonists without prior consultation with Tel-Aviv as had been the case with the St James Conference 1939.

The Geneva Conference 1973 was just a framework for bilateral negotiations between each Arab state and Israel concluded by separate agreements rather than genuine multilateral diplomacy finalized by a comprehensive settlement. During the conference, US diplomacy played a very active mediating role, submitting proposals to bridge the gap between the rivals. The USSR's diplomacy was passive, as was that of



Jordan. Israel, however, worked hard to become a prominent actor on all questions. The Foreign Minister of Egypt, Ismail Fahmy avoided any possible impression that Cairo would go for separate bilateral negotiations with Israel. To sum up, the Geneva Conference was a way to get all parties to make one symbolic act, thereby enabling each to pursue a separate course i.e. step-by-step. Indeed, Kissinger concluded the first Egyptian and Syrian disengagement agreements with Israel in 1974. Yet the second Egyptian-Israeli disengagement in 1975 was followed by significant American commitments to Israel i.e. the Memorandum of Understanding in 1975. The United States should consult with Israel on any future peace initiative before submitting it to the Arabs. This made the US policy identical to the Israeli one. Hence, it could not act as a mediator any more. This partially explains why the United States attempts at reconvening the Geneva Conference in 1977 were not successful. The Jimmy Carter administration was unable to apply pressure on Israel at all. This, among other reasons, pushed Sadat to apply the so called '*electric shock approach*', i.e. his visit to Jerusalem in 1977.

Sadat's visit to Jerusalem in 1977 made the United States initiative for reconvening the Geneva Conference in 1977 meaningless. Following the Camp David Accords in 1978, Israel felt free to pursue its expansionist policy in the Levant without anything to worry about. It invaded Lebanon in 1979 and 1982. It also annexed Jerusalem in 1980 and the Golan Heights in 1981. Indeed, Anwar Sadat's peace with Menachem Begin in 1978 was identical to Chamberlain's accommodation of Adolf Hitler in 1938. The latter took advantage of the treaty of 1938 and invaded Poland in 1939. Winston Churchill preserved the UK. In Egypt, Mohamed Housni Mubarak took office and established the Weimar Republic; Cairo was in deep continuous



economic crises; it was of little influence in the regional and the international arena. However, both the Weimar Republic and Egypt in the post-peace era remained different in other features. For the former, it presented the first attempt in the German history to establish democracy; for the latter, it always remained in a state of dictatorship.

Had Syria and the PLO been engaged in the Camp David process, would they have gotten as much as Egypt was given? The answer is negative. The Israeli strategy aimed at concluding a separate agreement with Egypt in return for Sinai rather than a comprehensive settlement with the Arabs based on UNSCR 242. Furthermore, the isolation of Egypt would prevent the Arabs from launching another comprehensive war against Israel so that it would enjoy enough security in return for a reasonable concession i.e. Sinai. The Arabs had no place in the settlement process even if they decided to join Sadat or follow his path.

The Egyptian- Israeli Peace Treaty in 1979 was a by- product of significant concessions made by Sadat at the expense of the national and regional strategic Egyptian interests. The essence of the treaty was almost identical to the treaty of 1840, which Egypt was forced to sign following its defeat by Britain, Russia, Prussia, and Austria. Egypt should not act as a regional power and so it must be contained within its borders; it must also be made busy with its internal problem - economic crises i.e. management by proxy. This suggested that the strategies of the big powers towards Egypt remained unchanged after two centuries. The question is if Mohammed Ali had been forced to sign the treaty of 1840 following his defeat in 1839, why did Sadat sign the treaty of 1979 after his win in the 1973 War?

The Egyptian negotiation style was defensive, frank, straightforward, avoiding any tough clash or sharp threats - a rather gentlemanly approach. Sadat was in a hurry to reach an agreement to



prove his theory i.e. the essence of the conflict was of a psychological nature. Hence, he was under time pressure, which undermined the Egyptian position during the negotiation process. Furthermore, he cut off relations with Egypt's allies i.e. the USSR and the Arab and Muslim worlds. To make matter worse, he kept his negotiating team in the dark; they were not aware of his secret talks with Jimmy Carter. By contrast, the Israeli negotiation style was offensive, based on tough clashes and sharp threats. Israel aimed at reaching a framework agreement (the Camp David Accords 1978) and re-negotiate details so as to get new concessions (the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty 1979). The Israeli Prime Minister, Menachem Begin, was not under time pressure to reach an agreement; he could easily survive in case of the collapse of the Camp David Summit in 1978. Furthermore, Begin employed the democratic institutional dimension to alleviate Carter's pressure on him; he should first consult the Israeli negotiating team, then obtain cabinet endorsement, and finally the Knesset's approval of any agreement.<sup>1</sup>

Looking at the United States role in the Egyptian-Israeli peace negotiations, it began in 1971 with a secret channel between the National Security Advisor, Henry Kissinger, and his Egyptian counterpart, Hafez Ismail. The Kissinger visit to Egypt on 6 November 1973 was a turning point in the American role. The United States became almost the unique mediator between Israel and the Arabs i.e. the disengagement agreements between Israel on one hand, and Egypt and

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<sup>1</sup>.For this period see Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, Little Brown and Company, Boston & Toronto, 1982, William B.Quandt, *Camp David Peace Making and Politics*, The Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C., 1986, Mahmoud Riad, *The Memories of Mahmoud Riad 1948-1979*, Dar Al-Mostaqbal 'Al-'Arabi, Cairo, 1983, Ismail Fahmy, *Negotiating for Peace in the Middle East*, Madbouli Library, Cairo, 1995, Mohamed Ibrahim Kamel, *The Missing Peace in the Camp David Accords*, Kitab Al-Ahali, Cairo:1987, , and Ahmed Youssouf, "The experience of the Egyptian-Israeli peace negotiations", *The Arab-Israeli Negotiations and the Future of Peace in the Middle East*, edited by Dr. Mostafa Alwy, Center for the Studies and Research of Politics, Faculty of Economic and Political Science, Cairo, 1994.



Syria on the other. Once Sadat decided to contact Israel directly, Washington became “*more observer than direct participant in the Middle East diplomacy.*”<sup>2</sup> Yet direct negotiations soon reached a deadlock so that Sadat sought an active American role. He believed that the United States would help him to get concessions from Israel. By contrast, Begin believed that US participation had always been in favor of Israel’s strategic interest.

The United States official position was similar to the Egyptian one. The UNSCR 242 was relevant to all fronts i.e. Sinai, Golan Heights, West Bank & Gaza Strip. The Palestinian issue should be settled globally and the Palestinian legitimate rights, including their self-determination, had to be recognized. The Israeli settlements were illegal. However, the United States role in practice was very different from the official position. It was clearly committed to Israel, giving vague promises to Egypt. It acted as a mediator, which aimed at bridging the gap between the antagonists rather than drafting its official position in a concrete proposal to be imposed. It had to honor its Memorandum of Understanding with Israel in 1975. Following the Camp David Accords in 1978, the United States approved a “*hollow ritual of Israeli negotiating tactics: a “memorandum of understanding” between [the United States] and Israel was a detailed statement of how Israel tended to interpret the provisions of the accord.*”<sup>3</sup> Although the United States regarded the Israeli interpretation as reasonable, it refrained from making a clear statement on this; otherwise, it would lose its role as a broker. According to Kissinger, “*Israel declared [its] interpretation to the parliament and [the United States] would not contradict it. Yet [this latter] could not ask Egypt to agree to it formally, even while [Egypt]*

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<sup>2</sup> .Quandt, *Camp David ...*, p. 166.

<sup>3</sup> Kissinger, *Years of upheaval...*, p. 652.



*acquiesced in practice. That seemed to settle things.*"<sup>4</sup> In other words, the United States was imposing fait accompli politics upon the Arabs. The question is: how is this analysis relevant to any forthcoming multilateral diplomacy?

The Iranian revolution resulted in drastic changes in the role of Iran in the region. It severed diplomatic relations with Israel and the United States. It was fully committed to the Palestinian question. One year later, the Gulf War I broke out between Iran and Iraq. According to Kissinger, "*the Gulf War I would be a precedent in wars' history, that there was not one loser, but both parties were losers in the sense that the war continued forever.*"<sup>5</sup> Israel was the winner of the war because these two radical enemies were distracted from the Middle East conflict. Iraq had rejected UNSCRs 242, 338 and any negotiations with Israel. Furthermore, the rich Gulf States mobilized their resources for supporting Iraq instead of financing Syria and the PLO. Would the Gulf War I experience encourage Iraq and Iran to adopt a softer approach towards any forthcoming multilateral diplomacy? It is worth mentioning that the high economic cost of the wars against Israel was, among other reasons, a decisive factor that pushed Sadat to choose the settlement option with Israel.

By the mid-1980s, the PLO was facing outstanding crises: (1) the distraction of Egypt, Iraq, and Iran from the Middle East conflict, and (2) its expulsion from Lebanon following the second Israeli invasion in 1982. Besides, the United States honored its Memorandum of Understanding with Israel in 1975. This entailed that the United States would never negotiate with the PLO as long as it did not recognize UNSCR 242 and

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<sup>4</sup>. Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* ..., p. 653.

<sup>5</sup>. Mohammad Hasanen Hykal, *The Arab-Israeli Secret Negotiations*, Vol.2. Dar-El-Shrouk, Cairo, 1996, pp. 169-70.



338. Therefore, the PLO had to reconsider its policy. In 1988, it recognized UNSCR 242 and 338, and Israel's right to exist. It also condemned all terrorist activities and state terrorism. One hour later, the United States confirmed its readiness to start a dialogue with the PLO. The United States Ambassador to Tunisia was charged to undertake this task.<sup>6</sup> Remarkably, the significant PLO concessions were only made in return for initiating a dialogue without commitment to agenda or outcome i.e. vague promise.<sup>7</sup> The Israeli Cabinet deplored the American decision, rejecting any negotiations with the PLO. Yet two key leaders of the Labor Party, Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres, believed that Israel should consider the new political position.<sup>8</sup> Besides, the left wing parties called for direct negotiations with the PLO.

The US-PLO dialogue was a general discussion rather than specific talks addressing concrete issues related to a settlement. According to the PLO negotiator, Abu Ayad, the dialogue took a form of questions addressed by the American Ambassador and the PLO had no idea about the result of the American examination. *"In all likelihood, never in the history of 'dialogue' had communication been as absent as it was in these official Palestinian-American encounters. The American Ambassador to Tunisia, Robert Pelletrean, and the Palestinian member of the Executive Committee, Yasser Abd Rabbo, each brought his insulating bubble to the meetings, to make sure that their voices were garbled and that they never made any human contact."*<sup>9</sup> Both Sadat and Arafat were deluded by the possibility of having the United States apply pressure on Israel. Both leaders offered significant concessions to the

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<sup>6</sup>. Mahmoud Abas, *The Way to Oslo*, Al-Mattbou'at for Distribution and Publication Company, Beirut, 1994, pp. 50-6.

<sup>7</sup>. Haykal, *The Secret Negotiations*., V. 2, p. 214.

<sup>8</sup>. Abas,, *The Way to Oslo*, PP. 56-8.

<sup>9</sup>. Hanan Ashrawi, *This side of Peace*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1995, p. 59.



United States in return for nothing. The question was: would the PLO seize the opportunity of any forthcoming multilateral diplomacy to have direct negotiations with Israel? Was it possible? If not, when would it be possible?

On 30 May 1989, the Palestine Liberation Front (PLF) launched an attack against Israel. The United States asked the PLO to expel the PLF from the PLO and to bring its members to account. Because of the PLO failure to meet these conditions, the United States terminated the dialogue. As for the issue of terrorism in Palestine, *“Yitzhak Shamir, once a terrorist and later Prime Minister, declared that neither Jewish ethics nor Jewish tradition can disqualify terrorism as a means of combat.”*<sup>10</sup> In relation between the PLO and terrorism, an Israeli scholar stated, *“The Irgun established the pattern of terrorism adopted 30 years later by [the PLO]. Among its actions was the wheeling of a vegetable barrow containing a bomb into an Arab market in Jerusalem, firing at a bus and throwing bombs into market places [Jerusalem-Haifa].”*<sup>11</sup> In other words, Zionists were the first to introduce terrorism in Palestine. As a member of Irgun, Menachem Begin participated in the King David Hotel explosion which left ninety-one dead in Jerusalem in 1946. The British mandate authority declared him a terrorist. Following the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty in 1979, he was awarded the Noble Prize for Peace. Would any forthcoming multilateral negotiations bring Arafat to the same scenario?

On 8 December 1987, a car accident caused the death of four Palestinians in Gaza. This accident was the straw that broke the camel's

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<sup>10</sup>.John Mearheimer Department of Political Science University of Chicago, and Stephen Walt John F. Kennedy, School of Government University of Harvard, *“The Israel Lobby and the U.S. Foreign Policy”*, March 2006.

<sup>11</sup>.Simha Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians*, London: Croom Helm; New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1979, p. 116.



back. On the following day, the Palestinians started to throw stones at Israeli army vehicles, shouting 'Jihad' i.e. Holy War. "*Palestinian men, women and children faced shooting and attacked Israeli soldiers and even armed personnel carriers with boldness not seen before.*"<sup>12</sup> The uprising was a turning point in the Middle East conflict. It was a sign of national consciousness that had taken forty years to develop. The Palestinians started to depend on themselves rather than having the Arabs fight for them.<sup>13</sup> "[The uprising I] *also affected the Israelis; for the first time they saw the high cost of continued occupation.*"<sup>14</sup> Would the uprising be a pressurizing card in the Palestinians hand in any forthcoming multilateral diplomacy?

Although the uprising was a spontaneous reaction against the Israeli occupation, the Israeli Prime Minister, Yitzhak Shamir, accused the PLO and his Defense Minister put the blame on Iran and Syria.<sup>15</sup> Hamas, which was an extension of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, was the true leader of the uprising. (Hamas was first established in Gaza as a social and cultural movement, and later as a political and military one in the 1980s.) For the sake of preserving its role as the sole representative of the Palestinian people, the PLO claimed that the uprising was purely its own work and offered financial support through clandestine networks.<sup>16</sup> The Israeli negotiating strategy with Palestinians was based on rejecting any negotiations with the PLO, but approving a dialogue with the Palestinians inside the occupied territories on administrative autonomy. Israel would also negotiate with Jordan

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<sup>12</sup>.Ritchie Owendale, *The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Wars*, Second Edition, Longman, London & New York, 1984, 1992, pp. 252-3.

<sup>13</sup>. Haykal, *The Secret Negotiations ...*, V 2, p. 194.

<sup>14</sup>.Dennis Ross, *The Missing Peace: The Inside Story of the Fight for Middle East Peace*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 2004, p.49.

<sup>15</sup>. Owendale, *The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Wars...*, pp. 253-5.

<sup>16</sup>. Haykal, *The Secret Negotiations...*, V. 2, pp. 194-6.



concerning a federation with the West Bank - the Jordanian choice. For this reason, Israel had supported Hamas and provided it with weapons during its clashes with the PLO in the beginning. Besides, Hamas' 'God Father', Ahmed Yassin, became a star in the Israeli media.<sup>17</sup> In other words, the Israeli strategy had been responsible for the re-emergence of Islamic fundamentalism at the expense of Arab nationalism. Nevertheless, Hamas refused later any Israeli support and established a clandestine network to hit Israeli targets. Therefore, it acquired prominence in the Arab and the Islamic worlds.<sup>18</sup> Israel had to face a movement based on a solid infrastructure i.e. mosques, throughout the occupied territories. Furthermore, negotiations with fundamentalists were a hard task. Would Hamas's ideology push Israel to reconsider its strategy towards the PLO in any forthcoming multilateral diplomacy?

Once Israel occupied Gaza and the West Bank in 1967, the Labor Party confiscated strategic areas to build settlements for military purposes i.e. defensive settlements. The Labor Party, under Shimon Peres, believed that the partition of the West Bank was essential. Israel should keep some settlements as well as the Jordanian Valley for military purpose and give back the heavily populated areas to Jordan.<sup>19</sup> By contrast, the Likud Party, which is a political body made of small nationalistic and fanatic parties, believed that the West Bank was a part of the Israeli biblical land and therefore the Israeli settlements should be established throughout the entire West Bank.<sup>20</sup> The Ronald Reagan administration confirmed that the Israeli settlements in the occupied territories were not illegal. Would the George Bush administration have the same attitude? Was the Egyptian model of dismantling the Israeli

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<sup>17</sup> .Haykal, *The Secret Negotiations..*, V. 2, p. 197.

<sup>18</sup> .Haykal, *The Secret Negotiations..* V2, pp. 197-8.

<sup>19</sup> .Ovendale, *The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Wars..*, p. 237.

<sup>20</sup> .Ovendale, *The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Wars..*, p. 237.



settlements in Sinai applicable to the Palestinian occupied territories? What could the Palestinians have offered to the Israelis in any forthcoming multilateral diplomacy in return for making the latter dismantle their settlements?

In July 1988, King Hussein of Jordan declared the termination of the Jordanian administrative authority in the West Bank. Therefore, the Jordanian Parliament, which embraced the West Bank representatives, was dissolved. Besides, the development scheme in the West Bank was canceled. The salaries of 21,000 Palestinian schoolteachers and civil servants were no longer paid. On the other hand, the Palestinian National Council (PNC) stressed that it would take over the responsibility in the West Bank. Did the Jordanian decision mean the death of the Jordanian choice in any forthcoming multilateral diplomacy? The answer would depend on how the core states reacted towards the Jordanian decision. Switzerland, for example, declared neutrality during World War I and II. It was kept away from the war only because the key states recognized this decision i.e. Germany, France, the UK, and Italy. How would the United States and Israel deal with the Jordanian choice in any forthcoming multilateral diplomacy? To what extent could the PLO use the Jordanian decision in any forthcoming multilateral diplomacy?

The 1980s witnessed different peace initiatives, launched either by the antagonists or by the two super powers. These initiatives agreed that negotiations were the only means of settling the conflict and that 242 and 338 were basic terms of reference. On the other hand, they disagreed on several issues. The Arabs and the USSR called for an international conference, even though it was an umbrella for bilateral diplomacy. As for Israel, the Labor Party was in favor of an international conference whereas the Likud party was against it. The Arabs also



advocated an independent Palestinian state. Yet the United States and Israel offered only self-rule. Furthermore, the Arabs insisted on reaching a comprehensive settlement. Both Israel and the United States focused on settlement in Jordan and the Palestinian territories, omitting the Syrian front. The Arabs insisted on PLO participation as the sole representative of the Palestinian people whereas both the United States and Israel refused to have any dialogue with it. Finally, both the United States and Israel gave economic cooperation with the Arab world due consideration but the Arabs omitted this point completely. To what extent did these initiatives contribute to shape the Madrid format? Would the Madrid format reflect the Arab point of view, or Israel's insight, or compromise between them?

Why was peace not possible? The Second Prime Minister (December 1953-November 55) and the first Foreign Minister of Israel, Moshe Sharett, answered this question. In his diary published in 1978, he stated, "*his own government and that of his predecessor and successor Ben-Gurion were so confident of Israel's military preeminence in the region that they were eager to provoke Arab states into military confrontations that the Arabs were sure to lose.*"<sup>21</sup> He added, "*We have decided to pass on to a general bloody offensive on all fronts: yesterday Gaza, today something on the Jordanian border, tomorrow the Syrian [Demilitarized Zone]; and so on.*"<sup>22</sup> Finally Ben-Gurion's belligerence defeated Sharrett who was eager to make peace with the Arabs. Ben-Gurion attacked Sharett for worrying so much about '*what the Gentiles will say.*' In the history of Israel, he was remembered as a Jewish Chamberlain.<sup>23</sup> In the art of international relations, the

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<sup>21</sup>. Tivnan, *The Lobby : Jewish Political Power...*,p.46.

<sup>22</sup>. Tivnan, *The Lobby : Jewish Political Power...*,p.45.

<sup>23</sup>. Tivnan, *The Lobby: Jwish political power...*,pp.46-7.



balance of power is a point of departure for any serious negotiations; an opponent dismisses negotiation if it can get more by war. The United States policy of offering unconditional political, military, security, and economic support to Israel resulted in complete absence of balance of power between the latter and the Arabs. Therefore, making peace based on mutual concessions was no attractive solution. In other words, the American policy resulted in undermining the Israeli peace seekers (e.g. Sharrett) and strengthening the warriors (e.g. Ben-Gurion). Would the United States pursue the same policy in any forthcoming multilateral negotiations?

### **The Time for Multilateral Diplomacy?**

On 20 January 1989, George Bush took office. However, the administration's focus was the Cold War and the Middle East came at the bottom of its agenda.<sup>24</sup> The administration divided the Arab world into so-called moderate and radical states. The United States should support the former (Egypt, Jordan, and the Gulf) and contain the latter (Syria and Libya).<sup>25</sup>

Since he had been Reagan's vice president, Bush adopted almost the same policy regarding the Middle East conflict. Yet the United States also had to consider crucial events, which had taken place in the region. In the first place, the Uprising I (started in 1987) continued despite all Israeli effort to suppress it. In the second, the end of the Gulf War I in 1988, which meant that Baghdad would draw its attention to the conflict. In the third, the Labor Party was flexible regarding the possibility of

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<sup>24</sup>. Abd Al-Mon'im Said, "The United States' Approaches toward the Arab Region", *International Politics Journal -Al-Siyassa Al-Dawliya (IPJ)*, vol. 97, July 1989, pp. 104-5.

<sup>25</sup>. Said "The United States Approaches toward the Arab Region", pp. 106-7.



having a dialogue with the PLO.<sup>26</sup> The administration enjoyed a relatively free hand in addressing the conflict. It owed nothing to the American Jewish lobby, having come to office with neither political nor economic support from it.<sup>27</sup>

The new Secretary of State, James Baker, carried out intensive consultation with former Presidents and Secretaries of State on the Middle East conflict. They all advised him to keep himself away from this issue: it was a trap to be avoided rather than an opportunity to be seized. The former President, Richard Nixon, told him that President Ronald Reagan was the best friend Israel had ever had in the White House. Although it was time for the United States to advocate an evenhanded approach, the Middle East conflict would remain a dilemma for a long time. The former Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, told him that the Israelis were quite clever at dragging the Americans into useless negotiations and then accusing them of betraying Israel. Nevertheless, Baker could not distance himself from the conflict. Due to the significant political power of the American Jewish lobby, this conflict became a domestic issue rather than a foreign one.<sup>28</sup>

In October 1989, Baker concluded that the Jerusalem issue should be solved through negotiation (he approved the Israeli distinction between Jerusalem and the West Bank). The PLO should only nominate Palestinian negotiators but non-nominated Palestinians by the PLO were approved as well. The Israeli settlements should be halted for a certain

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<sup>26</sup>. Hala Saudi, "The New American Administration and the Israeli Arab Conflict", *IPJ*, Vol. 97, July 1989, p. 120.

<sup>27</sup>. Saudi, "The New American Administration and the Israeli Arab Conflict", p. 120.

<sup>28</sup>. James Baker, *James Baker's Memories: Politics of Diplomacy*, translated by Magdi Sharshar, Second edition, Matbouli Library, Cairo, 2002, pp.171-88



period. The idea of holding an international conference should be kept low profile, focusing only on direct negotiations.<sup>29</sup>

During February and March 1990, Baker attempted to launch Israeli-Palestinian negotiations inside the Palestinian occupied territories. The Palestinians inside the territories were somewhat flexible, but the Israeli Prime Minister, Yitzhak Shamir, was extremely intransigent. His main concern was to keep most of the territories occupied in 1967 and to build the Greater Israel. However, the United State envoy to the Middle East, Dennis Ross, believed that the Uprising I created, to some extent, new dynamics in the region. It put the Israeli coalition (Likud-Labor) under pressure. Besides, the Israeli army concluded that the Uprising I needed a political solution rather than a militarily one. In June 1990, the Israeli coalition collapsed and Shamir formed a new one based on the Likud party and a group of small religious and nationalistic parties. Baker concluded that peace was impossible with this government.<sup>30</sup>

Looking at the Baker approach, the United States saw no need for any rush to bring the antagonists to negotiations since there was no Arab-Israeli war, and no threat to the oil supply. Baker saw no possibility for compromise on the issue of Palestinian representation and Israeli settlements because of Shamir's intransigence. Remarkably, Kissinger came to the same conclusion before the 1973 War. Above all, George Bush was reluctant to put pressure on Shamir because this would turn the American Jewish lobby against him. In 1990, Bush confirmed that the Israelis should build new settlements neither in the West Bank nor in Jerusalem. The American Jewish lobby was furious and Bush asked

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<sup>29</sup>. Mohammed Al-Sayed Said, "The future of the Arab regime after the Gulf crisis", *The National Council for Authentication, Art, and Literature*, (Kuwait, 1992), pp.198-201.

<sup>30</sup>. Baker, *James Baker's Memories...*, pp.190-93.



Baker's advice on how to soothe their anger.<sup>31</sup> This explains why no multilateral diplomacy could take place under these circumstances.

It is important, here, to underline the significant role of think tanks in designing the United States foreign policy. For example, the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, a body embracing Jewish-American scholars and intellectuals and run by the American-Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), shaped the Bush administration's strategy in the Middle East. Its reports are always taken very seriously and one was sent to the new administration, confirming that the United States should continue the Reagan line.<sup>32</sup>

The Gulf War II (the Iraqi annexation of Kuwait, 1990) underlined three crucial developments. In the first place, there was a shift from a bipolar international regime (the Cold War) into a mono- power regime - the so called the '*New World Order*.' This change meant that international disputes, including the Middle East conflict, would be settled according to the United States perspective. In the second, Arab nationalism received a knockout blow. Saddam Hussein had directed his forces to Kuwait instead of Israel and the ideology had failed to solve the Palestinian question.<sup>33</sup> In the third place, Iraq linked the Kuwaiti issue to the Palestinian question: the Iraqi withdrawal should be carried out simultaneously with the Israeli withdrawal from the Arab territories seized in 1967.<sup>34</sup> The EC was split on this question of linkage: the UK and the Netherlands rejected it but France approved it.<sup>35</sup> As for the United States, in order to build up an Arab coalition for the war to drive

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<sup>31</sup>. Baker, *James Baker's Memories...*, p. 187.

<sup>32</sup>. Said "The United States Approaches toward the Arab Region", pp. 103-4.

<sup>33</sup>. Mohammed Al-Ramahy, *The Fall of Illusion*, the Small Madbouli, Cairo, 1997, p.14.

<sup>34</sup>. Ovendale, *The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Wars*, p. 262.

<sup>35</sup>. Abd Al-Mon'im Al-Mashat, "The EC and the Arab Israeli Peace Process 1991-1993: EC, Germany and Egypt", edited by Wadouda Badran, Ismailiya Conference, Egypt, 1993, pp. 85-6.



Saddam out of Kuwait, it decided to give the Arabs a pledge of sequential linkage rather than a simultaneous one between the two issues. This sequential linkage meant only that the United States would make an intensive diplomatic effort to settle the conflict following the war. On 30 December, the Security Council called for an international peace conference to settle the conflict.<sup>36</sup> Hence, the Gulf War II changed the administration priorities, putting the Middle East on the top of its list. Again, the Arabs were asked to offer something concrete (in this case military force in return for a vague promise). Baker's attitude in 1990 was identical to Kissinger's approach at Geneva in 1973. Following the cease fire in 1973, Kissinger had asked for Sadat's intervention to end the Arab oil embargo. He offered Sadat vague promises - the United States would make a genuine effort to settle the conflict. What was better for the main Arab cause (the Palestinian question), the simultaneous withdrawal of Saddam, or the sequential withdrawal of Bush? Of course, the so-called Arab moderate states basically shaped their policies to serve the United States' interests in the region. In this context, one could understand why they advocated the United States' vague promise.

During the Gulf crisis, the USSR was completely marginalized. It was neither part of the coalition nor in a position to promote a peaceful settlement in order to preserve its ally, Iraq. This was confirmed by the USSR's post-war diplomacy, which was based on acting as a US satellite; simply because Moscow could not afford a confrontation with Washington. During his visit to Damascus, the Soviet Foreign Minister, Alexander Bessmertnykh, reiterated Baker's words about the settlement in the Middle East: an international conference of no plenipotentiary

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<sup>36</sup>. Al-Sayed Said, "The Future of the Arab regime after the Gulf Crisis", pp. 185-6.



authority was a convenient mechanism to settle the conflict.<sup>37</sup> During his visit to Israel with Baker, he stressed that once Israel was committed to an international conference, the USSR would restore diplomatic relations with it.<sup>38</sup>

The active participation of the EC in any forthcoming multilateral diplomacy was always likely to favor the Arabs. It called for the Palestinian right of self-determination and PLO participation as the sole representative of the Palestinian people (the Venice Declaration on 30 June 1980). By the 1980's, the EC had established direct relations with the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories through Amman, supporting Palestinian exports. However, the EU was busy with the implementation of the Maastricht Treaty signed in December 1991, and Germany was preoccupied with reunification. Above all, the EC lacked a common policy on the Middle East conflict.<sup>39</sup> Thus, it would be forced to keep a low profile as it had in the Geneva Conference in 1973.<sup>40</sup>

The Gulf War II proved that Israel was not the cornerstone of United States policy in the Middle East, since it was officially (not implicitly) excluded from the coalition. Would the United States reconsider its strategic relations with Israel? The answer is negative because Israel enjoys unlimited support from the American Jewish lobby (the Baltimore Conference 1942).<sup>41</sup> Israel had also acquired more military

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<sup>37</sup>. Except where indicated the following pages on the Beaker shuttle diplomacy rely for their detail on the authoritative account by Mordechai Gazit, "The Middle East Peace Process", *Middle East Contemporary Survey*, edited by Ami Ayalon, (Westview Press, 1991), Vol. XV, p. 116.

<sup>38</sup>. *Financial Times (FT)*, 18 October, 1991.

<sup>39</sup>. Al-Mashat, "The EC and the Arab Israeli Peace Process 1991-1993: EC, Germany and Egypt", p. 84.

<sup>40</sup>. During preparation for the Geneva Conference in 1973, France was willing to participate. Yet Kissinger was not enthusiastic, claiming that there was no single European diplomat with a comprehensive view of the crisis from its all aspects. Hence, the EC was denied participation.

<sup>41</sup>. In this conference, the participants agreed to support the forthcoming Jewish state in Palestine.



leverage over the Arab states following the destruction of Iraq's military capabilities, and the receipt of additional American and EU military and economic aid.<sup>42</sup> This new balance of power was likely to be reflected in any forthcoming multilateral diplomacy.

As for the Arab world, it was divided into two conflicting parties. The first consisted of those who had been members of the international coalition headed by the United States against Iraq, while the second represented those who favored a purely Arab approach. The former prevailed. Thus, the first party was in a coalition that included Israel against Iraq, and the psychological barriers around Tel Aviv started to break down.<sup>43</sup> Baker told Shamir that the image of Israel, in many Arab states, had been changed. The Arabs were ready to accept Israel.<sup>44</sup> Would this evolution pave the road to a forthcoming multilateral conference? The answer is positive. The Arabs were ready to reconsider their policy of conflict following a series of defeats. Once the United States administration realized that no radical concessions were required from Israel, it decided to bring the antagonists to the negotiating table.

To conclude, the parties concerned launched several peace initiatives during the 1980s but the significant gap between the antagonists, together with the inconvenient international scene, prevented these initiatives from bearing fruit. The Gulf War II did not narrow the gap between the antagonists but it radically changed the international environment in Israel's favor. The Bush administration put the Middle

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<sup>42</sup>.Wadouda Badran, "The Arab Israeli Ongoing Negotiations in light of the Previous Experience in settling International Conflicts", *The Arab Israeli Negotiations and the Future of Peace in the Middle East*, , edited by Dr.Mousafa Alwy, Faculty of Political Science , Cairo University, Cairo, 1994 , pp. 48-9.

<sup>43</sup>.Mohamed Hasanen Haykal, *The Arab-Israeli Secret negotiations*, Published by Dar-El-Shrouk, 1996, Vol. 3, p. 233.

<sup>44</sup>.Yitzhak Shamir, *Yitzhak Shamir's Memories* , edited by Dar Al-Kitab al-'Arabi, Cairo & Damascus 1995, p. 268.



East on the top of its agenda. This was the ripe moment to launch a new round of multilateral diplomacy.

## **BAKER'S SHUTTLE DIPLOMACY**

Having been victorious both in the Gulf War II and in the Cold War, George Bush was confident enough to pursue an assertive policy on the Middle East conflict. On 6 March 1991, he confirmed that this presented the source of instability in the region and therefore would have to be settled by diplomacy.<sup>45</sup> As a result, he gave Baker a mandate to pursue his previous efforts to settle the conflict. However, due to the new developments, the Secretary of State's strategy had undergone slight changes since October 1989. He had given up his complete rejection of a Palestinian independent state, instead preferring autonomy. He no longer saw any need for Israeli approval of Palestinian delegation members. And he now favored a symbolic peace conference with both bilateral and multilateral tracks.<sup>46</sup> Baker based his strategy on the Kissinger approach i.e. constructive ambiguity. Both the Arabs and the Israelis could easily claim that they got what they were looking for: an international conference for the former and direct negotiations for the latter.<sup>47</sup> Baker's next step was to consult with Israel on his strategy and then sell his format to the Arabs. He launched eight rounds of shuttle diplomacy, visiting the region four times within two months (March-May 1991) and making eight visits in seven months.

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<sup>45</sup>. Al-Mashat "The EC and the Arab Israeli Peace Process 1991-1993: EC, Germany and Egypt", p. 87.

<sup>46</sup>. Al-Sayed Said, "The Future of the Arab Regime after the Gulf Crisis", pp. 198-201.

<sup>47</sup>. Baker, *James Baker's Memories...*, p.6.9.



## 1-The Gulf

Saudi Arabia was Baker's first port of call, where he confirmed that the United States would act as a catalyst in the forthcoming multilateral diplomacy if the antagonist were ready to assume their responsibilities. He proposed a package deal in which the Saudis would lift the economic boycott against Israel, reject the General Assembly's 'Zionism is a form of racism' resolution of 1975, terminate the state of belligerency with Israel, start low level meetings with the Israelis, and exchange information with them on terrorism. In return, the Israelis would stop administrative detention, and withdraw their army from Gaza and certain cities in the West Bank. However, King Fahd of Saudi Arabia was reluctant to commit himself to any positive step towards Israel for the moment. Yet he confirmed that his country would establish political and economic relations with Israel if the Palestinian independent state became viable. Meanwhile, the Prince of Kuwait was not enthusiastic about the Baker proposal of an international conference, preferring instead a significant role for the Security Council.<sup>48</sup>

In the beginning, the Saudis were reluctant to participate in the conference, preferring discreet support. Of course, Shamir was not satisfied and therefore Baker applied more pressure on Riyadh. As a compromise, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) would participate in the inauguration as an observer and Saudi Arabia would participate in the Multilaterals. Fahd was also of a great help in selling Baker's format to the Jordanians, Palestinians, and Syrians.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>. Baker, *James Baker's Memories...*, pp.608-14.

<sup>49</sup>. Baker, *James Baker's Memories...*, pp.668-715.



## 2-Israel

Since he was the Israeli Prime Minister and head of the Israeli delegation to Madrid, it is indispensable to shed light on Yitzhak Shamir's political thought. Shamir rejected the Camp David Accords 1978 and the Peace Treaty with Egypt in 1979: for the former, no negotiations on Judea, Samaria (the West Bank) and Gaza should be made because they were part of the land of Israel;<sup>50</sup> for the latter, no dismantling of the Israeli settlements in Sinai because Egypt would accept a *fait accompli* in time. Shamir believed that Begin had made two mistaken precedents: evacuation of Israeli settlers and negotiating on Israeli land. Despite being the speaker of the Knesset in 1979, he abstained from voting on the Camp David Accords and the Peace Treaty with Egypt; he could not oppose them without jeopardizing his personal relationship with Begin.

Following the USSR's new policy of relaxing emigration for its Jewish community, Israel looked for new financial resources to build up new settlements for emigrants whose number reached 400,000 between 1987 and 1992. Israel became more intransigent about giving up the Palestinian occupied territories where new emigrants would be settled. This gave Shamir another reason to object to '*territory for peace*', proposing instead '*Peace for Peace*'. It is worth making a distinction between Shamir's decision on building up new settlements in the West Bank and Gaza simultaneously with the Madrid Conference on the one hand and Begin's plan to build up new settlements in Sinai during the Camp David negotiations with Egypt. For the former, it would be a way

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<sup>50</sup>. Except where indicated the following pages on "Israel" rely for their detail on the authoritative account by Yitzhak Shamir, *Yitzhak Shamir's Memories*, edited by Dar Al-Kitab al-'Arabi, Cairo & Damascus 1995.



of keeping the land of Israel. For the latter, it was an Israeli negotiation tactic to apply pressure on Egypt and the United States.

Shamir refused the Bush demand that an Israeli official request for a loan guarantees to build new settlements should be considered following, and not before the conference. Otherwise, the United States would lose credibility in the Arab world. Bush wrote to the Congress "*if Congress chooses to press forward [on the loan guarantees] now, we stand a very real chance of losing the participation of either our Arab or Israeli negotiating partner*". He attacked "*the American Jewish lobby for supporting the Israeli demand at the expense of American interests, confirming his determination to go forward in his plan, even though he would get one vote only in the forthcoming presidential election in 1992.*"<sup>51</sup> Bush pressurized Israel in way that no American president had done before. However, Shamir was intelligent enough to confirm that the ongoing dispute was between the Bush administration and Congress. The loan guarantees crisis triggered two crucial points: first, the US-Israeli dispute was only about timing (the United States asked only to put off not to cross out the Israeli demand); and secondly the crisis turned out to be purely an American internal one, as had been the case with Carter. Was Bush's stance a form of political suicide? It is worth recalling that as Vice President in the Reagan administration, Bush had strongly criticized the Israeli raid on the Iraqi nuclear facility in 1981 and supported American suspension of arms sale as a sign of disapproval.

Shamir took the St James conference 1939<sup>52</sup> as evidence to prove that international Conferences had always been contrary to Israeli interests: convening an international conference under the auspices of the five permanent members meant abdicating direct negotiations with the

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<sup>51</sup>. Shamir, *Yitzhak Shamir's Memories*, pp. 276-7.

<sup>52</sup>. It imposed the White Paper, which limited Jewish immigration to Palestine.



Arabs, and putting pressure upon Israel to comply with the Arab demands. Yet Shamir might accept a conference based on the Geneva format 1973, i.e. one without plenipotentiary authority. To meet this demand, Baker opted for having a ceremonial conference based on direct negotiations.

From 11 March to 10 October 1991, Baker visited Israel eight times, holding intensive meetings with Shamir with a view to obtaining agreement on the Madrid format. He conveyed to the Israeli premier his impression that the ripe moment for settling the Middle East conflict was due. During the first visit, Shamir confirmed that he would be intransigent on the negotiations format. The Arabs must accommodate the minimum demands of Israel i.e. Israel's right to exist, and suspension of the economic boycott.<sup>53</sup> They also agreed, firstly, that the United States would act only as a catalyst with no power to impose a settlement; secondly, that the Palestinian track should be included in a Jordanian one; thirdly, that a regional conference would be held under joint US-USSR sponsorship, providing that Moscow would restore diplomatic relations with Tel Aviv; fourthly, that the conference should lead to the creation of bilateral and multilateral tracks; fifthly, that the Bilaterals should take place between Israel, on one hand, and Syria, Lebanon, and a Joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation, on the other; and finally, that the multilateral track would include states from both inside and outside the region.<sup>54</sup> In other words, the United States advocated the Israeli position that Israeli-Arab relations should be normalized before solving the Palestinian question.

During his following visits, Baker focused on the two remaining issues: the UN role and the possibility of reconvening the plenary.

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<sup>53</sup>. Baker, *James Baker's Memories...*, p.618.

<sup>54</sup>. Al-Sayed Said, "*The Future of the Arab Regime after the Gulf Crisis*", p. 192.



Shamir regarded the UN as a hostile organization and therefore it should be kept away from the conference. Since the main target was to launch direct bilateral negotiations, Israel saw no need to reconvene the plenary at all. In principle, Baker had nothing against the Israeli demands. Nevertheless, this latter would make his mission in the Arab capitals quite hard, especially in Damascus.<sup>55</sup> Following long talks with Baker, Shamir finally agreed that a decision on reconvening the plenary should be taken unanimously and only for the sake of hearing reports. He showed flexibility concerning EC participation, but any UN role should be merely symbolic.

Baker also addressed the question of American assurances to Israel. The United States approved the Israeli interpretations of UNSCR 242; if Israel approved the Arab stance, there would be nothing left to negotiate. For example, 242 was applicable to states only and therefore the Jordanian withdrawal from the West Bank in 1988 put this territory out of the resolution's domain. They also agreed that a Palestinian independent state would not be the outcome of the settlement, that there would be no negotiations with the PLO, and that the East Jerusalem Palestinians were to be excluded from the delegation. In other words, the conference would be based on the Israeli initiative in 1989.<sup>56</sup> However,

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<sup>55</sup>. Baker, *James Baker's Memories...*, pp. 670-8.

<sup>56</sup>. On 14 May 1989, the Prime Minister of Israel, Yitzhak Shamir, and the Defense Minister, Yitzhak Rabin, proposed a peace initiative. It aimed at reinforcing peace with Egypt through its active participation in negotiations. The initiative framed its criteria for a peace settlement: direct negotiations with the Arabs in light of Camp David principles, no for the Palestinian State, no for negotiations with the PLO, and maintaining the status quo in Judea and Samaria, and Gaza. The settlement should be reached through two stages. The first stage was confined to Palestinian Arab inhabitants of Judea and Samaria, and Gaza on self-rule for a five-year transitional period. The second stage, which would start not later than the third year in the transitional period, would be for achieving a permanent solution and setting up a demarcation border with Jordan. The initiative invokes some remarks. The initiative called for direct negotiations as the only means to settle the dispute, ignoring the idea of convening an international conference. It did not propose a comprehensive settlement; Golan Heights were omitted. It was based on the Jordanian choice even though King Hussein of Jordan had withdrawn from the West Bank in June 1988. It stressed the



they were at odds over the question of Israeli settlements. For Baker there was "*no bigger obstacle to peace than settlements*" but for Shamir, building new settlements was necessary.

During the final visit, the Secretary of State presented the American letter of assurances, putting the final touch on the format, but he was not sure of the Syrian participation in the Multilaterals. It is worth stressing that Baker's shuttle diplomacy to Israel was for consulting on the format (no pressure over Israel) not for negotiating it i.e. compromise. He also reconsidered his position regarding a Palestinian state in light of Shamir's intransigence.

On 19 October 1991, Shamir declared, "*Israel had won the best possible conditions for attending the conference. [He would] recommend to the government to choose this way because [he did] not see a better alternative.*"<sup>57</sup> Remarkably, the Madrid format almost met the Israeli terms but Shamir's approval still came seven months following the Bush's initiative. Shamir stuck to the Israeli negotiation tactic: '*haggling over details to explore what else could be obtained.*' Despite Shamir's success in imposing his demands, there were many rejectionists, refusing any Israeli participation, including the government itself. Shamir's coalition was based on Jewish fundamentalists and nationalist parties. On 26 October 1991, the Israeli Cabinet reiterated that it would not yield to the Arab demand, i.e., '*territory for peace*'. The rejectionists gathered in Tel Aviv in order to support the Cabinet's decision. The demonstration adopted the slogan '*no one sells his mother*'.<sup>58</sup>

The Housing Minister, Ariel Sharon, who was considered a hawk in Israeli terms, opposed the Madrid Conference. Sharon said: "*I am for*

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words 'the Palestinian Arab' to refer to the Palestinian people and 'Judea and Samaria' to point out the West Bank. This was a reflection of the Likud Party's ideology.

<sup>57</sup>. *The Independent*, 19 Oct. 1991.

<sup>58</sup>. *FT*, 28 Oct. 1991.



*peace and I am with a peace process. I am afraid that this peace conference will not be a conference of peace; it will be a conference of war that might lead to bloodshed and wars in the future. Another line should have been taken ... the first thing that should have been done and that can be done now immediately by everyone who wants to participate is to stop the arms race.*"<sup>59</sup> Sharon described the Madrid Conference as *"an international field tribunal that Israel had been pushed into by the current American administration."*<sup>60</sup>

### **3-The Palestinians (PLO)**

The Chairman of the PLO, Yasser Arafat, favored a purely Arab approach in the Gulf War II for several reasons. The first was that neither Egypt nor the Gulf states had been able to change the United States decision to suspend dialogue with the PLO in 1988. The second was that the PLO received intensive political and economic support from Iraq following the end of the Gulf War II. And the third was that Arafat believed that the crisis would be solved through diplomatic channels rather than military action.<sup>61</sup> Consequently, the PLO became isolated on both regional and international levels. Had the PLO endorsed the United States stand towards Iraq, would it have been able to participate in the Madrid Conference? The answer is negative. The Likud party would never accept negotiations with the PLO under any condition. Nothing could bring the PLO to the Madrid Conference except for Israel itself. Arafat failed to understand why Bush had forgiven King Hussein of Jordan who also favored a purely Arab approach in the Gulf War II, but

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<sup>59</sup>. *The Independent*, 19 Oct. 1991.

<sup>60</sup>. *The Independent*, 19 Oct. 1991.

<sup>61</sup>. Haykal, *The Arab-Israeli Secret negotiations...*, Vol. 3, pp. 230-2.



not him.<sup>62</sup> The Palestinian National Council (PNC) approved Palestinian participation in the conference provided that all settlement activities were halted, an independent delegation was permitted, and the status of Jerusalem was to be negotiated.<sup>63</sup> The Madrid format did not meet any of these conditions but still the PLO capitulated to Shamir's three 'nos': no for PLO participation, no separate Palestinian delegation, and no representative from Jerusalem.<sup>64</sup>

Baker well understood that a conference aiming at making peace in the Middle East could not ignore the Palestinians, especially following the new political reality in the Palestinian occupied territories i.e. the Uprising I. In normal diplomatic practice, each actor had the full right to nominate its delegation, but the Palestinians were an exception. Baker's mission to the Palestinians was to search for figures to negotiate with other than the PLO and those from East Jerusalem; his focus was on the Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza.

Before the Secretary of State's visit to the Palestinian occupied territories on 9 March, the PLO announced that it had approved a meeting between a national group of Palestinians in the occupied territories and Baker. The statement emphasized that this decision had been taken at a meeting of the Palestinian leadership chaired by Arafat. Such statements became normal practice before any meeting with Baker. Once meetings were over, the PLO always published a full account of the talks. By this means, it aimed to prove its leadership both inside and outside the occupied territories as the sole representative of the Palestinian people.

On 12 March, the Palestinians met Baker for the first time. The

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<sup>62</sup>. Haykal, *The Arab-Israeli Secret negotiations...*, Vol. 3, p. 234.

<sup>63</sup>. *The Independent*, 1 Nov. 1991,

<sup>64</sup>. Mohammed Sabih, "Palestine and the Ongoing Peace Negotiations", *The Arab Israeli Negotiations and the Future of Peace in the Middle East*, edited by Dr. Mousafa Alwy, Faculty of Political Science, Cairo University, Cairo, 1994, pp. 188-90.



Communist party participated in the first meeting but boycotted the rest. Eleven Palestinians attended the first meeting though five attended the second one. Finally, the remaining meetings were restricted to three: Faisal al-Husseini, Hanan Ashrawi and Zakariya al-Agha (Gaza). The first encounter took place in the American Consulate in West Jerusalem. Faisal al-Husseini stressed that they met according to the instructions of the PLO, i.e. the sole legitimate leadership. Of course, Baker was not happy with this start and pointed out that he was looking for Palestinians from the occupied territories who were not PLO members and who were willing to be engaged in direct bilateral negotiations based on Resolutions 242 and 338. According to Baker, they also raised '*a ridiculous proposal*' of establishing an international coalition to get the Arab occupied territories free from the Israeli occupation, as had been the case with Iraq. Yet Baker completely refused any comparison between the Israeli case and the Iraqi one.<sup>65</sup> The Palestinians replied that this was not Safwan Tent (where the United States imposed terms of surrender on Iraq following Gulf War II), to which Baker responded sharply: "*it was not my fault you backed the losing side. There [was] a big price to be paid.*"<sup>66</sup> The head of the Palestinian delegation, Haidar Abd al-Shafi, then underlined two points: first, the Israeli violation of human rights in the occupied territories, and secondly, the need to stop Israeli settlement activities. Though Baker did not promise that the United States would press Israel to adhere to 242, the Palestinians considered this meeting positive. Meanwhile, Shamir told Baker that Israel wanted peace but

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<sup>65</sup>. Baker, *James Baker's Memories...*, p.619.

<sup>66</sup>. Except where indicated the following pages of "The Palestinians" relay for their details on the authoritative account by Hanan Ashrawi, *This side of Peace*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1995.



there was no Palestinian partner; the group of Palestinians, who attended this meeting, was PLO supporters.<sup>67</sup>

The second meeting took place on 9 April and was dedicated to the issue of self-determination. Baker explained that in the US view this meant more than autonomy, but less than a full state. Nevertheless, the Palestinians were disappointed because Baker remained hostile to negotiating with the PLO. The third meeting addressed Palestinian representation in the Madrid Conference. Baker said that if the Palestinians accepted a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation, it would be possible to appoint Palestinian outsiders and Jerusalemites. For his part, Faisal pointed out that the Palestinians no longer rejected autonomy if it constituted a stage in a plan that would lead to a comprehensive settlement. Baker made clear that the United States would not support a Palestinian state but would not oppose it if the concerned parties agreed upon its establishment. This suggested that the Palestinians had accepted the Camp David formula (a transitional period followed by final status negotiations), and that they had fallen for the US pretence of being neutral regarding a Palestinian state, leaving them to face Shamir's intransigence.

The fourth and fifth meetings focused chiefly on clarifying US strategy, though Syria came up and the Palestinians were taken by surprise when Baker informed them about Syrian approval of a limited UN role - which proved that Syrian-Palestinian coordination did not exist during the preparation for the Madrid Conference. This prompted the Palestinians to re-assert their demand for more effective UN participation. During the sixth meeting, on 2 August, the Palestinians were again surprised when Baker assured them that Syria accepted

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<sup>67</sup>. Baker, *James Baker's Memories ...*, pp. 620-21.



Palestinian representation through a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation. Baker urged them to accept this, stressing that they had most to gain from a viable active process and most to lose if there was no process. This meant that the Palestinians were in no position to bargain. Baker used the approval of Syria and Jordan to get a Palestinian concession on this point, and offered his services to convey any message to the Arab states. The Palestinians, who indicated that they were quite capable of talking to the Arabs directly, refused this. All of this reflected the Arab world reality following the Gulf War II - complete disintegration. On 16 September, the seventh meeting tackled the question of US guarantees. The Palestinians opted for a letter that would describe US policy and commitments vis-à-vis the Palestinians, and for the sake of discussing this issue, Arafat invited Faisal and Ashrawi to Tunisia to attend the PNC meeting. They traveled to Tunisia via Paris secretly in order to avoid the Israeli ban (no contact with the PLO). However, the press revealed the Tunisia trip and, as a result, Shamir announced that Faisal and Ashrawi were to be arrested and tried upon their return to the occupied territories. This placed the United States in a delicate position because it had been planned that Faisal and Ashrawi would go to Washington to pursue negotiations with James Baker. To contain the crisis, the United States postponed the Washington meeting, advising Faisal and Ashrawi to stay in London for the time being. Meanwhile, Baker convinced Shamir not to punish them. On 12 October, Faisal and Ashrawi met Baker in Washington, and six days later the United States letter of assurances was delivered to them. Again, Arafat proved that he was the master of the Palestinians inside the occupied territories.

In his last visit, Baker informed Faisal and Ashrawi that they could not get into the conference hall because they were born in Jerusalem. They could only play an active role outside the hall; Ashrawi might be



the spokesperson of the Palestinian delegation and Faisal the Chairman of Consultative Committee of the Palestinian delegation.<sup>68</sup> When Ashrawi bitterly complained about this, Baker answered that there was no room for the rules of justice here; it was only reality that counted.<sup>69</sup> In the art of international relations, interests and balance of power are dominant factors; rules of justice have to do with philosophers, not politicians.

Baker also demanded that the Palestinians should come to terms with Jordan. Yet Ashrawi confirmed that the PLO was the only one entitled to conclude an agreement with Jordan. On 16 October, a PLO delegation arrived in Amman to conclude the agreement. Both King Hussein of Jordan and Arafat agreed that there would be two equal and independent Jordanian and Palestinian delegations. Each delegation would tackle the issues relevant to its interest with two chairpersons, one Jordanian and one Palestinian. Hence, the PLO had an equal status to Jordan, and this was a considerable success for the organization.

The last problem was intra-Palestinian conflict, which Faisal and Ashrawi tackled by trying to elaborate criteria for selecting the Palestinian delegation. These included regional, political, and religious affiliation, experience, profession, social status, gender, prison record, languages ... etc. This list was handed to Arafat but he had his own priorities. This was the first disagreement to take place between the PLO and the Palestinians negotiating with Baker. Arafat was quite sharp, asserting, that it was up to him to decide who was on the list. He added that there would be no list today. The problem was that, in order to avoid adding to the voices of his opposition, Arafat made promises to hundreds of people who wanted to be members of the Palestinian delegation to the Madrid Conference. As a result, he produced a long list in which the

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<sup>68</sup>. Sabih , "Palestine and the Ongoing Peace Negotiations", p. 190.

<sup>69</sup>. Baker, *James Baker's Memories...*, p.718.



majority of nominees had no clear function. Once he arrived in Jerusalem, Baker was informed that the last list was still being negotiated in Tunisia, and a high-ranking PLO delegation arrived in Amman to negotiate it with the Palestinian delegation. This was a way for the PLO to assert its leadership over the whole process. Meanwhile, the Palestinian delegation members wrote a petition of loyalty and unconditional support for the PLO's decisions and sent it by fax to Tunisia.

A member of the Palestinian delegation to the Madrid Conference, Saeb Erakat, then announced that the delegation had been appointed and would be directed by the PLO. As a result, Baker insisted that Saeb should be dropped from the Palestinian delegation, and a new crisis predictably erupted. This was only resolved when Baker approved Saeb's membership on condition that he refrained from making any more public statements. Nevertheless, the head of the Palestinian delegation, Haidar, stated that it was not going to refrain from affirming that its members were supporters of the PLO. In response to these provocations, Shamir said that to his regret he could not banish this organization from the face of earth, so it would be somewhere.

Taking into consideration the PLO's vulnerable position following Gulf War II, it had achieved considerable success. It was able to establish a solid coordination with the Palestinian delegation that neither the United States nor Israel could undermine. The PLO had imposed its presence on the Madrid Conference, as both Washington and Tel Aviv tacitly admitted afterwards. Shamir, however, was unwilling publicly to admit this.<sup>70</sup> For how long would Israel continue to ignore political reality?

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<sup>70</sup>. Sabih, "Palestinians and the Ongoing Peace Negotiations", pp.191-2.



#### 4-Jordan

Jordan had no major border problem with Israel. Meanwhile, the Jordan River water distribution would be tackled by the Multilaterals. Would Jordan be the first Arab state to sign a separate agreement with Israel? The answer is negative. Only big states such as Egypt could afford a separate agreement. The Lebanese experience had proven this fact: Lebanon had signed a peace agreement with Israel in 1983 but was punished for this by Syria one year later. Another question: would the historical Jordanian territorial aspiration in the West Bank come to the surface?

American-Jordanian relations were badly affected because of Jordan's refusal to join the anti- Iraq coalition during the Gulf War II. However, during Baker and Shamir's first meeting, the latter urged that the United States should do the maximum to preserve the regime of King Hussein of Jordan, which was essential for the stability of the region.<sup>71</sup> (The strained relations with Jordan caused Baker to miss out Amman during his first visit to the Middle East in March.) This advice was, among other reasons, important to make the United States reconsider its policy towards Jordan. On 12 April, Baker met the Jordanian Foreign Minister, Tahir al-Masri, in Geneva, and visited Jordan six times from 20 April to 14 October. During the first meeting, Jordan said that it would neither represent the Palestinians nor set up a Palestinian delegation. Jordan was instead much happier with the idea of a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation. It easily approved the United States' proposed format for the Madrid Conference, followed by direct bilateral negotiations, and multilateral tracks. Moreover, King Hussein stated,

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<sup>71</sup>. Baker, *James Baker's Memories ...*, p. 618.



*"the old taboos, prohibiting contact and discussion with Israel, were never taken too seriously by Jordan."* Crown Prince Hassan went even further: *"Jordan", he said, "would not hesitate to recognize Israel and to establish diplomatic relations with it."*<sup>72</sup> Nevertheless, the Amman government affirmed that it had no intention to initiate direct talks with Israel immediately. During Baker's third visit, Hussein declared that Jordan was prepared to participate following consultation with the PLO. Remarkably, both Syrians and Palestinians were studying the American format, when Hussein made this declaration. If Hussein had been eager to establish solid Arab coordination, he should have addressed the Palestinians and Syrians first and then got back to Baker.

During these meetings, Hussein was sharp with Baker regarding the Israeli policy of building new settlements on the Palestinian occupied territories. He confirmed that it was pointless to discuss the status of these territories in the event of the continuation of this policy. Nevertheless, he showed flexibility regarding some modifications on the Jordanian-Israeli border. Of course, this was considered an outstanding success for the diplomacy of James Baker, who had obtained significant concessions from Amman even before negotiations started. Baker's mission to Jordan was the easiest of all his visits to the Middle East in the prelude to the Madrid Conference.

## **5-Syria**

The Syrian strategy regarding the conflict was shaped by a determination to restore the balance of power with Israel before

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<sup>72</sup>. Sabih, "Palestinians and the Ongoing Peace Negotiations", pp.191-2.



negotiations i.e. do not negotiate from a weak position.<sup>73</sup> Following the collapse of the USSR, Syria reconsidered its policy. In the future, it would pursue the following aims: (1) its capability in chemical weapons and missile technology (deterrence capabilities) should be developed, (2) its military presence in Lebanon should be continued to defend its western and south western boundaries,<sup>74</sup> and (3) a comprehensive war with Israel should be avoided, especially during Egypt's absence.<sup>75</sup>

Baker's visit to Damascus could make or break his shuttle diplomacy; Syria's participation was important for the credibility of the peace process. Furthermore, Baker's negotiations with Asad would not be easy. He was a shrewd leader, never considered surrendereing, and employed long meetings to exhaust his opponent. However, once he agreed on a deal, he would deliver.<sup>76</sup> To make matters worse, like many Arab rulers, Asad believed that the United States could easily apply pressure on Israel whenever it wanted; for Israel was completely dependant on the United States for political, financial, and security aid. Of course, this was pure Arab illusion.<sup>77</sup> Baker's strategy was "*trying to produce something symbolic for Asad while protecting Shamir on the substance.*"<sup>78</sup>

The Syrian position at Madrid was similar to its stance in Geneva: a comprehensive settlement according to UNSCR 242.<sup>79</sup> If Syria's goals in 1991 were identical to those of 1973, how could its participation in the Madrid Conference be justified? Although Syria understood well that a

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<sup>73</sup>. Dr. Walid Kazziha, "The Syrian Regional Policy and the Israeli Arab Settlement", *The Arab Israeli Negotiations and the Future of Peace in the Middle East*, edited by Dr. Mousafa Alwy, Faculty of Political Science, Cairo University, Cairo, 1994, pp. 214-5.

<sup>74</sup>. Kazziha, "The Syrian Regional Policy and the Israeli Arab Settlement", pp. 216-8.

<sup>75</sup>. Kazziha, "The Syrian Regional Policy and the Israeli Arab Settlement", p. 218.

<sup>76</sup>. Baker, *James Baker's Memories...*, pp. 621-2.

<sup>77</sup>. Baker, *James Baker's Memories...*, p. 673.

<sup>78</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace...*, p. 72.

<sup>79</sup>. Kazziha, "The Syrian Regional Policy and the Israeli Arab Settlement", pp. 222-33.



comprehensive settlement was not possible under these conditions, it was frightened to be left alone; for the majority of Arab states were prepared to be engaged in Madrid. Thus, Syrian participation was a tactic rather than a strategic decision. This suggested that Syrian-Israeli negotiation would face early deadlock.

Syria believed that it would be the most important Arab actor in the Madrid Conference. This was because Egypt had pulled out of the conflict, Iraq had been contained, and Jordan and the Palestinians were too weak to challenge its leadership. The Syrian strategy in Madrid was thus based upon: (1) rejecting any American pressure, and (2) blocking any separate agreement with Israel, such as the Lebanese-Israeli Peace Treaty 1983.

Because Syria had been a member of the allied forces in the Gulf War II, American-Syrian relations had developed positively, and on 23 November 1990, President Bush had met President Asad in Geneva. Following the first meeting with Baker, the Syrian Foreign Minister, Faruq al-Shara, said that Syria was prepared to pursue an active peace process. Subsequently, Syria indicated its preference for an international conference with the participation of the permanent members of the UN Security Council and the EU. It did not oppose the idea of superpower sponsorship but it was adamant about an active role for the UN. Shara confirmed that Syria believed that the UN should be in the conference and that the conference should remain in session. In other words, Syria was asking for an international conference with plenipotentiary authority. It wanted a genuine multilateral diplomacy rather than a multilateral opening session designed merely to launch a series of bilateral ones, as in the case of the Geneva Conference format designed by Henry Kissinger in 1973.



Nevertheless, Syria later accepted that the UN would only be an observer since no votes would be taken at the conference, and that the conference would only be reconvened to hear updated reports on the negotiations. Asad justified these radical concessions by saying that if Syria had not obtained all it wanted, it was because it had acted according to the Arab Proverb: Do you want to have the grapes or to fight the security guard? Syria preferred the grapes. Asad's words were consistent with Kissinger's advice to the Arabs: *'take what you can get rather than demanding what you want.'*

Regarding the question of Palestinian representation, Syria believed that this issue could be solved by either election or delegation that would include all the Palestinian factions. Syria was also prepared to approve any other solution adopted by the Palestinians. Remarkably, Syria had adopted a policy based on the assumption that the Palestinian question was the main Arab passion. Thus, the Palestinians were not free to take a decision without the Arabs' consent. Syria had also refused the Geneva format on this point in 1973, but accepted it for Madrid in 1991. This reflected the difference in the situation of the Arab world following the 1973 War and Gulf War II.

## **6-Lebanon**

Because it had no direct problem with Israel, Lebanon had not participated in Geneva. Following the first Israeli incursion in 1978 and the second one in 1982, Lebanon became one of the parties to the conflict and therefore aimed at participating in Madrid. However, the Lebanese position was different from the other Arab participants. In the first place, it was the only Arab ring state that did not declare itself a front line state



(it did not participate in the 1956, 1967 and 1973 Wars).<sup>80</sup> In the second, the Lebanese terms of reference were the Armistice Treaty 1949 and UNSCR 425.<sup>81</sup> In the third, it was concerned with the Palestinian refugee issue, which had been a direct reason for the Lebanese Civil War.<sup>82</sup> Yet Israel adopted the completely different position that the Armistice Treaty 1949 was null and void after the 1967 War, that UNSCR 425 became invalid following the second Israeli incursion,<sup>83</sup> and that the negotiations should follow the model of the Lebanese-Israeli Peace Treaty of 17 May 1983.<sup>84</sup>

Following the Civil War in 1975, the Lebanese second republic

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<sup>80</sup>.Dr. Nasif Hiti, "Lebanon and the Ongoing Peace Negotiations", *The Arab Israeli Negotiations and the Future of Peace in the Middle East*, edited by Dr.Mousafa Alwy, Faculty of Political Science , Cairo University, Cairo, 1994 , pp. 230-1.

<sup>81</sup>.On 19 March 1978, the UN Security Council adopted the resolution 425, which contained three basic points: (1) confirming the territorial integrity of Lebanon, (2) immediate Israeli withdrawal from the Lebanese territory, and (3) placing UN interim forces (UNIFIL) in the south of Lebanon. These forces had to assure the Israeli withdrawal, restore peace and security, and help the Lebanese government to restore its authority over the area. Nevertheless, the Israeli forces advanced further and occupied the area of the Litany River. On withdrawing from Lebanon on 13 June, the Israelis handed over their positions to the Marinate Christian Lebanese militia in the south with whom they collaborated and not to UNIFIL.

<sup>82</sup>.As a repercussion of the Middle East conflict, Lebanon had received three waves of Palestinian immigrations: (1) Palestinian refugees from the 1948 War, (2) Palestinian refugees from the West Bank after the 1967 War, and (3) the PLO after being expelled from Jordan during Black September 1970. The total number of Palestinians in Lebanon reached 400,000 out of a population that did not exceed 3 million. Most of these Palestinians were Muslims lived in the south along with the Shiites. The new situation disrupted the sensitive demographic balance (Christians to Muslims was 6 to 5) and was, among other reasons, direct element of outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War in 1975. In other words, the Palestinian refugees' problem resulted in two civil wars in Jordan 1970 and Lebanon 1975. See Ritchie Ovendale, *The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Wars*, Second Edition, Longman, London & New York, 1984, 1992..

<sup>83</sup>.Hiti , "Lebanon and the Ongoing Peace Negotiations", pp. 240-4.

<sup>84</sup>.The Israeli Prime Minister, Begin, pressed on the new Lebanese President ,Amin Gemayel, to sign a peace treaty with Israel. This would pave the way to another one with Jordan. On 10 October 1982, the Israeli Cabinet submitted a draft to the Lebanese Government. The US Secretary of State, George Schultz, applied pressure on the Lebanese government to sign the treaty. Meanwhile, Egypt was encouraging Gemayel to go for peace with Israel. On 17 May 1983, Lebanon signed the treaty which entailed: (1) full normalization of the Israeli-Lebanese relations within six months after the Israeli withdrawal form the Lebanese territories, and (2) the US would guarantee Palestinian and Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon. Despite US pressure, Syria refused to withdraw and therefore the treaty was kept on hold. See Ritchie Ovendale, *The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Wars*.



was under Syrian hegemony and therefore prior consultation with Syria was compulsory; the Lebanese position was identical to the Syrian one. Lebanon also confirmed that negotiations would mainly focus on maintaining security along Israel's northern border. Regarding the occupied Lebanese territories, it put on the table of negotiations: (1) the return of seven villages occupied during conclusion of the Armistice Treaty in 1949, (2) the return of the seventeen farms occupied during the 1967 war, and (3) the removal of international border signs to the north in 1978.<sup>85</sup> Would Israel be able to get Lebanon out of Syria's control?

As a reaction to Baker's shuttle diplomacy, Syria sought to consolidate coordination with Lebanon. Indeed, they signed two treaties: '*The Treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation and Coordination*'; and '*The Defense and Security Agreement*.' Together, these were a message sent to the US Secretary of State that Lebanon and Syria would stand side by side. As a result, Lebanon's stance was similar to the Syrian one during Baker's visits, notably in its opposition to participation in the Multilaterals in the absence of progress in the Bilaterals. Lebanon also stressed that the Israeli withdrawal from the south should not be linked to the presence of Syrian troops on its territory, which were there legitimately under the Taif Agreement of 1989.<sup>86</sup> The Israeli withdrawal should be carried out in accordance with UNSCR 425. It is probably fair to say that Baker's visits to Lebanon were a matter of protocol, for Beirut's position was determined by Damascus.

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<sup>85</sup>.Hiti , "Lebanon and the Ongoing Peace Negotiations", p. 233-40.

<sup>86</sup>.Under Saudi auspices, the Taif agreement was signed by the different Lebanese factions to put an end to the Lebanese Civil War, which had erupted in 1975. Taif is a Saudi city 80 Kilometers from Meccow, the holy city for Muslims.



## 7-Egypt

Despite the fact that Cairo remained faithful to the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty in 1979, it was reluctant to normalize relations with Tel-Aviv.<sup>87</sup> It had also succeeded in restoring diplomatic relations with the Arabs.<sup>88</sup> Egypt maintained equilibrium in its relations with the United States and Israel on the one hand and its relations with the Arab and Islamic worlds on the other. Would Egypt restore its leading position in the Arab and Islamic worlds as well as the Non-Aligned Movement by virtue of its new foreign policy? The answer is negative. In the art of politics, each state has three domains of interest: the domain of national security, the domain of vital interests (significant economic interests), and the domain of hegemony. In the post-peace era, Egypt lost any tangible impact on any of these domains. As an illustration, the domain of national security includes the neighboring states, namely Israel, Palestinians, Libya, and Sudan. As for the Palestinians, *“many felt that Egypt was manipulating the Palestinian question for its own ends and to its advantage - mainly to curry favor with the United States and to consolidate its regional position as the major force in the Arab world. Therefore, Palestinian public opinion refused to let Egypt speak on behalf of the Palestinians.”*<sup>89</sup> Egypt remained passive regarding the Lockerbie crisis. It could not stand with Libya. Meanwhile, many African states of strategic relations with the United States violated the air embargo imposed by the UNSC i.e. Uganda. To make matter worse, Saudi Arabia and South Africa, not Egypt, were behind a package deal, which settled the crisis between Libya and the West. Tripoli believed that

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<sup>87</sup>. Shamir, *Yitzhak Shamir's Memories...*, pp. 142-3.

<sup>88</sup>. Hanan Abu Taleb, "The Casablanca Summit and Egypt's Return to the Arab world", *IPJ*, Vol. 97, July, 1989, p. 156.

<sup>89</sup>. Ashrawi, *This side of Peace...*, p. 138.



Egypt had betrayed Libya to advance its relations with the United States. Hence, Libya regarded its relations with Egypt as a second priority. As for Sudan, Egypt became a spectator to the process of disintegration of Sudan, which started in the late 1990s.

As for the domain of vital interests, it includes the Horn of Africa and the Arab Gulf. Egypt abdicated its historical role in the Horn of Africa. At the United States request, it became a spectator to the crucial events in the Horn of Africa i.e. the Somali Civil War, which started in 1991, and the Ethiopian -Eritrean War, which broke out in 1998. As for the Gulf, it supported Saddam Hussein of Iraq when the United States was endorsing him in the Gulf War I 1980-88. Once the United States labeled him an enemy, it fought against him in the Gulf War II 1990.

As for the domain of hegemony is concerned, if a state has little influence in its domains of national security and vital interests, it is the natural consequence it shall definitely lose its hegemony. The same was the case with Egypt. In the post-peace era, the Egyptian foreign policy instead triggered suspicion in the Arab and Islamic worlds, as well as the Non-Aligned Movement that it was an US satellite. Hence, Egypt lost any leading role in these arenas. Leadership is not a word but a responsibility and the bill should be paid. To sum up, Egypt became "*the sick man of the Arab world.*"

In the art of international relations, if a state gives up its cards for low price to accommodate a key power's demands, the latter would lose any motive to take this state seriously. The more cards a state has, the more a key power will be eager to be engaged with it in serious negotiations based on quid pro quo. In the post-peace era with Israel, the Egyptian foreign policy disregarded this rule completely. Egyptian strategy was based on the assumption that Cairo should not have any conflict of interests with Washington. Hence, it lost any tangible



influence in its three domains of interest. Finally, Egypt had almost no credibility in its dealings with the United States for which it had abdicated its leading role. The Egyptian story with the peace process was that of a Greek melodrama. It was a story of an honorable woman devoting her life to her brothers and sisters. All of a sudden, she claimed that she could not afford this burden anymore. She betrayed them and sought for a better life, but she could not find it either; her life became even worse. Finally, she lost everything i.e. dignity, honor, self-respect, and prosperity.

The United States counted on Egypt to sell the Baker format to the Arabs, confirming that it was the only outlet.<sup>90</sup> During Baker's shuttle diplomacy, he could not find a better ally than President Mubarak of Egypt. He kept advising the Secretary of State on how to move forward. He employed his relations with the Jordanians, Syrians, and the PLO to serve Baker's plan. Upon Baker's request, Mubarak made an official statement that the Arabs were prepared to suspend the economic boycott in return for the suspending of Israeli settlement activity.<sup>91</sup> Would this position serve Egypt's interests? The answer is negative. Following the restoration of diplomatic relation with the Arabs, Egypt became the only Arab state holding diplomatic relation with Israel. The Madrid format meant that the Arabs would have direct relations with Israel, bypassing Egypt. Nevertheless, Cairo had to market the American project to preserve its relations with Washington. One might say that Egypt was in no position to block Madrid. Yet this was not true. Syria was unenthusiastic about it, but participated to avoid isolation. Lebanon could

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<sup>90</sup>. General Ahmed Fakhr, "Egypt and the Ongoing Peace Negotiations", *The Arab-Israeli Negotiations and the Future of Peace in the Middle East*, edited by Dr.Mousafa Alwy, Faculty of Political Science , Cairo University, Cairo, 1994 , p. 265.

<sup>91</sup>. Baker, *James Baker's Memories* ...,p. 714.



not participate without Syrian approval, and the PLO was deeply dissatisfied with Baker's plan. This suggests that Egypt could have easily collaborated with these actors to keep Baker's plan on hold. This analysis also suggests, first, that Baker's visits to Cairo were the key factor in making his diplomacy succeed; and secondly, that the political weight of Egypt in the region could not be omitted.

Egypt was a full partner in Madrid, not a party to the conflict advocating the well-known Arab position.<sup>92</sup> In line with the Baker plan, it claimed that the Multilaterals could go simultaneously with the Bilaterals. Refraining from participation would not serve Arab interests, but deprive them of the opportunity to show their willingness to make peace.<sup>93</sup> Of course, Egypt was fully aware that this position conflicted with the principles of international relations, but worked for the American plan.

To affirm its Arab role, Egypt offered relevant documents to the Palestinian delegation and its Camp David negotiations experience, underlining several new facts. These included emphasis on the positive development of American-Israeli relations following the Camp David Accords by virtue of the US-Israel Strategic Alliance signed in 1982, the great increase in the number of Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, and the radical change in the international environment in favor of Israel (destruction of Iraqi military power and the USSR's disintegration). Thus, the PLO negotiations with Israel would be completely different from the Egyptian ones.<sup>94</sup> Egypt stressed that "[Israel's] opening bid is never their bottom line."<sup>95</sup> It also underlined that Israel would do the maximum to avoid negotiating with a separate

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<sup>92</sup>. Fakhr, "Egypt and the Ongoing Peace Negotiations", pp. 269-70.

<sup>93</sup>. Fakhr, "Egypt and the Ongoing Peace Negotiations", p. 271.

<sup>94</sup>. Haykal, *The Arab-Israeli Secret Negotiations*., Vol. 3, p. 234

<sup>95</sup>. Ashrawi, *This side of peace*., p. 137.



Palestinian delegation, possibly pinpointing clandestine networks with Jordan. The Palestinians should make sure that Israel would present any Palestinian proposal to all other actors, aiming at penetrating the Arab front. The Camp David Accords should stand as a point of departure, adopting a '*questions and answers*' technique to probe the Israeli red lines. Regarding the Camp David Accords, the autonomous authority would be elected through direct negotiations. Would the election take place under the Israeli military governor? If yes, what would be the election guarantees? Would the candidates participate in the election as individuals or representatives of parties? And so on.<sup>96</sup>

## 8-The rejectionists

Like the Israelis, the Arabs had their own rejectionists. Both Arab nationalist states (Iraq and Libya) and Islamic fundamentalist regimes (Iran) rejected the Madrid Conference.<sup>97</sup> The Marxist leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, George Habash, opposed the Madrid Conference as a "*shameful concession and pledged to oppose*" it. He confirmed that "*our Palestinian masses, inside and outside, the occupied territories rejected the policy of free concessions and capitulation.*"<sup>98</sup> Furthermore, Habash resigned from the executive committee of the PLO because it accepted the Madrid Conference.<sup>99</sup> The Pro-Syrian group, Abu Musa, and Abu Nidal's Fateh Revolutionary Command, refused the PLO's stance, accusing Arafat of submitting to the United States plan.<sup>100</sup> The Lebanese opposition refused any participation

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<sup>96</sup>. Haykal, *The Arab-Israeli Secret Negotiations.*, Vol. 3, pp. 236-9.

<sup>97</sup>. *The Independent*, 19 Oct. 1991.

<sup>98</sup>. *The Independent*, 19 Oct. 1991.

<sup>99</sup>. *The Independent*, 1 Nov. 1991.

<sup>100</sup>. *FT*, 21 Oct. 1991.



before implementation of UNSCR 425. Remarkably, the nationalists refused the Madrid format because it did not fulfill their nationalistic aspiration; the majority did not oppose a settlement based on 242 and 338.

On 20 October 1991, the Iranian leaders called for armed struggle against Israel, condemning the Arab participation in Madrid. Iran called for a conference to consider the Madrid Conference. Four hundred delegates representing forty-five countries attended this conference, the majority of whom were Islamic fundamentalists ( Hamas- Hizballah). In the opening session, the President of Iran, Ali Hashemi Rafsanjani announced, "*Iran is even ready to dispatch troops to fight Israel along with the Palestinians.*"<sup>101</sup> He also confirmed that Syria would lose if it participated in Madrid.<sup>102</sup> Iran considered the Arab participation in Madrid a betrayal of the Palestinian cause, and aimed at establishing a unified rejectionist front to block the conference.<sup>103</sup> It offered some Palestinian organizations, inside and outside the PLO, a subsidy of five million US dollars per month to form a coalition opposing the Madrid Conference.<sup>104</sup>

The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt called for a holy war to free Jerusalem, describing the Madrid Conference as a conference for the sale of Palestine.<sup>105</sup> Meanwhile, the Moslem Brotherhood in Jordan stressed that peace with Israel would not be possible, confirming that the entire state of Israel was illegitimate. It declared the conference inauguration as a day of mourning. Hamas also described the Palestinian delegation to Madrid as American agents.<sup>106</sup> Remarkably, the Islamic fundamentalists

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<sup>101</sup>. *FT*, 21 Oct. 1991.

<sup>102</sup>. *FT*, 21 Oct. 1991.

<sup>103</sup>. *The Independent*, 23 Oct. 1991.

<sup>104</sup>. *The Independent*, 19 Oct. 1991.

<sup>105</sup>. *FT*, 18 Oct. 1991.

<sup>106</sup>. Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace*, p. 115.



regarded the Palestinian territories as holy Islamic land, which should be entirely liberated from the Zionist occupation.

## Conclusion

Israel regarded the Madrid Conference as a convenient opportunity, not to make peace with the Arabs, but to play for time to create new facts on ground. The conference's main target was to tame the Arabs and make them comply with the notion of '*peace for peace*.' Shamir affirmed that he aimed at extending the negotiations for ten years so that Israel could build up new settlements in the West Bank and Gaza and bring in more Jewish emigrants.<sup>107</sup> Would Shamir's vision of the Madrid Conference be a point of disagreement with the United States, as with the loan guarantees? The answer is negative. The United States' main concern, at this stage, was to assemble the antagonists as soon as possible in a ceremonial session regardless of how things would develop in the direct negotiations. Both Israel and the United States shared the same view about the Arabs' acquiescence to the Israeli conditions over time and under pressure i.e. the Sadat model. Nevertheless, the United States believed that the loan guarantees issue would not bring the Arabs to the negotiating table. Would the Camp David 1978 experience re-occur at Madrid in 1991?

Following the Gulf War II, and despite skepticism about American intentions, the Arabs decided to go to Madrid because there was no other option. However, they had three choices for participation. The first was a unified Arab delegation - an idea advocated by Syria but rejected by the

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<sup>107</sup>. Sabih, "Palestine and the Ongoing Peace Negotiations", p.192.



United States and Israel (some Arab states also believed that a unified Arab delegation was not practical i.e. each state had its own problem and terms of reference). The second option was separate Arab delegations with considerable freedom in negotiation tactics, reporting to a supreme coordination committee, which would guarantee adherence to basic Arab principles. Yet this approach would risk undermining the Arabs' coordination because of each delegation's free hand to take initiatives and to apply different negotiation strategies. The third option was separate delegations without coordination, giving priority to each state's interest at the expense of the interest of the Arab world as a whole,<sup>108</sup> i.e. Sadat's approach. The latter approach was the worst choice for the balance of power and would always be in favor of Israel.<sup>109</sup> Would the latter choice be the case in the Bilaterals?

Following their meeting in Damascus on 24 October 1991, the Arab Foreign Ministers confirmed that they would establish a united front against Israel in the Madrid Conference. The ring states agreed upon establishing '*a coordination committee*' for the forthcoming negotiations with Israel. However, the meeting, which took place five days before the Madrid Conference, failed to shape a unified Arab stance regarding the Multilaterals. It was not clear whether the other Arab states would adopt Syria's vision, which stipulated that Israel should first offer territorial concessions before joining the Multilaterals.<sup>110</sup> Hence, the Multilaterals stood as an early point of disagreement among the Arab participants. Was Arab coordination possible? The answer is that coordination was hard to reach and difficult to maintain. Each state had its own set of demands (Syria was concerned with Golan, Lebanon with 425 and security

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<sup>108</sup>. Said, "The Future of the Arab System after the Gulf Crisis", pp. 187-8.

<sup>109</sup>. Said, "The Future of the Arab System after the Gulf Crisis", p. 188.

<sup>110</sup>. FT, 25 Oct. 1991.



arrangements, and Jordan with coordination with the Palestinians and regional problems), and the Palestinian negotiations were divided into two stages: transitional and final status.

Looking generally at Baker's shuttle diplomacy, he adopted essentially the same strategy as Kissinger. The United States' proposals either originated with Israel or were approved by it. No threat to Israel was made in order to induce it to approve the Madrid format, penetrating the Arab front and applying pressure on each Arab actor instead (Baker threatened to hold the conference without Syria because of Asad's attitude to the UN participation). The United States was always clear with Israel while it was absolutely vague with the Arabs. For example, Baker merely said to the Palestinians, "*we cannot guarantee anything, but we'll try our best.*"<sup>111</sup> Since he had refused to give any commitment to pressurize Israel, the principle of '*territory for peace*' was just a gimmick to lure the Arabs into the Madrid trap. Finally, the United States advocated step-by-step diplomacy initiated for the first time in the Middle East conflict by Kissinger: starting "*with what was functional and postponing the difficult issues to a later phase.*"<sup>112</sup> Both the United States and Israel were keeping faith with their traditional strategy regarding the Middle East conflict. By contrast, the Arabs had come round to a strategy to suit the Israeli stance. Remarkably, Baker's diplomacy in early 1990s was just an echo of Kissinger's in the early 1970s.

Looking at the rejectionists globally, it could be deduced that the gap between the Israeli coalition government and the Labor party was tactical rather than strategic i.e. the format. Meanwhile, the gap in the Arab front was quite profound. The governments advocated the US

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<sup>111</sup> . Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace...*, p.119.

<sup>112</sup> . Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace...*, p.93.



proposal while the fundamentalists were opposing the whole process, not only the format. This phenomenon reflects the lack of democracy in the Arab world.

In the art of diplomacy, if one actor can prevent the other from hitting its target (double veto), they will engage in negotiations. In the Middle East conflict, the Israeli domestic policy was the only factor that could make or break the double veto. If Israel's major goal was to normalize relations with the Arabs (the Labor party strategy), a double veto tactic might be relevant from the Arab point of view. They could impose the land for peace principle. If Israel regarded normalization as a secondary target, giving high priority to land (the Likud party approach), the Arabs would be in no position to use this tactic. This was the case with Shamir's stance at Madrid.<sup>113</sup>

Being aware that negotiation is a give and take process, no negotiations could take place between Israelis and Palestinians at Madrid in light of the tremendous imbalance of power. Negotiation, here, meant only complete submission. The PLO had only two options: capitulation or resistance i.e. the uprising. Which scenario would prevail?

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<sup>113</sup>. Wadoudh Badran "The Arab Israeli Ongoing Negotiations in Light of the Previous Experience in Settling International Disputes", *The Arab Israeli Negotiations and the Future of Peace in the Middle East*, edited by Dr.Mousafa Alwy, Faculty of Political Science , Cairo University, Cairo, 1994 , pp. 49-50.



## **Chapter 2**

### **The Conference 1991**

As illustrated in the previous chapter, Baker's shuttle diplomacy set up the scene for the Madrid Conference as Kissinger's had done for Geneva in 1973. Both Kissinger and Baker sold the Israeli format to the Arab participants. The latter shuttle diplomacy to the Middle East also produced two major documents: the letter of invitation and the letters of assurance. The main objective of this chapter is to examine to what extent Madrid looked like Geneva in terms of format, protocol, corridor diplomacy, and the ceremonial session. It will also describe the performance of the parties concerned in the plenary and the fruits of the conference in terms of achievements and negotiation analysis.

#### **The Venue**

The American-Soviet letter of invitation was just an echo of the outcome of Baker's shuttle diplomacy. The UN was indeed a spectator with an observer status. The EU was a full partner without any role in the ceremony or the Bilaterals, but only in the Multilaterals. The Arab League was not invited at all, avoiding any reference to Arab solidarity, as had been the case with Geneva. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) attended as an observer to get the rich Arab states to finance the cost of peace i.e. the Multilaterals. Of course, all these had always been strict Israeli demands for participating in any multilateral diplomacy. The letter stated the participants' names: Israel, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan. The Palestinians were invited as part of a joint Jordanian-Palestinian



delegation. Remarkably, Egypt was also a participant rather than an observer, which had fully coped with the Israeli initiative in 1989. Meanwhile, the other Arab participants had no objection against Egypt, especially following the Casablanca Arab Summit in 1989, which had decided to resume diplomatic relations with it.<sup>1</sup> This was not the case with the letter of invitation to Geneva, which had not specified the participants but referred to them as '*the concerned parties*.' Nevertheless, Baker overcame the dilemma of Palestinian representation, which had been one of the main points of weakness at Geneva,<sup>2</sup> and had remained a major obstacle to reconvening it in 1977. This did not mean that Baker saw a comprehensive settlement as a unique solution, but preferred to make comprehensive and lasting peace. The letter of invitation was clear about the format and timing. An opening session followed by the Bilaterals based on UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, and Multilaterals dealing with the regional issues of water, refugees, environment, economic development and other topics of mutual interest. The Bilaterals would begin four days after the opening. This showed that the area of common ground among the antagonists was wider than it had been in Geneva. Of course, this is further evidence to the Baker's successful diplomacy against the background of the radical changes that had taken place in the Middle East (especially following Gulf War II) and the disintegration of the USSR. Another significant difference was that the co-sponsors (the US and the USSR) themselves forwarded the letter of invitation to the participants for the Madrid Conference. Prior to the

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<sup>1</sup>.Following the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty 1979, all Arab states severed its diplomatic relation with Egypt except for Sudan and Oman. Furthermore, the Egyptian membership in the Arab League, the Islamic Conference, and Non-Align Movement were suspended.

<sup>2</sup>.Kissinger had been the first US diplomat to introduce step-by-step policy. He aimed at concluding a separate Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty and therefore he was not eager to get the Palestinians into the Geneva. However, the Palestinian Uprising I 1987 forced Baker and Shamir to consider the Palestinians in the Madrid Conference.



Geneva Conference in 1973, the UN Secretary General had directed the letter to the rivals. This was one of the immediate consequences of the end of the Cold War on the Middle East conflict.

Against the Arab wish, “*The Madrid Conference was more about symbolism than practicality.*”<sup>3</sup> “[It] was designed to launch a process, not conclude it”<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, the Madrid Conference had no plenipotentiary authority to impose a settlement. Of course, this was a basic Israeli requirement to participate in the conference, following the Zionist experience with the St James Conference in 1939. Like other international conferences, such as Vienna 1815 and Versailles 1919, the victors had determined the format.<sup>5</sup>

Shamir was not sure of the Bush administration's intentions, especially following its refusal of the loans guarantee. To calm Shamir's fears, Baker agreed to submit a letter of assurance to Israel. However, the Israeli government leaked this news to the press. Therefore, Jordan, Syria, and the Palestinians asked for their own letters of assurance. Obviously, each clear letter would undermine the others and therefore the United States had to employ the favorite tactic of Henry Kissinger i.e. ‘*constructive ambiguity.*’ The United States drafted these letters in light of three principles: (1) transparency was compulsory because each actor would definitely read the other's letter, (2) the American position and the conference format were not subject to any changes by these letters, and (3) the United States would refuse to make more commitments to the

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<sup>3</sup>.Dennis Ross, *The Missing Peace: The Inside Story of the Fight for Middle East Peace*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 2004, p.80.

<sup>4</sup>. Dennis Ross, *The Missing Peace..*, 81.

<sup>5</sup>.As for Vienna, the post-Napoleonic wars order had to be designed by the UK, Russia, Prussia, and Austria even though France had also made active contribution .In Versailles, the victorious (the UK-France-Russia) submitted a treaty proposal with a threat of resuming the war after two days in case of the Germans' refusal.



antagonists.<sup>6</sup> Remarkably, these letters had not been needed at Geneva.<sup>7</sup> It is worth emphasizing that these letters were issued by the United States only, since this proved that the USSR was passive; the Madrid Conference was a pure American scenario. In an attempt to play the role of an honest broker, Washington affirmed that it would not give any secret assurance.

In its letter to Israel, the United States stressed its commitment to the country's security (Israeli military supremacy over Arabs). It also admitted the Israeli interpretation of 242, confirming that it would never force Israel to negotiate with the PLO. Regarding Golan Heights, any peace agreement with Syria must stipulate an Israeli presence on the Heights. It was prepared to offer security guarantees regarding any border arrangements concluded between Israel and Syria. Shamir asked for forty-five amendments to the letters of invitation and assurance; thirty-two of them were important and thirteen were trivial. Baker accommodated all of them.<sup>8</sup>

For Syria's benefit, the United States indicated that it would not recognize unilateral actions by Israel, which was understood to mean Israel's annexation of Golan. The Syrians also accused Baker of drafting the letter of assurances to Syria in consultation with Israel. Asad proposed fourteen amendments to the American letter to Syria, mainly focused on the Multilaterals, which should start after the Bilaterals. However, Baker maintained that it was impossible to accommodate all

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<sup>6</sup>.James Baker, *James Baker Memories: Politics of Diplomacy*, translated by Magdi Sharshar, Second edition, Matbouli Library, Cairo, 2002, p.725.

<sup>7</sup>.Israel had confidence in Kissinger's diplomacy in part because the unlimited military, political, and economic support provided by Washington during the 1973 War, and in part because Kissinger's commitment that the US would never impose a settlement on Israel. Sadat had fully counted on Kissinger's vague promises. For Jordan, it was not in need for US letter of assurance in part because it did not participate in the 1973 War, in part it had no significant problem with Israel, and in part because it kept its good relations with Israel and its strategic ones with the US during the war.

<sup>8</sup>.Baker, *James Baker Memories...*, p.738.



the Syrian amendments and Syria was free to boycott or join the Multilaterals.<sup>9</sup> In other words, Asad “*used the letter of assurances and the invitation to the conference as vehicles to reopen basic questions*”<sup>10</sup>; the Madrid format. Yet his strategy did not pay off. Unlike Israel, Syria did not have influence over American domestic policy.

Remarkably, the American letter of assurance to the Palestinians gave high prominence to the issue of East Jerusalem. The United States told the Palestinians that nothing would affect their claim to East Jerusalem. It stated firmly that Jerusalem must never be a divided city and its final status should be decided through negotiations. It did not recognize Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem; the Palestinians of East Jerusalem were entitled to participate by voting in the elections for an interim self-governing authority. Palestinian residents in Jordan with ties to a prominent Jerusalem family would be eligible to join the Jordanian side of the delegation. The United States refused to endorse the Israeli settlement activities in the Palestinian occupied territories.

For Lebanon, the United States was committed to 425 as a term of reference. Lebanon had the full right to enjoy territorial integrity, whereas Israel also had to enjoy safe borders. It would support the Lebanese government's attempt to assert its authority over its territory. Meanwhile, the United States kept its support for the Taif Agreement, which had given the Syrian forces a legal position in the second republic of Lebanon following the Civil War. In other words, the United States saw no linkage between the Syrian and Israeli withdrawals from Lebanon.

Looking at the letters of assurance, each one undermined the other in practice. For instance, the United States stressed that there was a

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<sup>9</sup>. Baker, James Baker Memories..., pp. 730-4.

<sup>10</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace*, p.79.



historic opportunity to bring just and lasting peace to the Middle East and yet insisted that a linkage between different tracks should not be made. In other words, it advocated step-by-step diplomacy rather than a comprehensive approach. It also proposed that the '*land for peace*' principle should be applied in all tracks but stressed an unconditional commitment to Israeli security. In other words, Israel would enjoy peace by virtue of unlimited American support and therefore had no incentive to surrender territory. Another example proved this inconsistency. It indicated that 242 and 338 were the terms of reference, but 242 had more than one interpretation. In other words, these resolutions were subject to negotiation rather than implementation. A third illustration emphasized the gap between theory and practice. It told Syria that the '*land for peace*' principle was relevant to Golan but told Israel that any agreement with Syria would permit Israeli forces to be maintained on its Heights. Finally, it told the Palestinians that those from Eastern Jerusalem were eligible to participate in the election, whereas it stressed that it would not force the Israelis to allow it.

Looking at the Baker strategy, it is clear that it had adopted the same step-by-step approach as Kissinger in 1973, working on aggravating internal Arab divisions. The Middle East conflict was to be divided into small sub-conflicts in order to make their management easier.<sup>11</sup> For how long would the US keep its image as an honest broker? Would Washington be able to deliver these contradictory commitments to the antagonists? In the art of diplomacy, a zero-sum game is not a point of departure for any negotiations. Consequently, the Secretary of State proposed that the Middle East conflict should be settled through bartering territory for peace. The Arabs accepted this, but Israel did not.

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<sup>11</sup>.Mohamed Hasanen Haykal, *October War 73: Arms and Politics*, Al-Ahram Center, Cairo, 1993, pp. 663-1.



Meanwhile, the United States confirmed that it would never impose any settlement upon the antagonists, but promised unconditional support to Israel. As a result, this once more turned the Middle East conflict into a zero sum game in which Israel would win and the Arabs lose. Syria and Lebanon were the only Arab actors to realize this, and as a result they refused participation in the Multilaterals (peace) before reaching agreement on the Bilaterals (land).<sup>12</sup>

To the Palestinians' astonishment, Baker announced in Jerusalem that the peace conference would take place in Madrid. Although they had discussed this issue with Baker, no specific agreement was concluded.<sup>13</sup> What was the Madrid story? In August 1991, it was clear that the conference would take place in October. However, the issue of the venue was no less complicated than the substantive ones. Baker preferred Washington, but the Soviets were not enthusiastic about this, proposing instead Prague or Cairo. Yet Shamir refused Cairo because he was not on good terms with Mubarak. Switzerland appeared as a good place, but there were two problems with it. Being host to the European headquarters of the UN, it would provoke Israel's hostility. Furthermore, the conference would be compared with the Geneva Conference in 1973, where the Syrians and Palestinians had been absent. The Hague seemed a good compromise because it enjoyed good conference facilities, the Netherlands enjoyed good relations with Israel, and the plenary would take place at the International Court of Justice, which would fit Asad's wish to enhance the European and UN roles. However, Asad was reluctant because Syrian-Dutch relations were not good, and Syria did

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<sup>12</sup>.Wadouda Badran, "The Arab Israeli Ongoing Negotiations in light of the Previous Experience in settling International Conflicts", *The Arab Israeli Negotiations and the Future of Peace in the Middle East*, edited by Dr.Mousafa Alwy, Faculty of Political Science , Cairo University, Cairo, 1994, pp. 49-52.

<sup>13</sup>.Hanan Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace*, New York, Simon & Schuster, 1995, p. 129.



not have an embassy in the Netherlands. He also refused Copenhagen and Prague, proposing Italy instead. He also indicated that he would prefer Madrid to Lisbon because Syria had no embassy in Portugal. For Israel, Madrid was a convenient place as well. However, Baker obtained the approval of the parties concerned to this only eleven days before the conference opened. Of course, this was tremendous logistic challenge to the United States as well as Spain.<sup>14</sup> Spain was good compromise; it enjoyed good relations with both Arabs and Israel.<sup>15</sup> According to the Spanish Jewish community, the Spanish Prime Minister, Philippe Gonzalez, had more than just a diplomatic relationship with Shamir.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, historically, Spain had witnessed a successful example of peaceful coexistence between the Arabs and Jews.<sup>17</sup> Jews fleeing from persecution in Europe had lived safely under Arab Islamic rule for about seven centuries, for Islamic law permitted non-Muslims to be residents in Spain if (except for the poor) they paid their taxes.<sup>18</sup>

Following threats from some Arab Nationalist and Muslim fundamentalists, the Spanish government took strict security arrangements. It also offered good logistic services i.e. hotels, international telephone lines, Hebrew and Arabic typewriters...etc.<sup>19</sup> There are no successful negotiations without adequate logistics. When it comes to multilateral diplomacy, the situation is more difficult because of the diversity of languages, the larger number of participants, and different cultures and behavior. This puts considerable responsibility on the hosting country.

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<sup>14</sup>.Baker, James Baker Memories..., pp.741-3.

<sup>15</sup>.Mohamed Hasanen Haykal, *The Arab-Israeli Secret Negotiations*, Vol. 3, Dar-El-Shrouk, 1996,p. 235.

<sup>16</sup>.*Financial Times (FT)*, 27 Oct. 1991.

<sup>17</sup>.Haykal, *The Arab-Israeli Secret Negotiations*, Vol. 3, p. 235.

<sup>18</sup>.In 1492, the Spanish Christians expelled the Muslims from Spain to Morocco, and the Jews were forced to follow them. They have been living there ever since.

<sup>19</sup>.*FT*, 27 Oct. 1991.



## The Delegations

To ensure its leadership, the PLO sent officials to Madrid, establishing an advisory committee for the Palestinian delegation. They stayed in different hotels because they were prevented from entering the conference hall.<sup>20</sup> Shamir made it clear that Israel would boycott the conference in the event of any explicit relationship between the Palestinian delegates and the PLO. He said that "*we will not speak to them and they will not ask any questions.*"<sup>21</sup> In the art of negotiation, each delegation does its utmost to hide its point of weakness. Yet the Palestinians admitted from the beginning that they were not well qualified for this mission. Once she arrived in Madrid, their official spokesperson, Hanan Ashrawi, said that "*unlike all the others, we were a people's delegation made up mainly of professional people and academics, and that we had come here to present the cause of our people. If we behaved differently and dispensed with diplomatic niceties, it was precisely because none of us were professional politicians or diplomats.*"<sup>22</sup> How could the Palestinians ask to be treated as equal to other Arab delegations and their opponent if they had already admitted to their incompetence?

The Palestinian delegation arrived in Madrid without a speech. Ashrawi prepared the first draft, emphasizing the Palestinian cause from a humanitarian perspective rather than a political one. The draft was sent by fax to Tunisia where Arafat made radical changes. He asked in particular for an explicit reference to the PLO and ambiguous terms and

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<sup>20</sup>. Ashrawi, *This side of Peace...*, p. 134.

<sup>21</sup>. *The Independent*, 23 Oct. 1993.

<sup>22</sup>. Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace...*, p. 144.



allusions to his words.<sup>23</sup> The latter was possible but not so the former, since this would simply provoke an immediate Shamir walk out. Before the conference commenced, the Palestinian delegation was summoned to Tunisia on board a Moroccan plane to meet Arafat. This was brinkmanship by him because he was confident that details of their secret meetings would be revealed by the media and thereby confirm PLO leadership.<sup>24</sup>

The fate of Shamir's coalition government was at stake because of the Madrid Conference. Yet the Labor party decided to support his decision to go to the conference if the coalition collapsed. A prominent Labor leader, Yossi Beilen, said that "*if we topple Shamir during the peace process, we will be losers.*"<sup>25</sup> Since Shamir believed that his Foreign Minister, David Levy, had advocated a moderate stand inconsistent with cabinet policy, the Prime Minister himself chaired the Israeli delegation even though the conference took place at ministerial level. Besides, Levy could not be trusted to represent Israel in this significant event because of his Arab origin - he was from Morocco. To justify this attitude, an official spokesperson said that "*[Shamir's] decision shows how serious he is about the peace process.*"<sup>26</sup> In protest, Levy refused to attend the conference.<sup>27</sup> Shamir had decided to fill the Israeli delegation with hard liners, including representatives of the Jewish settlers in the Palestinian occupied territories, i.e. the Deputy Foreign Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu; the uncompromising head of the Prime Minister's Office, Yossi Ben Ahron; and the Cabinet Secretary, Eliakim

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<sup>23</sup>. Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace...*, pp. 145-7.

<sup>24</sup>. Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace...*, p.149.

<sup>25</sup>. *FT*, 25 Oct.1991.

<sup>26</sup>. *FT*, 25 Oct.1991.

<sup>27</sup>. Yitzhak Shamir, *Yitzhak Shamir's Memories*, edited by Dar Al-Kitab al-'Arabi, Cairo & Damascus 1995, p. 280.



Rubinstein.<sup>28</sup> As a result, Levy accused Shamir and his group of ruining any possibility of peace: *"if they freeze me out what will it show? They were prepared to sacrifice national interests to personal considerations. If we miss this opportunity, it may never come again. After all, our demands, which seemed so unacceptable, have been accepted: direct talks, no PLO, no representatives from the Palestinian Diaspora, no Jerusalem representative. We have got what we wanted."*<sup>29</sup>

Despite the fact that the conference took place at ministerial level, the United States president decided to participate in the ceremony. This was in part because he wanted to prove to the whole world how much he was fully committed in making peace, especially to the Arabs following their assistance in the Gulf War II, and in part because his physical presence itself would make it difficult for any of the rivals to walk out in case of any problem i.e. Israel. Following his arrival in Madrid, Shamir met Bush and Baker immediately. President Bush expressed United States appreciation for the Israeli decision to attend the conference, stressing that Washington would act as an honest broker. To Shamir's astonishment, it was only after arriving in Madrid that he was informed that the Palestinians would deliver a separate speech from the Jordanians, thereby promoting their independent identity.<sup>30</sup> They won the right to a forty-five minute speech. As a sign of protest, Netanyahu said to the press that *"Israel had not been consulted about the Palestinian speech. [It was] a very unpleasant surprise for us."*<sup>31</sup> Moreover, Shamir affirmed that he would never hesitate to lead the Israeli team out of the conference if members of the Palestinian delegation declared that they were

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<sup>28</sup>.FT, 25 October, 1991.

<sup>29</sup>.The Independent, 22 Oct. 1991.

<sup>30</sup>.Yitzhak Shamir, *Yitzhak Shamir's Memories..*, p. 280.

<sup>31</sup>.The Independent, 30 Oct. 1991.



representatives of the PLO.<sup>32</sup> Yet no one, including the Israelis, doubted that the fourteen Palestinians at the conference were part of the PLO. Besides, Faisal Husseini confirmed this fact: *"reality is reality. You can change glasses, but you cannot change the real world."*<sup>33</sup> The head of the Palestinian delegation even put on the well-known Palestinian scarf to dramatize his identity, though this was dropped after Shamir enlisted American opposition.

Since his opponents were in a weak position following the Gulf War II, Shamir understood well that he could adopt a tough line: *"he will not give up on an inch of the land captured by Israel in 1967. He pledged to continue expanding Jewish settlements to the horizon. The process will fail if the negotiations focus on the formula of Israel trading land for peace."*<sup>34</sup> He even declared, *"there are no occupied territories."*<sup>35</sup> On 29 October, however, he was a bit more flexible. He reacted moderately to guerrilla attacks on Israeli soldiers in south Lebanon, two days before the conference, denying that it would impede the conference. He also admitted the possibility of negotiating based on *"the land for peace principle."* He said, *"we believe and are convinced that the land belongs to us since thousands of years. And maybe the Palestinians believe the same. Then let us negotiate how to settle it, how to find a way to avoid war."*<sup>36</sup> Finally, he declared, *"we have come here to make peace with our neighbor at long last. We only hope they will be ready to make peace with us."*<sup>37</sup> On the same day, Ashrawi said that she was *"pleasantly surprised to hear a new tone emerging from Israel."*<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>.FT, 25 Oct. 1991.

<sup>33</sup>.FT, 27 Oct. 1991.

<sup>34</sup>.FT, 20 Oct. 1991.

<sup>35</sup>.The Independent, 23 Oct. 1991.

<sup>36</sup>. The Independent, 30 Oct. 1991.

<sup>37</sup>. FT, 30 Oct. 1991.

<sup>38</sup>. FT, 30 Oct. 1991.



Was this new tone a radical change in the Israeli government's approach or just a political maneuver?

On the other hand, the Syrian Foreign Minister, Faruq Al-Shara, said that he would "*refuse to shake hands with his Israeli counterpart*."<sup>39</sup> Remarkably, Shara's words indicated that Syria had been forced to participate in Madrid. Meanwhile, the Lebanese Prime Minister said that "*[Lebanon] would not participate in bilateral talks with Israel unless [it] first agreed to withdraw from Southern Lebanon*."<sup>40</sup> He commented on the guerrilla attacks in south Lebanon where three Israeli soldiers were killed: "*national resistance is the right of the people as long as their land is occupied*."<sup>41</sup> Of course, Lebanese intransigence regarding the Bilaterals was evidence of simple political maneuvering, as with Shamir's moderate statements. As far as the Arab League was concerned, in contrast to Geneva, there was no Arab summit to decide the Arabs' position on the Bush initiative. At the earlier conference, Sadat and Hussein had decided to participate without a unified Arab position. The Arab League Secretary General, who had not been invited, said: "*I think for the first time the Arabs are serious and ready to discuss peace with Israel. It is now or never*."<sup>42</sup>

On 29 October 1991, President Bush announced that "*Washington did not intend to impose a settlement upon the Arabs and Israel*,"<sup>43</sup> while his Secretary of State added that "*the United States had no blueprint for peace, but would rely initially on a dynamic emerging in bilateral talks between Israel and its Arab neighbors. The United States would do whatever it could to make sure the parties took steps to reach a*

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<sup>39</sup>. *FT*, 30 Oct. 1991.

<sup>40</sup>. *FT*, 30 Oct. 1991.

<sup>41</sup>. *FT*, 30 Oct. 1991.

<sup>42</sup>. *FT*, 30 Oct. 1991.

<sup>43</sup>. *The Independent*, 30 Oct. 1991.



*comprehensive settlement.*"<sup>44</sup> Regarding the conference principles, Bush confirmed that *"the US-Soviet invitation mentioned 242 and 338 which call for Israel to withdraw from occupied territories in exchange for recognition and peace from the Arab world. Let the parties work all this out ... I do not want to give anybody any reason to walk away or make additional demands because of something that I have said."*<sup>45</sup> Gorbachev had no input, but merely echoed what had been underlined by the United States: *"let's just open the conference. Let's start working. It seems to me that the parties themselves can only win."*<sup>46</sup> Remarkably, the co-sponsors made contradictory statements to each party: to Israel, no imposed settlement and to the Arabs, *"land for peace"*. This was fully consistent with the Kissinger strategy in the Geneva Conference: (1) the United States had to act as an Israel's advocate to guarantee its security and to adopt a moderate program to gain Arab confidence,<sup>47</sup> (2) it had to preserve its full commitment to Israel in terms of security, economic and political support, and (3) it did not commit itself to bring a concrete outcome for the Arabs or play the role of their ally but exert maximum effort to bring peace and security to the region.

Protocol issues are very much related to the political climate: the more political tension, the more protocol disputes and vice versa. The table of negotiations was empty from the antagonist's flags, only the co-sponsors' i.e. the United States and the USSR. Israel refused to set with the Palestinian delegation with the PLO flag.<sup>48</sup> Regarding the seating arrangements, the UN and the USSR were placed on the podium. The other delegations were seated around the co-sponsor's table. On the left-

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<sup>44</sup>. *FT*, 28 Oct. 1991.

<sup>45</sup>. *FT*, 30 Oct. 1991.

<sup>46</sup>. *FT*, 30 Oct. 1991.

<sup>47</sup>. Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, published by Little, Brown and Company, Boston & Toronto: 1982, p. 620.

<sup>48</sup>. Baker, James Baker Memories., p. 744.



hand side, Israel was seated between Egypt on the right, and Lebanon on the left. On the right, the joint-Jordanian Palestinian delegation was seated between the EU on the left and Syria on the right. Remarkably, Israel was seated between two Arab states, i.e., Egypt and Lebanon. The Arab participants had not haggled over the seating arrangements at Madrid. By contrast, at Geneva, the seating arrangements,<sup>49</sup> the conference language,<sup>50</sup> and the entrance to the conference hall<sup>51</sup> had been significant points of disagreement. This was due to the high level of political tension in the Middle East following the 1973 War. On the contrary, the Gulf War II put the Arab participants on the Israeli side against Iraq. On the other hand, the Arab participants in the Geneva were victorious in the 1973 War but were significant losers following the Gulf War II; they approved the conference on the Israeli principles, and therefore it was pointless to argue about protocol issues. There were complete disequilibria in the Arab world. Was it possible for Germany to

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<sup>49</sup>. The USSR proposed that its seat, Egypt's and Syria's had to be placed on the right side of the Secretary General where as the US, Jordan and Israel would be on the left side. This order of seat suggested that Jordan was a major friend for the US, beside Israel in the Middle East, that Jordan would be shut outside the Arab world, and that the USSR would be seated next to its friends in the Middle East. Of course, the US refused that proposal and therefore, the Secretary General suggested seating the delegations in alphabetical order. Yet Egypt opposed to this suggestion. For, it would be placed between Israel and the USSR. Meanwhile, Israel rejected to be placed beside the empty seat of Syria, which had boycotted the conference. For, it would be isolated. Finally, the delegates agreed to be placed around a seven sided table in the following order: first, the USSR would be placed on the right side of the Secretary General between Egypt and Jordan; secondly, the US would be seated on the left side between Israel and Syria's empty seat. (See Kissinger, *the Years of Upheaval*, .. pp.795-96.)

<sup>50</sup>. The USSR proposed English and French as official languages of the conference. Besides, it accepted Hebrew and Arabic as well. As a result, Egypt accepted English and French but refused Hebrew and did not object Arabic. Finally, English and French were a fair compromise (See Haykal, *The Secret Negotiations ...*, Vol. 2, p. 201).

<sup>51</sup>. Israel proposed that the delegations had to assemble in one place and get into the conference hall. Yet the Egyptian Foreign Minister, Fahmy, rejected the idea and threatened to withdraw from the conference. For, he did not want to get into the conference hall side by side with Israel. This problem caused a forty minute delay before the opening could take place. Therefore, the Secretary General accepted Fahmy's proposal. Both the Egyptian and the Jordanian delegations would assemble in the hall where the Israeli delegation would use another entrance. (See Hamdy Fouad, *The Diplomatic War between Egypt and Israel*, Beirut: Dar Al-Qadaya, p. 275.)



haggle with its victorious rivals on seating arrangements at Versailles in 1919?

## THE CONFERENCE IN SESSION

The ceremony continued for four days from 30 October to 2 November 1991. It is worth recalling, here, that the Geneva ceremony took place in two days only<sup>52</sup> because the number of participants were less than that of Madrid; the EC, Syria, Lebanon, and the Palestinians were absent from Geneva. Of course, the plenary sessions of the St James 1939 and the London Conferences 1946 did not witness Arab-Zionist gatherings; for the former were proximity talks, while the latter was boycotted by the Zionists.<sup>53</sup>

Looking at the first two days of the ceremony, everything went as planned i.e. the parties concerned restated their well-known positions. The conference was inaugurated by the Spanish Prime Minister Philippe Gonzalez,<sup>54</sup> who delivered a ceremonial speech, which made it clear that Spain was merely a place of meeting and would have no input in the negotiations. Nevertheless, Bush's speech<sup>55</sup> underlined that real peace

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<sup>52</sup>.It started from 21 to 22 December 1973.

<sup>53</sup>.The Zionists were reluctant to participate in part because of their negative experience with the St. James's Palace Conference, in part because the UK was not prepared to propose a partition plan on the agenda, and in part because of the continued detention of many Zionists following terrorist attacks against British sites in Palestine.

<sup>54</sup>.The UN Secretary General inaugurated the Geneva Conference 1973 by referring to the UN effort to settle the dispute for a quarter century. The speech was based on hopes and wishes without mentioning specific principles, conceptions, and agenda. He did not explain the UN role either. In other words, the UN role was merely symbolic. Of course, it was the pure Israeli wish. See The Geneva Conference Documents, International Politics Journal (Al-Siyasa Al-Dawliya) IPJ 36, (April 1974).

<sup>55</sup>.In his speech at the Geneva Conference, Kissinger presented his step-by-step diplomacy as a realistic and convenient mechanism for peace making in the Middle East. He was vague, giving no interpretation to UNSCR 242, though calling for its implementation. He also confirmed that disengagement was his first priority without explaining the next one. Peace was not a matter of ending the state of belligerency, but normalizing relations between the people of the Middle East. The United States was committed to make peace without



was not just ending the state of belligerency, that referred to 242 and 338 as terms of references, and that the conference had no plenipotentiary authority. Yet the most important element in his speech was to emphasize that the United States and the USSR were partners rather than competitors. Bush's speech was moderate in tone, keeping a balance between Arab and Israeli demands.<sup>56</sup> Gorbachev<sup>57</sup> confirmed his desire for full coordination with the United States regarding the Middle East conflict and other universal problems. He pointed out the issue of the arms race in the Middle East and weapons of mass destruction, which stood as a real threat to peace in the region. It was noticed that Gorbachev was mainly focused on the new US-USSR relationship rather than on the Middle East conflict itself. As at Geneva, the USSR was absent during the preparatory stage at Madrid but for a different reason: at the earlier conference it had been excluded at the request of Egypt and Jordan; on the present occasion it was about to collapse.

The EC speech was given by the Dutch Foreign Minister who reconfirmed the EC's interpretation of 242 and 338 in line with the Venice Declaration 1980. (It confirmed the following points: (1) the Israeli right to exist, (2) self-determination for the Palestinians, and (3) Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories in 1967, including

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commitment to the process outcome. See The Geneva Conference Documents, IPJ 36, (April 1974).

<sup>56</sup> Except where otherwise indicated, the following account of the conference in session is based on the Documentary File of the Madrid Peace Conference in the Middle East, *International politics Journal -Al Siyassa al-Dawliya (IPJ)*, Vol. 107, January, 1992, Edited by Nabih al-Asfahany & Ahmed Youssef Kouraay, Cairo.

<sup>57</sup> In the Geneva Conference, the USSR Foreign Minister, Gromyko, pinpointed that détente would reinforce peace in the Middle East rather than hinder it. The Soviet approach was based on the implementation of UNSCR 242 according to the Arab's interpretation, taking into consideration the sovereignty of the Jewish State. Yet it did not provide a specific mechanism to be pursued. For Moscow had severed relations with Israel; it had surface relations with Jordan. Besides, it had its deep suspicion about Sadat's intentions. In other words, it had no friend in the conference. See The Geneva Conference Documents, IPJ 36, (April 1974).



Jerusalem.) He called on Israel to implement the Fourth Geneva Convention on the Arab occupied territories, and confirmed a willingness to develop the situation in the West Bank and Gaza even before the implementation of the transitional period. The EC was willing to have an active role in the Multilaterals, which had to be bound to the Bilaterals. Finally, the EC called for freezing both the Jewish settlement activities and the Arab economic boycott. The speech focused on the Multilaterals because the EC was deprived of an input in the Bilaterals as Israel had stipulated. Despite Europe's position was close to the basic Arab demands, the Arab rulers did not support the European willingness to play active role in Geneva, and Madrid. For the former, Sadat counted only on the US i.e. Kissinger; for Madrid, the Arabs pursued the Sadat stance even though some had criticized him i.e. Asad. This does not suggest that Sadat was a man of insight, but Egypt is the core of the Arab world.

The Egyptian Foreign Minister, Amr Moussa,<sup>58</sup> *“was so negative on day one, offering only an indictment of Israel, that [the United States] threatened not to let him speak on the second day.”*<sup>59</sup> He also pinpointed that Egypt was committed to the Arab world in general and the Palestinians in particular and therefore it would act as a full partner in the entire process. Would this be possible? Of course, it would participate in

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<sup>58</sup>.In the Geneva Conference, the Foreign Minister of Egypt, Ismail Fahmy, expressed his country's desire to have a peaceful settlement; yet he was always keen to show the possibility of the military option if the conference failed to conclude a disengagement agreement between the Egyptian and Israeli forces. Egypt gave high prominence to the UN role in the conference. He also stressed the Palestinians' legitimate rights more than once and made it part of any peace initiative. He was not in favor of the step-by-step approach. He wanted instead to apply a comprehensive approach based on UNSCR 242. This meant that he perceived peace within a comprehensive framework. Fahmy, in other words, was keen to show that Egypt would not be engaged in bilateral negotiations with Israel. However, he recognized the right of Israel to exist implicitly by confirming the right of all states in the region to enjoy their political independence. See The Geneva Conference Documents, IPJ 36, (April 1974).

<sup>59</sup>.Ross, *The Missing Peace...*, p. 81.



the Multilaterals, but how would it have its input on the Bilaterals? As for Israel, Shamir gave a briefing on the evolution of the Middle East to prove that the Arab position was not different from the Nazi crimes. Israel had agreed to attend a ceremonial inauguration, followed by: (1) direct negotiations to conclude agreements with the ring states and autonomy with Palestinians according to the Camp David Accords, and (2) the Multilaterals to establish future peaceful coexistence. Finally, he invited the Arab antagonists to start the first round of the Bilaterals in Israel. Shamir's speech was not different from Eban's at Geneva: the Arab stance towards Israel looked like the Nazi position vis-à-vis Jews, no return to 4 June 1967 line, direct negotiations, and establishing economic regional cooperation in the Middle East.<sup>60</sup>

The Jordanian Foreign Minister, Kamal Abu Jaber,<sup>61</sup> restated the Arab's position, emphasizing that double standards should not be adopted at Madrid, applying the same criteria of the Gulf War II to the Middle East conflict. The Jordanian speech was also identical to the one at Geneva. Faris Bovez reflected the Lebanese demand to implement 425. Lebanon had always refused to settle the Palestinian refugees in its

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<sup>60</sup>. In the Geneva Conference, the Israeli Foreign Minister, Aba Eban wanted to touch Western feelings by referring to the Middle East conflict as an extension to the Jewish sufferings during the Nazi time. He called for direct negotiations with each Arab neighboring state. He wanted to minimize the co-chairmen's role, criticizing the USSR for being biased against Israel. He underlined clearly what it had to take. Peace meant safe borders, economic, security, and regional co-operation as in the EC model. Yet he remained silent regarding any Israeli withdrawal from the Arab occupied territories in 1967. See The Geneva Conference Documents, IPJ 36, (April 1974).

<sup>61</sup>. In the Geneva Conference, the Foreign Minister of Jordan, Zeid Al-Rifai, an ex-student of Kissinger in Harvard University, underlined that the Jordanian prerequisite of peace was identical to the Egyptian one. Yet Jordan seemed a bit worried about the possibility of an Egyptian-Israeli separate agreement. The speech was high in tone in comparison to Fahmy's one. Jordan was providing a certain kind of camouflage, for, it had good relations with the United States and a secret meeting with Israel. Therefore, it looked suspicious to its Arab neighbors in general, and to Syria in particular. See The Geneva Conference Documents, IPJ 36, (April 1974).



territory. For this would provoke another civil war in Lebanon and lead to the loss of Palestine.

The United States delegation had insisted on reviewing the Palestinian speech beforehand. It wanted to make sure that the Head of the Palestinian delegation, Haidar Abd Al-Shafi would not say something that would provoke Shamir. For the sake of limiting the United States ability to make changes, Ashrawi submitted the speech to the Americans a few minutes before Haidar was going to the podium.<sup>62</sup> The latter reconfirmed the well-known Palestinian demands, criticizing the conditions which had been imposed upon the Palestinians to participate in the Madrid. These conditions would never change the reality that the Palestinian delegation was representing the entire Palestinian people, including those in the Diaspora and Jerusalem. The speech implicitly referred to the PLO by using the word '*leadership*'.

The Syrian Foreign Minister, Faruq Al-Shara, rejected Shamir's description of the conference as a ceremonial forum. Although Syria had several reservations about the Madrid format, it participated in the conference. The UN role was decisive regardless of the fact that it was granted only observer status. The Multilaterals should not commence without a concrete outcome in the Bilaterals. Shara criticized the ideology of Zionism and Israel's practices against Arabs and Muslims in general, and Palestinians in particular. He also criticized the Camp David Accords for being the main cause of the Israeli decision to annex Jerusalem and Golan.

Looking at the Shamir speech, it adopted a zero sum game approach: peace and land or the status quo. However, he addressed the Arab delegations differently-harsh criticism to Palestinians and Syrians,

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<sup>62</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace...*, p.81.



but a moderate tone with the Jordanians and Lebanese. For the Palestinians, he said *"all the people of Israel and all the world heard yesterday and understood the real meaning of the Olive branch carried by Palestinian murderers. We know how to strike at them."*<sup>63</sup> Syria also was accused of hosting Palestinians terrorist groups. By contrast, Israel had no territorial aspiration in Lebanon, but it should first free its territory from the Syrian occupation. It could restore full authority over its southern territories within the context of a peace treaty with Israel. Jordan was also welcomed to sign a peace treaty with Israel. Shamir's attitude reflected his strategy based on penetrating the Arab front- getting Jordan and Lebanon away from Palestinians and Syria. Of course, this was consistent with the step-by-step diplomacy introduced by Kissinger in the Geneva, rather than the comprehensive settlement and therefore he disregarded 242, 338, and 425.

Looking at the different Arab speeches, a clear distinction could be made between Palestinian, Jordanian, and Lebanese performances on the one hand and the Syrian one on the other. For the Palestinians, Haider Abd Al-Shafi affirmed that *"[they] sought neither an admission of guilt after the fact, nor vengeance for past inequalities, but rather an act of will that would make a just peace a reality,"*<sup>64</sup> adding that *"[Palestinians] would not use the opportunity to criticize Israel strongly or describe their negotiations position at length."*<sup>65</sup> Both Jordanians and Lebanese pursued the same approach. They adopted a defensive strategy, which had been the case with Egypt during the Camp David negotiations in 1978-79.

By contrast, the Syrian approach was different. In the first place,

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<sup>63</sup>.FT, 30 Oct.1991.

<sup>64</sup>. *The Independent*, 1 Nov. 1991.

<sup>65</sup>. *The Independent*, 1 Nov. 1991.



Syria advocated an offensive strategy by accusing Israel of committing crimes against Arabs. Unlike the tracks of the Rhodes talks, the Syrian one was colored by tension and mutual accusations as well. In the second was an all or nothing tactic identical to the Kissinger's diplomacy with Arabs, i.e. *'take it or leave it.'* If 242 and 338 were not implemented, Asad would regard the conference as *'null and void'*. In the third, Syria took the initiative by presenting an eleven- point plan at this early stage, based on: Israeli withdrawal to 4 June line, establishing a demilitarized zone on the Israeli-Syrian frontiers, and a non-specific number of Jewish settlers might remain under Arab rule in the freed West Bank.<sup>66</sup> Remarkably, the Syrian delegation had also taken the initiative at Rhodes, when it submitted a proposal based on freezing the truce line whereas other Arab delegations kept responding to the Israeli projects. In the fourth, Syria substantiated its argument by logical comparison; it made a comparison between Arab generosity towards Jewish communities in Spain and Morocco, and Israeli hostility in the occupied territories; it also criticized Zionist ideology; it was not logical that Jews should leave the Diaspora and settle in Palestine, in general, and Jerusalem in particular, otherwise, Christians should all be settled in the Vatican and Muslims must go to Mecca; the Jewish settlers in the West Bank had no right to raise the Israeli flag because it was a Palestinian land; *"if [they] refuse to accept that, then we could demand Arab flags and sovereignty over Palestinian villages inside Israel;"*<sup>67</sup> how could the Jews who left Palestine two thousand years ago have the right to go back whereas the Palestinians who have been forced to leave forty years ago did not have the same right ? Likewise, at Rhodes, once the Israeli delegation questioned the empowerment issued from the new Syrian

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<sup>66</sup> .*The Independent*, 31 Oct. 1991

<sup>67</sup> .*The Independent*, 31 Oct. 1991..



government,<sup>68</sup> the Syrian delegation responded immediately by questioning the ability of the Israeli delegation to sign a cease fire agreement since the letter of empowerment mentioned only the armistice agreement. Both Israel and Syria were alike in terms of negotiation style which would make their talks much harder.

The third day of the conference was a stormy one because it was dedicated to the antagonists' comments. This was a clear mistake from a diplomatic perspective. The antagonists would direct their comments to their people rather than each other; every political leader wanted to be a hero in the eyes of his domestic audience. However, this would enhance tension and might jeopardize the ceremony itself. Indeed, Shamir launched a strong criticism to Syria and the Palestinians. He accused Damascus of being a discriminator against the Jewish community in Syria and hosting terrorist organizations. The Palestinians were also accused of being terrorists and collaborators with the Nazis. As a reaction, the Palestinian delegation criticized Shamir's approach; the world had changed except for Shamir who advocated the same ancient ideology of Zionism. The Syrian attack was the strongest, criticizing Shamir for: (1) being a liar regarding the Syrian Jewish community situation that enjoyed full freedom, substantiating his argument by a report issued by the European Parliament, and (2) supporting the Jewish fundamentalists for demolishing the Aqsa Mosque to build the '*Third Temple Mount*'. Finally, the Syrian Foreign Minister showed an old picture of Shamir at the age of thirty one. This photo was circulated in Europe because he was wanted as a terrorist. Indeed "*Shamir had been a leader of the most extremist Zionist organization, the Stern gang in the*

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<sup>68</sup>. As a repercussion to the 1948 War, Syria witnessed a coup d'état in early 1949 led by Husni el-Zai'im until late March 1949; the new government did not enjoy international recognition.



1940's.”<sup>69</sup> The strong personal criticism of Shamir triggered a quarrel between the Syrian and Israeli delegations and therefore the final session was adjourned for two hours. Yet the Secretary of State and the Soviet Foreign Minister handled the crisis. Of course, the immediate Syrian reaction to Shamir proved that it was well prepared to attack Israel during the conference. For his part, the Egyptian Foreign Minister urged the participants to avoid criticism, and suggested that they should address the problems instead. Egypt’s weak reaction to Shamir’s propaganda meant that it would act as a moderate rather than an Arab advocate, which had not been the case at Geneva.

Baker, after that, made a statement that the cosponsors were ready to offer advice, recommendations and suggestions, and that the Multilaterals would be addressed during a meeting which would take place in the forthcoming weeks. Following this, the US-USSR Joint Communiqué has been issued indicating two points: (1) Madrid might be a venue for the bilateral negotiations even though there was no agreement on that, (2) confidence building measures (CBMs) between Arabs and Israel were essential. As a consequence of the end of the Cold War, the cosponsors adopted the same position, which was not the case at Geneva. Baker, finally, delivered a statement on some ideas about confidence building measures, such as suspending the Uprising I in return for freezing the settlement activities.

The last day of the conference focused on the place of the Bilaterals.<sup>70</sup> Netanyahu reiterated the previous Israeli position of holding

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<sup>69</sup>.Ritchie Ovendale, *The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Wars*, Second Edition Longman Inc., New York 1984, 1992, p.251.

<sup>70</sup>.The Geneva ceremony established the Military Working Groups (MWG) to start negotiations regarding disengagement agreements on the Egyptian and Syrian fronts. The USSR was willing to participate in the MWG through its Ambassador to Geneva. Yet Egypt was not in favor to the Soviet participation for two main reasons: (1) the Soviet Ambassador’s participation would turn the MWG to political negotiations rather than military ones, (2) Sadat had already decided to drive the USSR out of the peace process.



the Bilaterals in the Middle East.<sup>71</sup> He aimed at obtaining de facto Arab recognition at this early stage in return for nothing. For this reason, the Arabs refused the proposal,<sup>72</sup> suggesting instead a neutral place outside the region.<sup>73</sup> To break the logjam, the United States proposed Madrid as a convenient place to commence the Bilaterals on the following day. This was another proof that the United States was the master of the Madrid process. Another procedural issue arose when Syria insisted that the Arab delegations must meet at the same place and the same time; otherwise, Arab coordination would be undermined. It had already stressed this issue "*during impromptu Arab coordination meeting whether to commit to begin the first round of Bilaterals in Madrid on Sunday or not.*"<sup>74</sup> Meanwhile, the Palestinian and Jordanian delegations

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The USSR offered to send a military delegation to support the Egyptian one, but Fahmy did not accept this proposal either. Besides, Kissinger wanted to deprive the USSR from having any active role in the process and therefore he refused the Soviet proposal. Kissinger confirmed to Fahmy that the Soviet participation meant the failure of the MWG. Hence, neither the US nor the USSR participated in the MWG. On the other hand, Syria was willing to participate into the MWG to conclude a disengagement agreement, but without any direct negotiations with Israel. Thus, it asked Egypt to represent it during these talks. Fahmy welcomed the idea because it would give a better image for Egypt in the Arab world. Egypt was also eligible to negotiate on behalf of Syria because it was the commander of the Egyptian-Syrian front. Besides, the Syrian representation would take the form of having a Syrian officer in the Egyptian delegation. Nevertheless, Kissinger perceived the idea as a collapse of the Egyptian-Israeli MWG, giving two reasons: (1) time was not convenient before the forthcoming Israeli election, and (2) Syria refused to submit the list of Israeli captives. In fact, Kissinger's hidden agenda was to cut Egypt off the Arab world. Despite Jordan suggested a modest withdrawal from Jericho, Israel was not enthusiastic. Egypt regarded the proposed Jordanian disengagement as a political agreement rather than a military one because: (1) Jordan did not participate in the 1973 War, and (2) it was not entitled to negotiate on behalf of Palestinians. As a result, Kissinger had no motive to endorse the Jordanian proposal. On 26 December, the MWG meetings started in Geneva, headed by General Sūlasvuo from the UN, the Egyptian General, Taha Al Magdoub and the Israeli General Gur. Upon the Egyptian demand of emphasizing the military nature of the MWG, the three generals put on their military uniform. However, the MWG meetings reached a deadlock. Of course, this was exactly what Kissinger wanted: Peacemaking in the Middle East was a pure US job. The disengagement agreements should be concluded through a new round of Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy.

<sup>71</sup>. *The Independent*, 31 Oct. 1991.

<sup>72</sup>. Shamir, *Yitzhak Shamir's Memories*, p. 287.

<sup>73</sup>. Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace...*, p. 153.

<sup>74</sup>. Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace...*, p. 151.



had already informed the United States that they would accept to start the Bilaterals in Madrid. This also was another sign of weak Arab coordination.

Baker was furious because of Shara's conditions.<sup>75</sup> He talked to Ashrawi: *"[Shara] wants all delegations to meet simultaneously and in one location. We could manage one building, but the meetings must be held sequentially. You just tell Mr. Shara that the whole thing is off. I am going home. I'm taking the plane this evening and he can go back to Syria. As far as I am concerned, it's finished."* And he hung up on Ashrawi.<sup>76</sup> Baker deliberately talked to the Palestinians, and not the Syrians, to get the latter pressured by the former. This was right; the other Arab delegations pressed Syria to accept a compromise: keeping unity of place, dismissing unity of time. The Baker threat to Shara looked like the Carter threat to Sadat during Camp David in 1978.<sup>77</sup> Remarkably, the US threats to the Arabs were always serious, tough, and strong, which was never the case with Israel. Baker also adopted the same strategy as Kissinger based on letting the antagonists meet around the table of negotiations and then technical and substantial problems would be settled one by one. None of the participants in the Geneva plenary also knew the second step. This might be described as the US strategy of taming the Arabs according to the Israeli demands, using step-by-step diplomacy.

On 3 November, the joint Jordanian – Palestinian delegation held a one-day round of the Bilaterals with the Israeli delegation. Following a short formal trilateral opening, the Palestinians asked for a separate

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<sup>75</sup>. Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace...*, pp. 151-2.

<sup>76</sup>. Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace...*, p. 152.

<sup>77</sup>. In objection to the United States peace proposal made with prior consultation with Israel, Sadat decided to walk out of the Camp David Summit in 1978. In response, Jimmy Carter made three threats: it would be the end of the Egyptian-American relationship, the peace process, and his personal friendship with Sadat.



meeting with the Israelis immediately.<sup>78</sup> The head of the Israeli delegation, Elyakim Rubinstein, agreed provided that the discussions would be confined to an Interim Self-Government Agreement (ISGA).<sup>79</sup> Five hours of Syrian-Israeli negotiations proved that it was hard to proceed until terms of references were agreed upon i.e.242-interpretation.<sup>80</sup> For the Lebanese track, it was not a key one because it was fully bound to the Syrian one

In mid- November 1991, Shamir visited Washington to promote his proposal of holding the Bilaterals in the Middle East. Otherwise, the Arabs would turn the Bilaterals into proximity talks through US mediation in Washington.<sup>81</sup> The Camp David 1978 experience stood as evidence. Yet the United States insisted on holding the Bilaterals in Washington: (1) to overcome the Arab firm refusal of the Shamir proposal, and (2) to confirm its role as the unique mediator. Nevertheless, Baker said later that there was no reason to exclude holding negotiations in the Middle East in the future because this would make consultations between delegations and their political leadership easier. Meanwhile, Washington inquired of the Palestinians whether 4 December, in Washington, would be acceptable for the second round. Following revelation of the proposal, US-Israel relations witnessed a crisis because Shamir had not been informed beforehand.<sup>82</sup> He asked the United States to honor its promise: *“to coordinate first with the Israelis any proposals or decisions and not to surprise them with any sudden revelations.”*<sup>83</sup> To what extent would the Bush administration honor this commitment? And

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<sup>78</sup>.Camille Mansour, “The Palestinian- Israeli peace Negotiations: An overview and assessment”, *Journal of Palestine studies*, Vol. XXII, No. 3, spring 1993, p.10.

<sup>79</sup>. “The Peace Process: Special Document file”, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XXI, No. 3 spring 1992, p. 127.

<sup>80</sup>. “The Peace Process: Special Document file”, P.131.

<sup>81</sup>. Shamir, *Yitzhak Shamir's Memories*, p. 288.

<sup>82</sup>. Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace*, p.158.

<sup>83</sup>. Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace*, p.158.



would the approach of Bush toward this issue have an impact upon his political career in the next presidential elections in 1992?

Remarkably, the United States was strict on the composition of delegations and the rules of entrance. It aimed at avoiding any Israeli withdrawal if the Palestinian delegation included some figures from the PLO or any of the PLO's members got into the negotiation sites. For this reason, Baker confirmed that the State Department should be provided with information on the composition of each delegation to notify all other delegations in advance. And he would only allow delegation members free access to government buildings where negotiations were to be held. Regarding costs associated with negotiations, the Palestinian delegation should ask the PLO to assume these expenses and to plan for press facilities as well. This was because the United States would only arrange the sites for talks and other administrative issues while each delegation would be expected to assume all other costs associated with the negotiations.<sup>84</sup> The Palestinian delegation would need to depend on the PLO not only for political but also for financial support. This was actually the last thing that the United States wanted. American diplomacy should have exempted the Palestinians from this rule to cope with its strategy of undermining the PLO role. This suggests that diplomatic practices should carefully cope with strategies

On the other hand, the Palestinian delegation did not have the same point of view as the PLO. The Palestinian delegation was basically concerned with the Palestinian question as such but the PLO main focus was to affirm its role as a sole representative of the Palestinian people. Would this difference produce disputes?<sup>85</sup> Remarkably, the USSR was also marginalized in the post-Madrid diplomacy as the first

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<sup>84</sup>. Mansour, "The Peace Process: Special Document file", pp. 129-30.

<sup>85</sup>. Haykal, *The Arab-Israeli Secret Negotiations..*, Vol. 3, p. 243.



disengagement agreement in 1974 and the second in 1975 on the Egyptian front following Geneva in 1973.

Looking at the US approach towards the Bilaterals, it was prepared to act as a full partner in the negotiations through submitting proposals; not just a go-between to conveying messages and proposals or a facilitator intervening if negotiations reached a deadlock. It also advocated different strategies for each track, which meant that the comprehensive settlement was not a significant target in the Madrid format. Despite the fact that negotiations were primarily the antagonists' responsibility, the United States was always prepared to give them advice. For the Jordanian track, both Jordan and Israel should start addressing: (1) border issues unrelated to 242, (2) the nature of peace, (3) maritime problems in the Gulf of Aqaba, (4) joint production of potash, tourism, civil aviation and the like. The Palestinians should focus on the first phase of negotiations of the ISGA, avoiding debate on principles such as the source of authority, and the like. Both Israelis and Palestinians were asked to present proposals on this, addressing the powers and responsibilities of the Palestinians during the transitional period.<sup>86</sup> For the Lebanese track, it proposed a partial Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon. This partial withdrawal did not mean in any way a drift from the principles of 425. Negotiations in the Syrian track should avoid key issues, but probe the other party's position through hypothetical questions: Syria could ask "*what Israeli position on withdrawal would be if Syria were prepared, as part of a comprehensive settlement, to sign a peace treaty with Israel. Israel, for its part, might ask hypothetically what Syria's position on a peace treaty would be if Israel were prepared to undertake withdrawal.*"<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup>. Mansour, "The Peace Process: Special Document file", pp. 130-31.

<sup>87</sup>. Mansour, "The Peace Process: Special Document file", p. 131.



Once the conference finished, thousands of Palestinians were planning on coming to Jericho to receive the returning delegation. They gave the Israeli soldiers flowers and olive branches. This was one of the very seldom cases in history that people had greeted their occupiers with flowers. Haider conveyed a message to them in Gaza saying: "*it is premature to celebrate. We still have a long and difficult road ahead.*"<sup>88</sup> Yet the Palestinian delegation members had been received as prophets of peace. They held several open air meetings, seminars and debates to address the Madrid process.<sup>89</sup> Meanwhile, there were clashes between PLO supporters and Hamas members who had rejected the conference.<sup>90</sup> Who had best insight about the conference the PLO or Hamas? Would the Palestinian occupied territories be restored by negotiations or resistance? On the other hand, Shamir was warmly welcomed in Israel as well. Shamir's speech had not violated the fundamentalists' wish<sup>91</sup> and had given no hint of compromise over the occupied territories in 1967. He insisted that the nature of the Middle East conflict was not territorial.

Regarding the reaction of the radical actors in the region, the Iraqi government said that "*the Madrid Talks were a plot at the expense of the Palestinians.*"<sup>92</sup> Libya condemned the conference and called it "*Madrid's farce saying it would achieve nothing but confirm Washington's backing for Israeli military supremacy over the region.*"<sup>93</sup> Hizbullah confirmed that "*Israel is going to Madrid to build a greater Israel from the Euphrates to the Nile.*"<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>88</sup>. Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace...*, p. 157.

<sup>89</sup>. Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace...*, p. 157.

<sup>90</sup>. *FT*, Oct. 1991.

<sup>91</sup>. *The Independent*, 31 Oct. 1999.

<sup>92</sup>. *The Independent*, 31 Oct. 1999.

<sup>93</sup>. *The Independent*, 31 Oct. 1999.

<sup>94</sup>. *The Independent*, 30 Oct. 1991.



## Conclusion

Although “*the Arab view that only the [United States] could successfully pressure Israel was an illusion, [they] thought that without this there was little point in compromise.*”<sup>95</sup> Like Kissinger, Baker’s shuttle diplomacy designed the Madrid format to fit the Israeli’s basic demands. The plenary was just a ceremonial event of no substance. The antagonists kept reiterating their different sets of demands. It was a dialogue of the deaf rather than a negotiating process. The plenary at Madrid in 1991 was a flashback to Geneva in 1973 except for the USSR’s speech, which was identical to the American one. As the Arab proverb said, “*today (Madrid) looks like yesterday (Geneva).*”

For the Bilaterals, the three possible scenarios were: (1) the collapse of negotiations, which was neither the Arabs nor the Israelis nor Americans’ wish; (2) a comprehensive settlement, which was the best outcome for the Arabs but not for Israel, which could not justify the subsequent territorial concessions to its public; and (3) separate settlements with some Arab participants, which was the Israeli and American wish.<sup>96</sup> The latter scenario would be highly probable in part because it fully complied with the Madrid format, in part because Israel was adopting different strategies with the Arab participants to penetrate their front, and in part because the Arab front was completely fragile through lack of coordination. Who would first sign with Israel?

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<sup>95</sup>.Ovendale, *The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Wars.*, p. 345.

<sup>96</sup>.Mohammed Al-Sayed Said, “The Future of the Arab Regime after the Gulf Crisis”, *The National Council for Authentication, Art, and Literature, Kuwait*, 1992, pp. 205-10.



On the other hand, the Multilaterals would have a significant impact upon the Arab political, economic, cultural and social level.<sup>97</sup> The United States would rather have a Middle East regime assimilating Israel as a natural part of the region. Thus, it would not have to choose between the Arabs or Israelis, which was the case in the 1973 War. The emergence of secularization during the Renaissance was a significant factor that allowed Jewish communities to take a leading role in secular Europe. By contrast, the re-emergence of Islamic fundamentalism in the Arab world would make the Israeli attempt much more difficult. For this reason, Islamic fundamentalism has been regarded as a chief enemy of Israel and the West.

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<sup>97</sup>. Said, "The Future of The Arab System After The Gulf Crisis", p. 211.



## **Part B Bilateral FOLLOW- UPs**

**3-The Jordanian- Palestinian track from Washington to Oslo**

**4-The Jordanian- Palestinian track from Wye Plantation to the Camp David II**

**5-The Syrian track**



### **Chapter 3**

#### **The Jordanian/ Palestinian track**

#### **From Washington to Oslo**

Due to the fact that the Declaration of Principles between the Israelis and the Palestinians, signed in 1993, marked a significant event in the course of negotiations on the Jordanian-Palestinian track, this track will be divided into two parts: negotiations before and after this event. This chapter will focus on the Jordanian/Palestinian track of the Bilaterals up to the signature of the Declaration of Principles. It aims at answering the question: why did the antagonists fail to conclude an agreement in Washington whereas they succeeded in Oslo? It also addresses the different Israeli negotiation style during the Likud and Labor terms, and the Arab reaction towards these differences.

#### **Negotiations during the Likud term: Round Two to Round Five**

Once the first round of the Bilaterals was over in Madrid, the antagonists pursued negotiations in Washington upon the Arab request. Nevertheless, Israel remained faithful to its negotiation tactics i.e. '*having a say in every detail of the negotiation process.*' Hence, it proposed to start on 9 December 1991 (the Uprising I anniversary) instead of the United States' proposed date of 4 December. Yet the Palestinians insisted on commemorating the anniversary and<sup>1</sup> therefore it took place on 10

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1. Hanan Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace*, New York, Simon & Schuster, 1995, pp. 160-61.



December. Shamir was also determined to repeat his dissatisfaction with the Washington venue, stress that Israel would never comply with any American proposal without advance consultation, test the Palestinian reaction to the commemoration of the uprising anniversary,<sup>2</sup> and examine the extent of Arab coordination at this early stage.

However, the negotiations never reached the table. The three delegation heads, Israeli, Jordanian, and Palestinian, met on a couch in the corridor of the State Department where the negotiations were to be held. In agreement with the Jordanians, the Palestinian delegation proposed that the two tracks should start meeting in two separate rooms. Thus, the joint Jordanian- Palestinian delegation would constitute two separate delegations. The Israelis countered with a proposal to set up a number of subcommittees and working groups so as to address issues derived from a common agenda to be agreed upon.<sup>3</sup> The leader of the Palestinian delegation, Haider Abdel-Shafi, refused to go to the negotiation room, while Eliakim Rubinstein, the leader of the Israeli delegation, confirmed that he could only negotiate with the Jordanian delegation. The separate identity of the Palestinians being an illusion, the Palestinians should refer to Jordan if they were looking forward to political rights.<sup>4</sup> The Palestinians then asked for US involvement<sup>5</sup> but this was denied i.e. “*work it out with the Israelis.*”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> .The Palestinian delegation had already decided to share the Palestinian people inside and outside the Palestinian occupied territories their commemoration of the uprising anniversary so that they were prepared to celebrate this occasion with other Arab delegations in Washington.

<sup>3</sup> .Except where indicated the following pages on “Negotiations during Likud term: Round Two to Round Five” rely for their detail on the authoritative account by Camille Mansour, “The Palestinian- Israeli Peace Negotiations: An Overview and Assessment”, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XXII, No. 3, spring 1993.

<sup>4</sup> .Mohammad Hasanen Haykal, *The Arab-Israeli Secret Negotiations*, Vol.3, Dar-El-Shrouk, 1996, p. 246.

<sup>5</sup> .Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace...*, p. 161.

<sup>6</sup> .Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace...*, p. 161.



As is the case of the Rhodes Armistice talks 1949, Israel adopted a pragmatic approach regarding the negotiation format.<sup>7</sup> Israeli's basic condition to attend the Madrid Conference had been to downgrade the plenary at the expense of the Bilaterals. By contrast, as for the Jordanian-Palestinian track, it proposed the prerogatives of the plenary body at the expense of the two track i.e. Jordanians-Palestinians.<sup>8</sup> For the former, it aimed at penetrating the Arab front; for the latter, it wanted to downgrade the Palestinian identity. On 17 December, the round ended without an agreement upon this procedural issue. In this case, procedural issues touched the core of the Middle East conflict (the Palestinian identity).

The United States was a spectator rather than a full partner during this round.<sup>9</sup> Of course, there was no incentive for the Americans to get involved at this early stage, especially as they had already fulfilled their main target i.e. bringing the antagonists to the table. Once the antagonists failed to reach an agreement, they would beg for its intervention. Thus, it would assure its role as a unique full partner in settling the Middle East conflict. Such a strategy was first drawn up by Henry Kissinger. It had also adopted the same strategy during the Camp David Summit 1978; Anwar Sadat was complaining that Menachem Begin was intransigent, but Carter remained passive. Once the negotiations were about to collapse, the US President got seriously involved and put intense pressure on the Egyptian side. For this reason, Sadat accommodated Begin's demands. Would this be the case with the Palestinians?

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<sup>7</sup>. It insisted to negotiate with each Arab state the border question separately, but addressing the prisoner of war issue collectively.

<sup>8</sup>. "The Peace Process : Special Document file", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XXI, No. 3, spring 1992, p. 127.

<sup>9</sup>. Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace*, p. 161.



From a negotiation point of view, the second round was a case study in corridor diplomacy, a significant instrument in lobbying to pass or block a resolution in regional or international organizations. It also plays a role in bilateral negotiations; each side attempts to probe the other's intentions through personal and informal discussions. However, the case in the second round was different because the bilateral negotiations did not take place at all. Official negotiations were replaced by corridor diplomacy. This reflects how profound the differences between the Palestinians and Israelis were.

In protest at the Israeli decision to deport twelve Palestinians from the West Bank, the third round took place one week later -13 instead of 6 January. At this time, the Arab side decided not to go to Washington on 6 January to express their disappointment. Yet Israel insisted on closing on 16 January as had been planned.<sup>10</sup> It was an Arab attempt to use the Bilaterals as a pressurizing card to force Israel to reconsider its policies toward the Palestinian occupied territories. Yet Israel answered by confirming that no concessions would be made to keep negotiations on track. This also reflected the fact that the Bilaterals were highly sensitive to events taking place in the Middle East, and that the Likud regarded them (the Bilaterals) as a liability rather than an asset. As a result, they were not a convenient Arab card to play against Israel.

By virtue of the US mediation, it was agreed that each round would consist of two tracks: the Palestinian track, which would comprise nine Palestinians and two Jordanians; and the Jordanian track, which would include nine Jordanians and two Palestinians. Each round would be opened and closed by a plenary session. Israel's relative flexibility was

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10. Wahed Abd El Mighed, "The Peace Negotiations and the Arab Negotiating Performance", *International Politics Journal -Al- Siyassa al Dawliya (IPJ)*, Vol. 97, April, 1992, p. 182.



attributed to Shamir's anxiety to get the American loan guarantee during the congressional debates scheduled for 22 January 1992.

For the Palestinian track, the two sides faced a dilemma: each aimed at taking the initiative while having to prove that it adhered to the terms of reference. Consistent with its tendency to haggle on everything, Israel informally presented an agenda which was immediately rejected because Jordanian and Palestinian issues were not differentiated. The agenda reflected a limited vision for the transitional period. The Palestinians replied with a draft agenda of their own and an outline for an interim self-governing authority based on free elections under international supervision. The two documents reflected a profound gap on substantive issues.<sup>11</sup> Yet this suggested that they were at least getting down to real business. Palestinian strategy was not easy to execute. On the one hand, there were the Palestinian people's demands, especially for sovereignty over East Jerusalem, an immediate halt to settlement activities, and application of the Fourth Geneva Convention to the Palestinian occupied territories. On the other, the Palestinian delegation was in no position to press these demands. Nevertheless, it reiterated those demands in every meeting.

Once negotiations on the Interim Self-Government Agreement (ISGA) started, ministers of the Tehiya and Moledet withdrew from the coalition on 19 January, depriving Shamir's government of its majority in the Knesset. Thus, negotiations in all tracks could not go one step further; *'no weak government would make considerable concessions in negotiations.'* Shamir, by now, had two motives to end the talks: his own belief, and his anxiety to remain in office.

The Jordanian track was facing no insurmountable problems; both

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11. "The Peace Process : Special Document file", p. 131.



sides were able to reach an agreement in this round. Nevertheless, King Hussein believed that Jordan should be the last Arab state to seal an agreement with Israel. Small states could not afford a separate peace agreement with Israel. Thus, the Jordanian negotiating strategy was based on reaching a framework agreement only on the bilateral issues. The Israeli strategy, however, aimed to reach an agreement with Jordan immediately. Consequently, Rubinstein offered a draft peace treaty at the beginning of this round. Not surprisingly, the head of the Jordanian delegation, El-Majali, returned this to him after consultation with his colleagues. If the peace treaty was prepared before the negotiation started, there would have been no point in holding the Bilaterals. Nevertheless, the two sides achieved considerable progress regarding the border issues, refugee problems, and water distribution from the Jordan River.<sup>12</sup>

On 10 February, Baker sent a letter to Faisal Husseini in his capacity as a head of the Palestinian team, reiterating the American commitment to a comprehensive settlement.<sup>13</sup> Faisal Husseini had not been a member of the Palestinian delegation at Madrid because of his membership in the Palestinian National Council (PNC). Would the United States reconsider its policy regarding the PLO? The answer was negative. The United States was just attempting to act as an honest broker without any intentions of reopening dialogue with the PLO.

During the fourth round (from 24 February to 4 March), two significant documents had been exchanged: an Israeli project and Palestinian counter-draft. The former stemmed from the provision in the Camp David Accords 1978 designed to improve the Palestinians' standard of living in the occupied territories without addressing their

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12. Haykal, *The Arab-Israeli Secret Negotiations...*, Vol. 3, pp. 244-45.

13. Mahmoud Abas, *The Way to Oslo*, Al-Mattbou'at for distribution and publication company, Beirut, 1994, p.141.



political rights. It tackled people's issues rather than the status of the territories. The Palestinian draft, of course, suggested exactly the reverse: (1) electing a central political authority under international supervision and a legislative assembly, and (2) confirming the Palestinian right of self-determination following the transitional phase. However, the United States had expected that the Palestinians would work with the Israeli text and then invoke American intervention. Thus it was dissatisfied and accused them of "*posturing instead of negotiating*." Why did the Palestinians insist on having their own proposal? The answer is that they wished to address the Israeli delegation on an equal footing, and establish their own bargaining position.

The Israelis and Jordanians failed to reach an agreement on a common agenda. The Israeli priority was to establish subcommittees so as to address issues related to the nature of a peace accord, while the Jordanians wanted the implementing of 242, and a halt to settlements in the Palestinian occupied territories. Furthermore, they diverged on the concept of peace: Israel was concerned with the social phase of peace, such as normalization of bilateral relations, while Jordan stressed the political aspect, namely Israeli withdrawal from the territories seized in 1967.<sup>14</sup> To have something to work on, the Israelis proposed some trivial issues such as the problem of proliferation of mosquitoes in the Jordan Valley.<sup>15</sup> Otherwise, they would have to stop negotiating until some progress was reached on the other tracks. Remarkably, the Jordanians insisted on addressing issues related to the Palestinian track. This approach suggested one of two possibilities: confirming the Jordanian choice (the West Bank was part of the Jordanian territories) regardless of

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14. El Mighed , "The Peace Negotiations and the Arab Negotiating Performance", p. 183.

15. Haykal, *The Arab-Israeli Secret Negotiations*., Vol. 3, p. 247.



Hussein's decision to break up ties with the West Bank in 1988, or stressing Arab solidarity.

The fifth round, from 27 to 30 April 1992, was the last before the Israeli elections and as a result did not begin with any optimism. The two sides kept on shoring up their proposals. Nevertheless, the Israelis submitted a proposal for municipal elections without any political connotation. They aimed at scoring two points: (1) appearing to abide by democratic principles and (2) seizing the opportunity to inflame confrontations between supporters of the PLO and HAMAS. The Palestinians submitted a counter proposal, confirming the political nature of these elections.

### **Negotiations during the Labor Term: the Bilaterals -the Oslo Back Channel**

On 23 June 1992, Shamir called for early elections to face the strong Labor candidate, Yitzhak Rabin. The Bush administration regarded Shamir as an obstacle to peace in the Middle East and therefore supported the Labor party. Baker was unsatisfied with Shamir's attitude every time he visited the region: imposing a curfew on the Palestinians, and announcing the building of a new settlement.<sup>16</sup> The Arab states also preferred to see the Labor party in office, offering indirect financial assistance and encouraging the Arab Israelis to support this party. The Labor party also asked Egypt to advise the Palestinian delegation to be intransigent if the Likud party showed any flexibility during the fifth round. This was to deny Shamir any progress in negotiations that could

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<sup>16</sup>. Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace*., p.172.



be used in favor of the Likud party during the election campaign.<sup>17</sup> Meanwhile, the Bush administration remained intransigent regarding the loan guarantees and therefore Shamir came under pressure from the new Jewish immigrants who were suffering from bad living conditions.<sup>18</sup> They put all the blame on Shamir and voted for Labor.<sup>19</sup> Thus, Labor took office in a coalition based on the leftist party Meretz. Remarkably, Israeli elections have always been a playground for foreign interference, i.e. by the Arabs as well as the Americans.

The PLO regarded the new Israeli government as a positive sign, especially its Foreign Minister, Shimon Peres, who had kept in contact with it; Meretz shared his stance.<sup>20</sup> The Labor party also gave up the Likud notion of '*autonomy for people rather than territories*,' and announced a freeze on settlement activities.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, Rabin made a distinction between so called security and political settlements, refusing to limit the former, which would improve Israeli security. By now, the Prime Minister, Rabin, would be responsible for the Bilaterals, while Peres would be restricted to the Multilaterals.<sup>22</sup>

While the Israelis were busy with the electoral campaign, the PLO seized the opportunity to confirm its significant role in the Bilaterals. The Palestinian delegation participated openly and publicly in the Palestinian Central Council meetings that took place from 7 to 10 May 1992, and

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<sup>17</sup>. Haykal, *The Arab-Israeli Secret Negotiations...*, Vol.3, p.253-4.

<sup>18</sup>. Following the disintegration of the USSR in 1991, Israel received an influx of Russian Jewish immigrants. This situation posed a significant challenge to the Shamir government. It had to accommodate them satisfactorily or they would go back to Russia. However, this was not possible without the US loan guarantees.

<sup>19</sup>. Yitzhak Shamir, *Yitzhak Shamir's Memories*, Published by Dar Al-Kitab al-'Arabi, Cairo & Damascus 1995, p.312.

<sup>20</sup>. Haykal, *The Arab-Israeli Secret Negotiations...*, Vol. 3, p. 254-5.

<sup>21</sup>. Mansour, "The Palestinian- Israeli Peace Negotiations: An Overview and Assessment", p.18-9.

<sup>22</sup>. Haykal, *The Arab-Israeli Secret Negotiations...*, Vol. 3, p. 259.



Arafat received the Palestinian delegation formally and publicly on 18 June in Amman, five days before the Israeli elections.<sup>23</sup>

The sixth round took place from 24 August to 24 September in two stages separated by a ten-day recess in order to allow the two sides to consult with their respective political leaderships. At the first (24 August – 3 September), the Israeli side presented a text which was not significantly different from Shamir's, though it was prepared to accept the idea of a Palestinian body with limited authority. The Palestinian reaction was negative and submitted a counter-draft based on the establishment of a Palestinian body with extended authority.<sup>24</sup> The Israeli proposal reflected relative flexibility to prove that a real change had taken place, while the Palestinians had lifted their minimum demand to test the new Israeli government.

Meanwhile, in the Jordanian sub-track the two sides were close to an agreement on the agenda. However, the Israelis attempted to re-negotiate what was already agreed, refusing the Jordanians' demand for the applicability of 242 to the Jordanian occupied territories in 1948 and 1967,<sup>25</sup> and adding the issues of refugees and settlements to the proposed agenda.<sup>26</sup>

During the second stage, Israel proposed a new document referring to 242 for the first time, but only in the context of the permanent status negotiations. Nevertheless, the Palestinians asked for acknowledgment of the applicability of 242 in the interim status as well, thereby seeking to

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<sup>23</sup>.Mansour, "The Palestinian- Israeli Peace Negotiations: An Overview and Assessment", p.18.

<sup>24</sup>.Mansour, "The Palestinian- Israeli Peace Negotiations: An Overview and Assessment", pp.19-21.

<sup>25</sup>.Since 1948, Israel had occupied 340 square kilometers - nearly the size of Gaza – on the northern Jordanian border i.e. Al-Bakora. During 1967 War, the Israeli forces occupied a minor part of land on the Jordanian south border i.e. Gour Al-Safy.

<sup>26</sup>.Mouhamed Abd El Salam, "The Six Round in the Bilateral Negotiations between Arabs and Israel", *IPJ*, Vol. 110, October 1992, p. 185.



achieve two significant goals. The first was territorial jurisdiction and control over land and water for a Palestinian government, and the second was East Jerusalem (as a part of the Palestinian occupied territories in 1967 addressed in 242) to be accepted as a part of the interim arrangements. A negative Israeli reaction to this was predictable. Though Israeli- Jordanian negotiations were mainly concerned with the agenda, they failed to break through this stalemate.<sup>27</sup> In general, the antagonists regarded this round as a trial balloon to probe the minimum demands of each side.

The antagonists started the seventh round on 21 October, two weeks before the United States presidential elections, so no significant progress could be expected. They preferred to wait for the new administration. Nevertheless, the Bush administration aimed at taking advantage of any success that could be achieved during the seventh round.<sup>28</sup> The two sides were intransigent towards their previous stance on the applicability of 242 in the interim period. However, they agreed to establish informal committees to address concepts, territory, and economic and human rights. Yet the informal talks failed to further the negotiations.<sup>29</sup>

On 29 November 1992, the Israelis and the Jordanians announced that they had reached an agreement on an agenda and the declaration of principles that would shape their future relations. This announcement inflamed Arabs doubts about Jordan. It was considered the first crucial Israeli breach of the Arab front.<sup>30</sup> How could the Labor party achieve such penetration after two rounds in the Bilaterals whereas the Likud failed to do so after five rounds? Likud had made it clear that a “*peace for*

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<sup>27</sup>. El Salam, “The Six Round in the Bilateral Negotiations between Arabs and Israel”, p.186.

<sup>28</sup>. Imad Gad, “The Peace Process in the Rabin’s Term”, *IPJ*, Vol.111, January 1993, p.86.

<sup>29</sup>. Abas, *The way to Oslo*., pp.148-50.

<sup>30</sup>. Gad, “The Peace Process in the Rabin’s Term”, p.87.



*peace formula*” should guide any partial, or comprehensive, settlement with the Arabs and thus gave no incentive for a settlement with them. By contrast, Labor signaled that it would make territorial concessions, while confirming that there would be no complete return to the 4 June 1967 line. And the Arabs were prepared to embrace Kissinger’s advice: “*take what you can get rather than demanding what you want*”. A breach on the Arab front should be expected.

Meanwhile, both Republicans and Democrats were competing to satisfy the powerful American Jewish lobby;<sup>31</sup> Bush approved the \$ 10 billion loan guarantees and invited Rabin for talks while Baker was visiting the Middle East for the first time following the formation of the new Israeli government. Baker endorsed Rabin’s new policy and tried to sell it to the Arabs. The Democratic candidate, Bill Clinton, claimed that any administration headed by him would be more understanding of Israeli requirements than the Bush one. Jerusalem should be the undivided capital of Israel forever.<sup>32</sup> Clinton and his deputy, Al Gore, criticized the Bush administration for harming the United States relations with Israel because of its stance on the loan guarantees.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, these statements invoked the anxiety of the Arab-Americans who had started to take part in American politics. To calm their fears down, Clinton sent them a letter mentioning that a Democratic administration would tirelessly seek to bring a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.<sup>34</sup> Such a vague letter was not sufficient to soothe Arab American anger but

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<sup>31</sup>. On 3 November, a New York businessman, Harry Katz, revealed a tape transcript to prove that AIPAC, the most prominent Jewish lobby in the US, was deeply involved in the presidential elections. The transcript was a conversation between Katz and the president of this committee, David Steiner, and the release of the tape resulted in his prompt resignation. See David Steiner and Harry Katz Transcript of telephone Conversation, 22 October 1992, *Journal of Palestine studies*, Vol. 22, winter 93, pp. 161-2

<sup>32</sup>. Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace*., p.213.

<sup>33</sup>. Bill Clinton, “Letter to Arab Americans,” Little Rock, A R. 7 October 1992, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 22, winter 93, pp.157-8.

<sup>34</sup>. Clinton, “Letter to Arab Americans,” p. 158.



Clinton was not prepared to sacrifice the significant American Jewish lobby.

The Bush administration had offered four contributions never made by any former administration: significant political and financial American aid for assimilating hundreds of thousands of Russian and Ethiopian Jews; political support for Israel to establish diplomatic relations with 44 states, including the USSR; abolishing the General Assembly's '*Zionism is a form of racism*' resolution; and termination of the Iraqi strategic threat to Israel i.e. the Gulf War II.<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, the American Jewish lobby had been uneasy with George Bush's administration and thus he only got 25 per cent of the Jewish vote.<sup>36</sup>

How did the American Jewish lobby function in the US Presidential and Congress elections? American Jews had established an impressive array of organizations to influence American foreign policy, of which the American Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) was the most powerful. Ariel Sharon once told an American audience, "*when people ask me how they can help Israel, I tell them: Help AIPAC.*" The latter activists were only doing what other special interest groups do, but doing it very much better. Financial support has always been a key factor in the presidential and congressional elections. AIPAC made sure that its friends received strong fanatical support from the many pro-Israel political action committees. Any one seen as insensitive to Israeli needs could be sure that AIPAC would direct campaign contributions to his or her political opponents. Democratic presidential candidates depend on Jewish supporters to supply about 60 per cent of their financial campaign. For this reason, Israel was largely immune from criticism in Congress. A

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<sup>35</sup>.James Baker, James Baker Memories: Politics of Diplomacy, translated by Magdi Sharshar, Second edition, Matbouli Library, Cairo, 2002, p787

<sup>36</sup>.Manar El Shorbagy, "The Priority of Debatable Issues in the United States Presidential Elections," *IPJ*, Vol. 110, October 1992, p. 205.



Christian Zionist congressman, Dick Armey, said in September 2002: “*My No. 1 priority in foreign policy is to protect Israel.*” However, one might think that the No. 1 priority for any congressman should be to protect America’s foreign interests. When the prominent Democrat, Howard Dean, called for the United States to take a more even-handed role in the Middle East conflict, he was perceived by top Democrats as someone bad for Israel - evenhandedness was completely condemned.<sup>37</sup> Remarkably, the Israeli Knesset sometimes witnessed harsh criticism of Israeli domestic and foreign policies (from left wing parties and Israeli Arab members) of a kind never seen in the American Congress. To conclude, money is a key factor in the American democracy i.e. almost plutocracy.

Clinton based his administration's Near East and South Asian policies on the dictates of the Israeli government and its principal American Jewish lobby. He also installed former deputy director of research at AIPAC and co-founder of pro-Israel Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Martin Indyk, as the principal White House adviser for Near East and South Asian Affairs. The Deputy National Security Adviser, Samuel (“Sandy”) Berger, and National Security Adviser of the Vice-President, Lean Perth, were strict Jews with a deep commitment to Israel.<sup>38</sup> Aaron Miller, who has lived in Israel and often visits the country, was fully involved in US foreign policy in the Middle East.<sup>39</sup> In the State Department, he retained Denis Ross from the former Bush administration. Ross was a former fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy

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<sup>37</sup> John Mearheimer Department of Political Science University of Chicago, and Stephen Walt John F. Kennedy, School of Government University of Harvard, “*The Israel Lobby and the U.S. Foreign Policy*”, March 2006.

<sup>38</sup> See Eugene Bird, “The Israelization of American Policy is No Paranoid Fantasy”, *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, February-March, 1994, p.12. And Avinoam Bar-Yossef, “The Jews Who Run Clinton’s Cabinet”, *Ma’arin*, Tel Aviv, 2 September 1994, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, winter 95, Vol. 24, p.148.

<sup>39</sup> Mearheimer, “*The Israel Lobby*.”



and therefore by implication had strong ties with AIPAC. He “*was to emerge as the architect of [the US] policy toward the Arab-Israeli conflict in the first Bush administration and the lead negotiator in the Arab-Israeli peace process throughout the Clinton presidency.*”<sup>40</sup> Ross was a pious Jew: “*It was only after getting married and having children that I became a more observant Jew and began to attend synagogue regularly.*”<sup>41</sup> He was one of the most pro-Israel elements in both the Bush and Clinton administrations. In these circumstances, would the Clinton administration be able to act as an honest broker?

Two significant events had taken place in early December, before the eighth round (7-17 December 1992) started. In the first place, there was the Knesset decision to write off the law of 1986 forbidding any contact with the PLO; this meant implicit recognition of its role in the Madrid conference. In the second, there was the ring states' meeting in Beirut, which reflected their skepticism towards the Clinton administration. To this the PLO sent a reduced delegation, comprising only four members. There were two reasons for this. First, following two rounds of negotiations, the Palestinians had not seen any change in the Israeli negotiating strategy; it was merely consuming time to create new facts on the ground. Secondly, the round took place during the transitional period of the American presidency and no significant progress could be expected. The Israeli side took the initiative and presented a document. This included no substantial new ideas, but only answered the Palestinian questions raised during the seventh round. The document divided the Palestinian occupied territories into five categories, each of which should be governed by a different legal status. This would

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<sup>40</sup>.Dennis Ross, *The Missing Peace: The Inside Story of the Fight for Middle East Peace*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 2004, p.7.

<sup>41</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace...*, p.5.



automatically undermine any Palestinian claims during the final status negotiations. The Israelis understood well that it was not wise to make any concessions at this stage, but wait for the Clinton administration to be inaugurated.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, the Palestinian delegation suspended the talks and the final session did not take place as a protest against the Rabin government decision to deport 400 HAMAS activists to Lebanon.<sup>43</sup> The decision came as a reaction to the execution of an Israeli soldier by HAMAS on 15 December 1992. For their part, both the Jordanians and Lebanese announced that they would not accept any deportees.<sup>44</sup> The Arab world bitterly condemned the expulsion, and the Palestinian delegation was under tremendous pressure from the Palestinian people to give up the negotiations altogether. Thus, their bottom line was to resume the Bilaterals if there could be an agreement that would guarantee a speedy return of the deportees. Remarkably, the Arab governments, including the PLO, had been taking very serious measures against Islamic fundamentalists who had been accusing them of being satellites of the Christian West and opposing any settlement with Israel. Why were the Arab governments dissatisfied with the Israeli decision? This question shows the Arab world's confusion.

Since it was the last round to be held under the Bush administration, the president himself, together with his Secretary of State, personally received all of the delegations on 16 December. Although the Palestinians were formally received in the framework of the Joint Jordanian – Palestinian delegation President Bush received their team separately on the following day. It was headed by Faisal Husseini and

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<sup>42</sup>. Mansour , "The Palestinian- Israeli peace Negotiations: An Overview and Assessment", pp. 24-7.

<sup>43</sup>. Mansour , "The Palestinian- Israeli peace Negotiations: An Overview and Assessment", p.27.

<sup>44</sup>. Mansour , "The Palestinian- Israeli peace Negotiations: An Overview and Assessment", p.28.



comprised Palestinians from both the outside and inside (including Jerusalem). Bush's attitude was both a political gesture and a precedent for the Clinton administration.<sup>45</sup> Up to the eighth round, two facts remained clear. First, no common agenda had been agreed upon because each side stuck to its own interpretation of UNSCR 242. Secondly, no alternative Palestinian political leadership had emerged, and the PLO had consolidated its role. Would the Rabin government have a direct dialogue with the PLO to overcome the deadlock?

In an attempt to bring the negotiations on track, the newly appointed Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, visited the Middle East to confirm the United States commitment to the peace process. Christopher asked the Palestinians to make a public commitment to resume the Bilaterals in return for an Israeli statement. Yet the Palestinians would not be able to see this before making their own public commitment. In other words, the United States asked the Palestinians to make a concession in return for a vague promise. Not surprisingly, the Palestinians refused. Nevertheless, the American consul-general in Jerusalem handed out the invitation to the ninth round. The Palestinians refused to take it so that he put it on the table. When Ashrawi handed it back to him, he put it again on the table and left. The Palestinian side delivered the invitation letter again to the American consulate officially, which could be described as a '*diplomatic slap*' to the Americans.<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, the PLO did not want to cut contact with the United States so it sent the delegation to negotiate with the State Department in Washington. Yet deadlock was soon reached. Meanwhile, the Foreign Ministers of the Arab States convened in Cairo to give a unified response on the new date set by the co-sponsors for the ninth round i.e. 20 April

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<sup>45</sup>. Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace*., pp.231-37.

<sup>46</sup>. Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace*., pp.237-41.



1993. The Palestinians were apprehensive that the Arab states would accept the invitation without them, so Arafat obtained Syrian approval to his demand for postponement. Nevertheless, he was pressured by the co-sponsors and the so-called Arab moderate states, and asked the Palestinian delegation for more flexibility. The head of the Palestinian delegation, Haider, however, asked the delegation to act independently and respect the people's demand. Meanwhile, Arafat was under significant pressure from both Americans and Russians. Finally, the Palestinian delegation gave its consent, which was another proof that the PLO was the sole representative of the Palestinian people.<sup>47</sup> A leadership-people divergence always favors the negotiators in the case of democratic regimes, and is a sign of weakness in dictatorships. In the former, negotiators enjoy ample room for maneuver (the Israelis); in the latter, they are subject to pressure from their leadership, which had also come under international pressure (the Palestinians).

During the previous eight rounds, the PLO had instructed the Palestinian delegation to be rigid with the Israelis, and as a result it had just sought to implement PLO strategy. None of its members attempted to play the role of alternative leadership<sup>48</sup> for two reasons. First, they were nominated by Arafat, and secondly, they lacked political weight in the Palestinian occupied territories. What would be the future of the PLO if the delegation sealed an agreement with the Israelis? Members of the delegation, in this case, would be asked to implement the agreement. They would enjoy an international recognition, plus financial aid. Therefore, they could assure their influence whereas the PLO would have to return to Tunis empty handed. Of course, this would be the beginning of the end for the PLO. It was for this reason that Arafat worked against

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<sup>47</sup>. Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace...*, p.185.

<sup>48</sup>. Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace...*, p.218.



the Washington negotiations; if the Israelis refused 242, they should abide by 181. The delegation asked whether the PLO wanted the Washington negotiations to succeed. Nevertheless, Arafat was not ready to reveal his intentions.<sup>49</sup> *"The analogy used by Arafat was that of the drone used to fertilize the queen bee and then left to die. Another analogy was that of reviving the patient long enough to make him sign his will and then leaving him to expire or even finishing him off."*<sup>50</sup> This was a common phenomenon in the Arab world: a total divorce between political leadership and its diplomats. Sadat's relationship with the Egyptian delegation in the Camp David I 1978 was identical. Meanwhile, the Palestinians had concluded that an effective American involvement was not possible and that direct negotiations with the Israelis would be more practical. Sadat had also come to the same conclusion, which pushed him to visit Jerusalem. Meanwhile, the Israeli Foreign Minister, Peres, was dissatisfied because Rabin prevented him from having any input to the Bilaterals. Thus, he was for sponsoring back stage negotiations. In short, the Oslo back channel was a by-product of the PLO's fear from the Washington negotiations, the useless American role, and the Rabin-Peres antagonism.

What is a back channel? *"It is a line of diplomatic communication which by-passes the normal or front channel, usually to maximize secrecy and avoid opposition to a new line of policy. This does not necessarily entail side-lining all professional diplomats, just most of them."* The US-USSR negotiations on arms control in the early 1970s are an example. They were formally concluded in Vienna but Henry Kissinger used the

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<sup>49</sup>. Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace...*, p.185.

<sup>50</sup>. Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace...*, p.171.



back channel of secret meetings with the Soviet ambassador in Washington in order to advance them.<sup>51</sup>

Was the Oslo back channel the first one between the PLO and Israel? The answer is negative. Several secret channels had been established between the PLO and Zionist figures: the Sweden Channel, the Likud Channel, and the Labor Channel. On 15 November 1988, the Palestinian National Council recognized UNSCRs 242 and 338, and therefore a group of American Jewish scholars asked for a secret channel in Sweden. The Swedish Minister of Foreign Affairs hosted the meetings and attended their inauguration. The channel aimed at establishing an official contact between the United States and the PLO. It did bear fruits, notably in the shape of the US-PLO dialogue in 1988. Nevertheless, Israel was not yet ready to follow the United States' step and therefore the dialogue could not proceed. It is worth noting, in this context, that the American Jewish lobby could easily decide Middle East policy for the United States but not for Israel. The latter has always insisted that only its citizens should decide its fate.

In April 1992, the PLO and some elements of the Likud party opened a back channel of which Ariel Sharon himself was aware. However, due to Israeli press leaks, Sharon was forced to cut off any further contacts. As for the Labor-PLO back channel, this was established through Arab Israeli Knesset members, who conveyed messages and proposals between the Labor Party and PLO. On 12 April 1989, they presented Rabin's proposal for negotiations. It was similar to the US Letters of Assurances in 1991. This suggests that the US-Labor Party coordination was deeply rooted. This back channel continued during the Washington bilateral tracks in Shamir's term. Meanwhile, the PLO

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<sup>51</sup>.See G.R. Berridge & Alan James, *A Dictionary of Diplomacy*, Palgrave Macmillan, Second edition, London, 2003.



proposed another back channel with Yossi Beilin's group in the Labor Party; the former Dutch Foreign Minister Max Van Der Stoel served as a mediator. Once Yitzhak Rabin took office in 1992, Beilin was appointed as deputy Foreign Minister. This proves that the Oslo channel did not emerge from a vacuum.<sup>52</sup>

The first meeting had taken place in London on 3 December 1992, though subsequent ones were shifted to Oslo and developed into the back channel. Yair Hirschfeld, an Israeli academician had close ties to Palestinians in the occupied territories, who was involved with the Multilaterals, was going to London for a steering committee meeting. Hirschfeld was close to the Secretary General of the Foreign Ministry, Yossi Beilin, who was also one of Peres's intimate friends.<sup>53</sup> Abu Ala (Ahmed Orei') who was the head of the Palestinian delegation in the Multilaterals was in London as well. Ashrawi suggested a meeting between Hirschfeld and Abu Ala in London to address the Multilaterals i.e. economic issues. The former accepted provided that it was unofficial. Nevertheless, they did not discuss economic issues but the Bilaterals. After a careful study, the PLO concluded that Hirschfeld had Israeli government approval to establish a back channel.<sup>54</sup>

From 20 to 22 January 1993, the first round took place in Norway and it was soon clear that the PLO would have to change its strategy or face the same fate in Oslo that it had met in Washington. It thus aimed at an agreement on a declaration of principles instead of a common agenda. Following consultations with the Egyptians and some American Jewish figures, the PLO prepared a draft, deferring the key issues to avoid a

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<sup>52</sup>. For further reading about the Israeli-Palestinians back channels See Abas, *The way to Oslo*, pp.44-56, pp.70-2, and pp.86-98.

<sup>53</sup>. Hykal, *The Arab-Israeli Secret Negotiations*., Vol.3, pp.264-65.

<sup>54</sup>. Abas, *The way to Oslo*., pp.178-81.



deadlock. The new strategy was to start from the obtainable, and build upon it to further the Oslo negotiations. The point of departure was Gaza, which had no economic benefit for Israel, and where crowded conditions made it impossible for it to restore order. If Israel returned Gaza to the PLO in the framework of an agreement, it would have three advantages for it: enable a face saving withdrawal; deprive HAMAS of any opportunity to take it over, and avoid any UN role in the territory, which would create a precedent in the Middle East conflict generally.<sup>55</sup>

During the second round, which took place on 11 February 1993, the Palestinians were anxious to ensure that Rabin was fully aware of the Oslo back channel. The two sides explored the possibility of reaching an agreement on a declaration of principles, but the Jerusalem issue was a significant obstacle to this.<sup>56</sup> On 20 March 1993, the third round focused on shifting the Palestinian leadership from Tunisia to Gaza-'*Gaza First Option*'.<sup>57</sup> The Palestinian side asked the Israelis to inform Egypt of the new developments in this channel and they did not oppose the idea.<sup>58</sup> By the end of this round, the Palestinians concluded that Peres was the architect of the Oslo channel, that Rabin had been notified of it but was not fully aware of all details, and that Secretary of State, Christopher, was also in the picture.<sup>59</sup>

Before the ninth round of the Bilaterals commenced, a number of critical developments had taken place in the process. For one thing, the Israeli stance had developed a certain flexibility following the expulsion crisis. For another, the Foreign Ministers of the ring states had met in Syria and stated that the Arab delegation would not go to Washington

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<sup>55</sup>. Abas, *The way to Oslo*., pp.201-2

<sup>56</sup>. Abas, *The way to Oslo*., pp.201-2.

<sup>57</sup>. Abas, *The way to Oslo*., p.207.

<sup>58</sup>. Abas, *The Way to Oslo*., p.205.

<sup>59</sup>. Ahmed Ibrahim Mahmoud, "The Bilateral Negotiations and Prospects for Substantial Issues Settlements," *IPJ*, Vol. 113, July 93, pp. 160-1.



without the Palestinian one. Furthermore, the Americans had decided to play the role of full partner instead of being simply the mediator, as it had been during the previous eight rounds.<sup>60</sup> This was a carrot to encourage the Arabs to resume negotiations, especially after their frustration with the outcome of the Bilaterals. Remarkably, the United States had used the same tactic with Sadat during the Camp David Summit I in 1978, though it simply meant more pressure on the Egyptian side alone. Had the Arabs learned from this experience? And, if they had, why did they approve the new American approach?

At the beginning of the round, the Israelis made two concessions. First, they approved Faisal El-Hussani as the head of the Palestinian delegation, though previously they had refused to negotiate with him because he was a resident of East Jerusalem. Secondly, they proposed to set up a sub-committee to address human rights in the Palestinian occupied territories. The Israelis proposed a prompt transfer of civil administration to the Palestinians, though the latter stressed that the transfer of administration should be done within a political framework to guarantee a linkage between interim and permanent status. The Israeli side proposed a project for an interim phase, to which the Palestinians responded by a counter proposal, thus reflecting serious gap between the two sides. In their capacity of full partner, the United States proposed a paper to bridge it<sup>61</sup> but it was simply a reflection of the Israeli position. The Palestinians thus refused it as a basis for negotiations.

As for the Jordanian-Israeli talks, Peres announced that an agreement was ready to be signed. However, Jordanians stressed that they had not even agreed a common agenda because of difficulties over a few

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<sup>60</sup>.Mahmoud, "The Bilateral Negotiations and Prospects for Substantial Issues Settlements", pp.161-63.

<sup>61</sup>.Mahmoud, "The Bilateral Negotiations and Prospects for Substantial Issues Settlements", p.161-63.



linguistic terms.<sup>62</sup> In other words, there were two different accounts on this round, which used to be common phenomena in the Bilaterals. The Israeli tactic was basically dependant on penetrating the Arab front through announcing an imminent breakthrough on one track to inflame the suspicious of other Arab delegations. Of course, the Israeli choice for the Jordanian track was not arbitrary; Jordan had no significant problem with Israel and it has been engaged in secret negotiations with Zionist leaders even before the establishment of the Jewish state.

The fourth round of the Oslo back channel took place on 30 April 1993, while the ninth round of the Bilaterals was going on. The two sides agreed not to propose new ideas in the Washington talks before discussing them in Oslo. They also agreed to freeze the Washington track in order to give a better chance to Oslo. The Palestinians proposed a symbolic Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank, i.e. Jericho. By the end of the Round, the Israelis asked for six weeks to finalize the Declaration of Principles because Rabin had to prepare the Israeli public before the announcement.<sup>63</sup>

On 8 May 1993, the fifth round of the Oslo channel took place to address the Gaza-Jericho project. Taking into consideration the Palestinian ability to postpone the ninth round of the Bilaterals, Rabin concluded that an agreement with the Palestinians should be the first step, followed by one with the Syrians. Rabin was still skeptical about the Oslo back channel, believing that the Washington rounds were the best option for Israel. The end of this round resulted in a draft of Declaration of Principles (DOP).<sup>64</sup> This situation looked like the Israeli-Jordanian negotiations in the Rhodes Armistice Talks 1949. The King Abdullah of

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<sup>62</sup>. Mahmoud, "The Bilateral Negotiations and Prospects for Substantial Issues Settlements", p.161-63.

<sup>63</sup>. Abas, *The Way to Oslo*., pp.212-14.

<sup>64</sup>. Absa, *The Way to Oslo*., pp215-19



Jordan had opened a back channel with Israelis simultaneously with the official talks; the two sides had agreed to negotiate any proposal thought this channel before proposed it in the official one.

Indeed, the Oslo back channel had a significant impact on the tenth round. The language of Tunis was becoming more strident. When Christopher invited Faisal to Washington for consultation before the tenth round, the Palestinians responded with an eight- point memorandum containing ten specific questions. The answers to these would determine whether the meeting was to take place.<sup>65</sup> The Americans were flexible and were willing to further the Washington talks, especially after the Oslo achievements. They had aimed at reaching agreement on an agenda during the Washington talks, though the progress in Oslo had forced them to propose a draft for a Declaration of Principles based on the '*Gaza First option*' as well. The Palestinians, however, rejected the American proposal and threatened the United States with being ignored if they insisted on ignoring the PLO.<sup>66</sup> During the previous rounds, the Palestinians had been pressing the Americans to take an active role in the process, but now they were no longer interested by virtue of the Oslo back channel.

The PLO was working on the Palestinian response to the American proposal with the Egyptians without prior consultation with the Palestinian delegation. Nevertheless, the delegation remained determined to have its input and wrote a long critique, arguing that the '*Gaza First Option*' was not beneficial to the Palestinians. This would, it argued, allow Israel to get rid of the areas it found difficult to control while maintaining power over the areas that it wanted. It would also undermine any genuine peace and stability in the region, and - via early

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<sup>65</sup>. Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace...*, p.244.

<sup>66</sup>. Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace...*, pp.249-50.



empowerment of a civil administration - consolidate the Israeli attempt to separate the people from the land.<sup>67</sup> On 3 August 1993, the Palestinian delegation met Christopher to discuss the American draft of the Declaration of Principles, having only the night before received an official draft of the Palestinian response. When Arafat had refused to consider its proposed amendments, the delegation's members had asked him to accept their resignation. However, Arafat ordered them to submit the document and go to Tunis for consultation. In late August, the delegation had a free discussion with Arafat, it complained about conflicting instructions, multiple channels, lack of a coherent strategy, inconsistent political decision-making, total disregard for structures, and lack of accountability and openness in internal work.<sup>68</sup> These complaints are commonly heard in Arab diplomacy because Arab heads of states believe that the making of foreign policy should be their own. Sadat, for example, disregarded the advice of his collaborators during crucial events i.e. the first and second disengage agreements with Israel in 1974, 1975 respectively, his decision to go to Jerusalem, and the Camp David Summit I in 1978.

The sixth round of the Oslo back channel which had taken place on 21 May 1993 had witnessed a positive development. The director-general of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, Uri Savir, had joined the Israeli delegation, which reflected more attention from Peres side. However, the PLO was worried that Rabin had not yet been involved.<sup>69</sup> Rabin then became more engaged through his special envoy, Joel Zinger, who participated in the seventh round, which took place on 13 June. However, Zinger's negotiating style was to ignore any achievements, and start from

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<sup>67</sup>. Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace*., pp.252-53.

<sup>68</sup>. Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace*., pp.253-57.

<sup>69</sup>. Abas, *The Way to Oslo*., pp.226-27.



scratch, thereby providing evidence of the lack of confidence between Rabin and his Foreign Minister, Shimon Peres. Zinger referred to Rabin's positive impression during the eighth round that started on 27 June, but said he was still skeptical about the PLO's ability to honor any agreement. Nevertheless, he stressed that he had a mandate from Rabin to reach a final draft of the DOP to be signed in Washington. Zinger also addressed the issue of mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO.<sup>70</sup> The ninth round started on 6 July, when the Israelis presented two documents, one on mutual recognition, and the other on representing the DOP. The former was to be signed in Oslo, the latter in Washington. The tenth round, which took place on 21 July, tackled the Palestinian comments on the two documents. The gap, however, was wide and the Israelis applied pressure by threatening to give up on the negotiations.<sup>71</sup> The Israeli negotiating strategy was based on the assumption that although the DOP did not meet the Palestinians' minimum conditions, Arafat would approve it in return for mutual recognition, his biggest achievement following his deportation from Lebanon.<sup>72</sup> Would the Israeli strategy pay off? The answer is affirmative. In the Arab world, personal considerations come first and national interests last.

During the eleventh round began on 25 July, the Israeli negotiating strategy was based on two factors: first, keeping pressure on the Palestinians to extract immediate concessions, and secondly, reaching a general agreement so that Israel could re-negotiate in the future in order to obtain more concessions on the details. However, the Palestinians responded with a counter threat. They could not continue working in the Oslo channel, and insisted on the need for a detailed agreement.<sup>73</sup> By

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<sup>70</sup>. Abas, *The Way to Oslo*., pp.231-37.

<sup>71</sup>. Abas, *The Way to Oslo*., pp.241-45.

<sup>72</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace*., p. 104.

<sup>73</sup>. Abas, *The Way to Oslo*., pp.241-45.



now, the antagonists had a draft of the DOP with points of disagreement inserted between brackets. The main objective of the twelfth round, which took place on 14 August, was to remove these brackets. However, they remained at odds on key issues and once more, the Israelis threatened to close the channel.<sup>74</sup>

The two delegations had insufficient authority to overcome the remaining points of disagreement - now nine brackets. The Israeli government had only two options: either to abandon the Oslo channel or negotiate at a higher level. Peres chose the latter option and visited Stockholm on 17 August. He had invested a great deal of effort in Oslo during the last nine months and was keen to make the channel succeed in order to further his career. The Norwegian Foreign Minister confirmed his willingness to smooth the road for an accord and the result was that seven-hour telephone negotiations took place between Tunis, Jerusalem, and Oslo. Arafat and Abas were on the line in Tunis, Peres was next to the Norwegian Foreign Minister waiting for Tunis's reply, and Rabin was hearing from Peres in Jerusalem. Finally, the two sides reached an agreement to be initialed in Oslo on 19 August.<sup>75</sup>

Arafat consulted an Egyptian official legal expert on the draft because none of the Palestinian delegation members was a legal expert, and he wanted to get Egypt involved in the Oslo agreement. The lawyer, Taher Shash, was a member of the Egyptian delegation to the Camp David Summit I in 1978, and legal advisor for the Palestinian delegation to the Bilaterals. Taher advised Arafat to proceed on the grounds that the agreement was elaborated in the Camp David framework, and was the maximum that the Palestinian could get in current circumstances.<sup>76</sup> Both

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<sup>74</sup>. Abas, *The Way to Oslo*., pp.256-57

<sup>75</sup>. Abas, *The Way to Oslo*., p.263.

<sup>76</sup>. Haykal, *The Arab-Israeli Secret Negotiations*., Vol.3, pp.287-88.



Palestinians and Israelis initialed the agreement on 20 August 1993. During the last round, which took place on the same day, the Israeli side kept up pressure on the Palestinians to obtain new concessions i.e. '*last minute demand tactic*.' It asked the PLO to deliver a statement calling on the Palestinian people in the occupied territories to end the Uprising I. The Palestinians confirmed that once the standard of living improved in the territories, the Uprising I would come to an end.<sup>77</sup>

The Palestinian delegation was not surprised by the back channel only that it succeeded and reacted negatively to the initial agreement. In its view this simply postponed the settlements issue and Jerusalem to the final phase without getting guarantees that Israel would not continue to create facts on the ground which would prejudice the final outcome.<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, "*the gaps, ambiguities, lack of detail, and absence of implementation mechanisms*" were serious weaknesses.<sup>79</sup> Nevertheless, the PLO outlined the DOP's advantages. It recognized the Palestinians as a people with political rights, contained a commitment to discuss the refugee issue and Jerusalem in the final status phase, admitted the return of displaced persons, and discussed boundaries, and therefore by implication statehood. The PLO also challenged the delegation to prove that it could have obtained more.<sup>80</sup> Again, it repeated Kissinger's words of '*demanding what you can get rather than asking what you want*.' Would the Kissinger advice put an end to the Middle East conflict or get the antagonists to a deadlock?

The director of policy planning in the State Department, Denis Ross, criticized the agreement, claiming that it gave new momentum to the PLO after the Gulf War II, and hindered the American effort to

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<sup>77</sup>. Abas, *The Way to Oslo*., pp.266-68.

<sup>78</sup>. Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace*., pp.269.

<sup>79</sup>. Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace*., p.260.

<sup>80</sup>. Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace*., p.260-61.



promote a peace agreement with Syria, which was the most vital actor in the Arab world after Egypt. However, Peres replied that the PLO was always the sole representative of the Palestinian people, and that HAMAS was not prepared to conclude a peace agreement with his country. He also pointed out that the Palestinian question was the core of the Middle East conflict, and that Syria had become isolated. Finally, he stressed that Israel knew well how to preserve its own interests.<sup>81</sup> Ross, later, praised the DOP and told Peres that “*Ben-Gurion would be proud.*”<sup>82</sup>

In compassion between the US-PLO dialogue 1988 and the Israeli-PLO Oslo back channel, a clear distinction could be detected. For the former, the United States had been hesitated to promote the dialogue though the PLO had done the maximum to accommodate the American demands i.e. approving 242, the Jewish state's right to exist, and denounce terrorism. The reason was that the United States had not obtained the Israeli approval to launch this dialogue. Hence, the dialogue ended to nothing. By contract, Peres did not need Christopher or Ross's approval to initial the DOP. This analysis demonstrated that Israel should not have prior consultations with the United States on any agreement with the Arabs, but the Americans should do so. This could be attributed to the fact that Israel has significant pro-Israel Jewish lobby in the United States, but the latter does not have American lobby in Israel.

Jordan was also taken by surprise by the announcement of the DOP. It regarded the DOP positively and negatively. For the former, it would open the door for an Israeli-Jordanian accord; for the latter, it meant termination of any possible Jordanian re-control over the West Bank i.e. the Jordanian choice. Syria considered the DOP betrayal of the

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<sup>81</sup>. Haykal, *The Arab-Israeli Secret Negotiations..*, Vol.3, pp.291-2.

<sup>82</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace..*, p. 118.



comprehensive settlement approach.<sup>83</sup> The Syrian demand of having a unified Arab delegation was right –separate tracks could not bring a comprehensive settlement. This also proved that a conference format is not only a matter of procedure, but substance.

To sell the accords to the world, Israel asked for US political and financial support to the Palestinians, a demand welcomed by the latter.<sup>84</sup> On 1 October 1993, the United States generated pledges of nearly \$2.4 billion in assistance to the Palestinian Authority (PA) - to be provided once it established competent institutions. Nevertheless, Arafat resisted the creation of transparent mechanisms for the distribution of the assistance. It was his money and he wanted to use it to buy loyalty and curry favor.<sup>85</sup> In general, this is the way that the Arab dictatorships exploit international aid - to establish their authority rather than develop the standard of living of their people.

To sell the accords in the Palestinian occupied territories, Arafat advocated a new notion: '*the fruits of peace*'.<sup>86</sup> What he meant by this was that the standard of living of the Palestinians here would be improved, not least because of new international aid and investments. Unfortunately, the international aid was basically focused on promoting Palestinian police capabilities. In other words, it aimed at guaranteeing Israeli security rather than improving the standard of living of the Palestinian people.<sup>87</sup> Sadat had applied the same flawed strategy to sell the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty in 1979 to the Egyptians. In case of the Middle East, the American aid to the Arabs was useless.<sup>88</sup> Following a

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<sup>83</sup>. Haykal, *The Arab-Israeli Secret Negotiations...*, Vol.3, pp.204-6.

<sup>84</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace...*, pp.114-6.

<sup>85</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace...*, p. 123.

<sup>86</sup>. Haykal, *The Arab-Israeli Secret Negotiations...*, Vol.3, p.316.

<sup>87</sup>. Haykal, *The Arab-Israeli Secret Negotiations...*, Vol.3, p.410.

<sup>88</sup>. US aid was fruitful in Europe and Japan following the World War II and in South East Asia after the Vietnam War for the sake of containing Communism (Eisenhower Doctrine). This doctrine was not applied to the Middle East because any significant acquisition of economic



quarter of century of the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty, it has been proved that the Egyptian standard of living did not witness any improvement. The United States aid was just a Trojan horse, which made Egypt fully dependent on Washington in terms of economy and military; indeed, Cairo lost its free will in foreign and domestic policy. Would the Oslo Accords (the Mutual Recognition and the DOP<sup>89</sup>) bring prosperity to the Palestinian occupied territories?

The Oslo Accords left nothing to be negotiated in the eleventh round (31 August- 14 September 1993) in Washington. Nevertheless, the Palestinian delegation did have a few tasks to undertake: discussing the ceremonial details, especially the signing, speeches and the like.<sup>90</sup> On 9 September 1993, the PLO published two significant letters, one to the Foreign Minister of Norway, and the other to the Israeli Prime Minister. In the former, the PLO announced that it was calling on the people in the Palestinian occupied territories to end any violence and participate in reconstruction and development. The PLO admitted implicitly that the Uprising I was a sign of violence and terrorism, but not a legitimate national struggle to free the Palestinian occupied territories. The letter to Rabin underlined outstanding commitments: (1) the PLO's recognition of Israel, (2) approval of 242 and 338, (3) denunciation of all types of violence and terrorism, and (4) abolishing all clauses in the Palestinian charter that were in conflict with the above-mentioned commitments. Remarkably, the PLO's commitment was identical to the Palestinian

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strength by the Arab states would later jeopardize the existence of Israel; economic power could easily generate military power.

<sup>89</sup>.The DOP stipulated the following main points. First, the Palestinians would be granted immediate self-rule in Gaza and Jericho. Secondly, there would be early empowerment for the Palestinians in the West Bank. Thirdly, an agreement on self-government and the election of a Palestinian Council would be concluded. Finally, an extensive program of economic cooperation between Israel and the Palestinians would begin. The permanent status negotiations would cover significant issues: Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, security arrangements, and borders.

<sup>90</sup>.Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace*., pp.262-63.



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<sup>90</sup>.Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace...*, pp.262-63.



National Council (PNC) initiative in 1988. What was new? Israel had decided finally to consider the PLO initiative. Arafat was denied a visa for the United States to deliver a speech at the UN after the PNC initiative in 1988. Would he face the same situation in 1993? Of course not, for his road to the White House was open by virtue of Rabin's approval. In other words, the Israeli Prime Minister not the United States President that could bring Arafat to the White House. Sadat's theory that the United States possessed most of the cards in the Middle East conflict proved to be wrong. The Israeli Prime Minister, Rabin, responded to Arafat's letter on 10 September 1993. He recognized the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people and so would negotiate with it to reach peace in the Middle East. For the first time in its history, Israel had recognized the Palestinian people as having political rights, a point inconsistent with the main pillar of Zionist ideology: '*people without land, and land without people.*' This also proved that Zionism was not cast in stone; it was subject to change under Arab pressure i.e. the Uprising I.

On 13 September 1993, the ceremony took place at the White House. The State Department was busy with protocol issues. Peres believed it was too much for Rabin to sign the DOP with Arafat and so proposed himself and Mahmoud Abas for this.<sup>91</sup> Besides, Peres also wanted to underline his role in the Oslo back channel. Meanwhile, Rabin confirmed that he would not show up if Arafat was in military dress. The United States employed the Saudis to persuade him: that there should be no guns and no uniforms.<sup>92</sup> The United States did not want partners in the ceremony so that Russia, Egypt and even Norway were not invited. This had always been the American approach since the Eric Johnston shuttle diplomacy in 1953-55.

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<sup>91</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace...*, p. 119.

<sup>92</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace...*, p. 119.



By virtue of the Oslo Accords, Arafat's image in the United States and Western Europe was changed overnight from that of terrorist to prophet of peace. If the issue of terrorism had to do with ethical principles, it should have taken ages to change this image.<sup>93</sup> He was hosted in the White House, had lunch with the Secretary of State, dinner with the Prime Minister of the UK, and held meetings with the IMF and World Bank.<sup>94</sup> Sadat also went through the same process. This suggested that the only road to the White House should pass first through Israel, and that Jews were the real leaders of the Christian West; they had simply replaced the influence of the Vatican during the Medieval period with their own outstanding influence on the mass media and stock markets following the Renaissance. In other words, the '*Vatican*' was just moved from Rome to Tel-Aviv, and anti-Semitism was substituted atheism. Furthermore, Arafat was even awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace, simply because he had met the Israeli demands. Sadat also was awarded this prize for the same reason. This suggested that the Noble Prize was exploited for political purpose.

The Likud party's reaction to the announcement of the Oslo Accords was, however, hostile. It would be the beginning of the end for the Jewish State. The Labor government should have adhered to the '*Peace for Peace formula*' to guarantee Israeli national security. The Labor approach would simply encourage Arafat to ask for more Israeli territory. What would be the future of the Oslo Accords if the Likud party took office?

The Israelis and the Palestinians had to conclude a detailed agreement with an implementation mechanism, because in its lack of details the

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<sup>93</sup>. In some cases, terrorism is widely used as a political propaganda weapon from one side against another. British colonial forces in the US had labeled George Washington a dangerous terrorist charged with many crimes of sabotage. Later, he became the hero of liberty for the American people. Nelson Mandela of South Africa also went through the same metamorphosis.

<sup>94</sup>. Haykal, *The Arab-Israeli Secret Negotiation...*, Vol. 3, p.389.



DOP was similar to the Camp David Accords of 1978 that preceded the Egyptian – Israeli peace treaty of the following year. Thus, the antagonists agreed to set up four negotiating committees.<sup>95</sup> They were, however, soon at odds on many points, for example, control over bridges and checkpoints in Gaza and Jericho. For the Palestinians, this was a sign of sovereignty, while for the Israelis it was essentially a national security matter.<sup>96</sup> The deadlock gave rise to the need for a third party. On 12 December 1993, at the request of Rabin, Egypt hosted a meeting between himself and Arafat, though it proved fruitless. Remarkably, Egypt was now playing the role of mediator whereas the United States was almost a spectator. Washington stressed that the two sides had reached the DOP without its help, and therefore they should pursue the same approach until reaching a detailed agreement. Why did the United States adopt this attitude? It realized that the two sides were in fact not close to an agreement, not least because the PLO needed a long time to acquiesce in the Israeli terms. Besides, the deadlock would undermine the Oslo process and underline the indispensability of the United States role in further negotiations. It adopted the same approach with Sadat after his visit to Jerusalem in 1977; it had kept low profile until the Camp David summit I in 1978.

Arafat tried to use the antagonism between Rabin and Peres to penetrate the Israeli front. He told Peres that the PLO was concerned with the Israeli negotiating style. It had already received messages from Rabin's envoy stating that the Prime Minister was responsible for the entire security file; as a result, meetings with Peres should be kept low profile. The Palestinians wanted to know with whom the PLO should negotiate. Peres was angry and accused Rabin of undermining him. To

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<sup>95</sup>. Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace*., p.277.

<sup>96</sup>. Haykal, *The Arab-Israeli Secret Negotiations*., Vol.3, p.336.



what extent did Arafat succeed in getting Israeli concessions by virtue of this situation? Probably to only a little, because institutions rather than personalities determine the Israeli position; any peace agreement should be first approved by the Israeli cabinet and then ratified by Knesset. Following Sadat's visit to Jerusalem, he had attempted to penetrate the Israeli front by exploiting antagonism between the Minister of Defense, Ezra Weizmann and the Foreign Minister, Moshe Dayan. However, his trial was unsuccessful for the same reason.

On 2 May 1994, the Palestinian delegation to the Washington Bilaterals met Christopher for the first time after sealing the DOP, raising Israeli violation of human rights, settlement activities, Jerusalem, and release of the Palestinian prisoners. It also wrote a long list of reservations on the proposed agreement to be signed on 4 May 1994 in Cairo, asking Arafat not to sign unless he could get Rabin's commitments on the issues that had been raised with Christopher. Nevertheless, Arafat ignored the delegation's advice and asked its member to attend the signing in Cairo.<sup>97</sup> Arafat's attitude was similar to Sadat's; this latter agreed with Kissinger on the draft of the Egyptian-Israeli first disengagement agreement 1974 and then ordered his Chief of Staff to sign it. By contrast, during the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty negotiations 1979, Begin could not take a decision of dismantling the Israeli settlements in Sinai before obtaining the approval of his Defense Minister, Weizmann. Furthermore, he had to make a telephone call with the hawkish General, Ariel Sharon, who had not been present in these negotiations to obtain his approval.

In Cairo, the antagonists were at odds on the issue of Jericho's boundaries but agreed to sign the agreement and to address this later.

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<sup>97</sup>. Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace...*, pp.287-88



Rabin would write a letter to confirm this but Arafat did not find Rabin's letter in the file when he was signing; so he signed the agreement, but not the map; consequently, Rabin refused to sign it as well. This lack of good organization led to a diplomatic crisis. In the art of diplomacy, small details are as significant as substantial issues. Fortunately, Arafat finally found the letter and signed the map.<sup>98</sup> Arafat also exploited the event to demonstrate to his public that he would fight for their rights. His chief aim was to add to his charismatic character and weaken his opponent i.e. Hamas.<sup>99</sup>

The Cairo Agreement (the Gaza- Jericho Agreement) established the PA on the ground and Arafat could leave Tunis to assume his new responsibilities in Gaza. Of course, the Gaza- Jericho project was not a new proposal. Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, had floated the same suggestion in 1977 and Sadat had conveyed it to Arafat. On this occasion, however, the PLO had rejected it. The Cairo Agreement was just a set of guidelines, which did not mention several pending details, especially the size of the Israeli redeployment in the West Bank and the responsibility for security in the territories. After almost one year of intensive official and back channel negotiations, the antagonists drafted an '*Interim Agreement*' that covered a huge amount of details. As usual, they should seal the agreement in Washington. The United States chief concern about the ceremony was to avoid any reluctance to sign on the part of Arafat as had been the case with the Cairo Agreement. Ross informed every Palestinian around Arafat that he would lose his relationship with Clinton if he caused a scene at the signing. In a private meeting with Arafat, Ross said that "*Mr. Chairman, there better not be any surprises tomorrow.*"<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup>. Haykal, *The Arab-Israeli Secret Negotiations...*, Vol.3, pp.392-95.

<sup>99</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace...*, p. 136.

<sup>100</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace...*, p.207.



A few hours before the signing, a problem arose over the timing of when the Palestinian police station could be manned in Halhul, a small Palestinian village close to Hebron. Arafat was cooperative: “*Whatever the Prime Minister decides is acceptable to me.*”<sup>101</sup> “*If there was a high point in the Oslo process, this was it. Rabin had come to appreciate Arafat, believing that he was taking steps that were hard for him.*”<sup>102</sup> On 28 September 1995, the antagonists signed the agreement in the presence of Mubarak and Hussein. Why were the president of Egypt and the King of Jordan invited to the ceremony despite the fact that they had been absent from the DOP ceremony? Mubarak was not happy because he had been ignored in the DOP ceremony and so it was not wise to make him angry again. Moreover, the Interim Agreement was just a detailed agreement of the Gaza- Jericho one, sponsored by Egypt. Finally, both Egypt and Jordan were expected to support the Interim Agreement and so the presence of Mubarak and Hussein would give them the moral responsibility to overcome any problems that might subsequently emerge.

After the DOP, the Jordanians signed the Common Agenda with Israel in Washington on 14 September 1993. In November, Peres met secretly King Hussein of Jordan; yet the latter was not ready to move so far towards peace with Israel. Following the Cairo Agreement in 4 May 1994, he became interested in a peace agreement with Israel. He knew that Arafat would be established in Jericho and extend his control throughout the West Bank and East Jerusalem, the holy city on which Hussein had his own claim. Furthermore, the Cairo Agreement included lists of goods that could be traded into and out of the West Bank and Gaza, which would directly affect what Jordan could export to the territories. Finally, Jordan was facing an outstanding economic crisis after

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<sup>101</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace...*, p.207.

<sup>102</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace...*, p.208.



the Gulf War II, and so Hussein's main target was to write off his American debt. Congress would only approve this if the administration had a Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty in hand.<sup>103</sup>

Hussein pursued Sadat's style, delivering a speech to the Jordanian Parliament on 9 July 1994 in which he said that "*if it would help to meet Jordan's needs in the peace process, he would meet with Rabin.*"<sup>104</sup> Both Hussein and Rabin signed the Washington Declaration, with Clinton serving as a witness, on 25 July 1994. The Declaration marked a new era for their bilateral relations, terminating the state of belligerency between them, seeking a just, lasting, and comprehensive peace on the basis of UNSCRs 242 and 338, and respecting the special role of the Hashemite Kingdom over the Muslim holy shrines in Jerusalem. The two sides decided to resume negotiations at Wadi Arava, located in the boundary area north of Aqaba and Eilat. The agenda included two main issues: territory occupied in 1948 and 1967, and water. Jordan felt that the creation of the Jewish state contributed to its water problem. Yet the negotiations reached a deadlock and so Jordan sought active American involvement.<sup>105</sup> Hussein made Sadat's fatal mistake: by meeting Rabin publicly, he offered almost his only significant card in negotiations for nothing.

Finally, they sealed a peace treaty on 26 October 1994: Amman would lease the Jordanian occupied territory in 1948 for twenty-five years, and the land would be given a special status. Israel would swap 11.5 square miles of territory, and Jordan would grant areas under its sovereignty a special status to permit Israelis unimpeded access. Israel would also provide Jordan with 50 million cubic meters of water per year

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<sup>103</sup> . Ross, *The Missing Peace...*, pp. 168-9.

<sup>104</sup> . Ross, *The Missing Peace...* 177.

<sup>105</sup> . Ross, *The Missing Peace...*, p. 186.



and help ensure international funding for a dam that would provide Jordan with another 50 million cubic meters per year. The treaty marked another Israeli breakthrough in the Arab front.<sup>106</sup> Remarkably, the negotiations were shifted from Washington to the region after sealing the Common Agenda, as had been the case with Palestinians after signing the DOP. After three years of the Bilaterals, Shamir's demand that the negotiations should be shifted to the Middle East had been achieved.

## Conclusion

Since the establishment of Israel, the United States presidents have faced the dilemma of accommodating two contradictory factors. On the one hand he has had to deliver his electoral promises to the American-Jewish lobby. On the other, he has had to promote the American interests in the Middle East in crude oil, maritime passage, and its huge market. Sadat had volunteered a solution by searching for a peaceful solution to the Middle East conflict. This explains why the United States Presidents from Eisenhower to Bill Clinton invested so much effort and offered financial incentives to bring a settlement in the Middle East. Had the Arabs fully understood the nature of the US-Israeli relationship, they would have had a strategy based on three pillars. They would have endorsed the American Arab lobby, opened Arab markets only to American companies prepared to advocate the Arab position, and use the huge Arab investments in America and Europe to secure control over international stock markets and the mass media.

The Washington Bilaterals were a dialogue of deaf; the Israelis were not ready for compromise; the PLO was willing to keep the Bilaterals low

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<sup>106</sup> Ross, *The Missing Peace...*, pp.186-87.



profile so that Israel would be forced to deal with it directly. Indeed, the PLO strategy brought its fruits during Labor term and therefore the Oslo back channel was launched and ended to the DOP. The point here is that the PLO refused any agreement in Washington not because of its provisions (substance), but because it would be driven out of the scene. The Oslo channel demonstrated certain significant features about the art of negotiation. Once two sides are engaged in negotiations, they pass through an exploratory stage before concessions are exchanged. During the first stage, each side presents a proposal or proposals, reflecting its opening position (the maximum demands). The official documents presented at the beginning should be classified into three categories: (1) points of agreement, (2) points of disagreement, and (3) miscellaneous points raised by one side but on which the other remains silent. The two sides exchange ideas and documents about the miscellaneous points, which should be classified either to points of agreement or disagreement. Such a phase consumed nine rounds of the Oslo negotiations. In the second stage, each side attempts to probe the other side's the minimum demands. For this reason, each side uses all pressurizing cards to try extracting concessions from the other. They could threaten to break up negotiations, use economic and military power...etc. At this phase, the two political leaderships become fully involved to determine whether the negotiations are to continue. In other words, the first phase is almost extensively for diplomats and the second one for politicians. Negotiations succeed if the two sides can elaborate an agreement that meets their minimum demands, which was the case with the Oslo back channel.

Looking at the essence of the Gaza-Jericho Agreement, the Christian West led by the United States believed that historical Palestine consisted of two different portions: Israel and the Palestinian occupied territories. Israel being seen as a territorial extension of the industrialized West, the



boundaries between Israel and the Palestinians should be defined according to the Israeli perspective. The Palestinian occupied territories were the part of the land that Israel was ready to give.<sup>107</sup> The Western approach reflected the legacy of colonialism and the basic principles of the old international law (inspired by the Roman law): European (or White) societies had a natural right to take what they wanted from the territories of non-white societies. In this context, it was easy to understand the United States position towards the Middle East conflict. In the first place, the American Congress recognized Jerusalem as the undivided capital of Israel because Israel did not want to give up East Jerusalem.<sup>108</sup> In the second, the United States regarded Hezbollah and HAMAS as terrorist organizations even though Hezbollah's demand was nothing more than unconditional Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon, that is, full implementation of 425. HAMAS had proposed a full Israeli withdrawal from the Palestinian occupied territories in return for terminating its operations against Israeli targets, that is full implementation of 242. Yet they refused the Israeli proposal of boundaries demarcation, which was enough reason of being terrorist organizations. In the third, when the Palestinians started to defend themselves against the Israeli occupation, which has always been backed by the West, they were considered a nation of terrorists.

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<sup>107</sup> Mark Marshall, "Rethinking the Palestine Question: The Apartheid Paradigm", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XXV, No. 1, Autumn 1995, pp. 15-7.

<sup>108</sup> The Western (or White) societies believe that they have the natural right to kill non-European societies. None of the colonial heads of states were considered as war criminals even though they were responsible for the murder of millions of non-Europeans (non-White). The former President of the US, Harry Truman, was not perceived as a war criminal even though he threw two nuclear bombs on two Japanese cities (non-white) as a retaliation against the Japanese raid on the American fleet (military target). This was because the victims were not White. Meanwhile, the West perceived Adolph Hitler as a war criminal. His policies led White Europe to war and resulted in the murder of a hundred thousand Whites.



## **Chapter 4**

### **The Jordanian-Palestinian Track: From Wye Plantation to Camp David II**

As a result of the Oslo Accords, a Jewish fundamentalist assassinated the Israeli Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin on 4 November 1995, who was perceived as a traitor because of his readiness to give up some parts of the West Bank.<sup>1</sup> In May 1996, the elections took place between the Israeli Prime Minister, Shimon Peres, and the head of the Likud party, Benjamin Netanyahu, and gave the latter about a 1 percent lead.<sup>2</sup> This reflected the reluctance of the Israeli public to give up any part of the Palestinian occupied territories. This chapter will pursue the course of negotiation on the Jordanian-Palestinian track during the terms in office of Netanyahu (the Likud party) and Barak (the Labor Party). It is an attempt to explain why the Israelis and Palestinians failed to conclude a peace agreement similar to that achieved between Israel and Jordan.

### **Negotiations during the Likud term: Netanyahu**

Netanyahu's political thought is revealed in *A Place Among the Nations*, published in 1995. Peace, he claimed, should be established upon two major bases: a sincere willingness of the Arab partners to have

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<sup>1</sup>. Zionism means that a Jewish state should be established in Palestine as it had been two thousand years ago. Some Jewish fundamentalist groups stipulated that this Jewish State should be established within the David state boundaries, and fully comply with biblical teachings. In other words, all fundamentalists are Zionists, but the reverse is not true. Hence, a confrontation between secular Zionist and Jewish fundamentalist was expected.

<sup>2</sup>. Mohammad Hasanen Haykal, *The Arab-Israeli Secret Negotiations*, Vol.3, Dar-El-Shrouk, 1996, P.458.



peace with Israel, and security guarantees to safeguard it. The peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan met these two conditions. By contrast, the Oslo Accords did not fulfill these demands.<sup>3</sup> Once he arrived in Gaza, Arafat declared that the Oslo Accords were a temporary stage after which the PLO would continue its holy war (Jihad) to achieve its basic targets; therefore, Netanyahu believed, the PLO failed to meet the first of his conditions. The PLO concluded a tactical agreement with HAMAS to create a temporary halting of attacks against Israel, but not to disarm it. As a result, it did not meet the second condition either.

According to Netanyahu, following the 1967 War, the Arab states had given up the military option and so two contradictory theories emerged to address the Middle East conflict. According to one of these, Israel was a fait accompli and therefore the Arabs should consider it as a neighboring state. According to the other, since Israel could not be defeated within its post-1967 boundaries, the Arabs should force Israel to withdraw to its 4 June 1967 border through diplomatic means - and then launch a destructive attack to wipe it off the map. Jordan adopted the former theory and the PLO the latter. Jordan, for example, did not stipulate the Israeli withdrawal from the Jordanian occupied territories in 1967 but leased it to Israel. By contrast, the PLO aimed at establishing a Palestinian state on any territory freed from the Israeli occupation at the first stage and then would conclude military agreements with Israel's enemies to destroy the mini Israeli state. The Oslo Accords achieved the first stage of the PLO's strategic plan: Israeli withdrawal to the 4 June 1967 line and establishing the Palestinian state. A settlement would be durable if it provided for only minor Israeli involvement in Palestinian

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<sup>3</sup>. Except otherwise mentioned the following paragraphs on "Netanyahu's political thought" relies for their details on the authoritative account by Benjamin Netanyahu, *A place Among the Nations*, second edition, Dar El-Jaleel for publishing and Palestinian Research and Studies, Amman, 1995.



affairs, but maximum interference in security issues to prevent any attack or military threats from the eastern borders (Syria and Iraq). Thus, autonomy was the convenient approach. Besides, Israel should not give up any more land in the West Bank (Judea and Samaria) because it had always been Jewish land. If Israel accepted the Arabs' argument that they had title to the West Bank, then Jaffa and Acre would be considered theirs as well. This would be the beginning of the end of the Jewish state.

Netanyahu considered two types of peace, that among democratic and dictatorial states. For the former, it referred to open borders, free trade, tourism, and cooperation in scientific research and the environment. The EU provided a concrete example. In the latter, dictatorships had a tangible propensity towards violence, suppressing their people by all means to remain in power. War presents the first option for these regimes in order to solve any internal and international dispute. However, dictatorial regimes would renounce war if they believed that they would lose it. In other words, peace should be based on deterrence. Since all the Arab regimes were dictatorships, deterrence was the best approach to bring stability to the region. For this reason, Israel should have political, economic, and strategic leverage over the entire Arab world. Peace should be based on superiority rather than equality. This explains why security would bring peace but peace could not bring security.

Netanyahu's thought reflected a lack of confidence in the Arabs in general, and the PLO in particular, as well as skepticism about the West's commitment to Israel. The Zionist movement's experience with the West did not inspire much confidence. The UK, for example, betrayed the Zionist cause: it took over the East Bank in order to create a new Arab state on the land of Israel i.e. Jordan. Remarkably, Shamir shared Netanyahu's feelings: he hated nobody, including the Arabs themselves,



but the UK.<sup>4</sup> This suggested that Israel under Netanyahu would neither engage in serious negotiations with the Arabs, nor give due consideration to any American insurances or commitments regarding its security. Did Netanyahu come up with an ideology different from Shamir's? The answer is negative, thereby providing evidence that Israel was a state of institutions rather than one of personalities. The Likud party's policy has always been independent from its political leadership. Nevertheless, Netanyahu advocated an academic Western approach to substantiate his own arguments with several historical examples. He studied in the United States for a long time so that he knows how to address the West.

His election program was a reflection of such thought, stressing that "*he would halt the land for peace exchanges upon which the Oslo accords were premised.*"<sup>5</sup> Shaping a new strategy in negotiations with the Arabs, Netanyahu affirmed that he trusted neither the Israeli Foreign Ministry nor the Ministry of Defense, which he regarded as captive of the Oslo Accords and unwilling to help him to change them. He insisted on full control over the negotiations and required the Israeli Foreign Minister, David Levy, to consult him and his foreign affairs consultant, Dore Gold, on all details.<sup>6</sup>

Netanyahu commenced his term by adopting an intransigent strategy. This was marked by his decision to open the tourist tunnel in old Jerusalem,<sup>7</sup> which resulted in serious, bloody, clashes between

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<sup>4</sup>. Yitzhak Shamir, *Yitzhak Shamir's Memories*, edited by Dar Al-Kitab al-'Arabi, Cairo & Damascus 1995, p.312.

<sup>5</sup> Richard H.Curtiss, "As Netanyahu dismantles Peace process, Israelis wait in vain for Clinton intervention", *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, October/November 1997, p.14.

<sup>6</sup>. "Tunnel Vision : Israeli violation of the Oslo Accords", *The Nation* (I.S.S.N: 0027-8378) Vol. 263 (2) October 1996, p. 3.

<sup>7</sup>. This project was initiated by the Rabin Labor coalition, but Peres delayed the opening to avoid the Palestinian anger. By contrast, Netanyahu was eager to provoke this feeling.



Palestinians and Israelis in the Palestinian occupied territories.<sup>8</sup> He also insisted on re-negotiating the plan of withdrawal from Hebron.<sup>9</sup> His aims here were to set a precedent to be applied to each item in the Oslo Accords, and postpone further Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank. At the end, Netanyahu agreed to withdraw from four-fifths of Hebron, with joint Israeli-Palestinian forces patrolling the hills above the city.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, he refused to set deadlines for the three additional withdrawals that Israel had agreed to carry out in the Cairo Accords. He insisted on postponing at least two of them until final settlements were reached in order to extract new concessions from the Palestinian side.<sup>11</sup> In other words, he was renegotiating each item of the Oslo Accords.

Netanyahu's approach was successful because the Palestinian side adopted a poor strategy, i.e. a problem solving one. In the art of negotiations, if one side uses the strategy of intransigence, the other has two options: either to employ the same, or yield. If both are intransigent, the negotiations will soon reach deadlock. However, one or other might turn to a problem solving strategy if they conclude that pressure will not produce results. The Palestinian Authority (PA) was willing to keep negotiations on track at any cost and was prepared to offer some concessions. However, Arafat could not accommodate all Netanyahu's terms because he had to consider the Palestinian public. In other words, a problem solving strategy was irrelevant to counter Netanyahu's intransigent one, and so the Palestinian track would soon face a deadlock.

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<sup>8</sup>. "Tunnel Vision : Israeli violation of the Oslo Accords", p. 3.

<sup>9</sup>. Following a series of HAMAS attacks that killed 59 Israelis in March 1996, the acting Prime Minister, Peres, postponing the withdrawal from Hebron stipulated in the Oslo Accords.

<sup>10</sup>. Rachele Marshall, "Israel's Intransigence, U.S. Pressure Force Arafat compromise on Hebron", *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, March 1997, p. 9.

<sup>11</sup>. Marshall, "Israel's Intransigence, U.S. Pressure Force Arafat compromise on Hebron", p. 101



A US letter of assurance to Netanyahu was leaked by him stating that Israel had an exclusive right to determine the extent of its withdrawal during the next 18 months to '*specified military locations*'. The US letter meant that Israel would keep half of the West Bank until the end of the interim phase i.e. mid-1988.<sup>12</sup> The Palestinians immediately claimed that an American letter of assurances to the PA made it clear that '*specified military locations*' meant only '*cantonments or other military camps.*' This would prevent Israel from declaring large areas of the West Bank as military locations. The two contradictory letters signed by the Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, presented a serious problem to his successor, Madeleine Albright. Controversial promises and letters of guarantee had been a cornerstone of American multilateral diplomacy from the Geneva Conference to Madrid. When it comes to confrontation, the United States either remains neutral or supports Israel, and so the American letters of assurance to the Arabs were fig leaves.

On 26 February 1997, following ten days of resumed negotiations on the Palestinian track, Netanyahu decided to construct 6,500 housing units at Har Homa on Mount Abu Ghneim, the last open space near Jerusalem. Of course, the Palestinians opposed this, and the United States and the EU both expressed their concern.<sup>13</sup> On 9 March, King Hussein of Jordan forwarded a letter to Netanyahu, accusing him of being a peace destroyer.<sup>14</sup> In response, Netanyahu mentioned that had there been a successful peace process in May 1996, he would not have been elected. According to Netanyahu, rather than let the Oslo process die, he sought to

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<sup>12</sup>.Eugene Bird, "In the Aftermath of the Hebron Agreement, What Secret Promises Did U.S. Make to Israelis, Palestinians?" *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, March 1997, p. 8.

<sup>13</sup>.Rahelle Marshall, "Crisis Point in the Peace Process, Israel Negotiates New Agreement, While It Violates Old Ones", *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, April/ May 1997, p. 9.

<sup>14</sup>.King Hussein of Jordan, letter to Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu on the peace process, Amman, 9 March 1997, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, summer 97, Vol. 26, pp. 154-6.



revive it and so he took many decisions that Peres had been reluctant to take, notably the redeployment in Hebron, and the transfer of value added tax to the PA. (Peres had already postponed the redeployment after the Israeli election in 1996 in order to be seen as a strong leader in the eyes of Israeli electors.) Netanyahu continued to confirm to Hussein that nearly all Palestinians in the territories lived under Palestinian rule but Israel could not continue delivering its commitments if the PA failed to respond: violating its obligation by releasing HAMAS and Islamic Jihad hardcore figures.<sup>15</sup> Hussein's letter was sentimental and contained no solid arguments. It was a piece of advice that was given by a philosopher or preacher to a political leader. By contrast, Netanyahu's letter provided eloquent proof that Likud was more committed to the Oslo Accords than Labor.

One month after Netanyahu's government took office, the PA presented him with a list of 23 Israeli violations of the Oslo Accords.<sup>16</sup> The overwhelming majority were committed during Labor's term and continued during that of Likud, i.e. imposing a *fait accompli* in Jerusalem, and postponing the redeployment in Hebron. Why did the PA accuse only Netanyahu of being an obstacle to the Oslo Accords? The Labor Party had always been flexible in words, but hard in actions, embracing a step-by-step policy. By contrast, Likud had always been tough in words as well as actions, imposing its goals on the spot, so Arab rulers would not have sufficient opportunity to prepare their people to accept its terms.

Israel accused Egypt of advising the Palestinians to remain intransigent towards Netanyahu's proposals, while the latter exploited a

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<sup>15</sup> Prime Minister Netanyahu Reply to King Hussein's letter, 10 March 1997, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, summer 97, Vol. 26, pp. 158-9.

<sup>16</sup> Palestinian Authority, List of Israeli Violations of Oslo, Gaza, 15 July 1996, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Autumn 96, Vol. 26, pp. 144-5



clash between two Coptic families in Upper Egypt and police investigations to apply pressure on the Egyptian government. The Israeli leader asked the American Jewish lobby to highlight the incident in the media and Congress as a violation of human rights. As a result, many Jewish congressmen launched serious campaigns against Egypt, asking the Clinton administration to cut off American aid to it. Netanyahu was conveying a message to Egypt that it should give up supporting the Palestinians or face a problem. In the art of diplomacy, this tactic is called '*management by proxy*', aiming at creating a problem for a state in order to extract more concessions on a specific issue. The counter tactic is called '*crisis management*', which involves handling the accusations by means of a cool approach, and playing counter-pressurizing cards. Yet the Egyptian counterstrategy was based on the former element only (defensive strategy) although it had many cards: opening the file on boundary demarcation with Israel, tightening normalization, signaling the possibility of resuming diplomatic relations with Iran, launching a campaign concerning specific segregation measures against Arab Israelis, and so on. Remarkably, Egypt has remained faithful to its defensive negotiating strategy since the very beginning of the Middle East conflict. In the Rhodes Armistice Talks 1948, the Egyptian delegation remained passive; it kept reacting to the Israeli proposals without initiating its own. Again, during the first disengagement negotiations in 1974, Sadat put his trust in Kissinger and therefore the real talks were between the latter and the Israelis. Once they had agreed on the disengagement plan, Kissinger presented it to Sadat as an American proposal. The same rules were also fully applicable to the second disengagement negotiations in 1975. For the Geneva Conference in 1973, Sadat made too little effort to forward the Egyptian reservation on its format for the same reason - his

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confidence in Kissinger. Finally, Egypt approved the Baker format of the Madrid Conference without amendments to keep its so-called strategic relationship with the United States.

During an 18-month period, the Clinton administration was reluctant to apply pressure to Netanyahu's government because it was completely penetrated by many nationalist Jewish organizations. These organizations could produce transcripts of private telephone conversations and information or documents from the FBI, the Justice Department, and local police departments in order to cause a problem to those American political leaders who criticized Israel. As an illustration, prior to the Middle East visit of Madeleine Albright, she asked the Chairman of the House International Relations Committee, Benjamin Gilman, to refrain from making pro-Israel statements during her trip. She wanted to avoid any statement that would undermine American diplomacy. Instead of complying, he informed the Israeli embassy of her confidential request. During her visit to Israel, the President of Israel, Ezer Weitzman, told Albright privately that in order to save the peace process, the United States would have to '*knock heads*', meaning Netanyahu's. Before she left, State Department press spokesman, James Rubin, had made Weitzman's private remark public. During a meeting with Hussein and his Crown Prince Hassan, Clinton warned that Netanyahu is '*an impossible man to deal with*'. This statement was immediately announced in the Israeli media.<sup>17</sup> As with the London Conference in 1946, the third party was penetrated by Zionists. This suggested that the role of third party has always been in favor of Israel.

Eighteen months into Netanyahu's term, the latter's credibility was under threat. He had promised the Israeli electors peace with security but

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<sup>17</sup> Richard H. Curtiss, "Binyamin Netanyahu's Dangerous vision", *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, December 1997, p.6.



the peace process had reached a stalemate. Normalization between Israel and the Arabs was not working smoothly.<sup>18</sup> The PA also suspended security cooperation with Israel as a reaction to Netanyahu's refusal to carry out the second stage of redeployment; so HAMAS could launch a series of attacks, causing hundreds of casualties. Netanyahu's strategy led Israel neither to peace nor to security. Arafat was in trouble as well. The Palestinian mainstream asked him to drop the Oslo process, and - by virtue of its successful attacks - HAMAS was gaining new ground not only among the Palestinian people but in the Arab world generally. The Clinton administration was in a delicate position because the peace process was on the verge of collapsing. Hence, both Israelis and Palestinians were prepared to resume negotiations and the United States was willing to act as a full partner.

The United States strategy, at this stage, was relatively evenhanded i.e. to shape an agreement that would give land to Palestinians and security to Israelis. Yet this strategy would conflict with Netanyahu's decision not to give up more land to the Palestinians. To put pressure on him, the Clinton administration leaked an unofficial proposal to the media, which the Labor Party asked Netanyahu's coalition to consider. The American action was inconsistent with the Memorandum of Understanding with Israel signed in 1975, which stipulated that the United States should consult with Israel before launching any initiative or proposal on the Middle East. Of course, this turned the strong American Jewish lobby against Clinton as had been the case with Carter following

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<sup>18</sup>.During Peres term, both Qatar and Oman had taken tangible steps for normalizing relations with Israel; Qatar opened an Israeli commercial office in Doha and carried out a feasibility study for exporting its natural gas to Israel; Oman also received Peres in Muscat. Once Netanyahu took office, both Qatar and Oman started to tighten these normalization measures and expressing their concern because of the Israeli new policy.



the signature of the US-Soviet Communiqué in October 1977.<sup>19</sup> However, Carter had immediately asked for the help of Dayan, the Israeli Foreign Minister, to calm the Jewish lobby down but Clinton did not make Carter's mistake by asking for Netanyahu's assistance. Indeed, he proceeded with his plan.<sup>20</sup>

On 28 September 1998, Clinton hosted a summit meeting in Washington between Netanyahu and Arafat. Netanyahu agreed to give up 13 percent of the West Bank. The two leaders had agreed to return in mid-October to what could be a decisive round of peace talks.<sup>21</sup> On 15 October 1998, the summit took place at Wye River, 60 miles east of Washington. The United States advocated the same strategy as in the Camp David Summit in 1978: it would serve as a full partner until an agreement was reached. All three leaders were under serious pressure. Clinton's party needed a breakthrough because it had to face legislative elections on 3 November 1998, under the shadow of Monicagate. For his part, Netanyahu faced a vow by Israeli ultra nationalists to topple him if he promised further withdrawals. As for Arafat, he faced serious opposition from Islamic fundamentalists and nationalists.

The Wye Summit was a '*security-for-land*' trade off. The United States strategy depended on getting Arafat to deliver a concrete security plan. With that, Netanyahu would have no choice but to respond by transferring 14.2 percent of the West Bank from area 'B' of Palestinian civil control and Israeli security control to area 'A' of full Palestinian civil and security control.<sup>22</sup> In other words, the United States would first start

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<sup>19</sup>. The two super powers would make joint efforts in order to resume the Geneva Conference not later than December 1977.

<sup>20</sup>. HT, 17 Sep. 1998.

<sup>21</sup>. HT, 16 Oct. 1998.

<sup>22</sup>. Dennis Ross, *The Missing Peace: The Inside Story of the Fight for Middle East Peace*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 2004, 413-17.



by squeezing Arafat and then see what could be obtained from Netanyahu. Arafat also asked for employment of the principle of reciprocity on the security issue: if the Palestinian police should arrest Palestinians charged with violence, the Israeli police should also arrest the Israeli settlers who were killing Palestinian civilians.<sup>23</sup>

At the opening of the summit, Clinton stressed that the two sides should exchange concessions. Netanyahu replied to this by stating that if the Palestinians showed a willingness to stop violence, there would be a chance for an agreement, while the latter insisted that they had taken all the security measures that they could.<sup>24</sup> The United States negotiating tactic was to apply pressure on the antagonists by imposing a time limit. This resulted in a US ultimatum: there should be complete success or failure after five days of negotiations.<sup>25</sup> Negotiations were a process of give and take in which each side should have pressurizing cards: Israel had land, while the PA had active security cooperation with Israel and announcement of the Palestinian state on 4 May 1999 as the Oslo Accords stipulated. Since Israel was taking unilateral actions (constructing new settlements), the Palestinians had the exclusive right to declare their independent state unilaterally. The Israeli card was concrete, while the two Palestinian cards were not; it was not easy to prove the PA's failure on security cooperation, while the Palestinian state was something to do with the future and so the negotiation dilemma was to assure full Palestinian compliance in return for Israeli withdrawal. In this case, the side with non-concrete cards would be in a position to maneuver. The PA, for example, could claim that it could adhere fully to security cooperation with Israel but could not guarantee the result. The

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<sup>23</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace...*, P. 416.

<sup>24</sup>. *HT*, 16 Oct. 1998.

<sup>25</sup>. *HT*, 18 Oct. 1998.



CIA was involved in finding a formula whereby the Palestinian security effort could be evaluated.

On 19 October 1998, the Israeli Foreign and Defense Ministers, Ariel Sharon and Yitzhak Mordechai, arrived at Wye River. The Defense Minister discussed the maps of the Israeli withdrawal<sup>26</sup> and security measures. Sharon's arrival had another connotation. He had credibility among the ultra-nationalist parties so that Netanyahu could justify any accord agreed upon.<sup>27</sup> After four days from the inauguration, it became clear that Arafat was working in good faith with the head of CIA, George Tenet whereas Netanyahu was procrastinating in order to avoid committing himself to any withdrawal.<sup>28</sup> He was in a delicate position. He wanted a partial deal which would offer progress but not force him to break with the ultra nationalist, and also keep the confidence of the Israeli center parties in the coalition. The Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, believed that a partial deal was not an option. She told Netanyahu, *"If you keep going the way you are, you will have no peace and no security, is that what you want? You treat Palestinians with no respect and no dignity."*<sup>29</sup>

On 19 October, during the course of the negotiations, a Palestinian attack on a bus station caused the injury of more than 60 people, and hard-liners in Israel asked Netanyahu to boycott the talks. Instead, he was clever enough to seize this opportunity to prove that Arafat had done nothing to cooperate with Israel in security.<sup>30</sup> He suspended negotiations on all issues except for security and criticized the United States for being reluctant to apply pressure to the PLO leader.<sup>31</sup> The Americans looked for

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<sup>26</sup>. HT, 19 Oct. 1998.

<sup>27</sup>. HT, 12 Oct. 1998.

<sup>28</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace...*, p. 430.

<sup>29</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace...*, p.435.

<sup>30</sup>. HT, 29 Oct. 1998

<sup>31</sup>. HT, 20 Oct. 1998.



a catalyst to further the talks, and turned to King Hussein, who had been in the United States for cancer treatment. He remained in contact with the two sides and gave advice to Washington on how best to proceed.<sup>32</sup>

After seven days of intensive talks, the Americans presented a draft agreement to the Israelis based on Netanyahu's demand for a partial deal. The United States had to acknowledge its memorandum of understanding with Israel signed in 1975 - Washington should first discuss any peace initiative on the Middle East with Tel-Aviv, and then get back to the Arabs. Yet the Israeli delegation responded by threatening to walk out. They accused the PA of evasion and the United States of retreating from previous commitments. Of course, the Palestinians assumed the Israelis were having a problem with the Americans. They were not aware of the deal.<sup>33</sup> The Palestinians considered the Israeli threat a device to have the American delegation press them to accommodate Israel's demands.<sup>34</sup> The United States called the Israeli brinkmanship '*an exercise without substance.*' In the event, Netanyahu ordered most of his delegation members together with the Israeli pressmen to go to the airport during discussion of the American draft, though this tactic proved fruitless.<sup>35</sup> In the history of marathon sessions in Middle East diplomacy, Sadat, Arafat, and Netanyahu applied the tactic of threatening to leave, but only Arafat ever used it successfully. The Palestinian leader stipulated that the PLO not the Palestinian delegation should seal the Declaration of Principles (DOP) or he would leave, and Israel met his demand - but only because, following their mutual recognition, it was no longer significant. Bluffing is a common tactic in negotiation, though the difficulty has always been how and when to use it without losing credibility.

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<sup>32</sup>. HT, 21 Oct. 1998.

<sup>33</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace*., P.439.

<sup>34</sup>. HT, 22 Oct. 1998.

<sup>35</sup>. HT, 23 Oct. 1998.



Since bluffing did not pay off, Netanyahu employed another tactic – ‘*the killer amendment.*’ At the eighth day of the Wye Summit, the United States was concluding a draft of the deal. At this point Netanyahu asked to see Clinton and Arafat alone. Once the meeting started, he forwarded amendments that changed the meaning of the draft - the original draft became meaningless. Netanyahu's amendments had to do with the release of the Palestinian prisoners; he also asked for the detention of the head of the police of Gaza. Arafat said there was nothing more to discuss and stood up. Clinton erupted, shouting at Netanyahu, “*This is outrageous; I am not going to put up with this kind of bullshit.*”<sup>36</sup> Clinton and Arafat left the room, leaving Netanyahu alone. This tactic was not successful either.

Before sealing the agreement, Netanyahu applied another tactic – ‘*the last minute demand.*’ This tactic is widely used in Israeli diplomacy. For example, the former Israeli Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion, surprised the French government by demanding a French research nuclear reactor at the last minute in return for Israeli participation in the 1956 War. His tactic paid off. Would this be the case at the Wye Summit? Netanyahu added a new condition: the release of Jonathan Pollard, the US Navy intelligence analyst who was convicted of spying for Israel in 1986. Ross advised Clinton to keep this significant card in his pocket for permanent status negotiations.<sup>37</sup> Clinton agreed only to review this case later in order to clear the last obstacle to the deal.<sup>38</sup> The Pollard condition stands as an example of one side’s attempt to extract concessions from the third party as well. Once he failed to release Pollard, Netanyahu told Clinton that he needed to get the Egyptians to free Azzam Azzam, an

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<sup>36</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace*., p. 449.

<sup>37</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace*., p. 438.

<sup>38</sup>. HT, 24-25 Oct. 1998.



Israeli Druze who was convicted of spying for Israel. Both Clinton and Arafat called Mubarak who flatly rejected the appeal.<sup>39</sup> The Azzam condition stands as an example of one side's attempt to extract concessions from a non-party in negotiations as well. It looked like Chamberlain's approach to accommodate Hitler's demands at the expenses of Czechoslovakia in 1938. Of course, Netanyahu aimed at obtaining as many concessions as possible to justify to his supporters his agreement to withdraw from 13 percent of the West Bank.

On 23 October 1998, the two sides sealed a '*Land-for-Security*' Memorandum.<sup>40</sup> Netanyahu could count neither on his supporters among Congressional representative nor American Jews to pressurize Clinton as they had done before because they were preoccupied with the parliamentary election campaign.<sup>41</sup> Besides, Clinton was not subject to the American Jewish lobby. He was in his last term and no longer in need of their support, and Monicagate could not topple him because the impeachment would not get the support of two thirds of Senate members.

Looking at Netanyahu's negotiating tactic in the Wye Summit, he started by procrastination, then bluffing, after that a killer amendment and finally a last minute demand. None of these tactics paid off. Although the United States was prepared to accommodate Israeli demands, Netanyahu was reluctant to put anything in the American pocket. Hence, an uneven deal was not even possible, and so the Americans turned against him to have something to negotiate with Arafat.

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<sup>39</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace...*, pp. 450-3.

<sup>40</sup>. This provided for an Israeli release of several hundreds of three thousand jailed Palestinians, a security plan with a timetable for the Palestinians to arrest HAMAS activists under full CIA supervision, an Israeli troop pullback from 13 percent of the West Bank, establishment of an Israeli-Palestinian committee to discuss a third phase withdrawal, and a guarantee of safe passage for the Palestinians between Gaza and the West Bank.

<sup>41</sup>. *HT*, 24-25 Oct. 1998.



Netanyahu's decision to seal the American plan reflected his willingness to avoid the inevitable conflict with the United States and the Labor party but he faced a confrontation with his own cabinet. He threatened to call for early elections if the cabinet would not approve the memorandum. His tactic paid off and he remained in office after obtaining a Knesset vote of confidence on 26 October 1998.<sup>42</sup> To prove his own full commitment to this memorandum, Arafat launched a wide-ranging campaign of detention against HAMAS activists and journalists who had criticized the memorandum. In the art of politics, interests come first and ethics last. The PA human rights record was deplorable but the United States did not condemn it for this. By contrast, Al Gore praised the Palestinian State Security Courts, which were established in 1995.<sup>43</sup>

In the art of negotiations, each side makes an attempt to establish a precedent. If the other side's reaction is not sharp, this is a positive sign to go further. Thus, once he returned home and felt relief from United States pressure, Netanyahu began to procrastinate and so delayed a cabinet decision on the memorandum, accusing the PA of being late in submitting the security plan.<sup>44</sup> Despite the fact that the memorandum made no reference to ratification or approval procedures, he took the United States and the PA by surprise, announcing that the memorandum would not come into effect until the Israeli cabinet and Knesset ratified it.<sup>45</sup> Arafat did not respond to Netanyahu's tactic in kind; he could also have exploited the institutional democratic dimension tactic, that the approval of the Palestinian National Council (PNC) was compulsory. As a result of Arafat's passiveness (taking Netanyahu's new demands lightly), the Israeli cabinet added three conditions: (1) the need to strengthen the

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<sup>42</sup>. *HT*, 27 Oct. 1988.

<sup>43</sup>. *HT*, 30 Oct. 1998.

<sup>44</sup>. *HT*, 28 Oct. 1998.

<sup>45</sup>. *HT*, 3 Nov. 1998.



Jewish settlements in disputed areas, (2) the removal of anti-Israel clauses from the PNC Charter, and (3) separate cabinet approval for each stage of the pullback. These conditions reflected two major elements: Netanyahu's willingness to accommodate his right wing's demands, and his deep distrust not only of the PA, but also of the CIA assessment of the security plan.<sup>46</sup> On 20 November 1998, he completed the first stage of a three-phase withdrawal under the memorandum.<sup>47</sup>

To re-affirm his commitment to the memorandum, Clinton paid a three-day visit to Israel and the PA territories. However, the visit stimulated Israeli fears that this would reinforce Palestinian aspirations for an independent state and so Clinton confirmed his commitment to Israel. In Gaza, he also confirmed on 14 December 1998 that the Palestinian people were free to determine their own destiny in their own land - but that this would not mean statehood. Clinton also witnessed the PNC vote to write off those parts of the Palestinian charter that denied Israel's right to exist. Meanwhile, Netanyahu halted the second phase of the Israeli withdrawal because of pressure from the hard line opposition in the cabinet,<sup>48</sup> refusing to release 750 prisoners under the memorandum; agreeing only to free 100.<sup>49</sup>

Despite CIA confirmation of the Palestinian commitment to the security plan under the memorandum, Netanyahu accused them of not doing so and threatened to have early elections if the Knesset did not endorse his decision to suspend the memorandum. Meanwhile, the new Labor Party leader, Ehud Barak, refused to take part in any coalition headed by Netanyahu, insisting that he could not work with a government

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<sup>46</sup>. *HT*, 12 Nov. 1998.

<sup>47</sup>. *HT*, 21, 22 Nov. 1998.

<sup>48</sup>. *HT*, 15 Dec. 1998.

<sup>49</sup>. *HT*, 16 Dec. 1998.



that had '*surrendered to the extremists*'.<sup>50</sup> In the event, Netanyahu called for elections on 14 May 1998 and no progress in the peace process could be expected before then. In the art of negotiations, procrastination and maneuvering are applicable to foreign and internal policy. However, the question is always how and when they should be used without losing credibility. Netanyahu's excessive use of these tactics caused him significant harm; he lost credibility with the Clinton administration, Arabs, ultra nationalist and religious parties, and the Labor Party. Since no political leader could remain in office without credibility, Netanyahu had to leave.

### **Negotiations during Barak's term**

In the elections in May 1998, Barak achieved a decisive victory, winning 56 percent of the votes.<sup>51</sup> This marked a crucial development in Israeli history, the rise of Jewish fundamentalism.<sup>52</sup> This demonstrated that Israel would be no exception to the fundamentalist-secular conflict of the time. Barak's response to this development was to establish a coalition based on the Shas party because he wanted to represent the religious parties and deprive Likud of the opportunity to participate in the forthcoming negotiations.<sup>53</sup>

Since Barak made it clear that Syria was his priority, he deliberately chose to go slowly with the Palestinians.<sup>54</sup> The strategy subsequently adopted by Barak's new government was a confrontational one: '*take it or*

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<sup>50</sup> . *HT*, Dec. 1998.

<sup>51</sup> . Ahmed Tohamy, "The Israeli Elections and the Political System Contradictions", *IPJ*, Vol. 137, July 99, pp. 173.

<sup>52</sup> . The Likud and Labor parties together obtained only 45 Knesset seats (19 and 26 seat respectively), less than 50 per cent of the total, whereas the fundamentalist Shas party won a surprising 17. Rabin assassination was just the beginning of the beginning of this conflict.

<sup>53</sup> . "The Israeli Elections and the Political System Contradictions", pp. 174-176.

<sup>54</sup> . Ross, *The Missing Peace...*, p. 591.



*leave it.*' In case of Palestinian refusal, they should suffer significant consequences.<sup>55</sup> In September 1999, assisted by the mediation of Madeleine Albright, the antagonists concluded an agreement on Israeli force redeployment in the West Bank, signed in Sharm el Sheikh.<sup>56</sup> This agreement was bitterly condemned by the Likud leader, Ariel Sharon, who described it as a very grave step.<sup>57</sup> On 4 January 2000 the antagonists signed a further agreement.<sup>58</sup> They remained, however, at odds regarding maps of the withdrawal. The Palestinians wanted to include three villages bordering Jerusalem whereas the Israelis were only prepared to pull back from unpopulated land.<sup>59</sup>

As agreed in Sharm el Sheikh, the official negotiations on the permanent status started in early 2000. Arafat nominated Yasser Abed Rabbo, and Barak appointed Oded Eran. However, Barak allowed the official channel to deal with functional issues - water, economic relations, environment, and so on. In April, Barak convinced Arafat to adopt the Oslo pattern of negotiation: opening a secret channel side-by-side to the official one. Abu-Ala, who had been the architect of the Oslo Accords, was made head of the Palestinian delegation to that channel. On the Israeli side would be Shlomo Ben-Ami, the Minister of Internal Security. The back channel dealt with border, refugees, and security arrangements - reserving Jerusalem only for the endgame summit. Shlomo believed this was not an appropriate approach to promote the back channel; he should present a package deal on all issues including Jerusalem. The more the Israelis could give on Jerusalem and territory, the more the Palestinians

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<sup>55</sup> . *HT*, 3 Sep. 1999.

<sup>56</sup> . This stipulated that Israel would give up 11 percent of the West Bank within five months, and the permanent status negotiations would start following the first pullback, with the goal of an overall settlement by September 2000.

<sup>57</sup> . *HT*, 4-5 Sept. 1999.

<sup>58</sup> . This turns over an additional 6.1 per cent of the West Bank, thus giving the Palestinian Authority full or partial control over 40 percent of its area. See *HT*, 5 Jan. 2000.

<sup>59</sup> . *HT*, 10 Mar. 2000.



should give on refugees and security. Barak was not convinced, in part because he did not want to reveal his bottom line on Jerusalem, and in part because he believed that Arafat would pocket the package deal and not respond to it at this stage. However, Ross confirmed that he would get a meaningful response from the Palestinian to an Israeli package deal. Barak was partially convinced.<sup>60</sup>

On 21 March 2000, the antagonists resumed the official channel in both the Andrews Air Force Base and the Bolling Air Force Base, close to Washington<sup>61</sup> but soon reached a stalemate. Barak signaled that Israel might recognize a Palestinian state as part of a package deal in which the Palestinians accepted his four ‘*nos*’: no to withdrawal from East Jerusalem, no to the right of return, no to water reallocation, and no to returning to the 4 June 1967 borders. The Palestinians turned down this proposal.<sup>62</sup> In contrast to their tactics in previous negotiations with the Israelis, this time the Palestinians procrastinated, their aim being to get the third step of Israeli withdrawal implemented before any agreement on final status. Arafat aimed at controlling about 90 percent of the West Bank as well as three villages adjacent to Jerusalem before the final status negotiations started. Hence, he would start these negotiations with strong cards in hand. Besides, the Palestinians were very much concerned with the concept of geographical consistency, without which a Palestinian state would not be possible; they would refuse 99 percent Israeli withdrawal if it did not comply with this concept. By contrast, Barak was planning to merge the third phase of withdrawal with the final status so that Israel

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<sup>60</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace*. pp. 603-11.

<sup>61</sup>. *Al Hayat (AH)*, 21 Mar. 2000.

<sup>62</sup>. *AH*, 20 April 2000.



could put considerable pressure on the Palestinians regarding the key issues i.e. Jerusalem, the right of return, and settlements.<sup>63</sup>

As for the back channel, nine rounds of secret negotiations took place in Israel and the PA territories. The tenth round, which took place in Sweden, marked a new development. The antagonists drafted an outline of the final settlement of the conflict. The Palestinian negotiating strategy was to listen to Israeli ideas and accept them after some modifications, as at Oslo. Of course, this is the last thing a negotiator should do. Abu Ala adopted this strategy because he did not enjoy the full support of Arafat, and so it was impossible for him to present a package deal proposal on the permanent status issues. To make matters worse, the back channel was leaked by the press and Abu Ala was not prepared to expose himself to the public in the absence of Arafat's full coverage. Why had Arafat not yet established his priority - the back channel or the official one? He wanted to avoid any problem with the head of the official channel, Abed Rabbo, who headed a small faction in the PLO; Arafat wanted to get different factions involved in the final status negotiations to secure wider support.<sup>64</sup> The Stockholm document addressed four key points: Jerusalem, refugees, displaced persons, and the Palestinian state. The two delegations finished the drafting but left the last decisions to Barak and Arafat.<sup>65</sup> Yet this draft did not meet their minimum demands.

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<sup>63</sup>. AH, 2 June 2000.

<sup>64</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace*. pp. 606-17.

<sup>65</sup>. For Jerusalem, it denoted the following points: (1) it should remain unified as the capital of Israel, (2) Israel would practice complete sovereignty over the entire city, but the PA should handle issues such as education, health, infra structure regarding the Arab municipalities (vocational authority), (3) the Palestinian flag would wave over Al Aksa Mouske, and (4) both Israel and the Vatican should reach a special agreement on the Christian holy place. As for the refugees, it highlighted a special concern regarding the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon based on three categories: (1) Israel would accept one hundred thousand refugees within ten years in the framework of family reunification with no connection to 194, (2) about one hundred thousand should be settled in Lebanon, and (3) the rest should be settled either in the Arab world or somewhere else. On the other hand, the displaced persons who



On 13 June 2000, the head of official Palestinian delegation, Abed Rabbo, resigned. In his letter of resignation, he confirmed that there was no need to establish more than one channel with Israel. If the PLO had been forced to have a back channel with Israel because of the Israeli refusal to allow it to participate in the Madrid Conference, the situation became different following the Oslo accords. The back channel would only give Barak ample room for maneuvering to avoid implementing the third phase of withdrawal.<sup>66</sup>

Once Barak had concluded that Israeli pressure was insufficient to extract further concessions from the Palestinians on the key issues, he invited US intervention,<sup>67</sup> and on 2 July announced that a tripartite summit was the only way out of the deadlock.<sup>68</sup> Barak told Clinton that *“was Arafat ready to make peace? We would never know unless we went to a summit and put him to the test - and we needed to do that now.”*<sup>69</sup> The United States had to solve the third party dilemma for hosting a summit. It needed to be almost sure that the minimum demands of the antagonists could be made to coincide. Nevertheless, the antagonists would not reveal their bottom lines before negotiations began. Clinton was in a hurry; he was approaching his last days in the White House, and could not get to the summit once the Republican and the Democratic conventions were under way.<sup>70</sup> Besides, the United States should consider Barak’s demands. Following this, President Clinton invited the two leaders for an intensive round of negotiations at the presidential retreat of

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left territories between June and September 1967 were eligible to return the PA territories within ten years but those who left before or after this period were not entitled to go back. The estimated number was about three hundred thousand. Finally, the Palestinian state should be established on 66 percent of the occupied territories; Israel would annex 20 percent and lease 14 percent for 99 years. See AH, 3 June 2000.

<sup>66</sup>. AH, 16 June 2000.

<sup>67</sup>. HT, 6 July 2000.

<sup>68</sup>. AH, 3 July 2000.

<sup>69</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace*. p. 629.

<sup>70</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace*. p. 638.



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<sup>70</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace*. p. 638.



Camp David on 10 July 2000. Despite the fact that Arafat believed that these negotiations were just an Israeli trap, he was in no position to disregard the American invitation.<sup>71</sup> For his part, Clinton said that there was no guarantee of success, and compromise was necessary; and the Camp David negotiations were opened without a specific deadline for completion.<sup>72</sup> Secretary of State Albright confirmed that if the summit collapsed, eruption of violence would be highly likely i.e. the uprising.<sup>73</sup>

Barak himself came under pressure from nationalist and religious parties in his coalition, threatening to withdraw their support if he would not declare his '*red lines*' in the forthcoming negotiations.<sup>74</sup> For this reason, he specified five red lines: (1) no return to the 4 June 1967 lines, (2) no for the right of return for the Palestinian refugees, (3) no foreign army in the West Bank (the Palestinian state should be disarmed), (4) no for dividing Jerusalem (it should remain the unified capital of Israel), and (5) Israeli settlements to remain under Israeli sovereignty. Furthermore, he confirmed that any agreement with the Palestinians would be subject to a referendum. The Palestinians considered that, in adopting this attitude, Barak had made the forthcoming negotiations useless.<sup>75</sup> Nevertheless, the Israeli leader was prepared to compromise on two of these '*red line*' issues. He was willing to extend self-rule in the Arab neighborhood of Jerusalem, and he was prepared to be flexible on Palestinian family reunification.<sup>76</sup> Barak also sent a number of assistants to Washington to convince the American Jewish lobby to stop criticizing his strategy; it was time to put an end to the conflict with the Palestinians and focus instead on Iran and Iraq, whose leaders were threatening to

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<sup>71</sup>. HT, 6 July 2000.

<sup>72</sup>. AH, 6 July 2000.

<sup>73</sup>. AH, 10 July 2000.

<sup>74</sup>. AH, July 2000.

<sup>75</sup>. AH, 7 July 2002.

<sup>76</sup>. AH, 8 July, 2000.



acquire nuclear capabilities.<sup>77</sup> Meanwhile, Clinton was being urged by the Jewish lobby in Congress to avoid pressure on Barak and offer no aid to the Palestinians before concluding an agreement.<sup>78</sup> Congress was anticipating about \$15 billion as the cost of peace.<sup>79</sup>

In the art of negotiations, each party should keep its minimum demands confidential. For this reason, Barak refused to elaborate on them. On the eve of Camp David II, the three Israeli religious and nationalist parties withdrew from the coalition, claiming that Barak's red lines were unclear and distorted. Hence, he came to the Camp David Summit as head of a government representing only a minority in the Knesset; he had no support either from his government or from the parliament. His own Foreign Minister, David Levy, even refused to participate in the Israeli delegation.<sup>80</sup> In such a situation, obviously Barak had no power to make any major concessions in order to obtain a final agreement.<sup>81</sup> Either he got his demands fully accommodated, or the summit would collapse.

Although Arafat went to Washington without any cards in his own hand, he was the only leader who could afford a complete failure of the Camp David Summit. Moreover, his prestige in the Arab world would be enhanced simply by a refusal to bow to American and Israeli pressure. By contrast, Clinton was anxious for success because he wanted to end his career as a peacemaker and improve the chances of his vice-president in the forthcoming presidential elections. In case of failure, Barak's chance of establishing a new governmental coalition would be limited, and an

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<sup>77</sup>. *AH*, 10 July 2000.

<sup>78</sup>. *AH*, 7 July 2000.

<sup>79</sup>. This fund would be allocated to three major areas: (1) relocating Israel's military bases, (2) enhancing its defense capabilities, and (3) compensating the Palestinian refugees for the loss of their property. See *HT*, 17 July 2000.

<sup>80</sup>. *AH*, 10 July 2000.

<sup>81</sup>. *Al-Ahram Weekly (AW)*, 13-19 July 2000.



early election would be unavoidable.<sup>82</sup> Both Israeli and Palestinian right wings were critical of the summit. Shamir said that one Camp David summit (Sadat-Begin) had been more than enough, while Hamas reaffirmed that armed resistance had always been the only approach to free the Palestinian occupied territories.<sup>83</sup>

The Camp David format consisted of a transitional phase track dealing with the third phase of Israeli withdrawal, and another concerned with the final status negotiations.<sup>84</sup> The latter were themselves divided into two tracks: first, higher-level negotiations headed by Barak and Arafat to address the key issues, namely Jerusalem, borders, the right of return or compensation, and the settlements; and secondly, lower-level negotiations to approach other questions, namely water, environment, and economic relations. As for higher-level negotiations, the United States team adopted the tactic of holding separate meetings with the two leaders, thereby avoiding any significant direct contact between them. This turned negotiations to proximity talks as had been the case with Camp David I in 1978. From 11-19 July, Arafat and Barak met only twice, once informally, and on the other occasion in order to present their official positions.<sup>85</sup>

Despite agreement on the format, the antagonists were at odds on the ultimate goal of the summit. The Israeli target was to conclude a framework agreement<sup>86</sup> whereas the Palestinians wanted a detailed agreement in compliance with UNSCRs 194, 242, and 338.<sup>87</sup> Of course, the Palestinians had passed through bitter experiences with the previous framework agreements, which had never been delivered by the Israelis.

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<sup>82</sup>. *AH*, 11 July 2000.

<sup>83</sup>. *AH*, 12 July 2000.

<sup>84</sup>. *AH*, 7 July 2000.

<sup>85</sup>. *HT*, 19 July 2000.

<sup>86</sup>. *AH*, 8 July, 2000.

<sup>87</sup>. *AH*, 9 July 2000.



Clinton was interested in a partial deal involving statehood for the Palestinians and Israeli withdrawal from roughly 75 percent of the West Bank. The United States strategy was to act as a full partner. It was prepared to submit a paper on the way it understood each side's position, but the antagonists were not bound by its interpretations. The paper would limit the differences between the antagonists by establishing parameters on all the core issues that the two sides could discuss with each side or with the United States. This attitude made a precedent in the US diplomacy in the Middle East. It had never presented a paper on how to resolve these issues i.e. Jerusalem. What trade-offs did it propose? On the western border, the Palestinians would get the 1967 lines, but with modifications to take account of the Israeli settlements. On the eastern border (Jordan Valley), sovereignty for the Palestinians, provided Israeli security needs were met. Regarding the refugees, there would be observance of the general principle for the Palestinians in terms of reference to UN General Assembly resolution 194 with practical limitations for the Israelis. Jerusalem would be described as being three cities in one - municipal city, holy city, and political city. Nevertheless, Barak wanted to have nothing happen in the first two days in the summit, just applying more pressure on Arafat. Clinton had to accommodate Barak's demands. Of course, he had to discuss the paper with Barak before submitting it to Arafat (the United States should honor the Memorandum of Understanding signed in 1975.) Barak approved the parameters provided they were modified. He employed the killer amendments tactic - these modifications would turn the paper quite close to his opening position. The United States was only prepared to incorporate some of the Israeli modifications in the paper; otherwise, the



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Palestinians would reject it. Once Clinton submitted the paper to Arafat, the latter became upset and saw it as an Israeli one.<sup>88</sup>

Clinton used the G8 Summit, which was scheduled to open in Okinawa on 21 July 2000, as an instrument to employ time pressure tactics: he would have to leave Washington for Okinawa on 19 July.<sup>89</sup> The official meetings on territory and borders were useless. Abu Ala refused to discuss the Israeli security concern as long as the Israelis did not approve the Palestinian concept of their sovereignty over the eastern border (Jordan Valley). Since the Israelis failed to accept the concept of territorial swap, he would not talk about possible modifications on the Palestinians' western borders. Shlomo responded that the Palestinians could ask for the settlement that suited them and then explore how to respond to Israeli needs, an approach advocated by Clinton. Abu Ala was worried about press leaks; he could not present a map where the Palestinians gave up their territories. Clinton shouted at Abu Al 'an outrageous approach' and left the meeting. Meanwhile, a new back channel had emerged; Mohammed Dahlan had begun to meet quietly with Shlomo to discuss all issues, including Jerusalem. It was fruitful. However, Barak cut it off. He was not prepared to make a breakthrough at this stage. What was Barak's negotiating strategy? When Ross said to him "*We are in the fifth day of the Summit you insisted on having, and we have not heard anything new from you or your side.*" Barak finally revealed his strategy. First, "*the summit would create a pressure cooker and that would produce new moves.*" Second, "*the pressure cooker had to work first on Arafat; then things would happen.*" Third, "*if the United*

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<sup>88</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace...*, pp. 650-63.

<sup>89</sup>. HT, 18 July 2000.



*States would just get tougher with the Palestinians, then everything would change.*"<sup>90</sup>

To overcome the stalemate, the United States decided to present a paper reflecting prospects for a settlement i.e. territorial swap, and Jerusalem. Nevertheless, Barak rejected the American paper, confirming that he wanted to save concessions for the endgame. Clinton got angry and said "*he had beaten up on the Palestinians, but in truth Barak was not doing a thing in a summit he had insisted on having.*"<sup>91</sup> However, Clinton could not challenge Barak by submitting the paper to the antagonists; he had to honor the Memorandum of Understanding signed in 1975. The United States adopted a new tactic. This was a Palestinian-Israeli secret meeting based on a two-on-two formula. The four negotiators would work through the night and report to Clinton by noon. The purpose was to try to cut a deal on the core issues. Yet this tactic did not pay off either. Arafat's strategy was that the Palestinians just listened to the Israelis, but refrained from elaborating a counter proposal. This tactic exposed the Israeli side to both the Palestinians and press leaks.

At this stage, Clinton decided to shake Arafat: "*we can all go home and I will say [the Israelis] seriously negotiated and you did not. [He also asked Arafat] to come back with a response on territory, security, or end of conflict.*"<sup>92</sup> Arafat came under pressure from his negotiating team, which asked him to be intransigent on Jerusalem and territories, offering no more than 1 or 2 percent of the territories as the appropriate response to Clinton. However, Arafat's response was clever, "*gave us what we wanted on Jerusalem and you got what you needed on territory.*"<sup>93</sup> In other words, Jerusalem was the essence of negotiations and the ball was

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<sup>90</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace*., pp. 663-66.

<sup>91</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace*., p. 672.

<sup>92</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace*.. p. 676.

<sup>93</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace*.,p. 680.



now in the United States and Israeli courts. Barak submitted a paper that he wanted Clinton to present to Arafat as an American paper. From the United States point of view, there was nothing wrong with this. Yet the paper was a retreat from the previous Israeli position that had already been offered to the Palestinians during the summit. Clinton blew up. "*You want me to present something less than what Shlomo presented as our idea? I will not do it.*"<sup>94</sup> At this stage, the United States employed brinkmanship: if Clinton did not hear something new in the next two hours, he would declare the summit over. This tactic did not pay off; the United States got no answer from the antagonists. Clinton offered Barak two choices: call the summit off, or seek a partial agreement on everything, deferring Jerusalem.

From a negotiating point of view, the first eight days of the summit were just exploratory: each side was probing the bottom line of its opponent. On the eighth day the serious negotiations began. Barak offered a package deal. On territory, Israel would annex 9 percent in the West Bank with a 1 percent swap opposite Gaza. On the Jordan Valley, the Palestinian would get 85 percent of their eastern border with Jordan. On Jerusalem, the Moslem and Christian Quarters would be placed under Palestinian sovereignty, and seven out of eight or nine of the outer neighborhoods being under Palestinian sovereignty; the inner neighborhoods would have planning and zoning, security, and law enforcement powers. On Al-Haram Al Sharif (Al-Aqsa Mosque and Dome of the Rock), Arafat would get custodianship. On security, Israeli needs would be met. Finally, on refugees, there would be a satisfactory solution for both sides. At this point, Clinton could present the deal as an American proposal and therefore all pressure should be applied on Arafat. The latter said that "*these were Dennis Ross's ideas, cooked up with*

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<sup>94</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace...*, pp. 684.



*Barak.*” Yet Clinton denied this completely and claimed that they were his own.<sup>95</sup> Of course this was not true. This approach was systematic practice in US policy in the Middle East. For example, during the first and second disengagement talks in 1974-75, Henry Kissinger presented the Israeli proposals as American ones.

Arafat’s main concern was East Jerusalem; it was not his claim, but that of the Islamic world; he could not condone the transformation of Israeli occupation of East Jerusalem and Al-Haram into Israeli sovereignty. Once Clinton concluded that an agreement with Arafat on East Jerusalem was not possible, he asked Mubarak of Egypt, Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, Hussein of Jordan and Ben Ali of Tunisia to convince the Palestinian leader to put off any discussion of Jerusalem for two years. Barak endorsed the proposal. However, Arafat was immovable.<sup>96</sup> *“Al-Haram was a genuine problem for Arafat and he really could not accept even nominal Israeli sovereignty over it.”*<sup>97</sup> By contrast, Barak could not abdicate sovereignty over the Wailing Wall (The Western Wall of Al-Haram). Being secular does not mean that compromising on religious claims was easy. Arafat was not a Moslem fundamentalist and Barak was not a Jewish orthodox; yet they were not prepared to abdicate their religious claims.

There were nine long days (and nights) of hard negotiations, at the end of which Clinton announced that *“we all thought it was over”* but *“we discovered that nobody wanted to go, that nobody wanted to give up.”* Therefore, Madeleine Albright took over the president's role, following his departure to Okinawa for the G8 Summit.<sup>98</sup> Meanwhile, Arafat was facing three choices, all of them bitter. He could reject the American

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<sup>95</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace*. pp.686-93.

<sup>96</sup>. *AH*, 22 July 2000.

<sup>97</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace*. p. 699.

<sup>98</sup>. *HT*, 21 July 2000.



paper, which would lead to a confrontation with both the United States and Israel. He could accept it, which would risk confrontation with the various Palestinian factions. Finally, he could postpone consideration of refugees and Jerusalem. However, he would have no firm guarantees that the Israelis would cease creating facts on the grounds, and would invite Palestinian accusations of putting aside their fundamental demands.<sup>99</sup>

Arafat adopted the first option: he rejected the American proposal. To the Palestinians, the proposal was a bad one because it would permit the Israelis to annex all of the settlements around Jerusalem. It would also mean that they would share sovereignty with the Israelis over Al-Haram, and enable them to refuse the right of return according to UNSCR 194. It was also ambiguous because it provided neither detailed maps, nor timetable for the Israeli withdrawal, and no specific description was given of the territories that Israel would exchange with the Palestinians in return for annexation of the West Bank settlements. In other words, the Palestinians would have had to accept co-sovereignty over Al-Haram, dismiss the right of return, and end the conflict immediately in return for vague Israeli promises of withdrawal.<sup>100</sup> By contrast, both the Israelis and the American believed that Barak went as far to accommodate the Palestinians basic demands as ever. In light of Arafat's attitude, Camp David II collapsed, and was concluded by a short statement signed by the antagonists and the United States. This stated that the two sides should not take any unilateral action that prejudged the outcome of future negotiations,<sup>101</sup> a commitment never delivered by any Israeli government. Remarkably, the Jerusalem issue was a key issue in the Camp David II as it had been with Camp David I. However, Arafat's attitude was different

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<sup>99</sup>. *AW*, 20-26 July 2002.

<sup>100</sup>. *The Diplomat*, June 2001.

<sup>101</sup>. *AW*, 27July-2Aug.2000.



from Sadat's. The former took a firm position, asking for complete Israeli withdrawal from East Jerusalem as UNSCR 242 stipulated; the latter rejected the advice of his team. The Egyptian team confirmed to him that taking a strong position about Jerusalem was mandatory; otherwise the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty would be considered as a separate accord with Israeli. Nevertheless, Sadat's unique concern was only restoring Sinai.

Would the failure of Camp David II in July 2000 bring the peace process to the end? In August 2000, the antagonists agreed to set up a back channel to bridge the gap, especially on Jerusalem. Before the negotiators arrived in Washington to resume negotiations, Arafat visited Barak at his home, and then the latter called Clinton, telling him, "*I would be a better partner with the Chairman than even Rabin.*" The Palestinians' negotiating strategy remained unchanged: to stretch the Israeli proposal to the maximum on all issues. In other words, Arafat's style was to pocket any advance in the Israeli position and treat it as a point of departure, not culmination of the effort. Meanwhile, Barak needed to strengthen his negotiating position on Jerusalem by permitting the leader of the Likud opposition, Ariel Sharon, to visit Al-Haram on 28 September. In Washington, Ross asked the head of the Israeli delegation, Shlomo Ben-Ami, who was acting Foreign Minister and the Minister of Internal Security, to limit or block the visit. Yet Shlomo declined because Israeli intelligence reports assessed that there was no great risk of violence. If this was true, why was Sharon surrounded with a massive police presence? Arafat had also to show what Jerusalem meant to the Palestinian people - the outbreak of the Al Aqsa Uprising (the Uprising II) on 29 September 2000. On 4 October, an Arafat-Barak summit took place in Paris with a prime focus on defusing the crisis; little was done



towards bridging the gap regarding the permanent status negotiations.<sup>102</sup> In other words, Arafat met Barak's pressure with counter pressure; yet the antagonists' attitude has widened, not narrowed the gap.

Upon the request of the antagonists, Clinton was to propose a package deal. He preferred to present it in the form of ideas, rather than a firm proposal. He was not prepared to face another failure at the end of his presidency. On 22 December 2000, he stressed that these ideas represented the culmination of the United States effort, not the beginning point of negotiations. Negotiations could take place within the parameters, but not on the parameters themselves. If either side could not accept the parameters within five days, the United States would withdraw the ideas. On territory, there would be a range from 4 to 6 percent on annexation in the West Bank. In partial compensation for annexation, there would be a range of 1 to 3 percent swap of territory provided to the Palestinians, and non-territorial compensation could include the creation of a permanent safe passage between the West Bank and Gaza. The United States would insist on the contiguity of territory for the Palestinian state. On security, the key would lie in an international presence to monitor the implementation of the agreement. The international forces would gradually take the place of the Israeli Defense Forces, which would remain in the Jordan Valley for a period of up to six years. Israel would also retain three early-warning sites in the West Bank with a Palestinian liaison presence as Israel deemed necessary. The Palestinian state would be demilitarized, with a strong police apparatus. The Palestinians would have to accommodate the training of the Israeli air force in the Palestinian airspace. The Israeli Defense Forces could redeploy to the Jordan Rive in the event of an external threat. On refugees, the right of return would be applied to the Palestinian state.

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<sup>102</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace*. pp.720-35..



Admission of the Palestinian refugees in Israel would be Israeli's sovereign decision. On Jerusalem, the principle of what is Arab is Palestinian and what is Jewish is Israeli would apply to the neighborhoods of East Jerusalem and the Old City. As for Al-Haram, the Palestinians would gain sovereignty over Al-Haram and the Israelis over the Western Wall (the Wailing Wall). The two would share functional sovereignty over excavation. The last point was that the agreement clearly marked the end of the conflict and its implementation would put an end to all claims. On 27 December, the Israeli security cabinet accepted the Clinton ideas with reservations within the parameters, not outside them, while Arafat remained silent. Clinton invited Arafat to Washington for a meeting on 2 January 2001. The Palestinian leader employed the killer amendment tactic. Practically, he rejected the Western Wall formula, the Israeli security needs, and the refugees' formula.<sup>103</sup>

From the American and Israeli point of view, "*Arafat was never good at facing the moment of truth. [He] was not up to peacemaking.*"<sup>104</sup> For the Palestinians, the Clinton ideas were never a missed opportunity. First, they were just the modified pattern of Barak's package deal presented at the eighth day of the Camp David II Summit. Knowing the Israeli negotiating style, '*their first bid never was their bottom line.*' Therefore, the attempts to portray the Clinton ideas as significant Israeli concessions were quite null and void. Second, since signing the Declaration of Principles in 1993 Israel had never complied with any agreement with the Palestinians. Both the Barak package deal and Clinton ideas were alike in terms of lack of details: no maps to show the Israeli annexation and the swap, no timetable for the Israeli withdrawal, etc. This

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<sup>103</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace*., pp. 751-58.

<sup>104</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace*., pp. 751-56.



enhanced the Palestinians' anxieties and made them regard Clinton's ideas as an instrument to reward him at the end of his presidency and a device to support Barak in the forthcoming elections at the expense of the Palestinians. Had the United States been serious, it should have filled out these ideas with the necessary details. In other words, Barak would obtain all that he needed from the Palestinians and would not necessarily have to deliver his commitments. Of course, the United States would remain silent about the Israeli violations of the agreement, as had been the case in the last 7 years. As the spokesperson of the Palestinian delegation to the Madrid Conference, Hanan Asrawi, put it "*if the judge is your opponent, to whom do you appeal?*" Third, Damascus would turn the Palestinian opposition organizations in Syria and Lebanon against Arafat. It would be too difficult to sell the agreement to the Palestinian people, especially those in the Lebanese refugee camps without tangible Syrian assistance. Four, like it or not, Hezbollah's unprecedented achievement by forcing the Israelis to withdraw from Lebanon unilaterally made the ceiling of the Palestinian demands higher. Arafat could not portray this agreement as an achievement in comparison to what had been achieved in south Lebanon.

Transitional agreements are generally governed by criteria different from those of final status. The balance of power at the time may well shape the former but the common good must be the basis of the latter. In its absence, there will be no guarantees that the two parties will keep faith with any final status agreement. However, the Clinton ideas simply reflected the balance of power on the ground, which has always been in favor of the Israelis. Remarkably, this analysis was at odds with Ross's belief that the Palestinians were not entitled to 100 percent of their territories. "*The very concept of fairness was, by definition, subjective.*"<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>105</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace...*, p. 726.



As for the United States, despite claiming to be an impartial third party, the Clinton team consisted of either well-known pro-Zionist figures or former Israeli lobbyists such as Dennis Ross, Martin Indyk, and Aaron Miller.<sup>106</sup> Although the pro-Zionist figures were Oslo process supporters, they did so only within the limits of what would be acceptable to Israel. The American delegation had to coordinate with Barak in advance, and did not offer independent proposals. “*The Palestinians negotiators complained that they were negotiating with two Israeli teams - one displaying the Israeli flag and other of American one.*”<sup>107</sup> However, there were differences among them in terms of their adherence to the Israeli right wing’s demands. Arafat, for example, preferred the National Security Advisor, Sandy Berger, who had been a member of the ‘*American Peace Now Movement*’, to Dennis Ross who was very much a pro-Israeli hardliner. In other words, Arafat had to choose between bad and worse. Sadat’s situation in Camp David 1978 was less complicated; there were only two or three members of the United States team who were well-known pro-Zionist figures. This also reflected the American Jewish lobby’s success in improving its position relative to the United States administration.

Barak called for an early election, the result of which was that Sharon came into office and the entire process was back at square one. Sharon established his negotiating strategy on three assumptions. First, there would be no Palestinian partner; Barak was the first to say that ‘*Arafat was not a partner*’ during Camp David II in July 2000. Second, Israel would negotiate only with the United States on a settlement in the occupied territories. Third, the US administration would sell this

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<sup>106</sup>. *AW*, 3-9 July 2000.

<sup>107</sup>. John Mearheimer Department of Political Science University of Chicago, and Stephen Walt John F. Kennedy, School of Government University of Harvard, “*The Israel Lobby and the U.S. Foreign Policy*”, March 2006.



settlement to the entire world, and apply pressure on the Arabs to accept it. In other words, Sharon was interested in Israeli-US negotiations rather than Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. From 2001 to 2005, Sharon's negotiating strategy proved to be successful. He obtained blind support from the new US President, W. Bush, and the EU could do little but dance to the American music. Nevertheless, Sharon's real problem was not external, but internal, i.e. the Uprising II.

After five years, it became clear that there was no military solution, only a political one; Rabin had come to the same conclusion during the Uprising I. Would Sharon adopt Rabin's strategy of serious negotiations with the Palestinians? The answer was negative. He remained faithful to his strategy; there was no pressure from the W. Bush administration to start serious negotiations with the Palestinians either. Would the Arab regimes support the Uprising II? With the exception of Syria and Hezbollah (backed by Iran), the Arab regimes regarded the Uprising II as a part of the problem, not a part of the solution. They came under American pressure not to support the Uprising II, and to apply pressure on Arafat to stop it. It is worth recalling that the Palestinian revolution from 1936 to 1939 did not receive any support from the Arab leaders either. Under British pressure, they called on the Palestinians to terminate their resistance, and give London an opportunity to re-consider its policy.

The Uprising II was a turning point in both Israeli society and the Israeli theory of security. The Israeli settlements based on strategic locations in the Palestinian occupied territories had been significant for Israeli national security. Now, they had become a liability rather than an asset; huge numbers of the Israeli Defense Forces must settle there to protect small numbers of settlers. In 2005, Sharon withdrew unilaterally from Gaza, dismantling all the Israeli settlements there. He also vowed to

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dismantle the isolated settlements in the West Bank. Of course, this attitude had given rise to Nasser's motto "*what has been taken by power can only be restored by power.*" Remarkably, Barak agreed with this motto, "*Once admitted, had he been born a Palestinian, he would have joined a terrorist organization.*"<sup>108</sup>

## Conclusion

The Oslo Accords were based on specific principles, namely: land for peace, based on UNSCRs 242 and 338; the end of occupation; total rejection of violence and terrorism; security for both parties; and Israeli's right to exist in security. To this end, the antagonists adopted certain tactics: gradualism, bilateralism, and discretion.<sup>109</sup> As for gradualism, it meant that the process should be kept alive; each year should witness certain achievements no matter how minor they were so that a mutual trust could be built. This tactic remained valid until the Camp David II Summit in 2000. Of course, it witnessed crucial difficulties during the Netanyahu term; he aimed at ending the Oslo process yet was forced to sign the Wye Memorandum under US pressure. Barak also successfully postponed the third phase of the Israeli withdrawal. Once Israel maneuvered and procrastinated on withdrawal, the PA responded in kind - no full security cooperation with Israel. This situation led to a significant lack of confidence between the antagonists.

As for bilateralism - direct negotiations between the antagonists with only a limited role for the third party (confined to facilitation) - continued

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<sup>108</sup>. Mearheimer, "*The Israel Lobby.*

<sup>109</sup>. Terje Roed-Larsen, UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Keynote Address at "*the International Media Seminar on 'Ending confrontation: Building Peace in the Middle East'*", Copenhagen, 18 July 2002.



up to Sharon's term. Nevertheless, the more distrust the antagonists felt for each other, the more they were in need of a full partner. For this reason, the United States hosted the Wye Summit during Netanyahu's term and Camp David II during Barak's. As for the Egyptian role as a third party, a clear distinction should be made between Likud and Labor attitudes to it. Thus, the former believed that Egypt was still an enemy to Israel and therefore should be driven out of the process. Hence, Netanyahu refused adamantly any Egyptian role in bilateralism. By contrast, the Labor Party saw Egypt as a reliable partner for peacemaking with the Palestinians. For this reason, Rabin, Peres, and Barak asked for Mubarak's assistance.

On the other hand, the discretion tactic was applicable up to the end of the process - the Stockholm back channel in June 2000 stood as an example. Unlike Oslo, the Stockholm channel could not produce an agreement. The former aimed at solving what was solvable; by contrast, the latter's target was to solve what was unsolvable. Following the Israeli incursion into the Palestinian territories in March 2002, the PA's institutions were significantly destroyed and the Palestinian standard of living sank to disastrous levels. Therefore, the antagonists went back to square one.

Some Arab leaders hypothetically assumed that had Peres won the election against Netanyahu, peace would have been possible. However, the reason for the collapse of negotiations had nothing to do with Likud or Labor, but with the structure of the negotiation itself. The Palestinian track was based on Kissinger's step-by-step diplomacy- gathering the antagonists to the table of negotiations would create enough momentum (pressure cooker tactic) to settle the Palestinian question. This diplomacy proved to be successful in the first stage; the antagonists signed the Oslo Accords. However, the American and Israeli assumption that the



Palestinians would finally acquiesce in their demands as had been the case with Sadat proved to be wrong and so the negotiations collapsed.

To make matters worse, the Oslo Accords (or the only concrete achievement on this track) suffered from major points of weakness. In the first place, the lack of details even with the transitional phase was obvious; as Assad said that “*each part of this agreement needs a separate agreement.*” Of course, this left the process vulnerable to misinterpretations. In the second, these accords did not define an end goal by deferring the hardcore of the conflict up to the final status negotiations. They looked like navigating without a clear destination and so getting nowhere had to be expected.



## Chapter 5

### The Syrian and Lebanese tracks

The Syrian-Israeli negotiations used to take a confrontational pattern. During the Rhodes Armistice Talks, they witnessed a war of words and mutual accusations from both sides. Syria also declared its intention of mobilizing immediately 20,000 additional men to serve in the Syrian army.<sup>1</sup> During the Syrian-Israeli disengagement negotiations in 1974, Asad also launched a war of attrition in Golan to apply pressure on the Israelis and the Americans. The Madrid ceremony was no exception. It witnessed a significant quarrel when the Syrian Foreign Minister accused the Israeli Prime Minister of being a terrorist. It also confirmed the right of national resistance against occupation - it was playing the Hezbollah and Hamas card to apply more pressure on Israel during the forthcoming Bilaterals. These clashes could be attributed to the fact that the antagonists applied the same strategy of negotiations i.e. the offensive approach; each side aimed at taking the initiative and for this reason Syria presented a proposal for a comprehensive settlement of the Middle East conflict in the ceremony. The following pages are an attempt to examine the antagonist's negotiation styles: whether they continued to apply their previous negotiation strategy and tactics in the Bilaterals. Of course, the Israelis believed that the Syrians were in no position to apply their previous strategy following the disintegration of the USSR. Were they right?

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<sup>1</sup>. "Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel (DFPI)", *Armistice Negotiations with the Arab States December*. Vol. 3, 1948-July 1949, Israel State Archives, edited by Yemima Rosenthal, Jerusalem 1983. p.537.



## Negotiations during Shamir's term

The Syrian track faced a stalemate from the first round. The Syrian delegation insisted on Israeli agreement to full withdrawal from the Golan as a significant prerequisite to addressing the nature of peace with Israel. For their part, the Israelis showed readiness to withdraw in, but not from, the Golan. They were also interested in discussing security arrangements and normalization before reaching an agreement on the scope of their withdrawal. Consequently, the negotiations went in a vicious circle on interpretation of UNSCR 242.<sup>2</sup> They were doing little more than engage in a historical debate on the Middle East conflict, the Israelis substantiating their argument with some Syrian press clippings from the 1960s.<sup>3</sup>

Israel's opening position with Lebanon was based on four pillars: no territorial aspirations in Lebanon, the necessity of security arrangements to preserve its northern borders, no interests in Lebanese water, and all foreign forces (Syrians, Iranians, and Palestinians) to be expelled in order to make possible an Israeli withdrawal.<sup>4</sup> Only in the third and fourth rounds did some progress begin to be made but even then tensions were felt, not least because the Israelis accused some members of the Lebanese delegation of being Syrian satellites. In the fourth round, the Israeli delegation proposed the establishment of two subcommittees: a security arrangements committee; and a civilian committee to tackle economic cooperation, i.e. trade, tourism, and labor. Nevertheless, Lebanon refused the proposal on the ground that it aimed at reaching a

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2. Mohammad Hasanen Haykal, *The Arab-Israeli Secret Negotiations*, Vol.3, Dar-El-Shrouk, Cairo, 1996, p. 244.

3. Wahed Abd El Mighed, "The Peace Negotiations and the Arab Negotiation Performance", *International Politics Journal-Al-Siyassa al Dawliya (IPJ)*, Vol. 97, April, 1992, p. 183.

4. Haykal, *The Arab-Israeli Secret Negotiations*., Vol.3, p. 244.



separate peace treaty, which would never solve the Lebanese problem. The Lebanese delegation was preoccupied with the final status of about half a million Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. It did, however, approve an Israeli proposal on the establishment of a joint military committee convening on a regular basis for consolidating security in south Lebanon.<sup>5</sup> The fourth round was also overshadowed by Israeli military operations in south Lebanon justified by Israel as a necessity to protect its northern border. The Lebanese stressed that national resistance against occupation was also legitimate.<sup>6</sup>

### **Negotiations during Rabin's term**

Once he took office, Yitzhak Rabin was a devotee of a 'Syria – first' strategy. He believed that *"it was both possible and desirable to do a deal with Asad before doing one with Arafat."*<sup>7</sup> The Clinton administration also believed a peace treaty with Syria would affect the regional dynamics. The Palestinians could make life uncomfortable for the Israelis, but Syria could threaten their existence. Lebanon would also follow Syria in the path of peace. The Palestinians who would find little support from the hard liners would finally make agreement with Israel.<sup>8</sup> If so, why did Rabin sign with Arafat first? Two reasons combined to make Rabin changed his strategy: the tough Syrian negotiating style, and the grave event in the Palestinian occupied territories ( Hamas attacks and its consequences, especially the expulsion issue).

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5. El Mighed , "The Peace Negotiations and the Arab Negotiation Performance", pp. 184-5.

6. El Mighed , "The Peace Negotiations and the Arab Negotiation Performance", p. 184.

7. Dennis Ross, *The Missing Peace: The Inside Story of the Fight for Middle East Peace*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 2004. p.92.

8. Ross, *The Missing Peace...*, p.99.



By August 1992, a new chapter in the Syrian and Lebanese tracks had begun. Syria intended to end the debate, which had prevailed during Likud's term of office, that is, whether the Israeli withdrawal would be in or from the Golan. During the sixth round, Syria proposed a peace treaty based chiefly on dropping its insistence that the Israeli evacuation from Golan should precede any peace treaty, and addressing Israel's security concerns. Nevertheless, it made clear that a partial withdrawal would be totally rejected, and that any Israeli commitment to full withdrawal had to be made before the Syrian commitment to tackle the nature of peace. The Syrian stance, regarding the nature of peace, could be attributed to two factors. Addressing normalization at this early stage would encourage other Arab participants to normalize relations with Israel, and selling normalization domestically without a clear and definite Israeli commitment to full withdrawal would be difficult.<sup>9</sup> Of course, Israel was not ready to give up its most significant card in the negotiations (commitment to full withdrawal), so it did not react positively to this suggestion.

The Israeli position at this stage was shaped by the fact that UNSCR 242 was relevant to Golan, and that a partial withdrawal could be approved. For this reason, the Syrian President, Asad, criticized the Israeli stance, stressing that Israel had nothing new to offer in order to launch serious negotiations.<sup>10</sup> The Israeli Foreign Minister, Peres, replied that Asad's idea of peace did not include diplomatic relations or open borders, and so it was not a real peace. Hence, a much lower price than Asad demanded should be paid. To break the impasse, the Secretary of

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<sup>9</sup>. Raymond A. Hinnebusch, "Does Syria Want Peace? Syrian Policy in the Syrian – Israeli Peace Negotiations", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XXVI, No. 1, autumn 1996, p. 52.

<sup>10</sup>. "Syrian President Hafiz al-Asad Remarks on the Peace Process", Damascus, 14 December 1992, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Document and Source Material, spring 93 Vol. 22, p. 144.



State, Christopher, brought a message to Israel that Asad understood that peace would not simply be a state of non-belligerency. Syria proposed a new formula: the more land Israel conceded the more peace it could have; a total peace could be reached in return for a total withdrawal. Nevertheless, Israel stuck to its previous position: Israel would not commit itself first. This was the case in the Rhodes Armistice Talks, each side adhering to a key rule of negotiations: '*never make the first concession unless it is a minor one.*' Yet the dilemma was that full withdrawal and the nature of peace were critical to both sides. Hence, the negotiation reached a deadlock. This analysis explains why Rabin decided to proceed on the Palestinian track rather than the Syrian one. He preferred a partial withdrawal on the Palestinian front to a full withdrawal on the Syrian one. Moreover, significant progress in the Palestinian track would give Israel freedom of maneuvering towards Syria.<sup>11</sup> Besides, Rabin's priority turned to how to stop the Palestinian uprising (the Uprising I); especially since the Golan front had always been quiet since 1974. Since the Palestinians agreed to stop the Uprising I in return for Israeli recognition of the PLO and vague promises on the key issues, an agreement with Syria based on definite commitments did not look attractive any more.

In August 1993, Christopher conveyed to Asad what Rabin had put in the American pocket: "*full Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights in return for meeting Israel's needs on peace and security.*"<sup>12</sup> Asad sent two negotiators to meet the Israeli ambassador to Washington, Itamar Rabinovich.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, the Oslo Accords stalled any progress on the Syrian track because Rabin needed some time to digest them before

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<sup>11</sup>. Hinnebusch, "Does Syria Want Peace?", pp. 52-3.

<sup>12</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace*., p. 146

<sup>13</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace*., p. 146



contemplating movement to the Syrian front.<sup>14</sup> To Asad, the Rabin commitment (the pocket) was just a war gimmick to hit two targets: pressure on the Palestinians to show more flexibility during the Oslo secret negotiations; and a reduction of Asad's opposition to the Oslo Accords.<sup>15</sup>

Israel believed that it had acquired new leverage and so it applied more pressure for a summit with Asad. Peres announced that the Syrian leader would have to negotiate with Israel - as Sadat had done - in order to get a withdrawal comparable to that from the Sinai. Asad, however, refused to give such a significant gesture without a firm public commitment to full withdrawal from the Israelis. Asad indicated that peace might bring such a summit but a summit could not bring peace.<sup>16</sup>

In October 1993, Clinton phoned Rabin and asked him about the pocket; Rabin asked for four months to be re-engaged in serious negotiations with Asad. To sooth Asad's fears, Clinton proposed a summit with Asad.<sup>17</sup> On 16 January 1994, Asad-Clinton Summit took place in Geneva. During the press conference, Asad said that Syria would respond to the requirements of peace, stressing that it should be comprehensive and just if it was to last. Yet he refused to elaborate on this point. For his part, Clinton announced that Asad had made it clear to him that Syria would establish normal relations with Israel: open borders, free trade, and diplomatic relations.<sup>18</sup> Rabin, however, interpreted Asad's commitments regarding normalization to be conditional on full Israeli withdrawal from Golan, the Palestinian occupied territories including

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<sup>14</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace...*, p.137.

<sup>15</sup>. *AH*, 21 Nov. 1999.

<sup>16</sup>. Hinnebusch, "Does Syria Want Peace? ", pp. 52-3.

<sup>17</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace*, p.139.

<sup>18</sup>. Hafiz al-Asad and Bill Clinton Remarks at News Conference", Geneva, 16 January 1994 (excerpts), *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Document and Source Material, spring 94, Vol.23, pp.145-47.



Jerusalem, and south Lebanon.<sup>19</sup> Following this summit, there were smaller meetings between heads of delegations. The Israeli agenda had contained four elements: peace, withdrawal, security arrangements, and the time and structure of the withdrawal. The Syrian ambassador, Walid Mualem, and his counter part, Itamar Rabinovitch, concluded that the security component had to be addressed by high-ranking military officers in Washington. The first meeting of the Chiefs of Staff had taken place in December 1994, General Ehud Barak holding discussions with his counterpart, General Hekmat Al-Shihabi. Again, the negotiations had reached deadlock, and to break the logjam they started negotiating on a short American paper in which a number of general principles would have to be discussed. This led to a second meeting between the two Chiefs of Staff, which the Israelis viewed as a good opportunity to exchange ideas on security. However, Asad declared the meeting a failure and, to break the impasse, the American peace team visited the Middle East. In the event, however, this was not fruitful either.<sup>20</sup>

Rabin was willing to encourage Asad to proceed, and the Israeli press was full of claims that he was committed to the principle of full withdrawal. Moreover, Rabin publicly stressed that peace was more important than keeping certain settlements on the Golan. Nevertheless, he affirmed that any agreement with Syria should be subject to a public referendum. This put Asad in a delicate position. Like Sadat before him, he had to address Israeli public opinion directly in order to have his own input, and take the risk of offering significant concessions in order to reach an agreement that could still be rejected by the Israeli public.<sup>21</sup> In

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<sup>19</sup>. Hinnebusch, "Does Syria Want Peace?", p. 53.

<sup>20</sup>. "Remarks by Itamar Rabinovitch, Israeli Ambassador to the US, on the Israeli/Syrian Peace Talks", *Washington Institute*, 18 January 1996, [http://www. Israel-mfa.gov. il/peace/ rabinovi, Html](http://www.Israel-mfa.gov.il/peace/rabinovi, Html).

<sup>21</sup>. Hinnebusch, "Does Syria Want Peace?" p. 53.



other words, Rabin exploited the democratic institutional dimension in the negotiations; it was not Rabin-Asad negotiations but the Israeli people-Asad talks. This had always been the Israeli negotiating style with Sadat. Of course, the Arab dictatorships were in no position to employ this tactic. In response to this, Asad added that *"we said full peace but Rabin has not said full withdrawal."*<sup>22</sup>

During 1994, the United States was pressing the antagonists to adopt a negotiation strategy based on starting to negotiate the core issues while deferring the secondary ones. Of course, this negotiation strategy was completely different from the Oslo one, which had been based on deferring the hardcore issues and starting to negotiate the solvable ones. Could this strategy bring an agreement, as had been the case with Oslo? The antagonists addressed the meaning of full withdrawal, the withdrawal stages, and the security arrangements. For the full withdrawal, Syria confirmed that it meant an Israeli return to the 4 June 1967 border (the armistice line), which would give Syria access to the Tiberius Lake. Israel countered by stressing that it meant an Israeli return to the pre-1948 borders (the international borders), which placed the lake entirely in its territory. It should be remembered in this context that the Golan was rich in water resources (the headwaters of the Jordan River), and that Lake Tiberius provided the basic Israeli water reserve.<sup>23</sup> In other words, the conflict over Golan was multidimensional - security and water.

The withdrawal schedule was another point of disagreement. Israel proposed a three- stage plan for withdrawal from Golan over five years. According to this plan, after a minor pullback from some Druze villages, Syria would have to establish diplomatic relations with Israel. Israel then should be satisfied regarding normalization before any further

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<sup>22</sup>. Hinnebusch, "Does Syria Want Peace? ", p. 53.

<sup>23</sup>. Hinnebusch, "Does Syria Want Peace?", pp.53-4.



withdrawal. Yet Syria called for the full withdrawal within a year. Asad refused any agreement, which left the final outcome to Israeli assessment. He also opposed normalization before the full withdrawal.<sup>24</sup> Asad had learned from the Oslo Accords that any agreement should be well defined, with a clear timetable for implementation.

As for the security arrangements, Israel wanted to dismantle Syria's chemical weapons and reduce its standing army significantly. It also stipulated a limited force zone, requiring a virtual Syrian pullback to Damascus. These demands meant demolishing Syria's capabilities to deter the Israeli arsenal of conventional and non-conventional weapons and as a result, they were refused. By contrast, Syria stipulated an equal demilitarized zone on the two sides- a demand was rejected by Israel. During June 1995, Syria accepted an unequal demilitarized zone principle, proposing a 10-6 ratio in Israel's favor. However, the negotiations reached deadlock because of an Israeli demand for an early-warning station on Mount Hermon. Asad stressed that satellite surveillance was enough, confirming that an Israeli presence in Golan would violate Syrian sovereignty.<sup>25</sup> The major obstacle in proceeding with the negotiations was the crisis of confidence between Rabin and Asad. Each side suspected the other of being reluctant to seek peace seriously before the Israeli elections in 1996.<sup>26</sup>

During the weeks preceding Rabin's assassination, an attempt was launched to put the negotiations back on track, but the effort was aborted as a result of the killing.<sup>27</sup> During the Rhodes Armistice Talks in 1949, when it suffered an adverse balance of power with the Arabs, Israel had

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<sup>24</sup>. Hinnebusch, "Does Syria Want Peace? ", p.54.

<sup>25</sup>. Hinnebusch, "Does Syria Want Peace? ", p. 54.

<sup>26</sup>. "Remarks by Itamar Rabinovitch, Israeli Ambassador to the US, on the Israeli/ Syrian Peace Talks"

<sup>27</sup>. "Remarks by Itamar Rabinovitch, Israeli Ambassador to the US, on the Israeli/ Syrian Peace Talks."



always stated that parity was a condition for any security arrangements. However, in 1995, with the tables turned, it stressed that a disparity in its favor was compulsory. Of course, in the intervening years it had acquired significant leverage over the Arabs in conventional and non-conventional arsenal by virtue of United States support, and so was in a position to dictate its security terms. For this reason, it had also succeeded in concluding a peace treaty with Egypt, which demolished Egypt's capability to defend against an Israeli attack.

### Negotiations during Peres's term

Once Peres had taken office, the Saudis conveyed to the Americans: "*King Fahd's belief that there was a moment of opportunity between the Syrians and Israelis,*" offering his good offices with Asad.<sup>28</sup> Meanwhile, Peres showed an interest in proceeding with negotiations on the Syrian track. He aimed at concluding an agreement with Syria before the elections, scheduled for the latter part of 1996, stating that he wanted "*to fly high and fast.*"<sup>29</sup> However, he confirmed to the Americans what he regarded as important. First, "*he was prepared to lose the Golan or the elections, but not both. It would be very difficult to sell a withdrawal to the June 4 lines to the Israeli public.*"<sup>30</sup> Second, the deal must be comprehensive in the sense that Asad must show the Israeli public that a deal with Syria was in fact a deal with the entire region. Finally, Syria must end the violence of Hezbollah and the Palestinian opposition organizations.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace*., p.217.

<sup>29</sup>. "An interview with Ambassador Walid Al Moualem, Fresh light on the Syrian-Israeli Peace Negotiations", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XXVI, No. 2, winter 1997, p. 85.

<sup>30</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace*., p.225.

<sup>31</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace*., p.226.



Accordingly, on 18 December 1995 Peres outlined a plan for the resumption of negotiations. The ten-point plan included the following ideas. There should be no pre-conditions, the negotiations should be opened with a summit meeting with Asad, and the content and achievements of the negotiations should determine their duration. The negotiations should be less formal and more practical and carried out as soon as possible. The United States should have a significant role. As to their aims, these should be to transform Golan from an area of military confrontation to one of economic cooperation, achieve peace on the Lebanese front, and indeed end all wars in the region.<sup>32</sup>

In January 1996, the two sides resumed negotiations in Maryland (the Wye talks). To create a better atmosphere, Syria promised the Americans that it would exercise its influence on Hezbollah to stop escalation in south Lebanon.<sup>33</sup> The first round had to overcome the issue of the Rabin commitment (the pocket), which had been denied by Peres. The United States employed its preferable tactic first introduced by Henry Kissinger - '*constructive ambiguity*'. The Syrians would assume that full withdrawal from Golan would take place once Israeli needs had been accommodated. The Israelis would remain silent and not openly contradict the pocket. In the event, the antagonists agreed to address the timeline, and Syria agreed to take concrete steps on both security and normalization. The Syrians also accepted the Israeli definition of comprehensiveness that a deal with Israel would be the key to broader peace with the region. The head of the Syrian delegation, Walid Al Moualem, confirmed that normal peaceful relations meant full diplomatic relations with embassies. In round two, the antagonists focused on the

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<sup>32</sup>. "Prime Minister Shimon Peres, Ten points of Understanding on the Peace Negotiations with Syria", Jerusalem, 18 December 1995, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Document and Source Material, spring 96 Vol. 25, p. 157.

<sup>33</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace...*, pp.232-3.



security issue. For the Israelis, the further removed Syrian forces were from the Golan, the less the Israelis needed ground early-warning stations in the Golan after withdrawal. For the Syrians, Damascus was seventy kilometers from the June 4 border, and so Syria needed strong forces to defend the capital. As a compromise, Walid proposed that the three divisions outside Damascus should not be removed, but could be made into "shells" - reserve rather than active ones. This looked interesting to the Israelis. Meanwhile, Peres was under tremendous pressure to call for early elections. He confirmed to the Americans that if Asad was prepared to meet him and push for an agreement, he would forgo early elections. Since Asad was not ready to make this move, Peres called for elections, but insisted on continuing the Wye talks. The last round was tautological, and turned out to be a half round ended by Hamas suicide bombings in Israel.<sup>34</sup>

Looking at the Wye talks, more was achieved in the two rounds than in the previous four years. The heads of the two delegations held continuous talks to finalize the structure of an agreement on all issues, aiming to bridge the remaining gaps by June 1996. The elements that were agreed upon would be sent to a special drafting committee and a final document could be expected by September.<sup>35</sup> Peres was concerned with the quality of peace, his delegation stressing that what was sufficient with Egypt in 1979 would not be satisfactory in 1996. Thus, peace should tackle the economic dimension on bilateral and regional levels.<sup>36</sup> Yet Syria objected to the Israeli approach, and made clear that an immediate free trade agreement between the two economies was not possible. It would require a transitional period during which it could improve its

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<sup>34</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace...*, pp.238-43.

<sup>35</sup>. "An interview with Ambassador Walid Al Moualem", p.81.

<sup>36</sup>. "Remarks by Itamar Rabinovitch, Israeli Ambassador to the US, on the Israeli/ Syrian Peace Talks."



economy; Syrian per capita income was only \$900 whereas that for Israel was \$15000.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, early elections would obviously prevent Peres from offering critical concessions. From that point the Syrian track was frozen while the mobilization of international efforts against HAMAS (the Sharm Al-Shaykh Summit March 1996)<sup>38</sup> rose to the top of the Israeli and international agendas.

In response to Hezbollah attacks, Peres launched widespread military operations (*'the Grapes of Wrath'*) in south Lebanon in mid-April 1996. He needed to prove to the Israeli public before the elections that he was a strong leader. This led to the Qana massacre in which 100 Lebanese civilian were killed in a UN compound. This was an obstacle to proceeding with negotiations. The massacre also turned the Israeli Arab minority against Peres; they decided to boycott the elections. Of course, this deprived Peres of their votes and weakened his position against Netanyahu. Would the United States call for an urgent conference about this massacre as it had following the HAMAS operations (Sharm Al-Shaykh)? The answer was '*no*' for the casualties were Arabs - not white.

Regarding the United States role in the Syrian track, it was fully involved in the process. For example, following the first meeting of the two Chiefs of Staff, it proposed a paper to bridge the gap between the two sides. Dennis Ross also made a summary of achievements at the end of each round. The Secretary of State himself took the final draft on his trip

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<sup>37</sup>. "An interview with Ambassador Walid Al Moualem", pp.86-7.

<sup>38</sup>. Following a series of HAMAS operations against Israeli targets in which 57 Israelis died, the US called for a one-day summit in which fourteen Arab States participated and admitted that HAMAS operations were terrorist acts. In other words, the Sharm Al-Shaykh Declaration represented another significant U-turn in the Arab side's perception of the Middle East conflict. The Palestinian resistance against Occupation, which had been encouraged by all Arab States, was now seen as '*terrorism*'. The Arabs aimed to support Peres by all possible means during the forthcoming elections. Of course, the Syrian and Lebanese absences were expected. They were not ready to give up endorsing Hamas and Hezbollah. The question is how would the Arab States regard HAMAS activities if the Likud party should take office?



to the region. When the two political leaderships approved the draft, it would become official.<sup>39</sup>

The exploratory stage of negotiations took a long time because the antagonists adopted the same negotiating style. Each side probed the other's bottom line, keeping its own secret. The second stage of exchanging concessions started in Maryland (the Wye talks) but political events prevented them from concluding an agreement.

The Lebanese track did not score any considerable success. It was obvious that nothing could be done here before a peace treaty was concluded with Syria. The Labor strategy could not separate the Lebanese track from the Syrian one.

### **Negotiations during Netanyahu's term**

Netanyahu's political thought on Golan is revealed in *A Place Among the Nations*, the book he published in 1996. Netanyahu refused any comparison between the Israeli withdrawal from Sinai and possible retreat in Golan. The disarmament of Sinai established a convenient buffer zone to safeguard Israeli security because of its great strategic depth. The Golan, on the other hand, would continue to present a significant threat to Israeli security even if demilitarized because of its significant strategic position. For this reason, he regarded the Israeli presence in Golan as compulsory.<sup>40</sup> Taking into consideration the difference between being the head of opposition and the head of state,

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<sup>39</sup>. "An interview with Ambassador Walid Al Moualem", pp.83-4.

<sup>40</sup>. Benjamin Netanyahu, *A place Among the Nations*, Dar El-Jaleel for Publishing Palestinian Research and Studies – Amman, Second edition 1996, pp. .p.57.



would the Prime Minister, Netanyahu, remain faithful to his political thought?

Netanyahu insisted on starting negotiations from scratch because he had no intention to abide by what had been achieved during Labor's period of office. Not surprisingly, however, Asad said that negotiations should be resumed from the point they had reached. Furthermore, Netanyahu embraced a new strategy toward Syria: it should choose between peace and Hezbollah. In other words, he did not consider Syria a peace partner to negotiate with, but rather a rival on which to apply pressure.<sup>41</sup>

At the beginning of the summer of 1998, Ronald Lauder, an American businessman and friend of Netanyahu, met the Syrian Ambassador Walid Al Moualem in Washington and told him that Netanyahu was serious about peace and wanted to open a secret channel to Asad. For five weeks, Lauder conveyed messages between the two leaders, and had extensive meetings with Asad. According to Lauder's account, Asad and Netanyahu had agreed on all issues - the border, security arrangements, the nature of peace, and Lebanon. They also drafted an eight-point paper entitled '*Treaty of Peace Between Israel and Syria*'. The most crucial points in this were the border and an early warning center. Netanyahu accepted Israeli withdrawal to the 4 June line. There was no reference, even bracketed, to any Israeli presence in an early-warning station. Due to the Wye Plantation Summit September 1998 with Arafat and its consequences, Netanyahu could not proceed with a package deal with Asad. The Syrian Foreign Minister, Faruq Al-Shara also confirmed that this paper had been accepted by Syria.<sup>42</sup> Would Netanyahu's successor accept this paper? Although a back

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<sup>41</sup>. Ashraf Rady, "The Feature of Netanyahu's Foreign Policy, *IPJ*, Vol. P.126, October 1996, p. 73.



channel is a good opportunity for the negotiators to talk away from the gaze of the mass media, it also has its own risks and deficiencies. First, it might put the parties in an embarrassing position in case of press leaks, as happened with the PLO-Likud contacts in April 1992, because of which Sharon came under pressure from the right wing parties. Second, it is quite fragile so that one party can easily cut it off without any political consequences - as with the Lauder-Asad secret channel; the latter refused to resume the back channel during Barak's term. Third, it is not an authoritative channel so that each party can present a different account of what happens in it. This was exactly the case with the back channel between the National Security Advisor of Egypt, Hassan Tohamy, and the Israeli Foreign Minister, Moshe Dayan, prior to Sadat's visit to Jerusalem in 1977. Tohamy told Sadat that Dayan confirmed full Israeli withdrawal from Sinai, though Dayan told Sadat later that this issue had not been discussed in the back channel at all.

Hezbollah's attacks against Israeli soldiers in south Lebanon also increased at this time, resulting in heavy casualties. For this reason, Netanyahu launched a "*Lebanon first*" option, aimed at separating the Lebanese track from the Syrian one.<sup>43</sup> As usual, Israel could easily sell its new strategy to the United States. Hence, the Americans endorsed the "*Lebanon first*" option, believing that it would break the deadlock in the peace process, and weaken the Syrian position to the point that it would yield to Israeli demands. Consequently, Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, paid a surprise visit to Lebanon at the end of her Middle East tour in September 1997, and confirmed that the Clinton administration was willing to deal with Lebanon as a full partner in the peace process.

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<sup>42</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace*, pp.527-28.

<sup>43</sup>. Carole Dagher, "As U.S. Rediscovered Lebanon, Its People Dare to Hope for a Lebanon Free From All Foreign Forces", *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, December 1997, P. 56.



She also addressed the Syrian military presence but the Beirut government stressed the important role played by it in Lebanon. (The Albright visit took place after four hours of fruitless talks with Asad. She arrived in Beirut from Cyprus, rather than Damascus.)<sup>44</sup>

To many Israeli ministers, Lebanon had become a new '*Vietnam*', so the Lebanon track had become the most significant card in Syria's hand.<sup>45</sup> Yet Netanyahu was not prepared to consider a package deal for the Syrian and Lebanese tracks, as Asad stipulated. Hence, the Lebanese track reached a logjam as well. Remarkably, Netanyahu had given up Israel's opening position of sealing a peace treaty with Lebanon, aiming only at obtaining security arrangements that would guarantee its northern border. Yet he was unable to achieve this objective either.

### **Negotiations during Ehud Barak's term**

Once Barak took office, he adopted a '*Syria First*' notion and confirmed that peace negotiations with Syria would be resumed in the coming weeks. There were three reasons for this attitude. First, Barak had made a promise to get the Israeli force out of Lebanon within one year. The Israeli withdrawal could be in the framework of a peace treaty with Israel, if, and only if, Israel had first concluded a package deal with Syria. Second, Syria posed a strategic threat to the existence of Israel whereas the Palestinians did not. Third, a peace agreement with Syria would definitely contain the threats coming from Iran and Iraq.<sup>46</sup> This strategy

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<sup>44</sup>. Dagher, "As U.S. Rediscovered Lebanon, Its People Dare to Hope for a Lebanon Free From All Foreign Forces", P. 56.

<sup>45</sup>. Dagher, "As U.S. Rediscovered Lebanon, Its People Dare to Hope for a Lebanon Free From All Foreign Forces", P. 56.

<sup>46</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace*., p. 509.



fueled the Palestinians' anxiety that the peace with them would be marginalized.<sup>47</sup>

In the art of diplomacy, journalists and academics close to officials are usually good channels to initiate contact or start a back channel. Patrick Seale, a British journalist and Asad's biographer, served as a mediator for exchanging unprecedented positive statements between Asad and Barak. He got Barak to refer to Asad's legacy as "*a strong, independent, self-confident Syria*." Then Seale confirmed that Asad praised Barak as "*a strong and honest man*."<sup>48</sup> Asad also underlined that the price for peace was full Israeli withdrawal from Golan. The former chief negotiator, Walid Mualem, predicted a peace agreement within a few weeks.<sup>49</sup>

The question was from where should the negotiations start? Asad stipulated that talks should start from the point they had already reached, and pointed out that three Israeli commitments had already been handed to the Clinton administration. First, the Rabin commitment on August 1993 of a complete withdrawal (the pocket). Second, the Rabin explanation on July 1994 that complete withdrawal meant the 4 June 1967 line. Third, Peres's approval of the Rabin commitment on December 1995. Yet Barak denied any commitments either from Rabin or from Peres.<sup>50</sup> Of course, the United States took the Israeli side, claiming that the antagonists had agreed on nothing, and that the administration did not convey any messages outside its mandate. Was this true? According to Ross, "*Rabin was very much an intellectual loner; he never shared the private commitment he had made to us on withdrawal from the Golan Heights with anyone on his side except Itamar Rabinovich, his negotiator*

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<sup>47</sup>. HT, 22 July 1999.

<sup>48</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace*., p. 510.

<sup>49</sup>. AH, 21 Nov. 1999

<sup>50</sup>. AH, 23 Nov. 1999



*and ambassador to the United States, so that when Shimon Peres became Prime Minister, he was surprised by it and Ehud Barak still questioned it even years later, telling us that he did not believe Rabin would ever have kept something so vital from him.*"<sup>51</sup> This suggests that the United States had not acted as an honest broker.

Barak's negotiation style was that he "*he knew best and did not feel particularly bound by [the United States] ideas - even if he had initially agreed on them.*"<sup>52</sup> Although Clinton told Barak that he suspected that Asad would accept something less than the Rabin pocket, Barak was not convinced. He proposed a border that touched neither the northeast quarter of the Tiberius Lake, nor the Jordan River north of it. If Syria accepted this, other issues related to the nature of peace, security, and the timetable would be solvable. He needed to show his public that Israel would retain control of the essential water reserve.

A back channel is usually the best solution to a serious negotiating problem, provided that minimum demands for commencement are fulfilled. To get Asad to a back channel, the key was to make it clear that in his case the channel was effectively trilateral, i.e. included the Americans as well, and thus was quite different from the Oslo channel. Asad appointed Riad Daoudi, a Syrian lawyer who had been at the Syrian-Israeli talks at Wye in 1996. Barak sent Uri Saguy, a retired general and former head of Israeli military intelligence. Dennis Ross represented the United States in the back channel, which began in Bern for three days and shifted later to Bethesda, Maryland in September 1988. The Israeli negotiating team confirmed to Ross that the Rabin commitment was '*a big mistake*'.<sup>53</sup> Hence, the Israeli opening position

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<sup>51</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace*., p.93.

<sup>52</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace*., p. 527

<sup>53</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace*., p. 524.



was based on a 'yes but' tactic. Israel accepted the principle of withdrawal to the June 4 lines; yet there were some areas where Israel had some specific concerns; especially about water and its relationship with the border. When Daoudi asked to put this in writing, Saguy declined. Ross proposed to put this in writing as an American formula. For Syria, it had something new from the United States; Israel could easily claim it was an American formula and did not bind it. Of course, Ross had to check first with Saguy, who wanted to get Barak's approval, and after that he would give the American formula to Daoudi. In other words, the United States had to honor the Memorandum of Understanding signed with Israel in 1975. The formula was a compromise between Rabin's commitment and Barak's new position. For Asad this was a non-starter for a formal resumption of negotiations. As for the demarcation of the 4 June line, it existed on no map. Hence, there could be different interpretations of where the line might run. Daoudi got Asad's approval to direct talks with Saguy on this issue. However, the meeting was fruitless.<sup>54</sup>

During November 1998, Barak was pressing Clinton to visit Damascus to confirm that the Rabin pocket was now a Barak one - Asad's precondition to resume the official negotiations. On 7 December, Secretary of State Albright visited Damascus to probe Asad's bottom line and the latter made two unexpected concessions. First, he adopted the United States traditional tactic of '*constructive ambiguity*': the negotiations '*would resume where they had left off*', with the understanding that each side would emphasize different points about the past. Second, the negotiations would take place at a political level - Shara-Barak. Of course, this was not Asad's negotiation style - no free concessions. This might be because he was worried about his health, and

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<sup>54</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace*., pp. 516-27.



so wanted to take the difficult step to make peace with Israel and thereby relieve his son of the need to do it.<sup>55</sup>

Barak's negotiating strategy was to get the United States involved in the talks; he would get more concessions from Syria by virtue of American pressure. Although Clinton was reluctant to get involved at this early stage, he had to accommodate Barak's strategy. On 15 December 1999, Clinton opened the talks between the Israeli Prime Minister, Barak, and the Syrian Foreign Minister, Shara, by emphasizing that there was now an extraordinary opportunity to achieve a comprehensive peace. Barak confirmed that Israel would do all it could in order to contribute to this, while Shara made it clear that anything less than the return of Golan was unacceptable. At the end of their remarks, Barak and Shara did not shake hands.<sup>56</sup>

Meanwhile, two cabinet ministers said that they would pull out of the coalition if Barak gave up Golan.<sup>57</sup> This gave an early signal to Barak that he had no room for significant concessions on territories and resulted in three main repercussions. First, his anxiety level grew and he was reluctant to address the border issue in the first round. Second, his main concern was how to make a deal that he could more easily sell to the Israeli public; he would posture rather than negotiate with Shara. Third, he was over-sensitive to any press leak that might expose him politically; he would not propose a serious draft of meaningful concessions. In other words, the talks were doomed to fail before they started.

During the first meeting, Shara recited the history of the negotiations, starting from the Rabin pocket. Barak said that "*while our government has made no commitment on territory, we do not erase*

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<sup>55</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace*., pp. 536-37.

<sup>56</sup>. HT, 16 Dec. 1999.

<sup>57</sup>. HT, 16 Dec. 1999.



history.”<sup>58</sup> This was a good starter for Shara. The talks focused on confidence-building measures, which were considered essential by Israel before ceding any territories. Shara replied to Barak’s demand that Syria should stop Hezbollah attacks against Israel by stating that no action could be taken for the moment, but might be expected following the conclusion of peace. After two days, the negotiations were concluded with an agreement to hold the next round in Washington on 3 January 1999.<sup>59</sup> Shara then visited Lebanon in order to emphasize that Lebanon would never be left alone.<sup>60</sup>

The second round started with clear discrepancies between Shara and Barak. For the former, he must have Barak's commitments on the Rabin pocket and the border demarcation group must convene immediately; Barak insisted that the peace and security groups must meet for several days before the water and border groups could meet. He wanted to avoid any discussion on the scope of withdrawal. As a US compromise, the water and border groups would begin with an indirect meeting immediately – each side would meet only with the United States delegation. For the peace and security group, it would meet in a three way-meeting format i.e. US-Israel-Syria. Barak also raised a question as to whether Shara had full powers to negotiate. He would not expose himself unless he was sure about this matter.<sup>61</sup> Of course, the situation of uneven ranking of the head of delegations partially ran against Barak's interests, giving Shara wider room for maneuvering; he had to have Asad's approval. However, Barak could also employ the democratic institutional dimension; he had to have cabinet, then Knesset, and finally public approval. This situation creates a real problem to dictatorships, as

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<sup>58</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace*., p.542.

<sup>59</sup>. *AH*, 21 Dec. 1999.

<sup>60</sup>. *HT*, 4 Jan. 2000.

<sup>61</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace*., pp. 548-53.



in the Sadat-Kissinger talks after the 1973 War. Kissinger had easily claimed that he had not been fully empowered by Nixon; yet the Egyptian president had not been in a position to use Barak's argument.

Barak's dilemma was how to keep his coalition strong by not committing to the Rabin pocket and keep the negotiations with Syria on track. He also needed to promote the Lebanon track; he had promised his public that he would get Israel out of Lebanon within one year. He had to face another dilemma, too: how to make progress on the Lebanese track while the Syrian one was facing deadlock. His tactic was that once the Lebanese track was resumed, he would commit himself to the Rabin pocket. Yet this tactic did not pay off. Lebanon made it clear that the Lebanese track would be resumed in the event of a substantial breakthrough in the Syrian one.<sup>62</sup>

In the event, Syria made significant moves on both security and border. This flexibility was mirrored in the other meetings on water and peace. Nevertheless, there was no responsiveness on the Israeli side. Barak had limited his representatives' mandate in these meetings; they were confined to administrative questions only.<sup>63</sup> The outcome of this round was fruitless. The antagonists failed to agree on the scope of withdrawal<sup>64</sup> and on the other issues. In the case of the early warning station on Mount Hermon, Israel wanted a permanent Israeli presence in the station, but Syria would accept that it should be run only under American and French auspices. The Israeli stance on the early warning station reflected a clear principle in the Zionist mentality - nobody but Zionists should be fully trusted on security questions, even the United States. Of course, this means that satisfying the Israeli needs for security

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<sup>62</sup>. *AH*, 4 Jan. 2000.

<sup>63</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace...*, pp. 560-61.

<sup>64</sup>. *HT*, 14 Jan. 2000.



is almost impossible. In the second, Barak believed that the demilitarized zone encompassed both the area from which Israel would withdraw and the existing demilitarized one (the Rhodes Armistice Talks 1949 had already established a demilitarized zone on both sides); Syria asked for equal scope on both sides - a demand rejected by the Israelis.<sup>65</sup> To complicate the matter, Barak received a serious signal from the Knesset that he should not hand over even one inch of Golan. A Likud bill approved by 60 to 53 votes stipulated that any deal over Golan should be approved by a qualified majority, which made Barak's task impossible.<sup>66</sup>

Of course, the third round never took place because of Syrian frustration with the lack of Israeli commitment to withdrawal up to the 4 June line.<sup>67</sup> The essence of the problem was Barak's insistence on having full control over Lake Tiberius (the Sea of Galilee). Syria disregarded an Israeli offer for a territorial swap elsewhere.<sup>68</sup> As for the resumption of the Lebanese track, Asad became more intransigent; the negotiations could only be resumed after completion of the demarcation of the border.<sup>69</sup> To make matters worse, Barak was completely isolated in his cabinet and the public; they believed that Israel should be engaged seriously with the Palestinians in the permanent status negotiations instead.<sup>70</sup> Asad's free concessions did not pay off - resuming the negotiation on the political level. Although Asad's health was declining, there was no excuse for getting away from the fundamental rules of negotiations.

In early 2000, Barak was interested in resuming negotiations on the Syrian track because of the pressure of the Lebanese resistance in south

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<sup>65</sup>. HT, 2 Mar. 2000.

<sup>66</sup>. HT, 18 Jan. 2000.

<sup>67</sup>. HT, 23 Mar 2000.

<sup>68</sup>. AH, 28 Mar. 2000

<sup>69</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace*., p. 567.

<sup>70</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace*., p. 571.



Lebanon. He wanted Clinton, who was at the time heading for South Asia to ask for a meeting with Asad. "*As was often the case with Barak, he assumed that the President [Clinton] would simply accommodate his schedule to fit the timetable the [Israeli] Prime Minister deemed appropriate.*"<sup>71</sup> Of course, Clinton had to meet Barak's demand. He phoned Asad, offering a meeting in Geneva any time before leaving for his visit to South Asia on 18 March. Yet Asad chose Clinton day's of departure as the only possible day in his agenda. The Syrian President was simply not interested in the meeting for two reasons. First, he had lost confidence in Barak after the latter's talks with Shara in 1999. Second, the unprecedented criticism of Shara by the Syrian Writers' Union in the aftermath of his talks with Barak told Asad that an agreement with Syria was too risky for the time being.<sup>72</sup>

On 26 March 2000, the Clinton-Asad Summit took place in Geneva in order to probe the possibility of resuming the Syrian-Israeli talks. However, Barak had sent Clinton to negotiate with Asad on his behalf without giving him his bottom line. During the summit, Clinton said, "*based on a commonly agreed border, [Barak] was prepared to withdraw to the June 4 line as part of a peace agreement.*"<sup>73</sup> When Shara asked for this commitment in writing, Albright declined.<sup>74</sup> Of course, this inflamed Asad's fears and made him suspect that Barak was still procrastinating. From Asad's point of view, Clinton neither brought something new from Israel nor made a new proposal, but asked Syria for a compromise in order to strengthen Barak's position inside Israel.<sup>75</sup> Asad replied that he was not interested in endorsing Barak, but wanted to get the entire Golan freed. Clinton put the blame on Asad's shoulders and

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<sup>71</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace...*, p. 579.

<sup>72</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace...*, p.585-87.

<sup>73</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace...*, p. 583.

<sup>74</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace...*, p.586.



made clear his view that the ball was in his court. This summit presented the last chance of resuming the Syrian-Israeli negotiations. Looking at Barak's strategy in negotiating on the Syria track, it was based on the following tactics: raising high expectations that an agreement with Syria could be concluded within weeks rather than months; offering no significant concessions, just maneuvering; preserving active US involvement to facilitate the agreement by maintaining pressure on Asad; and ensuring that in case of deadlock, the failure would not be blamed on him - it would be the fault either of the United States for not making enough effort, or of Asad because of his intransigence.

As for the Lebanese track, once Barak took office, he was under serious pressure from the Israeli public to begin a unilateral withdrawal from Lebanon. The hawkish Likud leader, Sharon, also called for a gradual unilateral withdrawal, accompanied by a threat of harsh retaliation in case of any attack on Israel's northern borders. Hezbollah was winning the guerrilla war, not by any triumph of arms but by inflicting on Israel a sufficient number of casualties to erode support at home - as happened with the Americans during the Vietnam War.<sup>76</sup> On 5 March 2000, the Israeli cabinet decided to withdraw from its self-declared 15 kilometer wide security zone in south Lebanon<sup>77</sup> by July - preferably, but not necessarily, within the context of a peace agreement with Syria.<sup>78</sup> The Israeli decision raised a question about the future of the South Lebanese Army (SLA), which had collaborated with Israel. The head of the SLA, Antwan Lahd, confirmed that the army would remain in

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<sup>75</sup>. *HT*, 29 Mar. 2000.

<sup>76</sup>. *HT*, 6 Mar 2000.

<sup>77</sup>. *AH*, 4 Apr. 2000.

<sup>78</sup>. *AH*, 17 Apr. 2000.



the south in case of an Israeli withdrawal and the Israelis reiterated their commitment to him.<sup>79</sup>

Because of the Lebanese and Syrian refusal to give Israel any security guarantees, the UN would carefully have to ensure that UNSCR 425 was being implemented.<sup>80</sup> To this end, the UN Secretary General stated that four conditions must be met. Israel would have to withdraw from all of the Lebanese territories it presently occupied, and the SLA would have to be dissolved. Israel must also release all detainees, and Syria would have to cooperate in the demarcation of the Lebanese-Syrian borders.<sup>81</sup> On 21 April 2000, the United States signaled that all foreign forces should withdraw from Lebanon, which was of course an implicit reference to those of Syria. However, the Lebanese president, Emil Lahoud, stated that the Syrian military presence was temporary, legitimate, and had nothing to do with the Israeli occupation.<sup>82</sup>

On 25 April 2000, the last Israeli soldier left Lebanese soil. The Israeli withdrawal, under cover of darkness, was not organized and, as a result, caused a complete collapse of the SLA. Sharon criticized the hasty withdrawal as a “*terrible tragedy and shameful thing*”; Israel, he complained, had betrayed the SLA, whose soldiers would either be arrested by Hezbollah or have to flee to Israel.<sup>83</sup> In fact, Hezbollah took over all of the territories evacuated by the Israeli army, and so reached right down to the northern border of Israel. Of course, this ran against the US demands that the Lebanese army should control this area.<sup>84</sup> The Hezbollah leader, Hassan Nasrallah, said that military operations would

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<sup>79</sup>. AH, 23 Apr 2000.

<sup>80</sup>. AH, 22 Apr. 2000.

<sup>81</sup>. HT, 24 May 2000.

<sup>82</sup>. AH, 25 May 2000.

<sup>83</sup>. AH 24 Apr. 2000.

<sup>84</sup>. AH, 27 May, 2000.



continue unless Israel released all Lebanese captives and detainees, and completely withdrew from the Shbaa farms captured in the 1967 War. However, the UN indicated that with the exception of a small portion, the official maps in the UN records placed the Shbaa farms in Syrian rather than Lebanese territory; as a result, the Israeli army withdrew only from that small portion. However, Lebanon insisted that these farms belonged to it and obtained Syrian confirmation on this matter. This meant that despite the Israeli withdrawal, the border file would remain a hot issue.

The hasty Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon called into question the entire peace process. For the first time in the Middle East conflict, Israel had withdrawn from Arab territories without conditions. In the case of Egypt, Sadat had paid a high price for the Israeli withdrawal: recognition of Israel and the opening of diplomatic relations; tough security measures in the entire area of Sinai that questioned Egyptian sovereignty; the loss of any leading role either in the Arab or Islamic world, or Africa, and the fate of coming to be regarded as a US satellite. For its part, Jordan had had to lease back to Israel some of its territories. In the case of the Palestinians, it was even worse. After about nine years of negotiations, they had got nowhere. Lebanon, however, which was the smallest of the ring states, had imposed its own terms on the Israelis. Israel had initially insisted that it would not withdraw without a peace treaty with Lebanon in light of the Lebanese-Israeli Peace Treaty signed in 17 May 1983, a security arrangement on the northern border, and an agreement on water. None of these conditions was met. Thus, the Israeli withdrawal presented a complete diplomatic victory for Lebanon.

In democratic regimes, sometimes a political leader faces the dilemma of how to accommodate two contradictory demands: pleasing public opinion in the short term and preserving his state's strategic interest for the medium and long terms. This was exactly the Barak



dilemma with the Lebanese track - he adopted the former option so that the Israeli army fled from south Lebanon. This was a fatal mistake in the history of Israeli diplomacy. In the first place, it undermined the so-called Arab moderates, especially Arafat, and strengthened the radical ones i.e. Nasrallah. The latter thus encouraged the Palestinians to start the Uprising II in 2000. In other words, the Israelis fled from a guerrilla war in south Lebanon only to face another one inside Israel itself. In the second, this was evidence that Arab leaders who collaborate with Israel lose their political career: assassinated like Abdullah I and Sadat or forced to flee, as in the case of Lahd.



## Overall assessment of the Bilaterals

The Arabs generally remained in no position to compete with the Israelis. There was no balance of power between Israel and the Arab states in terms of military capabilities, diplomatic performance, and international political support. Israel had established a central committee to coordinate and assess its performance on all tracks, an operation not matched by the Arab side. Israel also continued to enjoy full coordination with the United States and its delegation was informed of all events in the Middle East through daily intelligence reports. By contrast, the Arab delegations complained of receiving no support from the Arab embassies in Washington. They also suffered from a lack of confidence among themselves by virtue of Israeli negotiation tactics. For example, Israel revealed that there was significant progress in the Jordanian track to fuel anxiety among the other Arab delegations. Neither the Palestinians nor the Jordanians were willing to coordinate. Hussein, for example, agreed with Arafat to establish a joint committee of coordination but the agreement never materialized. Moreover, the Jordanian delegation was worried because of the Palestinian dependence on American good will. Following three rounds of negotiations, the heads of the Arab delegations decided to convene weekly meetings in Washington but failed to shape a common Arab strategy.<sup>85</sup>

The Israelis also took advantage of some Arab mistakes in terms of tactics and preparations. For example, the Syrian proposal to delay the fifth round because of the Israeli elections was a good opportunity to

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<sup>85</sup>. Haykal, *The Arab-Israeli Secret Negotiations...*, Vol.3, pp. 248-50.



accuse Syria of being unwilling to reach a peaceful solution promptly. The Israeli delegation refused this proposal stating that the desire for peace was the will of the people of Israel regardless of which party was in office. The Lebanese delegation, for its part, was not well prepared for the negotiations. Unlike that of the Israelis, its file on the negotiations lacked many significant documents, such as the treaty of 17 May 1983.<sup>86</sup>

During Shamir's term, the Arab side adopted a strategy of intransigence on all tracks. The Israeli side, however, adopted a problem-solving strategy in the sense that it was prepared to give some concessions. For example, it neither insisted on holding the Bilaterals in the Middle East nor put a time limit to the Washington talks after which they should take place in the Middle East. It accepted holding negotiations on the three-track basis at the same time and place in the State Department. It did not object to the PLO's implicit role in the negotiations regardless of the Palestinian delegation's daily attempt to make it explicit. It also accepted a separate Palestinian track. The Israeli concessions were also substantial.<sup>87</sup> This can be attributed to the fact that the Arabs started from their bottom line (the Israeli withdrawal to 4 June 1967 line) whereas Israel had ample room to give concessions. Why did the Israelis nevertheless fail to break through the Arab front? Shamir's strategy was based on the assumption that there was no problem with the Jordanians and the Lebanese. If Israel concluded agreements with them, Syria and the Palestinians would be in a vulnerable position. This strategy did not pay off. Jordan could not afford a separate peace treaty with Israel; nor could Lebanon get away from Syrian dominance.

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<sup>86</sup>. El Mighed, "The Peace Negotiations and the Arab Negotiating Performance", p. 187.

<sup>87</sup>. Nasif Hiti, "Lebanon and the Ongoing Peace Negotiations", *The Arab Israeli Negotiations and the Future of Peace in the Middle East*, edited by Dr. Mousafa Alwy, Faculty of Political Science, Cairo University, Cairo, 1994, p. 245.



Both Likud and Labor agreed on the pillars of Israeli foreign policy. There must be no return to the 4 June 1967 line and no return for the Palestinian refugees. A unified Jerusalem should be the eternal capital of Israel, the settlements should be extended, and Golan had a vital importance for security and water. They were at odds only on how to achieve these ends. In the case of Golan, Shamir stressed that a military presence was necessary in order to prevent any possible attack from Syria and Iraq, while Peres believed that this could be replaced by satellite surveillance services and the United States guarantees. They also advocated two different styles. Likud procrastinated in the negotiations to apply pressure on the Arabs by creating facts on the ground; the Arabs must acquiesce in the notion of a '*Greater Israe*' and '*peace for peace*.' Labor, on the other hand, aimed at penetrating the Arab front by offering an incentive to one Arab delegation only, which would not be of any significant cost to Israel. Thus, Rabin offered, at a certain point, administrative authorities, Gaza, and Jericho to the Palestinians - but procrastinated with the Syrians. Both administrative authorities and Gaza were heavy burden whereas Jericho had no significant value to Israel. This was enough to get the Palestinians away from the rest of the Arabs, and then the Jordanians were treated similarly, so that the Syrians and the Lebanese became isolated. Rabin's tactic put the Arabs in '*the prisoner's dilemma*.' Each actor had only two options: either to defect in order to get an Israeli carrot or to remain faithful to the comprehensive settlement so that the Arabs would enjoy a stronger bargaining position. Rabin was successful by virtue of the defection of the Palestinians and Jordanians.

Rabin promised the Bush administration a freeze on Israeli settlements in the Palestinian occupied territories in return for US\$10 billion loan guarantees. Nevertheless, he made a distinction between political and security settlements, but did not define this precisely so that



he would have room for maneuver. When he took office in June 1992, approximately 120000 Jewish settlers lived on the West Bank and about 4000 in Gaza. During Rabin's term, the number of settlers grew by 17 percent. Furthermore, Rabin encouraged the policy of Palestinian land confiscation. Labor seized land at an average rate of 1500 acres a month, compared to the 900 acres a month during Likud's term. Labor established Jewish zones in north and south Jerusalem.<sup>88</sup> It aimed at blocking any possibility of dividing or sharing Jerusalem after the fall of 1996 - the final status negotiations were to begin.<sup>89</sup>

Under the Declaration of Principles (DOP), the PA had to be established in Gaza and Jericho by November 1993, yet Rabin had delayed it until April of the following year. The Israelis were supposed to have withdrawn from most of the West Bank by July 1994, but by this time had neither moved nor set a date for withdrawal. Besides, Rabin did not honor the agreement with the PLO concerning the release of about 10,000 Palestinians being held in Israeli prisons. Despite this, Rabin's diplomacy was able to sell to the Arab world the idea that the settlement with the Palestinians was successful and suggested that it should reconsider the economic boycott. Under US pressure, some Arab countries (Oman, Qatar, Tunis, Morocco, and Mauritania) accepted the Israeli argument. As a result, Israel was able to establish representative offices in these states even though Rabin was violating the DOP. The acting Israeli Prime Minister, Shimon Peres, also paid a visit to Oman and Qatar. Nevertheless, it was impossible to sell the same idea to the Palestinians who lived under occupation. Between the signing of the DOP

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<sup>88</sup>.Bachelle Marshall, "End of the Beginning or Beginning of the End? To Israeli Leaders, Permanent Occupation Comes Before Peace", *the Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, March 1995,p.7

<sup>89</sup>.Richard H. Curtiss, "The Peace Process: End of the Beginning or Beginning of the End? As Peace Process Dies, the Blame Game Begins", *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, March 1995, p. 10.



on 13 September 1993 and 1 February 1994, some 110 Israelis and 195 Palestinians were killed.<sup>90</sup> If Labor's policy was better for Israel than Likud's, how does one explain Labor's defeat in the 1996 elections? Peres failed because he "*could not explain to the Israelis what he was doing for them without the Arabs realizing what he was doing to them.*"<sup>91</sup> Labor was a hawk in a dove's shape. Peres was prepared to sacrifice some thousand kilometers in return for being a leading economic power in the entire Arab world. Why did the Israeli public prefer not to give up some thousand kilometers in return for dominating the entire Middle East? Presidents Eisenhower and Carter as well as Secretaries of State Kissinger and Baker created better conditions for Israel to pursue its nationalist dream. However, the Israelis thought that Israel gave up too much land to the Arabs. "*One cannot be a hero in Israel unless he never gives an inch.*"<sup>92</sup>

As for Netanyahu, he remained faithful to his ideology, halting implementation of the Oslo Accords and any possibility for peace with Syria and Lebanon based on the '*land for peace*' formula. Nevertheless, he failed to sell his alternative formula - '*peace for peace*' - to the Arabs. Netanyahu's negotiating style changed after the Wye Memorandum in October 1998. Prior to this agreement, he acted as a charismatic leader, adopting a confrontational strategy to please his domestic audience regardless of the Arabs and the opinion of the international community. However, he reached a point at which he had to consider outside pressure at the expense of the ultra-nationalist and fundamentalist support so that he was forced to seal the Wye Memorandum. At this point, he adopted a

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<sup>90</sup>. Curtiss, "The Peace Process: End of the Beginning or Beginning of the End?", pp.9-10.

<sup>91</sup>. Richard H. Curtiss, "The Collapse of the Middle East Progress, How Different Was Peres' Plan from Netanyahu's", *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, June/July 1997, P.8.

<sup>92</sup>. Eugene Bird, "The Bridge that Failed: U.S. Relations with the Middle East and Israel", *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, October/November 1997, p. 12.



new strategy, which was a mixture of procrastination and maneuvering. To regain his cabinet allies' confidence, he procrastinated and refrained from implementing this memorandum. Under US pressure, however, he was at the same time maneuvering to gain support for the Memorandum in the Knesset, relying on Labor support. In other words, he had started to act as a politician rather than a charismatic leader. Finally, he found himself in no position to combat internal and external pressure. The charismatic Netanyahu could not ignore the regional and international dimensions forever but the politician Netanyahu lost the confidence of both domestic public opinion and the international community.

Barak's negotiating strategy assumed that summits hosted by the Americans would create their own dynamics - pressure cooker for the Arabs. Asad would yield during his summit with Clinton in March 2000; the pressure cooker would work on Arafat in Camp David II in July 2000. Barak's strategy did not pay off. Asad stuck to the Syrian position of full Israeli withdrawal to the 4 June line; Arafat was not prepared to share sovereignty over Al-Haram and to abandon the right of return. In the history of the Madrid Conference, Netanyahu appeared as an anti-peace leader whereas Barak was portrayed as a peace-seeker. Was this true? *[Barak] was, after all, a man who had been unhappy with Oslo; abstained on the Interim Agreement; and had never been a member of what Yossi Beillin had always called the 'so-called peace mafia' in Israel.*"<sup>93</sup> Barak also dismissed the Rabin pocket on Golan. However, he was always sweet in words but hard in actions. In the art of diplomacy, it is always deeds rather than words that count. Meanwhile, Barak's decision on unilateral withdrawal from south Lebanon gave rise to the notion of Islamic Jihad versus Arab nationalism; the former presented

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<sup>93</sup>.Ross, *the Missing Peace...*, p. 678.



significant success in Lebanon i.e. Hassan Nasrallah; the latter had proved a complete failure in the Oslo process i.e. Arafat.

What of the Syrian negotiating style? According to Peres, "*Asad was conducting the peace process just as one conducts a military campaign - slowly, patiently, directed by strategic and tactical considerations.*" The Syrian president was influenced by two major factors: fear that concessions to the Israelis might lead to him being toppled or assassinated like Sadat, and his ambition to restore the former parts of the historic '*Greater Syria*' (Palestine-Jordan-Lebanon) to his country's sphere of influence. In the 1980s, the struggle was over Lebanon,<sup>94</sup> when Syria won the battle and made Lebanon a satellite state. Once the Madrid Conference had started, the conflict had been over the rest, i.e. the Palestinians and Jordanians. However, Syria lost out after the Oslo Accords and the Jordanian-Israeli Peace Treaty. Hence, the Syrian notion of comprehensiveness was radically changed after the two accords: full Israeli withdrawal from both south Lebanon and Golan.

Looking at the history of the Syrian-Israeli negotiations, they succeeded at Rhodes in 1949 and the disengagement agreement in 1974 but failed in the Bilaterals. The main reason for that was the aim of the negotiations themselves. The previous negotiations aimed at either drawing the armistice line or concluding the cease-fire agreement following the wars of 1948 and 1973 respectively. This was an attainable target in comparison to the Madrid goal - bringing lasting peace to the region. Besides, the role of the third party (the US) was not smart enough to bring an agreement. In the case of Rhodes, in full coordination with the United States, the UN mediator, Ralf Bunche, applied pressure on Israel and Syrian. The antagonists yielded to this pressure; for Israel, it was

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<sup>94</sup>. Hinnebusch, "Does Syria Want Peace?", p.43



willing to avoid any confrontation with the UN at this early stage, not least because of its willingness to be admitted to the international organization; the new Syrian government (it came to office by a coup d'état in early 1949 led by Husni el-Zai'im) had not enjoyed international recognition yet. During the disengagement negotiations, as a reaction to Asad's firm position on restoring the entire Golan, Kissinger was forced to apply pressure on both sides. On 2 May 1974, he went to Israel asking for more concessions. The Israelis asked Kissinger why they should buckle to Asad's intransigence while Sadat was more flexible. They wondered whether the United States was in favor of intransigent Arab leaders.<sup>95</sup> By contrast, in the case of the Bilaterals, the United States put pressure on the Syrian side only. However, Asad was in a position to afford this pressure; the Oslo Accords were facing systematic crises, and so concluding an agreement on the same basis would not be attractive; Syria also kept strategic relations with Iran, and the fundamentalist and nationalist Arab resistance groups.

The US strategy in peacemaking was shaped by four assumptions. First, the Arab world was not ready "*to accept the legitimacy of Israel's existence. Acknowledging Israel as a fact was one thing; having to accept its legitimacy was quite another.*"<sup>96</sup> Second, "*Israel must feel secure if it was to take risks for peace.*"<sup>97</sup> Third, "*Peacemaking required that the Arabs understood that no wedge would be driven between the United States and Israel, and that Israel was not going to disappear.*"<sup>98</sup> Fourth, Criticizing Israel "*was legitimate, but creating a breach in the relationship was not.*"<sup>99</sup> Looking at these assumptions, the first and the

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<sup>95</sup>. William B. Quandt, *The Peace Process: American Diplomacy and The Arab-Israeli Conflict Since 1967*, Published by Al-Ahram Center, Cairo, 1994. pp. 205-6.

<sup>96</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace*., p. 6.

<sup>97</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace*., p.7.

<sup>98</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace*., p. 7.

<sup>99</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace*., p.7.



second were fully consistent with the Netanyahu theory of a '*deterrent peace*' with the Arabs - superiority rather than equality. The second assumption was quite enough to doom any negotiations to failure. To make Israel feel safe, the United States should guarantee its security by ensuring its superiority over the Arabs. But in the absence of a balance of power, Israel would lose a genuine interest in making peace with the Arabs. In other words, this assumption puts the cart before the horse, and therefore the Madrid caravan of peace could not move an inch. Assumptions three and four were echoes of the Kissinger doctrine: "*the United States should act as an Israeli advocate while pretending to act as an honest broker.*" The proper tactic to fit this strategy was to employ the United States carrot for strengthening Israel and to use the American stick to weaken the Arabs.

However, the Arabs were fully dependent on United States pressure on Israel and therefore kept calling for an active American role after each round; otherwise, the Bilaterals would collapse. James Baker stressed that the United States would intervene only at the request of the two sides.<sup>100</sup> However, since the Israelis stressed that American intervention was totally unacceptable, either for substantive or procedural reasons, any US intervention was impossible. The peace process had started in Madrid with two co-sponsors: "*the Soviet Union and the United States; one disappeared and the other became a spectator*".<sup>101</sup> It seems that the Arabs did not learn the lesson of Camp David I in 1978. They kept complaining about American partiality. The head of the Syrian delegation, for example, said that the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs was controlling the State Department. The United States role was to sell

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<sup>100</sup>. El Mighed, "The Peace Negotiations and the Arab Negotiation Performance", pp. 185-7.

<sup>101</sup>. Hanan Ashrawi (The spokesperson of the Palestinian delegation to the Madrid conference), *This side of Peace*, New York, Simon & Schuster, 1995, p. 171.



the Israeli proposals. The head of the Jordanian delegation wrote a report to Hussein, accusing American diplomats of being pro-Israel and complaining about American partiality to the head of the Israeli delegation to the Jordanian-Palestinian track, Rubinstein, as well. As a result, he wondered why the Arabs insisted on pursuing negotiations in Washington. Why did they not accept the Israeli proposal to hold the Bilaterals in the Middle East?<sup>102</sup> In other words, the Arab delegations fell into the Washington trap: Israeli intransigence and American partiality.

Why did the United States fail to adopt an evenhanded position in the Madrid Conference? The American-Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) argued that Israel had a significant strategic value to the United States. Israel enjoys four main advantages. First, it is located in a geostrategic position midway between Europe and the Arab Gulf, and therefore helps to meet threats in three areas: the Gulf, the Mediterranean, and NATO's Southern and Central fronts. Second, while other pro-American countries in the region are subject to overthrow by coup or revolution or a drastic change of political orientation, Israel enjoys political stability deeply rooted in its institutions. Third, the United States alliance with Israel is an alliance with the people of that country themselves, while the American alliance with the Arabs is an alliance with unstable political regimes. Fourth, Israel is the most advanced country in the region in term of political institutions and technological capabilities.<sup>103</sup> Although this analysis provides elegant arguments, it completely ignores cause and effect relation. The United States policy in the Middle East was the chief reason that it became the country most hated by the Arab people. Since the United States could

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<sup>102</sup> Haykal, *The Arab-Israeli Secret Negotiations...*, Vol.3, p. 249.

<sup>103</sup> Steven J. Rosen, *The Strategic Value of Israel, AIPAC Papers on U.S.-Israel Relations:1*, The American Israel Public Affairs Committee, third printing, the US, 1982, p. vii.



not cooperate with the people of the region, its unique option was to conclude tactic alliances with the Arab dictatorships. Of course, these alliances, for example with the Shah's regime in Iran could not be of a strategic nature. As a result of this, the Arab world has been deprived of sophisticated Western technology; yet this latter is always available to Israel. In the early twentieth century, the United States was the most beloved country by the Arab people. It was portrayed as a prophet of freedom against British and French colonialism. To sum up, Israel itself is the only reason for the United States tactic alliance with the Arab dictatorships - democracy means the United States' enemy will take office. On the other hand, Israeli democracy is at odd with Western values. The latter assume that people are supposed to enjoy equal rights regardless of race, religion, or ethnicity. By contrast, the Jewish state guarantees these rights to its Jewish citizens only, dealing with 1.3 million Arab as second-class citizens. Remarkably, Jews in the Diaspora are always prominent advocates for human rights, equality, secularization; however, once they became a majority, they acted differently, emphasizing the Jewish nature of their state, and depriving non-Jewish citizens of equal rights. Regarding the Israeli geostrategic position, it is true, but many Middle East countries also enjoy the same advantage, notably Egypt.

It is true that Israel played an active role during the Cold War by serving as America's proxy in the 1967 War; it defeated the USSR's friends, Syria and Egypt. It protected US allies like King Hussein of Jordan, and provided useful intelligence about Soviet capabilities. Nevertheless, backing Israel was not cheap. The United States decision to give \$2.2 billion in emergency military aid during the 1973 War triggered an OPEC oil embargo that caused considerable harm to the Western economies. There are also many reasons to question the



strategic value of Israel to the United States. Israel was useless during the Iranian Revolution in 1979. It also became a strategic burden during the Gulf War II in 1990; it could not be asked to join the anti-Iraq coalition without triggering Arab opposition. History repeated itself during the United States invasion of Iraq in April 2003. As for the United States war against terrorism, Israel could not be seen as an ally; its enemies are not always America's enemies. Hamas, for example, does not present any threat to US national security, but was listed as a terrorist organization only on Israel's insistence. Of course, this attitude turned large numbers of people in the Arab and Muslim worlds against the United States. Above all, unconditional support for Israel makes it easier for extremists to rally popular support and to attract recruits to Al-Qaida, whose leader Osama Bin Laden was deeply motivated by anger against Israel. Israel's nuclear arsenal, among other reasons, encouraged some of its neighbors to acquire nuclear capabilities. Israel also became a real burden in handling the Iranian nuclear file in 2005-2006. It is so difficult to encourage the Middle East states to take action against Iran while the United States is turning a blind eye to the huge Israeli nuclear arsenal. Israel also does not behave like a loyal ally. It provided sensitive military technology to potential rivals like China. Finally, it has also conducted the most aggressive espionage operations against the United States of any ally. Jonathan Pollard is an example; he gave Israel large quantities of classified materials in the early 1980s, which was passed on to the USSR in return for more exit visas for Soviet Jews.<sup>104</sup>

American Jewish lobbies argue that American attitudes to Israel are dominated by a sense of moral obligations emanating from shared

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<sup>104</sup>. John Mearsheimer Department of Political Science University of Chicago, and Stephen Walt John F. Kennedy, School of Government University of Harvard, "*The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*", March 2006.



values, cultural affinities and a common ethical and religious heritage. The United States and Israel are alike - nations of different peoples, endeavoring to build a new society. There is a profound bond between the Jews of Israel and the Christians of America. The latter see the hand of the Lord in the creation of Israel and in bringing the Jews back to it. Israel's existence is a proof of the realization of biblical prophecies. The United States President, Woodrow Wilson said, *"To think that I, the son of the manse, should be able to help restore the Holy Land to its people."*<sup>105</sup> *"When Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin asked President Lyndon Johnson [in 1967] why Americans supported Israel against the Arab world, the latter simply replied: Because we think it is right - an argument rarely used in diplomatic circles."*<sup>106</sup>

Is the establishment of Israelis on Palestinian soil consistent with moral values? The Israeli Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion, told Nahum Goldmann the President of the World Jewish Congress: *"If I were an Arab leader I would never make terms with Israel. That is natural: we have taken their country ...we come from Israel, but two thousand years ago, and what is that to them? There has been anti-Semitism, the Nazis, Hitler, Auschwitz, but was that there fault? They only see one thing: we have come here and stolen their country. Why should they accept that?"* Ben-Gurion also acknowledged that the early Zionists were far from benevolent towards the Palestinians. It is true that Jew in Europe, among other nations, were victims of Adolph Hitler's atrocities; yet the Israeli Prime Minister, Golda Meir, had denied completely the right of the Palestinian people to exist: *'There is no*

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<sup>105</sup>. Edward Tivnan, *The Lobby: Jewish Political Power and American Foreign Policy*, Simon And Schuster, Inc, New York, 1987, p. 18.

<sup>106</sup>. Bat-Ami Zucker, "Jewish American and U.S. Foreign Policy", *Diversity And U.S. Foreign Policy*, edited by Ernest J. Wilson, Routledge, Great Britain, 2004. p. 222.



*such thing as a Palestinian.*' <sup>107</sup> The Israeli Defense Forces murdered hundreds of Egyptian prisoners of war in both the 1956 and 1967 Wars, while in 1967, it expelled between 100,000 and 260,000 Palestinians from the newly occupied West Bank. The Swedish Branch of Save the Children estimated that 23,600 to 29,900 children required medical treatment for injuries sustained in beatings in the first two years of the Uprising I in 1987. Nearly a third of them were aged ten or under. During the Uprising II, the Israeli Defense Force was turning into a killing machine.<sup>108</sup>

Another argument is that Israel deserves unconditional support because it is weak and surrounded by enemies. However, Israel is the strongest military power in the region. Its conventional forces are far superior to those of its neighbors; it is also the only state in the region with nuclear power. According to a 2005 assessment by Tel Aviv University's Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, the strategic balance decidedly favors Israel.<sup>109</sup> If neither strategic nor moral arguments can account for the United States unconditional support for Israel, how can this attitude be explained?

*"If there is a model minority in terms of success in international affairs, it is probably the Jewish supporters of Israel."*<sup>110</sup> Despite the fact that most American Jews do not disassociate themselves from Jewish identity, they visualize themselves as American citizens and act accordingly. All studies indicate that the Middle East conflict is only one of many other issues, which decide American Jewish voting decision. After four generations in the United States, Jews felt safe in both their

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<sup>107</sup>. Mearsheimer, *The Israel Lobby*.

<sup>108</sup>. Mearsheimer, *The Israel Lobby*.

<sup>109</sup>. Mearsheimer, *The Israel Lobby*.

<sup>110</sup>. Zucker, "Jewish American and U.S. Foreign Policy," *Diversity And U.S. Foreign Policy*, edited by Ernest J. Wilson, Routledge, Great Britain, p.219.



Jewishness and their Americanism. AIPAC presented itself as an American, not a Jewish lobby. I. N. Kenen, who founded the American Zionist Council, which became AIPAC in 1954, believed that the organization should be an American one run by Americans. Although American Jewry is a highly complicated community and composed of different groups and perspectives, they are unified and motivated to meet Israeli's financial and political needs.<sup>111</sup>

The American Jews "*formed a cohesive group in the American society; that they were predominantly liberal; that they put the interest of Israel above everything else; that their control of the media made them dangerous adversaries.*"<sup>112</sup> As an illustration, '*The Wall Street Journal*,' '*The Chicago Sun Times*,' and '*The Washington Times*,' regularly run editorials that strongly support Israel. Magazines like '*Commentary*,' '*The New Republic*,' and '*The Weekly Standard*' defend Israeli at every turn. The American Jewish lobbies organize letter-writing campaigns, demonstrations and boycotts of news whose contents might be considered anti-Israel. One '*CNN*' executive has said that he receives 6000 email message in a single day complaining about a story containing criticism of Israel. On the other hand, the American Jewish lobbies dominate the think tanks, which play an eminent role in shaping the public debate and American foreign policy; AIPAC established its own institute in 1985 – '*The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*.' In the past 25 years, the Jewish lobby also gained influence in other key academic institutes, such as '*The American Enterprise Institute*,' '*The Brookings Institution*,' '*The Center for Security Policy*,' '*The Foreign Policy Research Institute*,' '*The Heritage Foundation*,' 'the

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<sup>111</sup>.Zucker, *Jewish American and U.S. Foreign Policy*., pp.225-6

<sup>112</sup>.Kissinger, *Year of Upheaval* , Little, Brown and Company, Boston & Toronto, 1982, p. 202.



*Hudson Institute*, and *The Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis* etc. They also established *'police academia'* to watch and monitor teachers' position regarding Israel, and to apply pressure on particular academics and universities that show some support to the Palestinians. The University of Columbia has been a frequent target because of the presence of Palestinian scholars like the late Edward Said, and Rashid Khalidi. The American Jewish lobby also includes prominent Christian evangelicals; they regard Israel's rebirth as the fulfillment of biblical prophecy and support its expansionist agenda. Neo-conservatives also work closely with the lobby.<sup>113</sup>

While Jews make up about 3 percent of the American population and 4 percent of the voting population, their concentration in specific regions, their education, wealth, and unusually broad involvement in politics, and their strong feelings for Israel make Jewish votes an important consideration for presidential and congressional elections.<sup>114</sup> The United States President, Theodore Roosevelt, saw votes in backing the Jewish cause. In his meeting with Zionist leaders, he *"had humored them, and then, in private, agreed with his foreign policy and defense advisers that a Jewish state in the region be disastrous for Western interests."*<sup>115</sup> His successor, Harry Truman, recognized Israel immediately, though his Secretary of Defense, George Marshall, and Undersecretary of State, Robert Lovett, were completely against; *"it was an election year, and his opponent Thomas Dewey, the popular New York governor, had already announced that he favored recognition."*<sup>116</sup> Senator John Kennedy was eager to win over the Jewish vote. His record on Israel was vague; he was concerned about the Palestinian refugee

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<sup>113</sup>. Mearsheimer, *"The Israel Lobby"*.

<sup>114</sup>. Zucker, *Jewish American and U.S. Foreign Policy...*, p. 227.

<sup>115</sup>. Tivnan, *The Lobby: Jewish Political Power...*, p.24.

<sup>116</sup>. Tivnan, *The Lobby : Jewish Political Power...*, p. 27.



problem and the risks of war in the Middle East. In a meeting with the prominent Jewish American leader, Philip Klutznick, this latter advised Kennedy: "*Eisenhower on the Suez Crisis 1956 was unsatisfactory, while Truman in 1948 was on the mark.*" Kennedy got the message and delivered a speech before a Jewish organization that "*Quite apart from the values and hopes which the state of Israel enshrines – and the past injury which it redeems – it twists reality to suggest that it is the democratic tendency of Israel which has injected discord and dissension into the Near East.*"<sup>117</sup> Like Truman, Kennedy was dependant on American Jewish money for his electoral campaign.<sup>118</sup> Jimmy Carter was no exception, he admitted to the Arab leaders that "*he had to take American Jewish opinion into account.*"<sup>119</sup> As an illustration, the US-USSR communiqué on 1 October 1977<sup>120</sup> triggered the American Jewish lobby's anger. This, in turn, led to a domestic political problem. On 4 October, Carter asked the Israeli Foreign Minister, Moshe Dayan, to calm the Jews' fears down. "*Dayan exploited the opportunity and succeeded simultaneously in winning Carter's gratitude and in sowing suspicion between the United States and the Arabs.*" [This gave] "*Sadat strong reasons to deal directly with the Israelis.*"<sup>121</sup>

The American Jewish lobby enjoys three sources of power. The first is a political weapon of last resort i.e. anti-Semitism. No American politician wants to be called an '*anti-Semite*', particularly a politician

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<sup>117</sup>. I.L.Kenen, *Israeli's Defense line*, Buffalo: Prometheus Books, U.S.A, 1981, p.156.

<sup>118</sup>. Tivnan, *The Lobby : Jewish Political Power..*, p. 55.

<sup>119</sup>. William B. Quandt, *Camp David.. Camp David Peace Making and Politics*, Washington, D.C., The Brookings Institution, 1986, p. 134.

<sup>120</sup>. It stipulated that the Geneva Conference was the only effective way to establish a framework for comprehensive settlement based on: (1) Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories in 1967, (2) the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people should be considered, and (3) establishment of normal peaceful relations between the antagonists on the basis of mutual recognition and sovereignty.

<sup>121</sup>. Quandt, *Camp David ..*, p. 134.



who is a genuine anti-Semite.<sup>122</sup> The second source of power is that 90 percent of them vote in the election whereas few Americans take advantage of their right to vote: about 50 percent. The third and most importantly, is that it gives money generously to any candidate who will support their interests. Businessmen, not rabbis, dominates the American Jewish lobby. *"It was the Jewish banker Abraham Feinberg, who was the first Jewish fund raiser for national politics. Feinberg raised money for Harry Truman and was a major backer of John Kennedy."*<sup>123</sup>

To sum up, no American politician could ignore the American Jewish lobby but the support of the latter is not the only factor to make a candidate President of the United States. Lyndon Johnson is a clear example. He was very good friend of Israel but he could not run for re-election because of the repercussions of the American involvement in

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<sup>122</sup>. Are contemporary Jews descendants of the twelve tribes of Israel? The Contemporary Jews fall into two main ethnic divisions: Sephardim and Ashkenazim. The Sephardim are descendants of the Jews who since antiquity had lived in Spain until they were expelled at the end of the fifteenth century and settled in the Arab and Muslim countries bordering the Mediterranean, the Balkans, and to a lesser extent in Western Europe. In the 1960s, the number of Sephardim was estimated at half a million. The Ashkenazim, at the same period, numbered about eleven million. Thus, in common parlance, Jew is practically synonymous with Ashkenazi Jew. The latter, who were the founders of the Jewish state in Palestine, historically belong to collection of Aryan Turkish tribes. They were citizens of the Khazar Empire, a major but almost forgotten power in Eastern Europe. It controlled much of what is today southern Russia, western Kazakhstan, eastern Ukraine, large portions of the Caucasus (including Dagestan, Azerbaijan, and Georgia), and the Crimea. It extended from the Black Sea to the Caspian, from the Caucasus to the Volga, and was finally wiped out by the forces of Genghis Khan. The Empire was converted to Judaism in A.D. 740. The reason behind this decision was that the Empire was in a precarious position between the two major world powers: the Eastern Roman Empire in Byzantium and the Islamic Caliphate. The Khazar Empire was the Third World of its day, and it chose a surprising method of resisting both the Western pressure to become Christian and the Eastern to adopt Islam. Rejecting both, its ruler converted to Judaism and encouraged his people to follow the same path. After the destruction of the Empire, the Khazars themselves migrated to Poland and Lithuania, where they formed the origin of the Western (Ashkenazim) Jewry. Therefore, the bulk of modern Jewry never lived in Palestine and is not of Palestinian, but of Caucasian origin. The mainstream of Jewish migrations did not flow from Palestine across France and Germany to Eastern Europe and then back again. The stream moved from the Caucasus through the Ukraine and Poland in Central Europe, and then to Palestine. See the volume of the Jewish Ashkenazi historian Arther Koestler, *The Thirteenth Tribe*, Randome House, 1976.

<sup>123</sup>. Tivnan, *The Lobby : Jewish Political Power...*, pp.54-5.



Vietnam. As an illustration, during the Suez Crisis 1956, the Senate Democratic Majority Leader, Lyndon Johnson, was on the phone with the Israeli Ambassador to the United States, Abba Eban, expressing his deep disappointment over the Republican administration position of threatening to punish Israel where it had not threatened the USSR for invading Hungary. He added that the administration was not going to get anything from Congress until they treated Israel fairly.<sup>124</sup> Following the assassination of John Kennedy in 1963, President Lyndon Johnson told an Israeli diplomat, *"You have lost a great friend. But you have found a better one."*<sup>125</sup> *"Shortly after LBJ entered the White House, he became the first U.S. President to receive officially the Prime Minister of Israel at the White House, and, according to Eban, LBJ established with Prime Minister Eshkol the kind of intimate confidence that had never before existed between heads of American and Israeli governments."*<sup>126</sup>

At the end, the Bilaterals faced an ultra-nationalist leader in Tel-Aviv, Ariel Sharon, and a Christian fundamentalist in the White House, George W. Bush, a situation that looked like a return to the Reagan-Shamir era. Hence, the negotiations could not move an inch. However, the question is: would Sharon face the same challenges that had been faced by Netanyahu? The answer is 'no'. During Netanyahu's term, Israeli society had been divided into two groups: Likud and Labor. Following the Camp David II Summit in 2000, the Israeli left wing came to the conclusion that peace with the Arabs was not possible on acceptable conditions, and so most of them started to believe in the Likud ideology - excessive use of power to impose these conditions on the Arabs. In other words, once Sharon came to office, he had found

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<sup>124</sup>. Howard M. Sachar, *A History of Israel*, New York, Knopf, 1976, p.509.

<sup>125</sup>. Kenen, *Israeli's Defense Line..*, p. 173.

<sup>126</sup>. Tivnan, *The Lobby : Jewish Political Power..*p.60.



Israeli society united under his leadership. Besides, Sharon would not have to suffer from any US pressure for three reasons. First, W. Bush had learned from his father's experience that challenging the significant American Jewish lobby would end his career fast. Second, his own belief as an Old Testament Christian fundamentalist that Israel should be established on its biblical land. Third, the American Jewish lobby defeated any effort by his administration to apply pressure on Israel. As an illustration, in the spring of 2002, Bush tried to reduce anti-American sentiment in the Muslim world, aiming at obtaining better support for the so-called '*War Against Terrorism*.' Of course, he had significant means to apply pressure on Israel - withholding political, economic, diplomatic, and military support. Sharon was in quite a delicate situation; he warned that Israel would not be like Czechoslovakia; and Bush was furious at being compared to Chamberlain. At this point, the American Jewish lobby moved to persuade the administration and the American people that the United States and Israel were facing a common threat from terrorism; Arafat and Osama Bin-Laden were two of a kind. Indeed, the administration refused ever again to have dealings with Arafat. Upon the Israeli request, Arafat was granted a visa to the White House; under Israeli pressure, he was also denied the visa. In April 2002, Sharon launched Operation Defensive Shield to annex all territories under PA control. Bush knew that the Israeli operation would make his '*Crusader War Against Terrorism*,' as he said more than once, much more difficult, and so he demanded that Sharon should halt the operation and begin to withdraw '*without delay*.' The lobby moved again to convince the vice president's office, the Pentagon and the neo-conservatives, not to apply any pressure on Israel. On 2 May 2002, Congress passed two resolutions reaffirming support for Israel. In May 2003, all polls reported that more than 60 percent of Americans were



willing to withhold aid if Israel resisted the United States pressure to settle the Middle East conflict. Nevertheless, the lobby took on Bush and triumphed again. As the former national security advisor, Brent Scowcroft, made it clear in October 2004. *“If Bush tries to distance the US from Israel, or even criticizes Israeli actions in the Occupied Territories, he is certain to face the wrath of the lobby and its supporters in Congress.”*<sup>127</sup> When it comes to the Middle East, the United States has no policy other than an Israeli one. As an illustration, the Clinton administration changed its successful policy towards Iran and Iraq on the dictates of the American Jewish lobby. Martin Indyk first outlined the strategy of dual containment in May 1993 at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, run by AIPAC. The United States would station substantial forces in the region to contain both Iraq and Iran, instead of one being used to check the other i.e. the Gulf War I (the Iraqi-Iranian War 1980-8). Once he was assigned as director for Near East and South Asian Affairs at the National Security Council, he put his ideas into action. It is worth noting, here, that the American Jewish lobby always consults Israeli officials, to make sure that their actions advance Israeli goals. As one activist from a major Jewish organization wrote, *“it is routine for us to say: This is our policy on a certain issue, but we must check what the Israelis think.”*<sup>128</sup>

The American Jewish lobby has also a very good friend in the Arab world i.e. the Arab dictatorships. They should have stood firm following 11 September, and insisted that the United States should change its policy in the Middle East; otherwise, it could not expect any support in its ‘*War Against Terrorism*.’ In this case, the lobby would have come under pressure and would have been faced with a difficult

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<sup>127</sup>. Mearsheimer, *The Israel Lobby*.

<sup>128</sup>. Mearsheimer, *The Israel Lobby*.



choice: either the United States or Israel. Nevertheless, the Arab dictatorships were only concerned about how to remain in office. To make matter worse, they have accepted the American Jewish lobby as a mediator between the Arab world and the US administration. It is a routine that before any visit to Washington by an Arab rulers that , they send one or more top advisors to prepare for the visit with key figures in the lobby, especially regarding the mass media and Congress. The lobby also benefits from the Arab dictatorships' practices; the latter are a good argument to prove that "*the Arabs still live in the dinosaurs' era*," as Netanyahu once said in a speech before Congress in 1996.

Does the American Jewish lobby's policy of defending Israel at every turn promote Israeli interests for the long run? The answer is negative. The lobby helps Israel only to hurt itself. Israeli pressure is basically applied on the Arab moderates who believe in a two-state solution based on UNSCR 242, the Madrid Conference's terms of reference. The lobby policy undermines the moderate secular leaders and strengthens the fundamentalist ones. As an illustration, Sharon did almost nothing to support the new PA Chairman, Mahmoud Abas, and therefore Hamas won the parliamentary elections in 2006. The lobby applied pressure on W. Bush administration to take four grave steps. First, in April 2002, Sharon obtained a US green light to annex the PA territories. Second, in March 2003, the Bush administration invaded Iraq under the pretext of a purely fabricated allegation -Weapons of Mass Destruction. Third, in April 2004, Bush gave a letter of guarantee to Sharon (Arthur Balfour promise II). Israel would annex the big settlement in the West Bank, maintain Jerusalem unified under Israeli sovereignty, and abandon the right of return for the Palestinian refugees. Four, the United States offered political and diplomatic support to

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Sharon's policy of imposing the Jewish state's permanent borders unilaterally, defending the fence. The latter would turn the Palestinian cities in the West Bank into Bantustans. These four steps were a priceless gift from the lobby to Al-Qaida II, proving Osama Ben-Laden's theory: Moslem holy war (Jihad) against the West was the only way to restore Palestine, and to have control over Islamic natural resources i.e. oil. In other words, he was wearing two hats: that of the historic Moslem leader Selah El-Din who freed Jerusalem from the Crusaders, and that of the prominent French leader, Charles de Gaulle who established the Government of Free France. Ben-Laden believed he should fight to free his country from American hegemony, making a comparison between the Saudi government and the Vichy government that collaborated with the Nazis, after the Nazi occupation in 1940. Remarkably, the lobby emphasized the Ben-Laden-Saudi royal family conflict, keeping the Palestinian issue low key. It did not want to alert American public opinion to the fact that the United States policy in Palestine was responsible for the 11 September attacks. However, reality remains clear that intransigence on one side enhances intransigence on the other.

What is the European role in the settlement process? Once Sadat took office in September 1970, he designed the Egyptian foreign policy on the assumption that "*the United States held 99 percent of the cards in the game*" i.e. the Middle East conflict. His main target was to get the United States involved in the talks with Israel. Yet he did not lift a finger to bring Europe to the Geneva Conference in 1973, putting all cards in Henry Kissinger's pocket. Europe was completely absent during the Camp David Summit in 1978, and the Egyptian-Israeli negotiations in 1979. He was fully dependent on the Carter administration. In 1980, Ronald Reagan took office, and Sadat could not get along with him. At this point, Sadat modified his strategy, and was willing to get the



Europeans involved in the process. In his speech before the European Parliament in Strasbourg in 1980, for the first time he called for an active European role in the process. Sadat's tactical move was relevant to the Madrid Conference in 1991 and its aftermath as well. The Arabs had put all of their cards in the hands of the Americans but having got frustrated with US partiality, started to call on the Europeans. On the other hand, the London Conference in 1946 had presented the end of the leading European role in the process; the UK confirmed that it was unable to settle the conflict, and sent the entire file to the UN. From that date up to this moment, Europe confirmed that it was only prepared to play a subsidiary role under US leadership. Although all of the EU states rotated in orbit around the United States, there were differences among them; if France might be Neptune or Plato, the UK must be Mercury. In other words, the so-called European role in the Madrid process was useless: the Arabs were not serious about it; nor were the Europeans able to play it.

The chief lesson that Arabs should learn from the Madrid experience is that if they are not ready for full submission to Israeli demands, negotiations will definitely reach a deadlock. The third party, that is, the United States, has demonstrated that it is neither willing nor able to apply significant pressure on Israel. Hence, negotiations are an Israel tactic to play for time, allowing it to create facts on the ground.

From Dennis Ross's point of view, one of the achievements of the Madrid Conference in 1991 and its aftermath was that *"the idea of Arabs and Israelis talking to one another is no longer considered illegitimate. Even during the worst of the Israeli-Palestinian fighting [the Uprising], Israelis and Palestinians have continued to talk to one another."*<sup>129</sup> However, what was new in Palestinian-Israeli talks? The Palestinian-



Jewish talks had started in 1913, and continued during and after the Palestinian revolution of August 1929. Prior to the Madrid Conference, the antagonists had also established different back channels for talks. However, they failed to reach an agreement. The Madrid experience proved that this target was still quite far off. Talks are not a target themselves, but just a tactic to shape an agreement. Following the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty in 1979, the Egyptian Foreign Minister, Mohammed Ibrahim Kamel, resigned and wrote his famous volume '*The Missing Peace*', condemning the significant Egyptian concessions that he believed unjustified. Following the failure of Camp David II, and its aftermath in 2000, Ross left the United States government, and wrote his own memoirs, also called '*The Missing Peace*.' One should expect the series of '*The Missing Peace*' volumes to continue for decades to come.

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<sup>129</sup>. Ross, *The Missing Peace*., p. 759.



## **Part C MULTILATERAL FOLLOW- Ups**

**6-The Moscow Conference and the Multilateral Philosophy**

**7-Arms Control & Regional Security**

**8-Economic Cooperation & Development**

**9- Water Resources**

**10- Refugees**

**11- Environment**



## **Chapter 6**

### **The Moscow Conference:**

#### **The Philosophy and Goals of the Multilaterals**

Throughout the long history of the Crusader Wars (1095-1291), the adversaries concluded many armistice treaties, but never peace accords. They were fully aware that peace was not attainable. This was also the case with the former multilateral diplomacies in the Middle East from the St James to the Geneva Conference. Nevertheless, the Madrid format went very far, calling for designing the features of peace (the Multilaterals) even before settling the territorial dispute. Of course, the Multilaterals were James Baker's carrot to obtain Shamir's approval of Israeli participation at Madrid. The Madrid ceremony did not establish the Multilaterals' rules and mandate but Baker referred to a conference that would later take place in Moscow. Would the Multilaterals succeed? If yes, they would make a precedent in the history of multilateral diplomacy not only in the Middle East but also in the entire world. Therefore, the Madrid format would be applicable to other regional conflicts.

#### **The Moscow Conference 28-29 January 1992**

During the Moscow Conference, each actor had a different view of what the Multilaterals should look like. The Jordanian Foreign Minister, Kamil Abu Jaber, underlined the necessity of the participation of Palestinians from the Diaspora. He also focused on the Palestinian refugees in Jordan, confirming Israeli responsibility in this respect. He



added that security could not be obtained only by arms control, but also by developing the standard of living for the people of the Middle East.<sup>1</sup> The speech gave due consideration to the economic crisis in Jordan resulting from Gulf War II. Jordan almost lost Gulf States' financial aid as a result of endorsing Iraq and therefore it was quite vulnerable to United States pressure regarding terms of peace with Israel. This could partially explain why Amman signed a peace treaty, which allowed Israel to lease some of the Jordanian occupied territories in return for American aid.

The Saudi Foreign Minister, Saud Al-Faisal, confirmed the organic linkage between the Bilaterals and the Multilaterals.<sup>2</sup> It is worth noting that the Gulf States, at this stage, believed in Bush's commitments to settle the conflict according to the same criteria as Iraq, which proved to be wrong. The Saudi delegation made it clear that the economic boycott should continue until the Arabs got their territories back. This also proved to be not true. Once the PLO and Jordan adhered to peace accords with Israel, the Gulf States confirmed on 1 October 1994 (less than three years after the Moscow Conference) that secondary and tertiary boycotts were no longer a threat, encouraging Palestinians and Jordanians to endorse their stance.

The Israeli Foreign Minister, David Levy, highlighted the fact that Gulf War II proved direct linkage between danger to world peace and the stockpiling of arms by dictatorships. Both Arab states and Israel faced a joint threat from the Iraqi dictatorial regime. The previous cooperation between Israel and some Arab states inspired much confidence. Jordan,

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<sup>1</sup>. "Head of Jordanian Delegation, Foreign Minister Kamil Abu Jaber, The Peace Process, The Multilateral Conference", Moscow, 28 January 1992, *Journal of Palestine Studies*. Vol. XXI, No 3, spring 1992, pp.141-42.

<sup>2</sup>. "Head of Saudi Arabian Delegation, Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal, The Peace Process, The Multilateral Conference", Moscow, 28 January 1992, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XXI. No 3, spring 1992, pp.142-43.



for example, learned from the Israelis how to use high technology in agriculture and to exploit the Dead Sea's natural resources. Israeli-Egyptian cooperation in the field of agriculture could also stand as a perfect model of regional cooperation. Israel was prepared to share with the Arabs its sophisticated technology in terms of economical irrigation methods, desalination, enriching underground water, solar energy, and overcoming disease in flora and fauna. The entire Middle East could work together so as to safeguard the environment. The Red Sea riparian states were invited to address the possibility of establishing joint ventures in the field of tourism. Israel would cooperate with the Arab states so as to rehabilitate the Palestinian refugees in the entire region.<sup>3</sup> In his speech, Levy did not refer to the Bilaterals so as to confirm that the regional cooperation should not be bound to the Israeli withdrawal from the Arab occupied territories. Furthermore, Israel's sophisticated technology meant that any regional cooperation program would favor the Arabs; therefore, by implication it should not be regarded as an Arab pressurizing card to extract territorial concessions. Regarding the refugees issue, the speech focused on rehabilitation, not the right of return. Israel was planning to settle the refugees in the hosting countries i.e. Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. It is worth recalling, here, that the Levy speech was identical to the speech to the Geneva Conference of Aha Eban, then the Israeli Foreign Minister: (1) Arab-Israeli economic relations should be designed in light of the European Community model, and (2) an economic, cultural organization should be established in the Middle East to draw cooperation in these fields. It was clear that the Arabs and Israelis were talking two different languages: the former emphasized territorial concessions and the

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<sup>3</sup>. "Head of Israeli Delegation, Foreign Minister David Levy, The Peace Process, The Multilateral Conference", Moscow, 28 January 1992, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XXI. No 3, spring 1992, pp.143-45.



participation of Palestinians from the Diaspora; the latter focused on regional cooperation and refugee rehabilitation.

Secretary of State, James Baker, concluded the conference by issuing a press communiqué, which expressed US satisfaction concerning the intervention of the various ministers and representatives.<sup>4</sup> The co-sponsors regarded water, environment, refugees, economic development, and arms control and regional security as cross boundary issues, and therefore they required multilateral cooperation.<sup>5</sup> The Working Groups' chairmanship reflected certain division of responsibilities among the extra regional partners. Japan chaired the environment to offer its own sophisticated technology in this respect and to finance huge environmental projects. Likewise, the EU had to pay the bill of regional economic cooperation and development. As for the Refugees Working Group, Canada has always been a state of immigrants and therefore it could host some hundred thousands of Palestinian refugees. Due to the fact that both the United States and the former USSR were the major arms suppliers to the region, they took over arms control and regional security. The United States confirmed its supremacy over Russia through its chairmanship of the Water Working Group; Russia was deprived of the chairmanship of any Working Group. As for the gavel holder for the five Working Groups, each group was chaired and run by a gavel-holder who was assisted by two or three co-organizers. Each gavel-holder had to ensure the smooth running of the meeting. It carried out many of the

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<sup>4</sup>. "Press Conference by Secretary of State James Baker, The Peace Process, The Multilateral Conference, Moscow", 28 January 1992, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XXI No. 3, spring 1992. p.145.

<sup>5</sup>. Steven L. Spiegel and David J. Pervin, *Practical Peacemaking in the Middle East, arms control and regional security*, Vol.1, edited by Steven L. Spiegel and David J. Pervin, Garland Publishing, INC. New York & London, 1995, p.6.



traditional tasks such as defining the agendas for the meetings, preparing documentation, and mediating quietly between the parties.<sup>6</sup>

The Moscow Conference also established a Steering Group comprising the co-sponsors (the US and Russia); the parties to conflict (Egypt, Jordan, the Palestinians, and Israel); Saudi Arabia, serving as a representative of the GCC and Tunisia for the Arab Maghreb Union; and the EU, Japan, and Canada as lead organizers of the Multilaterals. In 1993, Norway was invited to join the Steering Group.<sup>7</sup> This latter was designed to fulfill the following tasks: (1) coordinating the Multilaterals, (2) setting dates and venues for the various Working Groups, (3) hearing reports on the meetings' outcomes, (4) confirming the decision of the Working Groups, (5) setting priorities for the allocation of resources, and (6) discussing the overall vision of the future of the Middle East.<sup>8</sup> The Steering Group met at the conclusion of each round. Like the entire Multilaterals' Working Groups, it operated according to the principle of consensus and not that of majority. The Israelis believed that this was the only way to avoid the Arab states' domination as a result of their numerical superiority. However, the Arabs saw this principle as a way to establish Israeli domination of the Steering Group. Of course, the principle of consensus was the reason for paralyzing the Steering Group decision process. Proposals for the establishment of new working groups to deal with energy, human rights, public health, and Jerusalem were not approved. The Arab proposal to grant the UN a seat in the Group was not accepted either.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>. Joel Peters, *PATHWAYS TO PEACE: The Multilateral Arab-Israeli Peace Talks*, Royal Institute of International Affairs, Great Britain, London, 1996, p. 11.

<sup>7</sup>. Peters, *PATHWAYS TO PEACE*., p.12.

<sup>8</sup>. "The Multilateral Negotiations", Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <http://www.isreal-mfa.gov.il/peace/multi.html>.

<sup>9</sup>. Joel Peters, *PATHWAYS TO PEACE*., pp.9-12.



Despite the fact that the Steering Group was the supreme body in the Multilaterals, it performed only a ceremonial role. At each of its meetings, the gavel-holders of Working Groups presented oral summaries of the outcome in their respective groups. The Steering Group was confined to acknowledging summaries, determining the location and dates for the following meetings, and approving new participants in the Working Groups. Nevertheless, the '*inter-sessionals*' which took place between the meetings played a significant role in furthering the Multilaterals. An extra regional party, which acted as a '*shepherd*', organized each inter-sessional activity.<sup>10</sup>

The Working Groups yielded no official reports on the meetings' outcome. At the end of each round, the gavel-holders produced a short statement outlining the main issues discussed in the meetings. These statements were the basis of the gavel-holders reports to the Steering Group. Although the statements were not official documents, the drafting of them was not an easy task and was subject to many compromises.<sup>11</sup>

The Madrid format addressed the Multilaterals as one package: the five Working Groups served as a decision maker, whereas the Steering Committee (plenary) acted as a decision taker. Why did not the Madrid format establish a steering committee for the Bilaterals ~~as with the~~ Multilaterals? The answer is to meet the Israeli condition: each bilateral track should not be bound to another, i.e. the Syrian track has nothing to do with the Lebanese one. In other words, the target was to penetrate the Arab front so that the conclusion of partial accords with some Arab states would apply more pressure on the rest. Another question is: why did not the format set up an overall steering committee for the Bilaterals ~~and~~ Multilaterals? The answer is that the Multilaterals should not be hostage

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<sup>10</sup>. Peters, *PATHWAYS TO PEACE*., p.11.

<sup>11</sup>. Peters, *PATHWAYS TO PEACE*., p.12.



to the Bilaterals so that Israel could terminate the Arab diplomatic and economic boycott without returning to the 4 June line. On 13 January 1991, the Israeli Foreign Minister, Peres, stated that neither security nor peace could guarantee the state of Israel - only new Middle East that would make the issues of territories and refugees less important than ever.<sup>12</sup> Of course, the overall steering committees would definitely hinder such a strategy. Did the Arabs study the Madrid format before proceeding with negotiations? The answer is negative. Some were fully dependent on the vague American promises and the rest yielded to Washington's pressure.

### **Philosophy, goals, and format**

The American philosophy behind establishing the Multilaterals was: (1) familiarization with each other's goals, intentions, perceptions, anxieties, flexibility, and limits; (2) confirming that peace would bring concrete benefits to all people of the region through creating a web of functional interests regardless of political differences (win\win game); and (3) serving as a catalyst for the Bilaterals.<sup>13</sup> Hence, the United States point of view was quite close to the Israeli position, which was calling for a total divorce between the Bilaterals and Multilaterals. Having obtained US support, Israel went a bit further to claim that the Multilaterals should take priority over the Bilaterals themselves. Many Arabs bought the American argument and therefore eleven states (Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, the UAE, Oman, Tunisia, Morocco, and Mauritania) participated in the Moscow Conference on 28-29 January

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<sup>12</sup>. Abdel Moneim Said, "General Overview on the Negotiations", *International Politics Journal-El Seyassa El Dawlya (IPJ)*, January 1994, Vol.115, p.153.

<sup>13</sup>. Spiegel, *Practical Peacemaking in the Middle East, arms control...*, pp. 6-8.



1992 to set the rules for the five Working Groups. However, Syria and Lebanon boycotted the meeting for two reasons: lack of outstanding progress in the Bilaterals, and a belief that these issues were more appropriate for a normalization period, as yet very far off.<sup>14</sup>

The mode of this forum was to bring experts - not politicians or diplomats - from the region together at workshops to address the technical issues.<sup>15</sup> Regarding the decision making process, the Multilaterals have served as a forum in which the antagonists express their concerns, float ideas, and gauge reactions without any form of commitment;<sup>16</sup> it had no plenipotentiary power over the adversaries.

Looking at solving disputes by peaceful means, it went, in general, through certain gradual stages: peace keeping, then peace making, and finally peace building. Both the Rhodes Armistice Talks and the Geneva Conference led to the armistice and disengagement agreements between Arabs and Israelis. They were examples of peace keeping operations. The Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty, the Oslo Accords, and the Jordanian-Israeli Peace Treaty were models of peace making. Peace Building aims at consolidating the peace conception through a web of economic relations such as joint ventures, tourism, and trade. Following the peace treaty with Israel, Jordan, for example, started peace building measures immediately i.e. cooperation in the Gulf of Aqaba in the field of tourism. Regarding the Madrid format, the Bilaterals presented a peace making operation, whereas the Multilaterals were a peace building one. Remarkably, peace making and peace building were to be embarked on at the same time, which established a precedent in the long history of modern multilateral diplomacy. (During the Congresses of Westphalia of

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<sup>14</sup>. Spiegel, *Practical Peacemaking in the Middle East, arms control...*, p.8.

<sup>15</sup>. Spiegel, *Practical Peacemaking in the Middle East, arms control...*, p.8.

<sup>16</sup>. Spiegel, *Practical Peacemaking in the Middle East, arms control...*, p.7.



Vienna, Versailles, and San Francisco, the antagonists were firstly preoccupied with settling their dispute, and then they started to shape an order to consolidate the settlement.) Basically, their idea was that the post-war order should be designed according to the provisions of the settlement agreements. The Jordanian-Israeli Peace Treaty, for instance, addressed water distribution of the Jordan River between the two states. Despite it being a purely bilateral agreement, other riparian actors would be greatly affected. In other words, this bilateral agreement had a tangible impact on the Water Working Group. Consequently, addressing the multilateral issues before settling the bilateral disputes looked like putting the cart before the horse. Above all, the Arabs had to negotiate arms control and economic cooperation with Israel despite the fact that they had not yet terminated the state of belligerency.

The Arabs embarked on peace building measures, whereas Shamir was affirming his '*peace for peace*' formula and therefore by implication his insistence that they should capitulate to Israel. Besides, the Multilaterals were based on the assumption that the Bilaterals would definitely settle the conflict, which would apply additional pressure on the Arab actors. Of course, the United States was not ready to negotiate normalization with Japan after the air raid against the American fleet. The UK was also not prepared to normalize relations with the Nazis following their invasion of Poland in 1938 - but this logic was not valid for the Arabs.

Unlike the Bilaterals, the Multilaterals addressed issues affecting not only the ring states (Syria-Lebanon-Jordan-Egypt), but the entire region. '*Peace for peace*,' rather than '*land for peace*,' was the dominant formula at this stage and therefore Israel was eager to further the process while the Arab world was correspondingly skeptical. The Multilaterals were divided into two sub-tracks: official track diplomacy and track-two



diplomacy. The former discussed the Working Group gatherings - the official position of each actor, whereas the latter informally explored creative ideas for cooperation on these issues during symposiums and University work shops. The two-track diplomacy was significant for the official one. It served as a trial balloon by which each party passed its own proposals and tested the other side's reaction; especially many officials were involved in these forums. It also brought valuable ideas proposed by academics, specialists, and experts to the attention of the officials.

The international legal environment in which the Multilaterals were operating was quite important. Arms Control & Regional Security (ACRS), for example, had to function in line with international treaties on arms control, while the Environment Working Group (EWG) had to consider the rules of international environmental law. In other words, the terms of references were not UNSCRs 242 and 425, as with the Bilaterals, but wide sectors of public international law.

The Multilaterals brought together Arabs, Israelis, and extra regional participants (Japan, China, the EU, and Canada) into one forum. The question is why was Israel willing to have extra regional participants in the Multilaterals, whereas it completely refused their involvement in the Bilaterals with the exception of the United States? The answer is that it aimed at having international guarantees from the leading economic powers (Japan, Canada, and the EU) that they would pay the bill for peace (peace building) according to the Israeli point of view. Yet they should not be trusted regarding the peace making process i.e. the Bilaterals. The EU was denied participation in the Geneva Conference in 1973 and served only as an observer in the Madrid plenary. Would the EU attempt to design a new forum that would fulfill its target of being a real partner in the entire process?



The PLO was willing to participate in the five Working Groups to affirm its role at Madrid, and to exploit these forums to demonstrate the Palestinian point of view regarding the whole question. As in the Bilaterals, the Palestinian representation format provoked a series of diplomatic crises. In the Moscow Conference, some Palestinian delegation members were declared ineligible; three out of eight members were Palestinians from the Diaspora, and two of them residents in East Jerusalem, including the head of delegation, Faisal El-Husseiny. Yet the Palestinians underlined the fact that the regional issues were of great concern to all Palestinians and therefore participation of Palestinians from the Diaspora was essential. Secretary of State, James Baker, promised to endorse the Palestinian position in the next rounds, but argued that the Palestinians should fully comply with the Madrid format in Moscow. Yet they boycotted the conference. In solidarity with the Palestinians, Algeria and Yemen refused to attend.<sup>17</sup> Again, this was another sign of weak Arab coordination. Since the heads of Palestinian delegations to the first round of the Economic Cooperation and Development Working Group (ECDWG) and the Refugees Working Group (RWG) were prominent figures in the PLO, Israel boycotted them. Meanwhile, the Palestinians were denied participation in ACRS on the ground that this track was designed only for states. To break the logjam, the United States proposed to approve the Palestinian delegation in ACRS in return for dismissing the heads of the Palestinian delegations to the ECDWG and the RWG. Nevertheless, the American delegation withdrew the proposal before receiving the Palestinian reaction. The Egyptian delegation also discussed this issue with the Israeli one, which attached two conditions to its attendance at the ECDWG and the RWG: (1) the Palestinian delegation

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<sup>17</sup>. "The Peace Process, Special Document File", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XXI, No.3, spring 1992, p.141.



should not include any member from Jerusalem or the Palestinian National Council (PNC), and (2) dismissal of the heads of the Palestinian delegations to the ECDWG and the RWG. On 20 October 1992, the PLO reacted positively to the Israeli conditions: the heads of Palestinian delegations were absent for one round only in return for full Palestinian participation in the five Working Groups. The Israelis confirmed that their decision of participation would be confined to one round only and that they would systematically review each round in the light of new developments.<sup>18</sup> Another diplomatic crisis emerged during the RWG from 11 to 12 November 1992 held in Canada. The Israeli delegation boycotted the meeting on the ground that the deputy head of the Palestinian delegation was ineligible because of his membership in the PNC. To challenge the Israelis, he made a statement that he had participated in the PNC meetings and intended to participate in these meetings in the future. In an attempt to find a way out, the American delegation interpreted the statement as follows: his membership of the PNC lapsed in 1991 (the last round of the PNC) and therefore, he was not a member of the PNC any longer, but he could also participate in the next PNC meetings in the future. Both Palestinians and Israelis accepted this interpretation and thus the latter participated in the RWG.<sup>19</sup> The Palestinian representation issue presented a chronic problem to the Multilaterals until the DOP was signed. Both Israel and the United States adopted a problem solving strategy towards the participation of Palestinians from the Diaspora to avoid the possibility of an Arab boycott of the Multilaterals, which was in the interests of neither Washington nor Tel-Aviv. Hence, Israel was flexible regarding this issue in the Multilaterals but not in the Bilaterals.

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<sup>18</sup>. Mahmoud Abas, *The way to Oslo*, The Company for Distribution & Publication, Beirut, pp. 153-56.

<sup>19</sup>. Abas, *The way to Oslo...*, pp. 158-59.



## Chapter 7

### Arms Control & Regional Security

#### Working Group

#### (ACRS)

An arms race, in general, is the by-product of either political tension or the territorial aspiration of one state. In the Middle East, the two reasons have existed in the sense that Israel was created by force at the expense of the Palestinian people and it did not have defined its international borders. As a result, the Arabs vowed to wipe it off the map. Each side thus aimed at obtaining weapons for its own reason. This relation of '*cause and effect*' was an essential factor in determining whether the antagonists were to launch arms control negotiations at this stage. The antagonists started ACRS while they had not solved the territorial conflict - the reason for obtaining these arms. In international arms control negotiations, antagonists should have solved their political dispute before proceeding. The negotiations on security arrangements in Europe took place following World War II. The US-USSR arms control negotiations took place during the periods of relaxation i.e. after the Cuba Missile Crisis in 1962, detente in 1972, and the Gorbachev era, which commenced in 1985.<sup>1</sup> However, the Middle East was an exception.

Like most international attempts to establish security arrangements following wars, the first attempt in the Middle East took place during the cease fire in 1948 War and the Rhodes Armistice Talks in 1949, the UN established demilitarized zone between Israel on the one hand and Egypt,

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<sup>1</sup>. Abdel Moneim Said, "General Overview on the Negotiations", *International Politics Journal-El Seyassa El Dawlya (IPJ)*, January 1994, Vol.115, p.151.



Syria, Jordan, Lebanon on the other. After the Suez War in 1956, the UN international emergency force was established on the border between Egypt and Israel. In spite of the Israeli refusal to place this force on its border, Egypt accepted to settle it in Sinai unilaterally. After the 1973 War, the first disengagement, between Israel on the one hand and Egypt and Syria on the other, stipulated serious reduction in the Egyptian and Syrian forces in Sinai and Golan respectively. The second disengagement between Egypt and Israel in 1975 included an Egyptian demilitarized zone and confidence building measures (CBMs) such as early warning systems and prior notification of military activities. Nevertheless, the most significant arms control arrangements in the history of the Middle East conflict took place in the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty of 1979: demilitarized zones on two sides, early warning systems, and multinational forces. Building upon the Middle East experience, the more the antagonists move forward to peace, the more they could proceed with arms control. Due to the fact that the Bilaterals and ACRS nearly started at the same time, the question is how to find the formula of parallelism between the territorial settlements and arms control, taking into consideration that the former should precede the latter. This chapter is an attempt to answer this question.

### **The dilemma of arms control in the Middle East**

Due to the specific characteristics of arms control, they are somewhat different from negotiations on traditional issues such as territorial disputes. Antagonists continue to arm themselves in order to strengthen their position during the negotiation process, which sometimes takes too long. By the end of negotiations, they are in a different situation



from the point at which they started.<sup>2</sup> In other words, arms control negotiations should consider two factors during the negotiation process: (1) arms transfer to the antagonists, and (2) the indigenous capability of each. Otherwise, they would conclude security arrangements that fit their position at the starting point, not the current one. Of course, this would put a new burden on the shoulder of the ACRS negotiations. This was not the case with the Bilateral where the antagonists negotiated over almost static factors i.e. territory. Besides, the level and type of armament in the Middle East developed very fast from conventional weapons to weapons of mass destruction (chemical, biological, nuclear weapons, and delivery systems i.e. ballistic missiles). Hence, what was enough for the early 1990s remained insufficient for 2000. To consider these developments in terms of quality and quantity, the antagonists needed full records. Thus, transparency should have existed during the negotiations. Yet transparency was one of the ultimate goals of ACRS - not a prerequisite for their success. The UN record of arms transfers, established on 9 December 1991, could have been of use in this respect but it did not indicate the indigenous capability of weapons production of each state. Since the Israeli arms industry is quite sophisticated in comparison to that of the Arabs, the extensive usage of this record to ACRS would have served the Jewish state's interests.

The uneven development of arms poses another challenge. The antagonists usually had different views on military doctrine. Each state tailored its own doctrine according to the size of territory, population, economic power, possible threats, and the like. It developed its military posture according to these factors, which made this posture unique. Therefore, each state would focus on the strong points of the other's

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<sup>2</sup>. Said , "General Overview on the Negotiation", p.153.



military posture.<sup>3</sup> The Arabs enjoyed superiority in quantity of conventional weapons while Israel's were superior in quality. As regards weapons of mass destruction, however, Israel was unchallenged.<sup>4</sup>

The Israeli security concept focused on three elements of the Arabs' military posture. In the first place, the ratio between the standing ground forces of Israel and the Arab ring states was extremely negative for Israel (1:6). Therefore, the Arab side had a great incentive to start a war by surprise before mobilization of the Israeli reserve forces (the necessary time for mobilization the reserve was 48 hours). In the second, there was the topographic factor: the West Bank dominates the Coastal Plain, which was the most essential part of Israel, the width of which was only from 13 to 30 kilometers. The Golan Heights also dominates the Jordan valleys adjacent to the international border. In the third, potential acts of war against Israel could be initiated either by neighboring or by distant Arab or Muslim states (Iraq-Pakistan-Iran), or by both.<sup>5</sup> The different definitions of the fundamental security needs and military doctrine would create significant problems in ACRS. The arms control negotiations between the US and the USSR, for example, face such a problem. The Soviets were concerned about US technological advances in both warhead accuracy and in strategic defenses. The Americans were preoccupied with the Soviet capability of launching the first strike. To complicate the matter, the two sides had different definitions of each other's objectives: each side believed that the other wanted to extend its

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<sup>3</sup>. Said, "General Overview on the Negotiations", p.153.

<sup>4</sup>. Said, "General Overview on the Negotiations", p.154.

<sup>5</sup>. Aryeh Shalev, "Trends and Risks of Security in the Middle East", *Arms Control, Confidence-Building and Security Cooperation in the Mediterranean, North Africa and the Middle East*, edited by Fred Tanner, University of Malta, Malta, December 1994, pp.27-8.



ideology throughout the entire world.<sup>6</sup> This was exactly the case with the Middle East conflict. The Arabs believed that Israel aimed at maintaining its nuclear capability during peace in order to dominate the entire region. The Israeli Labor party perceived nuclear capabilities as a weapon of last resort if the Arabs launched a war of annihilation.

Arms control negotiations usually have an impact on third parties. The UK, France, and China, for example, have been affected by the Washington-Moscow arms control negotiations. In the case of ACRS, Iran, India, and Pakistan would be significantly concerned.<sup>7</sup> The absence of some vital actors would undermine the entire process. Israel, for example, believed that the absence of Iraq, Libya, Iran, and Algeria made ACRS incomplete.<sup>8</sup> Hence, it was extremely important to define the number of participants; otherwise, negotiations would be doomed to failure. The Soviets, for example, attempted to include British and French nuclear forces during arms control negotiations with the United States in 1981-83, which was completely rejected by the West. Had the Soviets insisted on their position, negotiations would have been doomed from the very start.<sup>9</sup>

Arms control negotiations tend to involve persons of high political rank because vital national interests are at stake. They are also highly

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<sup>6</sup>. P.Terrence Hopmann with collaboration of Daniel Druckman, "Arm Control and Arms Reduction View I", *International Negotiations Analysis, Approaches, Issues*, edited by Victor A. Kremenjuk, Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Fransisco.Oxford,1991, pp.270-71.

<sup>7</sup>. Said, "General Overview on the Negotiation", p.153.

<sup>8</sup>. General Ahmed Abdelhalem, "Arms Control and the Israeli Superiority in terms of quality", *IPJ*, October 1993, Vol.114, p.122.

<sup>9</sup>.Alexei G.Arbatou, "Arms Control and Arms Reduction: View II", *International Negotiations Analysis, Approaches, Issues*, edited by Victor A.kremenjuk, Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Fransisco, Oxford, 1991, p.299.



complicated because of the large number of technical issues involved i.e. weaponry, military doctrine, verification and the like.<sup>10</sup> Negotiators' full awareness of the capabilities and limitations of monitoring technology could be one of significant factors that would encourage them to consider or dismiss arms control proposals.<sup>11</sup> They also usually address issues that are subject to a great deal of bureaucratic and political conflict. Bargaining occurs within as well as among states. Negotiations between governments and their parliaments can be as intense as negotiations with other states.<sup>12</sup> This could be relevant to Israel; the Israeli Knesset has the right carefully to ratify any agreement in this respect. By contrast, Arab parliaments are just forums to confirm unconditional support to any decision that has been taken by a head of state.

Parity has always been a key issue in any arms control negotiations. Once Hitler had come to power in 1933, he took the western stance (especially the UK and France) regarding arms limitation<sup>13</sup> as a point of departure to convince his people that Germany had no other option but to arm itself. This explains why many Arab leaders tried to acquire nuclear capabilities. However, the Israelis insisted on monopolizing deterrence capabilities in the region because they were convinced that a single military defeat would threaten the very existence of the Jewish state. Thus, the *"Israeli military doctrine has been rooted in the objective of not only defeating any imaginable coalition of Arab*

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<sup>10</sup>. G.arbatou, "Arm Control and Arms Reduction View I", p.270.

<sup>11</sup>. Arian Pregonzer and John M. Taylor, "The Role of Technology in Regional Security", *Practical Peacemaking in the Middle East*, , *Arms Control and Regional Security*, Vol. I ,edited by Steven L. Spiegel and David J. Pervin, Garland Publishing INC. New York & London 1995, pp. 187-188.

<sup>12</sup>. G.arbatou , "Arm Control and Arms Reduction View I", p.275.

<sup>13</sup>.In the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments conference held in Geneva in 1932, the USSR put forward a proposal calling for general and complete disarmament, while the western powers proposed a wide variety of restricted arms. Germany, which was unilaterally and compulsory disarmed after World War I, reserved the right to rearm unless other nations disarmed to its level. The western powers were not ready to accommodate the German demand.



*states, but mastering enough offensive power to preempt an attack and carry the battle onto its neighbor's territory.*"<sup>14</sup> Looking at the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty in 1979, the security arrangements were clearly in favor of Israel - Sinai was almost demilitarized. Furthermore, Syria had already accepted unbalanced security arrangements in favor of Israel at the ratio 10:6. In other words, ACRS was prepared to set up unbalanced security arrangements in favor of Israel as well.

The arms race in the Middle East was characterized by diverse local antagonisms, which led to a vicious circle. When, for example, Saudi Arabia determined to compete with Iran, it triggered anxiety in Israel. When Israel responded by enhancing its own arsenal, it stimulated escalation in Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. And the growing power of Syria might trigger Turkey, Iraq, and Iran. If Iran responded to Syria, Saudi Arabia would be anxious again, and so on. Thus, arms control patterns that proved successful elsewhere were not necessarily relevant for the Middle East. Arms control in Central Europe, for example, was possible because all the states involved were clustered in two blocks (NATO and Warsaw Pact) which was not exactly the case with the region.<sup>15</sup> It was true that the Middle East could be clustered into two blocks: the Arab states and Iran on the one hand and Israel on the other, but the internal conflict of the former block could not be omitted.

By 1991, at which the ACRS took place, the Arab states<sup>16</sup> and

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<sup>14</sup>.Yahya M. Sadowshi, *Scuds or Butter? The Political Economy of Arms Control in the Middle East*, The Brookings Institution, Washington D.C. 1993, pp.57-8.

<sup>15</sup>. Sadowshi, *Scuds or Butter?*, pp.6-7.

<sup>16</sup>. During the 1980's, about one third of the international weapon trade was confined to the Middle East. During the 1970s, when oil prices rose from less than \$2 a barrel to nearly \$40, the Arab oil states, especially the Gulf became fabulously wealthy and thereby an arms race was made possible. During the 1980s, the picture was completely the opposite: revenues declined while expenses continued to rise. The income of Arab petroleum revenues dropped from \$216 billion in 1980 to \$54 billion in 1986. Meanwhile, growing population and rising food imports forced some Arab states to borrow huge sums. Jordan also lost the cash received from Iraq and Kuwait (\$185 million annually) following the Gulf



Iran<sup>17</sup> faced serious economic crises, and therefore cut down their military budgets was necessary. The situation was not much better in Israel: Shimon Peres, then Prime Minister, confirmed, “*in our case, defense needs are growing, while the economy is not.*”<sup>18</sup> Hence, under these circumstances, the entire Middle East regarded arms control as an attractive choice.

Despite the fact that the ACRS aimed at concluding “*regional security arrangements that would set the base for further peaceful co-existence between all parties of the region,*”<sup>19</sup> it would be highly affected by the international environment of arms control for two reasons: first, international arms control treaties were convenient terms of reference to ACRS, especially because most of the antagonists had already adhered to them;<sup>20</sup> and secondly, the evolution of arms control and security

war II. Meanwhile, some Syrian intellectuals advocated that Damascus should cut down its military expenditure. (See Sadowshi, *Scuds or Butter?*)

<sup>17</sup>. When the Gulf War I ended in 1988, Iran had to confront two major challenges: rebuilding its military forces, and developing its fragile economy. The Iranian head of state, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, confirmed that economic reconstruction deserved first claim and proposed a much smaller and gradual investment in the military. This approach was received warmly in the Majlis, the Iranian Parliament. (See Sadowshi, *Scuds or Butter?*)

<sup>18</sup>. The annual defense budget declined from \$7 billion in 1981 to \$5.9 billion in 1991. After the Gulf War II, the Israeli chief of staff, General Ehud Barak, adopted a military reconfiguration plan to cut down the military spending in many areas, aiming at covering the development costs of antiballistic missile and satellite early warning system. He cancelled funding for most journals published by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), closed its popular radio station, and reduced the number of IDF maneuvers. Yet the Israeli government failed to free enough funds to finance the pioneer new weapon technology and to assimilate the Jewish Soviet immigrants. (See Sadowshi, *Scuds or Butter?*)

<sup>19</sup>. Dr. Mahmoud A.J. Ali (Member of the Palestinian Delegation to ACRS), “Arms Control And Confidence Building Measures in the Middle East”, *Arms Control, Confidence-Building and Security Cooperation in the Mediterranean, North Africa and the Middle East*, edited by Fred Tanner, Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies, University of Malta, Malta, December 1994, p.79.

<sup>20</sup>. All Middle East states, including Iran, have adhered to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) except for Israel. This situation provoked Arab anger and was called on Israel to join the treaty. However, Israel refused to adhere to the NPT immediately with implicit endorsement from the US, confirming that such a step could be taken only after reaching a comprehensive peace in the region. Egypt led group of some Arab states that made their signature of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) conditional on the Israeli adherence to the NPT. Remarkably, informal arrangements for arms control could also have an impact on the ACRS as well i.e. the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR). Many Arab states also believed that MTCR was discriminatory because it restricted missile



arrangements themselves could be a great help to tailor a convenient security regime for the region.

ACRS would be aggravated by the policies of the major arms suppliers (the US and the USSR), who sought cash from arms sales to reduce the costs of their own acquisitions programs, and influence from them on the course of the conflict.<sup>21</sup> Although Bush confirmed, “*it would be tragic*” if Gulf War II was followed by a renewal of the arms race in the region, the US emerged as the largest weapons’ seller in the region. During the 1992 election campaign, Bush lobbied hard for new arms sales to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait so as to stimulate the American economy. To obtain the approval of Israel, the Bush administration offered it weapons worth \$700 million and collaborated more closely with it to develop advanced military technology. When a debate started on the scope of the US arm sales, an American official replied, “*there [was] absolutely no contradiction between arms control and arms sales.*”<sup>22</sup> The Russian attitude had not been so different. After the collapse of the USSR, the Russian government viewed arms sales as one of its outstanding foreign exchange earners. Meanwhile, the decline of the Russian economy began to have a negative impact on the physical welfare of high military officials, and therefore the Russian Defense Minister, Pavel Grachev, gave permission to military units to sell surplus military equipment in their possession. Regardless of the Russian claim to be adopting an arms control policy close to western norms, no close control could be maintained over what was sold.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, the Chairman of the

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technology to the Arabs whereas Israel enjoyed full American support to develop medium and long-range missiles. Therefore, some Arab states and Iran have made attempts to obtain this technology from North Korea.

<sup>21</sup>.Sadowshi, *Scuds or Butter?*, pp.7-8.

<sup>22</sup>.Sadowshi, *Scuds or Butter?*, pp.74-5.

<sup>23</sup>.Yitzhak Klein, *Russian Arms Transfer Policy and the Middle East*, Dep. of Political Science, Bar-Ilan University, Israel, pp.2-5.



official military trading companies insisted that “*Russia arms sales to the Middle East did not upset the balance of power in the region or make aggression more likely.*”<sup>24</sup> To sum up, the arms transfer policy of the co-sponsors clearly contradicted their role in ACRS - arms control ran up against their interests.

Among other arms control initiatives in the Middle East,<sup>25</sup> the Bush and Clinton initiatives stood as landmarks, especially the US role as the ACRS sponsor. After Gulf War II, Bush proposed an initiative for arms control in 1991. The initiative referred to “*freezing of acquisition and production*” of medium and long-range missiles and nuclear weapons in completely different contexts; the former to be eliminated within a short period of time, which was not the case with the latter, even though it supported establishing a Nuclear Free Zone (NFZ). It also called for prompt elimination of chemical and biological weapons. Therefore, the

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<sup>24</sup> Klein, *Russian Arms Transfer Policy and the Middle East*, pp.11-12.

<sup>25</sup> In 1950, the US, the UK, and France declared their intentions to curb the arms race in the Middle East. The tripartite declaration, which was accepted by both Arabs and Israelis, allowed the flow of necessary arms for defensive purposes only. However, this suppliers' cartel was not effective for two reasons: first, it was extremely ambiguous regarding the definition of necessary arms; and secondly, it failed to get all major arms suppliers involved, notably the USSR. On 9 December 1974, the General Assembly adopted an Egyptian- Iranian proposal to establish a nuclear weapons free zone (NWFZ) in the Middle East whereas Israel abstained. Upon Egypt's request, the Secretary General carried out a survey in this regard, stipulating total absence of nuclear weapons in the region and an effective verification system. In April 1990, Egypt went a bit further. Mubarak, proposed to establish a zone free of weapons of mass destruction (FZWMD) in the Middle East. In 1990, Jordan floated a proposal, which had linked debt reduction and arms control. The solution was not the write-off of debts in a vacuum, but as a part of an arms control and reduction package coupled with appropriate economic adjustment policies. In 1988, the Israeli Prime Minister, Shamir, reaffirmed his country's endorsement of a free zone of nuclear weapons in the Middle East through direct negotiations among the antagonists. He also proposed to establish zone free of chemical weapons in the Middle East, confirming the necessity of halting the arms race and prohibiting chemical weapons. However, the Israeli Foreign Minister, Shimon Peres, elaborated the most comprehensive Israeli initiative in the adherence ceremony of CWC in 1993. Israel proposed to establish an FZWM and delivery system. He introduced a new notion, “*destabilizing weapons.*” It referred to all weapons, which were proved to be a stabilizing factor in the Middle East i.e. conventional, chemical, and biological weapons, and wide range missiles. Of course, nuclear weapons were not destabilizing because they have never been used in the Middle East. In other words, he aimed at addressing all types of weapons, avoiding any discussion on the nuclear ones to have leverage over the Arabs.



ultimate outcome was to eliminate chemical and biological weapons and missiles promptly, leaving Israel the only nuclear power in the region for years to come. In comparison to the Bush initiative, that of Clinton (outlined in his speech to the General Assembly in September 1993) was clearer regarding the Israeli nuclear capabilities. It omitted any demand for Israel to submit to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) but focused only on maintaining the status quo. The US, simply, has never viewed the Israeli nuclear arsenal as a destabilizing factor in the Middle East.<sup>26</sup> In other words, these two initiatives were just a gimmick to seize the Arab deterrent (chemical- biological- missiles) by virtue of a step-by-step policy. Of course, this was for the sake of serving Israel's unspoken policy: depending on the US to sustain its nuclear monopoly.<sup>27</sup> This could explain why the US viewed both Iraq and Iran as a threat: they have worked against the Israeli policy.

According to the US initiatives, the balance of power meant Israeli superiority in terms of quality and quantity on the ground; that this would consolidate stability in the region, whereas the Arabs' armament would escalate tension. To illustrate the Western point of view, suppose that there was a consensus that introduction of certain classes of surface-to-surface missiles into the Middle East would jeopardize the balance of power between the antagonists. Hence, arms limitation on the deployment of such system would be useful. By contrast, suppose that surface-to-surface missiles were already in the inventories of these antagonists and

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<sup>26</sup>.By 1968 the CIA had informed President Lyndon Johnson of the existence of Israeli nuclear weapons, and in July of 1970 Richard Helms' Director of the CIA, gave this information to the senate Foreign Relations Committee. These and later disclosures were not followed by censure of Israel or by reductions of assistance to her. See Kenneth N. Waltz, "Toward Nuclear peace, Military Issues in the Post Cold War Ear", A shortened and revised version of Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: more maybe better*, Adelphi Papers, No.171. London: International Institute of Strategic Studies, 1981, p.553.

<sup>27</sup>.Geoffrey Kemp, "Cooperation Security in the Middle East", *Global Engagement*, edited by Jamme E.Nolan, Brookings, 1994,p.395.



they were effective deterrents - as Israel argued regarding nuclear and missiles arsenals. In this case, asymmetrical reduction of the Israeli nuclear capabilities would contribute to instability rather than stability.<sup>28</sup> To sum up, the US initiatives (so-called the '*international initiatives*') were weakening the Arabs' position and endorsing the Israeli one in the ACRS.

Two major Israeli schools of thought on ACRS were quite influential in the minds of Israeli policymakers: the liberal school represented by the Labor Party and the conservative one embodied in the Likud Party. The former approach was explained by Peres, then Foreign Minister, in his volume '*The New Middle East*', directly issued after signing of the DOP in 1993. By virtue of new technology, the basic elements of classical strategies on national security, which were based on time, space, and quantity, were questioned. The value of time and space were diminishing because of the tremendous speed of ground-to-ground missiles. Physical barriers (mountains, rivers, deserts) had become less important by virtue of artificial intelligence weapons. Quantities of conventional weapons were now less influential due to weapons of mass destruction.<sup>29</sup> To sum up, the classical theories based on the assumption that the more land a state keeps under control, the more security it acquires became less relevant. Therefore, land acquisition did not enjoy outstanding importance any more. As a reaction, Netanyahu, then the chairman of the Likud party and the head of the opposition, responded to Peres with his volume '*A Place Among the Nation*.' He embraced the assumption that land acquisition was as significant as ever to the security of the state of Israel. Israel was facing a real problem on the Eastern Front

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<sup>28</sup>. Kemp, "Cooperation Security in the Middle East", p.413.

<sup>29</sup>. Shimon Peres with Arye Naor, *The New Middle East*, Henry Holt and Company, Inc. New York, 1993. pp.75-78.



(Syria-Iraq) for two reasons: (a) it was quite close to the Israeli centers of population, and (b) the standing army of these two states gave them the lead over Israel by a ratio of 7 to 1. Therefore, Israel should continue to keep the West Bank and Golan.<sup>30</sup> Besides, the Labor and the Left had been much more reluctant than the Likud and the Right to acknowledge the Israeli nuclear capabilities.<sup>31</sup> Labor was prepared to negotiate on the 'land for peace' formula; if Israel gave up territory seized in 1967, it would be quite vulnerable to any Arab military attack and therefore it should enhance its nuclear capabilities. This could explain why doves would be much more intransigent than hawks regarding the nuclear issue during the ACRS.<sup>32</sup>

### **The official track diplomacy**

The ACRS held a wide assortment of activities such as workshops, educational seminars, tours of arms control-related facilities and paper

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<sup>30</sup>. Benjamin Netanyahu, *A place Among the Nations*, Dar El-Jaleel for publishing and Palestinian Research and Studies, second edition, Amman, 1995, pp.319-26.

<sup>31</sup>. There were two Israeli approaches concerning the Israeli nuclear capabilities: (1) they were means to impose a territorial settlement according the Israeli vision, and (2) they were a weapon of last resort. (See Dr. Mahmoud Karem, "Comment on ACRS," *The Arab-Israeli Negotiations and the Future of Peace in the Middle East*, edited by Moustafa Elwy, the Center of Political research, Cairo University, 1994, pp.392-3. In 1991, the public opinion polls demonstrated that 88% of Israelis agreed that the use of nuclear weapons under certain circumstances was justified in principle. Referring to the US and NATO rejection to limit deployment of nuclear weapons in Europe as long as the Warsaw Pact enjoyed a major advantage in conventional forces; Israel should resist any limits on its nuclear deterrent until the threat of Arab conventional weapons was reduced significantly. (See Gerald M. Steinberg, "Conflicting Approaches to Arms Control in the Middle East: Finding a Common Ground", *Practical Peacemaking in the Middle East: Arms Control and Regional Security*, Vol I, edited by Steven L. Spiegel and David J. Pervin, Garland Publishing, INC., New York and London 1995, pp. 92-3

<sup>32</sup>. Sadowshi, *Scuds or Butter?*, p.43.



preparation to stimulate discussion.<sup>33</sup> ACRS was supposed to advance through four cumulative stages. The first phase would approach the history and modalities of arms control measures adopted in the Middle East. It was also an opportunity to get the antagonists familiar with one another's security concerns. The parties presented papers on their own long-term security goals and principles (these papers will be discussed in the following pages). At this stage, they carried out visits to several Arab states so that the Israeli officials would be welcomed in their capitals. During the second stage, the parties concerned sought to obtain consensus regarding a list of confidence-building security measures as well as discuss abstract issues such as military doctrine. Egypt, for example, hosted a verification seminar, which included a visit to the Multilateral Forces and Observers in Sinai. In preparing the parties to negotiate the transmission of military data, Turkey held a workshop on information exchange and the mechanics of reporting unusual military activities. The Netherlands addressed the significance of telecommunications in managing relations and the experience of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) communications network. A maritime measures workshop focusing on avoiding incidents at sea and cooperative search took place in Canada. These activities aimed at developing a cadre of political and military experts to negotiate confidence-building measures (CBMs). The third stage aimed at reaching agreement on a declaration of principles concerning the objectives of ACRS. To that end, several extra-regional parties and the antagonists engaged in negotiations

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<sup>33</sup>. Micheal D. Yaffe, "An Overview of the Middle East Peace Process Working Group on Arms Control and Regional Security", *Arms Control, Confidence-Building And Security Cooperation in the Mediterranean, North Africa and the Middle East*, edited by Fred Tanner, Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies, University of Malta, Malta, December 1994, p.94.



on preventing incidents at sea and establishing a regional telecommunications network. The fourth phase, and by no means the final stage, involved: (1) the actual implementation of what had been agreed upon, and (2) establishment of permanent institutions that would participate in progressing arms control measures both before and during the era of peace, such as regional security centers, an ACRS data bank, and a communication network.<sup>34</sup>

The antagonists also presented papers on their own long-term security goals and principles i.e. Egypt, Jordan, Palestinians, Oman, and Israel. Being the most active actor in the Arab world with prominent initiatives, Egypt adopted a position that was the cornerstone of the Arab stance. Looking at the different papers presented, the members of the group agreed upon the following significant points: first, ending the arms race in the region; secondly, achieving security at the lowest level of armament; thirdly, establishing a zone free of weapons of mass destruction; fourthly, confirming the importance of an effective verification regime; fifthly, affirming the outstanding role of CBMs; and sixth, drawing lessons from others' experience. However, they also diverged over a series of crucial issues.

Both sides confirmed a clear linkage between the development on the Bilaterals and the ACRS and vice versa. However, the Israelis added two factors: (1) economic cooperation among the states of the region, and (2) democratization of the entire Middle East. Priority was a significant problem as well. The Arab priority was weapons of mass destruction in general and nuclear weapons in particular and then advanced military technologies in outer space. The Israeli priority was conventional and destabilizing weapons (chemical weapons, biological weapons, ballistic

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<sup>34</sup>.Yaffe , "An Overview of the Middle East Peace Process Working Group on Arms Control and Regional Security", pp.95-7.



missiles). Regarding the role of international organizations in verification, the Arabs did not oppose regional verification regimes tailored for the Middle East, but emphasized adherence to the NPT, and therefore acceptance of IAEA safeguards. By contrast, the Israeli position was based on omitting the international dimension, confirming the regional role only. The Arabs believed that CBMs should address different weapons systems, especially nuclear ones. Nevertheless, the Israeli paper focused only on those, which had been successful in enhancing stability in the region i.e. the CBMs on the Egyptian-Israeli border.

The papers also portrayed unequivocal differences in terms of four major issues: (1) parity, (2) sources of threat, (3) the incremental approach, and (4) security needs. The antagonists had different perceptions of the concept of parity. The Arabs emphasized quantitative and qualitative symmetry, including indigenous capabilities, whereas the Israelis indicated that their structural vulnerabilities would have to be compensated by offsetting capabilities i.e. a nuclear arsenal. Regarding the sources of threats, the Arab side believed that states present the only source of threats. Nevertheless, the Israelis had a long list which included states, military alliances among states of the region (referring to the charter of the Arab League, which included Cooperative Defense Accord), non-state entities( the Palestinians), and terrorism. The Israeli paper focused only on the political and military coalitions among the states of the region, omitting those between states of the Middle East and other states out of the region - the US-Israeli Strategic Alliance concluded during Reagan term. Although both Arabs and Israelis advocated an incremental approach through a step-by-step policy, the Arab side embraced a comprehensive deal through clear linkage among all types of weapons whereas the Israelis believed the opposite; progress in conventional weapons, for example, should not be conditional on



progress in nuclear ones. Finally, the Israeli paper confirmed the concept of deterrence as a basic security need (offsetting capabilities), which was always related to weapons of mass destruction. On the other hand, the Arabs' main target was to establish a zone free of weapons of mass destruction. Some of the Israeli delegation members acknowledged reality, which meant approving the status quo (the Israeli nuclear capabilities).<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, Israel refused to consider the Arab proposal of linking ballistic missiles with anti-missile missiles, affirming the purely defensive nature of the latter.<sup>36</sup>

To sum up, Israeli nuclear capabilities were the essence of the dispute between the antagonists. The Arabs' major target was to reach an agreement that would make Israel renounce these capabilities. On the other hand, Israel, with implicit US endorsement, believed in its exclusive right to acquire such capabilities so as to meet its own structural vulnerabilities. Hence, the Arabs regarded ACRS as a convenient forum to address Israeli nuclear capabilities at the very earliest stage. Yet the Israeli delegation refused to consider this issue at all.

## Track two

The California conference<sup>37</sup> made a rich contribution to promoting ACRS. In the first place, it served as a trial balloon because it was a semi-official forum in which officials portrayed different views on arms control. Hence, each party could measure the reaction of the other parties

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<sup>35</sup>.Abdelhalem, "Arms Control and the Israeli Superiority in terms of quality", p.122.h

<sup>36</sup>.General Ahmed Abdoulhalem, "Arms Limitation in the Peace negotiations," *The Arab Israeli Negotiations and the Future of Peace in the Middle East*, edited by Dr. Moustafa Elwy, The Center of Political Research, Cairo University, Cairo, 1994, p.379.

<sup>37</sup>.In June 1993, the Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation, and Center for International Relations of the University of California sponsored an international conference aimed at addressing ACRS. Scholars and intellectuals from different states, including Arabs and Israelis, presented papers, expressing their own point of view on how to boost the process.



on regional security. In the second, it illustrated previous experience of relevance to ACRS. It is worth recalling that the parties concerned had already agreed to seek benefits from other regional and international experiences.

As for trial balloons, a member of the Egyptian delegation to ACRS proposed a new approach to dealing with the Israeli nuclear question. Since the Israeli policy on nuclear capabilities was based on ambiguity, one did not know what was to be negotiated or controlled so that ACRS was scrambled. Rather than suggesting that Israel declared what it had, it could declare what it did not have. It would declare that it did not have naval nuclear mines and thereby encourage the parties to adhere to an agreement on incidents at sea. Or it could announce that it did not possess nuclear artillery in order to give more credibility to prior notification of force movements, and so on.<sup>38</sup> Jordan also floated its idea through the science advisor of King Hussein of Jordan, Abdullah Toukan. He proposed to establish a cooperative security regime<sup>39</sup> in the Middle East in light of the CSCE experience. To that end, a conflict prevention and crisis management center would be established somewhere in the region; its mandate would be to carry out studies on possible sources of threats and conflicts, and facilitate the settlement of disputes in a peaceful manner.<sup>40</sup> An Israeli scholar observed that all proposals presented by

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<sup>38</sup> .General Ahmed Fakhr, "Innovative Proposals for Arms Control in the Middle East", *Practical Peacemaking in the Middle East: Arms Control and Regional Security*, Vol. I, edited by Steven L. Spiegel and David J. Pervin, Garland Publishing, INC., New York and London 1995, pp. 92-3.

<sup>39</sup> . There are basically two types of security regimes: collective security, and cooperative security. For the former, it aimed at deterring aggression through counter-threat and defeating aggression if it occurred; yet, the latter is designed to prevent such threats from arising, and making preparations for them more difficult. In other words, any cooperative security regime should include collective security provisions.

<sup>40</sup> . Abdullah Toukan, "The Middle East Peace Process, Arms Control, and Regional Security", *Practical Peace-making in the Middle East: Arms Control and Regional Security*, Vol. I, edited by Steven L. Spiegel and David J. Pervin, Garland Publishing, INC New York & London 1995, pp.28-41.



Israel and the Arabs contrasted sharply about Israeli nuclear capabilities:<sup>41</sup> Israel considered this issue as the last step in the process; the Arabs believed that it should be given first priority. The Israelis regarded the Arab efforts to force Israel to give up its nuclear option before achieving a comprehensive peace as “*the Arab states' wish to retain the option of waging wars against Israel, with nothing to worry about.*” In light of this experience, Israel should resist any limits on its nuclear deterrent until the threat of Arab conventional weapons was reduced significantly. Hence, Israel should refuse the Arab demand that the Dimona nuclear reactor should be opened to inspection, which would limit Israeli capabilities in the long run. Nevertheless, a set of CBMs of no relevance to the Israeli nuclear capabilities - such as Pre-notifications of certain military activities - could promote ARCS.<sup>42</sup>

As an endorsement of Peres' new concept of security based on modern technology, two high-ranking American technicians argued that unattended ground sensor systems, aerial over flight systems, satellite systems, image processing interfaces, information management and data fusion systems, data security systems, portable inspector equipment, and methods for on-site inspection could be fundamental factors in the design of a security system in the Middle East.<sup>43</sup>

On the other hand, the track-two approach was more promising in regard to the exploitation of CMBs as a means of handling the problem of ‘outsiders’ such as Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Iran. The more effective

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<sup>41</sup>.Gerald M. Steinberg, professor of Center for Strategic Studies at Bar-Ilan University in Israel and arms control consultant to the Israeli Foreign Ministry.

<sup>42</sup>.Gerald M. Steinberg, “Conflicting Approaches to Arms Control in the Middle East: Finding a Common Ground”, *Practical Peacemaking in the Middle East: Arms Control and Regional Security*, Vol. I, edited by Steven L. Spiegel and David J. Pervin, Garland Publishing, INC., New York and London 1995, pp. 92-3.

<sup>43</sup>.Arian Pregonzer and John M. Taylor, “The Role of Technology in Regional Security”, *Practical Peacemaking in the Middle East: Arms Control and Regional Security*, Vol. I, edited by Steven L. Spiegel and David J. Pervin, Garland Publishing INC. New York & London 1995, pp. 187-188.



CBMs were agreed upon among the antagonists, the higher would be the anxiety felt by outsiders towards the process - simply because they would fear being left isolated. Therefore, the likelihood of reconsidering their position would increase, especially in regard to those CBMs that did not diminish the insider's capability to respond and deter any threat by a third party.<sup>44</sup>

The official papers presented in the official track diplomacy underlined the importance of drawing lessons from the experience of previously established nuclear weapon-free zones. The informal track highlighted uninhabited (Antarctic, outer space, seabed) and inhabited (Latin America, South Pacific) areas. The latter are of particular relevance to the Middle East. Both the Latin American NWFZ (established by the treaty of Tlatelolco in 1967) and the South Pacific NWFZ (established by the Treaty of Raratonga in 1986) covered large populated areas. Building upon these experiences, a NWFZ in the Middle East would create obligations on three groups of states: first, the zonal participant states; secondly, extra-regional non-nuclear states; and thirdly, nuclear states. Regarding the participants, they should: (1) exclude possession, acquisition or manufacture of nuclear weapons or nuclear explosive devices, (2) foreclose research and development related to nuclear weapons or explosives, and (3) open all nuclear facilities to international safeguards. The extra-regional states should refrain from taking any action that would undermine the objectives for which the zone was established. They should also undertake to discourage research in restricted areas of activity. The nuclear states' obligations would include: (1) respecting all provisions of the treaty, (2) refraining from attacking or

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<sup>44</sup>. Etel Solingen, "Modalities and Sequences in the Multilateral Arms Control Talks in the Middle East", *Practical Peacemaking in the Middle East: Arms Control and Regional Security*, Vol. I, edited by Steven L. Spiegel and David J. Pervin, Garland Publishing INC. New York & London 1995, pp. 231-243.



threatening to attack the states of the said region by nuclear weapons (negative security assurances), and (3) assisting any NWFZ party being attacked or under threat of attack by another nuclear weapons state (positive security assurances). Thus, two scales of verifications were required: (1) international safeguards (IAEA) because this zone is a part of the global nonproliferation regime, and (2) special verification arrangements to allay the fears of the states of the region. In the case of the Middle East, where tension, insecurity, and distrust prevail, the tentative arrangements should be more far-reaching than the IAEA safeguards.<sup>45</sup>

The proposed zone in the Middle East would be different from the Latin American zone and South Pacific one in the sense that it has neighbors around almost its entire periphery e.g. Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Cyprus, Malta, Greece, Italy, Spain, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Chad, Ethiopia, and others. Thus, a dialogue between the zonal and neighboring states would be of great importance. For example, they have to withdraw any nuclear weapons targeted at the zone or those of short range and deployed very close to it. Pakistani nuclear capabilities would be addressed within this framework. The reservations were linked to the question whether a state could simultaneously be a member of the zone, and also engaged in a strategic military alliance with a nuclear-weapon state i.e. Israeli-US Strategic Alliance. This was possible provided that the two sets of commitments were not contradictory. Another issue was whether the states of the zone were members of the NPT. If yes, non-possession could be achieved through the NPT. If the zone encompasses states not members of the NPT

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<sup>45</sup>. Solingen "Modalities for Verifying a Middle East Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone", pp.163-185.



or nuclear states (Israel), a special regime must be drafted. In other words, the proposed zone would need to design a special regime to approach Israeli nuclear capabilities.<sup>46</sup>

## Conclusion

ACRS was designed to reach certain goals that definitely went beyond its capability; in particular, the antagonists did not come anywhere close to territorial settlements. It was pointless to address the effect of the conflict (arms race) before overcoming the cause of the dispute (the Israeli occupation). Furthermore, several significant actors were absent. Syria and Lebanon believed that it was premature to address this issue while Golan and south Lebanon were under occupation. Iran refused to have anything to do with the Madrid Conference 1991 on principle. Above all, both Arabs and Israelis were deeply divided on Israeli nuclear capabilities: the former insisted on addressing this issue immediately, the latter confirmed that this should be tackled at the very last point of the process. In the art of negotiations, if antagonists address two or more sensitive issues and there is debate as to which they should start with, the best tactic is to apply the '*rotating agenda tactic*,' with different sub-committees to approach these issues simultaneously. Applying this to ACRS, it should have designed a Conventional sub-committee, and a Non-conventional sub-committee. Each of these might have been divided into different branches - chemical weapons, biological weapons, nuclear weapons, delivery systems (medium and long-range

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<sup>46</sup>. Jan Prawitz, "The Concept of NWFZ and the Middle East", updated as of 29 March 1994 of a paper presented at the 3<sup>rd</sup> *Pugwash Workshop on the Middle East* at Tynningo near Stockholm, Sweden 10-12 December 1993.



missiles) and anti-missile missiles. However, this tactic was not possible in this case because of the Israeli refusal to tackle nuclear weapons at this early stage, probably at all. The Israeli paper underlined that structural vulnerability should be compensated by extraordinary capabilities i.e. a nuclear arsenal as a weapon of last resort. Besides, the West believed that Israel's nuclear capabilities had been and continued to be a stabilizing factor in the region. In other words, the Arab position, which stressed the urgency of Israeli adherence to the NPT, was unrealistic. No wonder Egypt suspended its participation in ACRS because of the Israeli refusal to address the nuclear issue, and therefore the process was kept on hold. The Arabs had only two options: (1) living with the Israeli nuclear monopoly as the United States wished, and (2) developing their nuclear capabilities in both peaceful and military fields, and then launching serious negotiation in either ARCS or another forum i.e. North Korean and Iranian model. In other words, the Arab performance in ACRS looked like that of a political beggar rather than a strong negotiator applying the principle of quid pro quo. Looking to the international negotiation of arms control, the USSR did not call on the United States to abdicate its nuclear capabilities or start negotiations on nuclear disarmament before being a nuclear power. Had the USSR applied the Arab approach, the United States would have never taken it seriously. Although both France and Britain were fully covered by the huge American nuclear arsenal, they immediately decided to acquire nuclear capabilities once the USSR became a nuclear power. This argument remained valid for Israel, which decided to acquire nuclear capabilities despite being protected by full American security guarantees. On the other hand, Egypt adhered to the NPT in 1981 without being sure that Israel would join shortly. Again, the Sadat theory of breaking psychological barriers proved to be wrong.



## Basic features of “*the New Middle East*”

Multilateral trade negotiations such as the GATT Kennedy Round “involve many countries, cover numerous issues, and take place over long periods of time - years rather than months.”<sup>3</sup> In comparison to other multilateral diplomacies, the ECDWG was even more complex than the Kennedy Round.<sup>4</sup> Its mandate was also too broad (a free trade zone, regional economic cooperation, medium and large-scale joint ventures) to be achieved through one forum and in a limited period of time, and neither the plenary in Madrid nor the subsequent conference in Moscow had given it clear rules or terms of reference. Furthermore, unlike the Kennedy Round, the ECDWG had to start from scratch. International trade norms remained relevant as terms of reference for the ECDWG but obviously the political environment in the Middle East was not promising and no previous attempt to establish a free trade zone or regional cooperation in the Middle East had included Israel, and in any case all had failed.

Under international economic law, reciprocity is the chief rule upon which economic transactions function, each state being entitled to the same privileges, including equal access to international financial institutions.<sup>5</sup> It is clear, however, that the proposed scheme of regional economic cooperation did not meet these rules. The project was designed

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<sup>3</sup>. Gunnar Sjostedt, “Trade Talks”, *International Negotiations, Analysis, Approaches, Issues, A publication of the process of International Negotiations (PIN) project*, Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, Oxford, 1991, p.316.

<sup>4</sup>. The Kennedy Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) negotiations 1964-1967 was linked to earlier negotiations of GATT. Hence, there was no need for extensive agenda-setting activities, making this stage relatively, short. Its basic target was to dismantle trade barriers, which gave the round certain mandate i.e. tariffs.

<sup>5</sup> Ambassador Ra’ouf Saad, (Member of the Egyptian Delegation to ECDWG) “The Economic Regional Cooperation in the Middle East”, *The Arab-Israeli Negotiations and the Future of peace in the Middle East*, edited by Dr. Moustafa Elwy, the Center of Political Research, Cairo University, Cairo, 1994, pp.398-99.



to make Israel the core of the region. Besides, since Israel was totally backed by the West and the Bretton Woods institutions, it would be the black horse while the Arab states would be more like observers. Due to the fact that the Arab economic regime was heterogeneous, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), for example, would enjoy more weight than the Maghreb Cooperation Council. Jordan and the Palestinians had no weight at all.

Since the Middle East had taken serious steps towards privatization, joint ventures were expected to act as a vehicle to foster the activities of the ECDWG - trade, know-how exchange, tourism, infrastructure, and the like. As long as each party could inflict great damage on the other in case of withdrawal, the parties concerned could not go forward one inch without being sure of settling the territorial conflict. Of course, this would pose another challenge to the ECDWG.

In 1991, the Washington Institute for Near East Studies, run by AIPAC, advocated establishing trilateral economic cooperation between Israel, Jordan, and the Palestinians based on the Benelux model as a point of departure so that free mobility of labor and capital was guaranteed. It could be developed to monetary union in a second stage. Such an approach was adopted by the European Commission paper, presented at the first round of Development and International Cooperation Committee in the framework of ECDWG in May 1992. In general, the American and EU proposals to the ECDWG took the proposed Benelux model as a stepping stone to establish a free trade zone in the entire Middle East. The West believed that this zone would be a principle vehicle to bring peace to the Middle East.<sup>6</sup> This approach was in line with the remark of the former Israeli Minister of Defense, Moshe Arens, who stated that the

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<sup>6</sup>. Ahmed Thabit, "The Challenges and Threats of the Middle East Regime", *International Politics Journal-Al-Siyassa al Dawliya (IPJ)*, Vol. 96, April 1995, p.18.



history of Europe proved that economic problems were much more important than national disputes.<sup>7</sup>

The basic difference between the proposed free trade zone in the Middle East and the European Union is that the former was initiated by Israel and imposed by the West, while for the latter each state was free to join according to its own interests. Norway, for example, refused to join the EU, and the UK decided to be out of Euro land without significant harm. By contrast, if an Arab state boycotted the zone, it would suffer from political and economic isolation.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, Israel would remain Zionist, but the Arab League would have to be dismantled.<sup>9</sup>

Looking at the concept of regional cooperation, a clear discrepancy could be detected between Israel and the Arabs in terms of economic structure. The Israeli economy was part of the international capitalist economy with a sophisticated technological basis. By contrast, the Arab economy depended on raw material and assembly industries. For this reason, Israeli income was 67.7 billion dollars whereas the total income of the ring states reached only 54.4 billion. Neither Israel nor the West called for parity as a prerequisite for a free trade zone, which meant opening the wide Arab market to Israeli goods and services in return for raw materials and labor.<sup>10</sup> The European experience from the Coal and Steel Community to the full EU itself was based on parity not only in the economic field but also in political and social structures. Dictatorships in Spain and Greece could not join the European Community; even after democracy, the two countries had to adopt radical economic and legislative reform to meet EC standards. To sum up, subordination rather

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<sup>7</sup>. Thabit, "The Challenges and Threats of the Middle East Regime", p.19.

<sup>8</sup>. Ra'ad, *The Zionist Perspective*., p.111.

<sup>9</sup>. Ra'ad, *The Zionist Perspective*., p.19.

<sup>10</sup>. Ra'ad, *The Zionist Perspective*., pp.187-88.



than partnership would be the final outcome. Israeli-Arab relations would look like UK-Indian relations in the era of colonialism rather than German-French relations within the EU.

In his volume *The New Middle East*, Peres underlined the fact that deep hatred and suspicion between Germany and France turned into a strategic alliance by virtue of the EC, inaugurated in the 1950s by the representative for planning in France, Jean Monnet. His aim was not merely economic but also political. The Middle East was looking forward to a Monnet-type approach to put an end to Israeli-Arab antagonism.<sup>11</sup> Like the European model, the step-by-step approach was equally relevant for the Middle East.<sup>12</sup> In the first stage, bilateral and multinational projects would be established such as a joint research institute for desert management or cooperative desalination plants. In the second, international consortiums were to be inaugurated so as to carry out large projects such as a Red-Dead Sea Canal coupled with development of free trade and tourism along its length. In the third, gradual development of official institutions would be inaugurated.<sup>13</sup> To hit these targets, the Middle East infrastructure would also be developed, especially ports and expressways.<sup>14</sup>

However, in his book *A Place Among the Nations*, Netanyahu accused Peres of being unrealistic and completely misunderstanding the true nature of the Middle East. He distinguished between two types of peace: that of democratic nations and that of dictatorships. For the former, peace could be reached through open borders, free trade, tourism, and cooperation in the field of scientific research, environment, and

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<sup>11</sup>.Shimon Peres with Arye Naor , *The New Middle East*, Henry Holt and Company, Inc. New York, 1993. pp.70-1.

<sup>12</sup>.Peres, *The New Middle East*., p.69.

<sup>13</sup>.Peres, *The New Middle East*., p72-3.

<sup>14</sup>.Peres, *The New Middle East*., p.138.



education, as in the case of the EU.<sup>15</sup> For the latter, peace could only be achieved through power and deterrence. The democratic nations' failure to realize this difference was the main cause of the outbreak of World War II.<sup>16</sup> Since Israel was the only democratic state in the region, he claimed, it had no option but to stick to the concept of "*deterrent peace*."<sup>17</sup> The philosophical question of what comes first, the the chicken or the egg, was indeed the chief difference between Peres's approach and Netanyahu's. For the former, peace brought security; for the latter the opposite remained true in the case of the Middle East. However, they agreed that democracy was a unique outlet for peace in the region.<sup>18</sup>

The Arab Liberal intellectuals regarded the project of "*the New Middle East*" as a Zionist project supported by the United States so as to impose Western political, economic, and cultural hegemony on the region.<sup>19</sup> They, however, partially accepted the project, though with

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<sup>15</sup>. Benjamin Netanyahu, *A place Among the Nations*, Dar El-Jaleel for publishing and Palestinian Research and Studies, Second edition, Amman, 1995, pp.319-26.

<sup>16</sup>. Netanyahu, *A place Among the Nations*., pp.300-2.

<sup>17</sup>. Netanyahu, *A place Among the Nations*., p.305.

<sup>18</sup>. Such an assumption should be verified in light of outstanding differences between the history of Europe and the Middle East. Western democracy was an element in a comprehensive array of Western values: secularization, nationalism, and democracy. The Thirty Years War followed by the Westphalia Accord 1648 was the beginning of the end to theocracy in Europe and then the French revolution in 1789 established democracy. Secularization came first, and democracy came last. Unlike Europe, the Middle East has never witnessed revolution for secularization and therefore if the people of the region were given the opportunity for free elections (democracy), the majority would vote for fundamentalism. In other words, absence of secularization from the Arab values made the outcome of democracy very different from the European result. Both Peres and Netanyahu believed in the universality of Western beliefs, which proved to be wrong, at least in the case of the Middle East. Algeria provides an example of people voting for fundamentalists - in the municipal and parliamentary elections in 1992. This analysis could explain why the W. Bush administration pressed the Islamic world to change educational programs to secular values after 11 September 2000. It aimed at getting a new element (secularization) into Arab values so that secular leaders rather than fundamentalist ones took office in the case of applying the democratic pattern in the region. Yet this approach would be counter-productive - fundamentalism will win more ground. After nearly seventy years of a secular military regime in Turkey, secularization could not survive without army backing.

<sup>19</sup>. Mohammad Saad Abou Amoud, "The Concept of the Middle East in the Political Arab Thought", *IPJ*, Vol.115, January 1994, pp.166-67.



certain conditions. There would have to be comprehensive and lasting peace before the economic dimension of '*the New Middle East*' could be explored. The project should not undermine Arab-Arab cooperation. Israel should not enjoy any sort of preferential treatment. And an Arab-Israeli free trade zone was a premature project for the medium term. The harshest criticism of the project came from Islamic fundamentalists and Arab nationalists - it was a Western conspiracy.<sup>20</sup>

## **The official track**

### *Pre-DOP progress*

Over the course of three meetings in 1992, starting in Moscow in January, proceeding to Brussels in May, and culminating in Paris in October, the ECDWG saw no great surprises. The Israelis adopted the view that the states of the region should launch regional cooperation projects in the fields of agriculture, energy (including solar energy), tourism, and transport. Jordan also shared the Israeli point of view with special attention to cooperation between Israel, Jordan, and the Palestinians. Yet it added the necessity of foreign investments and fair measures for water distribution. The positions of the United States and the EU were all close to this, though they witnessed some important development on their stance. In Moscow, the United States called for repairing the region's uneven development in terms of trade, investments, health, and education.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, it fully advocated the Israeli position in Brussels, submitting a paper that called on the antagonists

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<sup>20</sup>. Amoud , "The Concept of the Middle East in the Political Arab Thought",pp.168-72.

<sup>21</sup>. Saad, "The Economic Regional Cooperation in the Middle East" , pp.405-13.



cooperate in the fields of trade, investments, health, and education.<sup>22</sup> Due to the imminent US presidential elections, the American delegation's performance in Paris was less active in comparison to the previous meetings. Likewise, the EU's opening position in Moscow was just to emphasize the importance of normalizing economic relations among the states of the region. However, it adopted the Israeli point of view in Paris - calling for regional economic cooperation in the fields of tourism, transport, agriculture.<sup>23</sup> Not surprisingly, the World Bank supported the US and EU position, stressing the need to develop infrastructure and cooperation in the fields of water and environment. It also suggested establishing institutes for science, technology, and culture, and emphasized the necessity of economic reform and the role of the private sector.<sup>24</sup> Of course, this was evidence that Israel had a significant impact on elaborating the Western position during these meetings. By contrast, the Egyptians placed special emphasis on the political linkage between the territorial settlement and economic cooperation. The concept of regional cooperation was a step forward, it maintained, going far beyond normalization. Goals, principles, and a basis for cooperation must all be determined before discussion of projects could commence. Likewise, the Palestinians insisted that a political settlement should precede trilateral cooperation (Palestinians, Israelis, and Jordanians). On the other hand, the Gulf States' delegations were just physically present, neither submitting papers nor actively participating.<sup>25</sup> They only joined at all under US pressure.

In parallel with the launch of the ECDWG, Harvard's Institute for

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<sup>22</sup>.Tahaa Abdoualem, "Regional Cooperation Projects in the Middle East," *IPJ*, Vol. 115, January 1994,p.190.

<sup>23</sup>. Saad, ,"The Economic Regional Cooperation in the Middle East," pp.414-17.

<sup>24</sup>. Abdoualem "Regional Cooperation Projects in the Middle East..", p.190.

<sup>25</sup>. Saad, "The Economic Regional Cooperation in the Middle East", pp.402-18.



Social and Economic Policies in the Near East launched a study to address the nature of economic cooperation in an era of peace. In January 1992, Jordanian, Palestinian, and Israeli experts met first in Cairo and then in Jerusalem. They had set up six working groups, which submitted a final report in June 1993. The essence of the Harvard report was identical to that of the EU, calling for the Benelux model as a point of departure. These experts became members of their own delegation to the ECDWG and advocated the same stance.<sup>26</sup>

### *The DOP's impact on the ECDWG*

After the signing of the DOP in September 1993, the EU produced a plan inspired by the European model. Notable in this were projects for an oil pipeline from the Gulf to the Mediterranean, highways, a Dead Sea-Red Sea Canal, an electricity grid, and free trade and labor markets by 2010.<sup>27</sup> In the following month the World Bank submitted a plan for regional development of its own to the Donor Conference in Washington. This argued that, due to its advanced economy and geographical location, Israel should be the core of the region. Like the EU plan, the World Bank's embraced infrastructure projects to promote the Benelux model but it called neither for developing the Arab states' infrastructure nor promoting Arab-Arab projects.<sup>28</sup> The World Bank also confirmed that the donor countries should deliver their commitments (2.4 billion dollars) within five years. However, economic experts involved in producing the Harvard report warned about the fate of Russia: out of 42 billion dollars,

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<sup>26</sup>. Ra'ad, *The Zionist perspective..*", pp. 163-65.

<sup>27</sup>. Two years later, the EU reconfirmed the free trade proposal in the Barcelona Summit, See Ra'ad, pp.166-67.

<sup>28</sup>. Ra'ad, *The Zionist perspective...*, pp.168-69.



it received only 2 billion because of coordination difficulties among donors.<sup>29</sup>

The DOP marked a significant Israeli success in selling its regional vision to the Palestinians as well. Two out of four of the Declaration's annexes were dedicated to economic cooperation. Annex No. 3 laid the ground for solid bilateral economic cooperation, while Annex No. 4 confirmed their cooperation in the ECDWG i.e. establishing the Middle East Development Bank, and coordination with Jordan for exploiting the resources of the Dead Sea.<sup>30</sup> According to article No. 15 in the Cairo Agreement 1994, both Israelis and Palestinians were to work together for enhancing economic cooperation with Egypt and Jordan.<sup>31</sup> On 17 October 1995, the United States signaled that it was ready to sign a free trade agreement with the Palestinians if the PLO<sup>32</sup> used its prestige to terminate the Arab economic boycott.<sup>33</sup> This meant that the Israeli-Palestinian Accords were economic cooperation-oriented, which was not the case with the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty with Egypt.<sup>34</sup> Of course, Tel-Aviv had learned from the experience of cold peace with Cairo that any coming peace treaty with Arabs should include concrete measures for economic cooperation.

The Jordanian-Israeli Peace Treaty applied the same approach. Twelve protocols were signed in order to lay the groundwork for Israel to have normal economic relations with the Arabs.<sup>35</sup> Thus, Jordan and Israel

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<sup>29</sup>. Ra'ad, *The Zionist perspective...*, p.171.

<sup>30</sup>. "Documents on the Middle East Peace Process, Security and Conflicts, *The Middle East*, Appendix 3A, 1993, pp.120-21.

<sup>31</sup>. Ra'ad, *The Zionist perspective...*, p.173.

<sup>32</sup>. The Palestinian occupied territories were highly dependent on Israel: (1) 90% of Palestinian imports came from Israel, and (2) in case of Israeli closure, the unemployment would reached 50% in the West Bank and 70% in Gaza. See Ra'ad, p.197.

<sup>33</sup>. Ra'ad, *The Zionist perspective...*, pp.200-1.

<sup>34</sup>. Abdoualem, "*Regional Cooperation Projects in the Middle East*", pp.187-88.

<sup>35</sup>. Ra'ad, *The Zionist perspective...*, p.175.



agreed to cooperate in putting an end to the Arab economic boycott.<sup>36</sup> On 18 August 1995, the Department of Industrial Studies of the Royal Jordanian Association issued a survey, which also advocated the Benelux model. It confirmed that there was no threat from Israeli industrial hegemony in the region because it had to compete with Japanese, European, and American production. However, the survey failed to consider another scenario: the possibility that Israeli products would manage to compete with EU, US and Japanese products in terms of price, taking into consideration two factors: (1) Israel's ability to obtaining Western know-how almost without restrictions, and (2) its ability to exploit cheap Arab labor.<sup>37</sup>

Lobbying is a key tactic in multilateral negotiations: it is not enough to have a clear insight, but to know how to sell it to the parties concerned. The Israeli ruling party, Labor, managed to tailor a modern plan from earlier Zionist thinking. It had also succeeded in selling this to international partners, i.e. the US, the EU, and the World Bank. After the DOP and the Jordanian- Israeli Peace Treaty, Israel sold its position to the Palestinians and Jordanians as well, thereby penetrating the Arab front. From a multilateral negotiation point of view, the Israeli performance was masterly.

## **The Regional Cooperation Conferences**

In the four years following the last months of 1994, four conferences of regional cooperation were held. The first took place in Casablanca (30 October - 1 November 1994), the second in Amman

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<sup>36</sup>. Ra'ad, *The Zionist perspective...*, p.179.

<sup>37</sup>. Ra'ad, *The Zionist perspective...*, p.216.



(October 1995), the third in Cairo (November 1996), and the forth in Doha (November 1998). They all enjoyed strong support from the United States, Russia, and the EU, which was just as well for their survival because, following the election of Netanyahu, there was strong Arab reluctance to convene (at Cairo) in November 1996.

The regional cooperation conferences achieved a new stage based on enhancing the role of NGOs and businessmen in the ECDWG, though these latter were still at an infant stage in the Arab world. The invitation card for the Casablanca Conference, for example, was issued by King Hassan II of Morocco in association with the American Council on Foreign Relations and the World Economic Forum (NGO). The reason was that both Israel and the US granted NGOs a significant role in their schemes for different purposes. As for the US, the notion of enhancing the role of the private sector and NGOs was a convenient pretext for removing the ECDWG from EU auspices. On the other hand, Israel aimed at penetrating the Arab societies. It assumed that Arab businessmen would be motivated by profit and sell the Israeli projects to their people.<sup>38</sup>

As for the level of representation and the nature of the participants, the Casablanca Conference witnessed intensive participation on both official and unofficial levels. Three thousand participants from 61 states i.e. head of states, prominent international figures, and businessmen. Of course, the conference took place after positive achievement in the Bilaterals i.e. the DOP and the Jordanian-Israeli Peace Treaty. By contrast, the stalemate in the peace process during Netanyahu's term had a negative impact on the level of participation. As for the Cairo Conference, the level of official participation was downgraded from

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<sup>38</sup>.Ra'ad, *The Zionist perspective...*, pp.185-87.



heads of state to foreign ministers. Besides, the Israel businessmen were almost isolated from their Arab counterparts. The situation was even worse in Doha. Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the PLO, Algeria, Morocco all boycotted the conference. Assistant ministers chaired the other Arab delegations. Remarkable, the Israeli delegation to Doha was headed by the Minister of Industry instead of the Prime Minister, as had been the case in Casablanca and Amman. This was due to Netanyahu's indifference to the ECDWG, that he had made clear in his book '*Place Among the Nations*.' The United States was almost the only participant that never lost willingness to further the ECDWG so that Albright led the US delegation to Doha.<sup>39</sup>

As with the Bilaterals, no Arab coordination meeting took place before these four conferences so that the Arab delegations lacked a unified position. Furthermore, there was inter-Arab conflict regarding their policy toward Israel. During the Amman Conference, for example, both Jordan and Qatar were willing to be engaged in economic cooperation with Israel. When Egypt criticized this attitude, they accused Egypt of being the first to break Arab solidarity and to sign a peace treaty with Israel.<sup>40</sup>

Looking at the Israeli papers presented to the conferences, these demonstrated a comprehensive vision and concrete plans. During the Casablanca Conference, for example, Israel, Egypt, Jordan, and Morocco presented 150, 40, 10, 3 projects respectively.<sup>41</sup> The Israeli paper included a full set of joint ventures, aimed at promoting its position as the new economic leader of the Middle East. Water was the top Israeli

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<sup>39</sup>.Neirmin Al-Saadany, "The Doha Economic Conference", *IPJ*, Vol. 131, January 1998, pp.299-300.

<sup>40</sup>.Neirmin Al-saadany, "The Conferences on Middle Eastern Cooperation: Positives and Negatives", *IPJ*, Vol. 127, January 1997, pp. 247-48.

<sup>41</sup>.Al-saadany, "The Conferences on Middle Eastern Cooperation", p. 248.



priority; it was hoping to assimilate more Jewish immigrants. Transportation came directly after water because it would make Israel the center of business and trade in the Middle East. Due to Israeli poverty in power resources, energy was also a high priority. Since it represented a considerable source of foreign currency, tourism came next. As long as Israel was well off in terms of industry and agriculture (genetic engineering), it was almost ignored. The Israelis called for a new distribution of tasks and responsibility in the region: Israel for high technology products, transit trade, and banking service; the Gulf states for petrochemical industries; and the rest of the Arabs states for light and intensive labor industries, i.e. textiles. In contrast to Israel's ideas, the papers of Egypt, Jordan, and Palestinians lacked a comprehensive vision of regional economic cooperation. They failed to present an overall plan reflecting their own needs and interests, but took the Israeli plan as a point of departure and started to insert their amendments.<sup>42</sup>

Unlike the meetings in Moscow, Brussels and Paris, these conferences witnessed a US-EU conflict of interests. For instance, during the Amman Conference, the EU objected to the US- Israel proposal to establish a Middle East Development Bank. In fact, the EU was almost marginalized in these regional cooperation conferences, becoming little more than a source of finance for American plans. It had to finance the US plans without having any input.<sup>43</sup> Hence, the EU, among other reasons, launched an initiative entitled "*the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership*" on 19 October 1994. The target was to establish the largest free trade area in the world covering the EU, central and eastern Europe,

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<sup>42</sup>. Ra'ad, *The Zionist perspective...*, pp. 225-246.

<sup>43</sup>. Al-saadany, "The Conferences on Middle Eastern Cooperation", p.249.



and all Mediterranean non-member countries by 2010.<sup>44</sup> Remarkably, the EU initiative focused on the same fields as the ECDWG: a free trade zone, investment, and the environment. The EU initiative hoped to create a new forum in which it would have the lead and preserve its interests in the era of peace. It is worth noting in this context that since the Geneva Conference in 1973, European-American antagonism had remained unchanged.

In the art of diplomacy, if a state fails to act as a lion able to impose its will, it should act at least as a fox with the capacity to reach its goal through cleverness and deception; capitulation is never an option. This was exactly the case with Egypt's diplomacy in the Cairo Conference. Despite its reluctance to challenge the US demand that the conference should be hosted in Cairo, it ruined the Israeli plan by diverting it from its basic goal. It turned the forum into an international economic conference rather than a regional cooperation one. Hence, Arab-Arab cooperation and Arab-foreign cooperation were on the top of the agenda so depriving Israel of the enjoyment of any privileged position.<sup>45</sup>

Israel had its usual advantages at these conferences - strong extra-regional backing and a divided Arab front - but in the event nothing much emerged. Some limited preliminary agreements were inspired by the process. In the Amman Conference, for example, Qatar proposed to export natural gas to Israel, though even Doha suspended any further negotiation on this matter during the Cairo Conference. Jordan also took

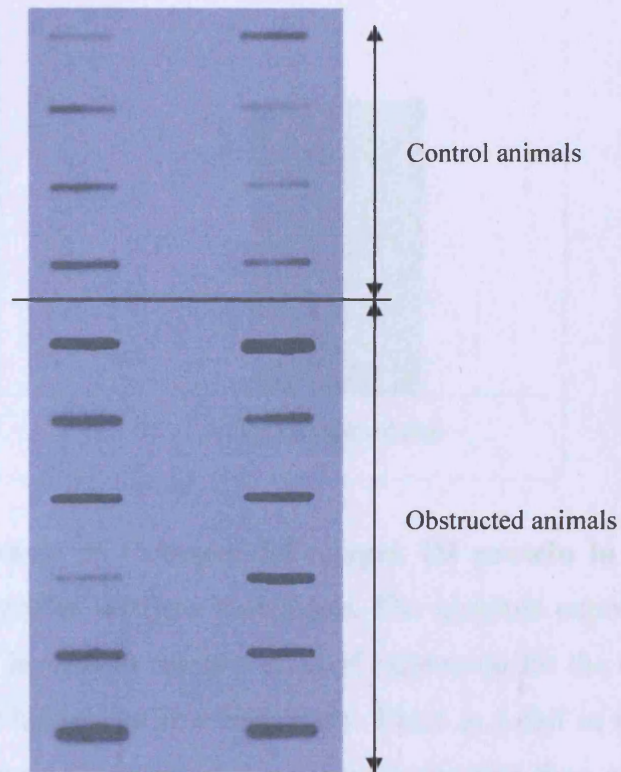
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<sup>44</sup>."COMMUNICATION DE LA COMMISSION AU CONSEIL ET AU PARLEMENT EUROPEAN SUR LE RENFORCEMENT DE LA POLITIQUE MEDITERRANEENNE DE L'UNION EUROPEENNE: ETABLISSEMENT DU PARTENARIAT EURO-MEDITERRANEEN", TEXTE E, COMMISSION EUROPEENNE, Secrétariat Central, COM (94) 427/5, Brussels, le 19 Octobre 1994, O/94/346, pp.2-3.

<sup>45</sup>.Al-saadany , "The Conferences on Middle Eastern Cooperation",pp.250-51.



Collagen III Protein



**Figure 65b. Expression of Collagen III protein in porcine bladder with exposure to elevated outflow resistance.** This image shows a representative slot-blot probed for Collagen III. Obstructed animals void through an implanted supra-pubic catheter containing a resistance valve.



the same stance regarding the Aqaba- Eilat airport.<sup>46</sup> By the time of the Doha Conference in November 1998, with the peace process about to collapse, the regional conferences were about to share the same fate and no subsequent conference was arranged

## **Track-two**

The track-two diplomacy made a rich contribution to ECDWG. In the first place, it was a semi-official forum in which prominent scholars close to officials gave different views on economic cooperation. Of course, this served as a trial balloon so that each party could measure the reactions of the others regarding the concept of economic cooperation and the different projects proposed. In the second, some of these views happened to be good ones, and were considered by the ECDWG delegations.

As for trial balloons, an Israeli scholar with strong relations with the Israeli government<sup>47</sup> proposed that a free economic zone (FEZ) should be established in the Gaza port. The proposed FEZ would provide economic benefits without either causing political damage or prejudicing the outcome of negotiations. For the Palestinians, it would generate income and establish solid trade relation with the outside world, including the Arab countries. For the Israelis, it would be a window for cooperation with its Arab neighbors.<sup>48</sup> By contrast, an Arab intellectual reflecting the

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<sup>46</sup>. Al-saadany, "The Conferences on Middle Eastern Cooperation", pp.249-250.

<sup>47</sup>.Seev Hirsch is Jaffee Professor of International Trade at the Leon Recanati Graduate School of Business Administration, Tel Aviv University. Dr. Hirsch has served as on several public committees. One of which was as an advisor on economic aspects of the Middle East peace process to the Israeli Minister of Finance.

<sup>48</sup>.Seev Hirsch, Shauli Katznelson, and David M. Sasson, "The Economics and Politics of a Free Economic Zone and Port in the Gaza", *Practical Peacemaking in the Middle East The Environment, Water, Refugees, and Economic Cooperation and Development*, Vol.II, edited



Arab point of view<sup>49</sup> pointed out, among other things, that economic cooperation could hardly succeed in the absence of a political settlement, and that previous experience of economic cooperation in the Middle East did not inspire much hope.<sup>50</sup>

Some scholars also made useful comments on the ECDWG. A prominent intellectual<sup>51</sup> called for strengthening markets by encouraging the private sector. Private sector organizations, he argued, could respond far more quickly than public ones, not least because they had stronger incentives. After the decision of many Middle East countries to embark on economic reform programs, this approach would become more feasible. Strengthening markets would undermine ethnic discrimination in the region because the actors in markets were businessmen rather than races.<sup>52</sup> However, one<sup>53</sup> criticized the ECDWG because its prime goal was to integrate Israel in the region, whereas increasing Arab and Israeli prosperity was only a secondary objective.<sup>54</sup>

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by Steven L. Spiegel and David J. Pervin, Garland Publishing, INC. New York & London, 1995, pp.343-45.

<sup>49</sup>. Elias H. Tuma is a professor in the Department of Economics, University of California, Davis.

<sup>50</sup>. Elias H. Tuma, "Economic Cooperation and the Middle East Regional Stability", *Practical Peacemaking in the Middle East, The Environment, Water, Refugees, and Economic Cooperation and Development*, Vol.II, edited by Steven L. Spiegel and David J. Pervin, Garland Publishing INC. New York & London, 1995, pp.287-90.

<sup>51</sup>. Alan Richards is a professor of economics at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

<sup>52</sup>. Alan Richards, "Strengthening Markets to Build Peace", *Practical Peacemaking in the Middle East The Environment, Water, Refugees, and Economic Cooperation and Development*, Vol.II, edited by Steven L. Spiegel and David J. Pervin, Garland Publishing, INC. New York & London, 1995, pp.319-24.

<sup>53</sup>. Patrick Clawson is a senior fellow at the Institute for National Strategic Studies of the National Defense University. He has appeared or spoken on numerous ABC, NBC, CNN, PBS, and BBC Television and radio.

<sup>54</sup>. Patrick Clawson, "Practical Prospects for Arab-Israeli Economic Cooperation", *Practical Peacemaking in the Middle East: The Environment, Water, Refugees, and Economic Cooperation and Development*, Vol.II, edited by Steven L. Spiegel and David J. Pervin, Garland Publishing, INC. New York & London, 1995, pp.303-304.



## Conclusion

The notion of regional economic cooperation focusing on the Arab-Israeli dimension was a purely Zionist and Western project that had its origins in pre-1948 thinking and aimed at avoiding the Crusaders' fate. Due to lack of vision by the Arabs and Western support, Israel would be the black horse, extending its economic hegemony from Morocco to Iraq. The EU has been quite cool about commencing admission negotiations with a secular Muslim state (Turkey), but has asked the Arabs to ignore their origin, history, and culture for the sake of admitting a fundamentalist Jewish state in the region. During the meetings of the EDCWG, Israel presented a comprehensive vision of regional cooperation, which was not matched by the Arab partners. Egypt was relatively active, though did not coordinate sufficiently either with Arab actors or international ones. The DOP had a critical impact on the EDCWG: Israel sold the Peres project of "*the New Middle East*" to the Palestinians and Jordanians, and the US hijacked the process under the pretext of holding regional cooperation conferences in Casablanca, Amman, Cairo, and Doha. Nevertheless, the Israeli and Western effort failed to establish the regional economic cooperation, as during the London Conference 1946-47.<sup>55</sup> On the next day, on behalf of the Arab delegations, the head of the Syrian delegation confirmed that Arabs would never betray Palestine for economic benefits. To sum up, a just territorial settlement could bring regional cooperation but not vice versa.

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<sup>55</sup>.The British Prime Minister had called for economic cooperation to develop the Arab world in return for approval of the partition plan ( Arab zone, Jewish zone, Jerusalem zone, and Negav zone).



## Chapter 9

### The Water Resources Working Group (WRWG)

Internationally shared water, in general, has been a strong source of conflict, but not necessarily war. In the case of the Middle East, it was a catalyst to the outbreak of the 1967 War. There is severe water scarcity in the region, and access to alternative fresh water resources is difficult. Moreover, the water resources of the Jordan River basin are shared by several antagonistic states, and the more powerful among them have usually attempted to exploit military strength to create new facts on the ground.<sup>1</sup> All the states of the region are also highly dependent on the disputed water resources not only for domestic consumption but also for irrigation and hydroelectricity. Water and land have always been interlocked in the Middle East conflict. Water has been a prominent factor in demarking the Zionist state's border and both the 1948 and 1967 Wars resulted in Arab-Israeli water conflict<sup>2</sup> for this reason.

The water issue was not confined to the WRWG, but was prominent in the Bilaterals as well. Both the DOP and the Jordanian-

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<sup>1</sup>. Peter H.Gleick," Reducing the Risks of Water-Related Conflict in the Middle East", *Practical Peacemaking in the Middle East ; The Environment, Water, Refugees, and Economic Cooperation and Development*, Vol.II , edited by Steven L.Spiedel and David J.Pervin, Garland Publishing INC. New York & London, 1995, pp.99-100.

<sup>2</sup>.On the evolution of water disputes in the Middle East, especially in the Jordan River basin, see Miriam R.Lowi, *Water and Power: The Politics of a Scarce Resource in the Jordan River Basin*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993, Fat'hy Ali Hassan,"Water in the Multilateral Negotiations", *International Political Journal -Al-Siyassa Al-Dawliya (IPJ)*, Vol.108, April 1992, pp.210-211, Sharif S. Elmusa(an advisor to the Palestinian delegation to the multilateral negotiations on water), "The Land-Water Nexus In The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XXV,No.3, spring 1996, pp.70, and Gad Yitzhak & Rabah Auda, "The water problem of the West Bank and Gaza Strip", *The Water Issue in The Middle East*, Vol. II, Center of Strategic Studies, Research and Authentication, pp.110-112.



Israeli Peace Treaty also addressed the issue of water's equitable apportionment. Water was a multidimensional issue: political, economic, and juridical. It also had a technical dimension because equitable apportionment was hard to reach and difficult to maintain due to different rates of economic development, population growth, and ideologies. Of course, it was not easy to tackle all of these dimensions in the WRWG, and for this reason the Moscow Conference 1992 had failed to reach an agreement on the place and time of its first round.<sup>3</sup> To what extent did the WRWG manage to make the Eric Johnston dream of regional water cooperation of 1955 come true? This chapter is an attempt to answer this question.

### **The attitudes of the parties concerned in 1992**

During the early 1990s, Israeli public opinion was divided over the water issue. In *The New Middle East* Peres gave four reasons for the water crisis in the Middle East: (1) nature, (2) rapid population growth, especially in Egypt and Syria, (3) careless exploitation, for example by over-pumping wells, (4) misguided unilateral policies, such as the Syrian attempt to divert the course of the Jordan River in the early 1960s.<sup>4</sup> A regional hydro system should be established based on transfer of water from areas of plenty to areas of need, and desalination.<sup>5</sup> The Arabs should consider the Turkish long-term proposal for a '*Peace Pipeline*' to transfer water from Turkey to the region either through a railway network or by sea (tankers). Turkish water could be transferred from southern Turkey to

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<sup>3</sup>. Hassan, "Water in the Multilateral Negotiations", pp.210-211.

<sup>4</sup>. Shimon Peres with Arye Naor, *The New Middle East*, Henry Holt and Company, Inc. New York, 1993. pp.124-28.

<sup>5</sup>. Peres, *The New Middle East...*, p.129.



Gaza port and then distributed through conduits to Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the Negev in Israel. The desalination option should be examined: the Gulf States had already gone very far in this respect. Yet this option did not seem economically viable in Jordan, Syria, and Egypt. He also referred to Egypt as a state suffering from water scarcity, with Nile water no longer an option.<sup>6</sup> This could be attributed to the fact that Israel was willing to obtain Egypt's support for the DOP. Remarkably, Peres made no reference to the water redistribution plans: the Arab side should accept the status quo.

Netanyahu confirmed that the West Bank aquifers provided Israel with 40 per cent of its water resources, so any harm to this underground water would definitely threaten Israel with real disaster. If Israel gave back the West Bank, it would be exposed to intentional or accidental wide-scale water pollution: (1) the Arabs had already polluted the environment during their wars (Saddam Hussein polluted the Arab Gulf water in the Gulf War II), (2) the West Bank did not have a sewage system so that pollution of underground water was highly likely. Thus, the conclusion was that the West Bank was essential to preserve Israeli water resources.<sup>7</sup> Like Peres, Netanyahu was not ready to consider the Arab demand for water redistribution.

In August 1990, the Israeli Ministry of Agriculture had stated that *"it was difficult to conceive of any political solution consistent with Israel's survival that did not involve complete continued Israeli control of the West Bank water and sewerage systems, and the associated infrastructure."*<sup>8</sup> And the former Israeli commissioner to WRWG, Dan

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<sup>6</sup>Peres, *The New Middle East*., pp.129-32.

<sup>7</sup>Benjamin Netanyahu, *A Place Among the Nations*, Dar El-Jaleel for Publishing and Palestinian Research and Studies, Second edition, Amman, 1996, pp. 416-17.

<sup>8</sup>Natasha Beschor, *Water and Instability in the Middle East*, The International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, 1992, p.23.



Zaslavsky, asserted that “*Israel [did] not want to become dependent for water on any neighboring countries, even in peacetime.*”<sup>9</sup> Israel participated in the WRWG while it was facing over-use of existing resources. It had to renovate water distribution networks and reduce hydropower costs. Above all, it had no long-term water storage reservoirs (the limited capacity of Lake Tiberius).<sup>10</sup>

Looking at the Arab performance from the beginning of the water conflict in 1948 to the early 1990s, it was characterized by four big deficiencies: (1) lack of a common Arab vision on the rights of Arab riparian states on the Jordan River (Syria-Lebanon-Jordan-Palestine) due to poor coordination among them, (2) lack of sophisticated technical capabilities, as a result of which they were dependent on the advice of UK and US experts, (3) lack of money to carry out water projects (dams), in consequence of which they were completely dependent on US financial support, and (4) lack of military power relative to Israel. Hence, the Arab riparian states on the Jordan River were in no position to have a tangible impact on the WRWG format. By contrast, the Zionist strategy on water was clear even before the establishment of Israel, and enjoyed full backing by the United States and Britain. Thus, Israel could easily wreck any Arab plans.

The Israeli-Palestinian water conflict was unique in many ways, and included five elements: (1) unequal distribution of common water resources, (2) consumption of water by the Israeli settlers from the Palestinian occupied territories, (3) Israel's strategy of extending its political boundaries to include the headwaters of its water resources, (4) the monopoly of water institutions by Israel (the Israeli water company, Mekorot), and (5) deprivation of the Palestinians of free access to water

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<sup>9</sup>. Beschor, *Water and Instability in the Middle East.*, p.23.

<sup>10</sup>. Beschor, *Water and Instability in the Middle East.*, p.11.



data on the Palestinian occupied territories, with the result that they have refused to consider Israeli statistics on the question. Despite the fact that the redistribution issue was a common problem in water disputes, the other four elements were not. This conflict was also unique in international water negotiations because it was a state-non-state water dispute. The Jerusalem issue was not absent from this conflict either. Israeli official and non-official statistics included Jerusalem water consumption within the Israeli total consumption whereas the Palestinians insisted on adding it to the West Bank's consumption.<sup>11</sup>

Turkey was a significant actor in the WRWG because it was the only participant that enjoyed a water surplus. From a Turkish point of view, the principle of universality of water should be accepted and thereby water would be regarded as a commercial commodity like oil.<sup>12</sup> During his visit to Washington in February 1987, the President of Turkey, Turgut Ozal, proposed the '*Peace Pipeline*' project to supply the Middle East with water. It aimed at exploiting the surplus of two domestic rivers (Sihan, and Gihan Rivers), which reached 16.1 mcm per day. The project comprised two pipeline: first, the western pipeline that would supply Syria, Jordan, Israel, and the western part of Saudi Arabia; and secondly, the eastern pipeline that would supply Syria, Kuwait, the eastern part of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates. It took about 8-10 years to establish the project, which provided Turkey with annual earnings about 2 billion dollars. According to the American Brown Worth Company, the cost of the western and eastern pipeline reached 8.5, and 12.54 billion dollars respectively (the total cost of

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<sup>11</sup>.Elmusa , "The Land-Water Nexus in The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict ", pp.59-65.

<sup>12</sup>.Samir Salha "The Middle East Water Crisis: Conflict or Cooperation", *The Water Issue in The Middle East*, Vol. II , The Center for Strategic Studies, Research and Authentication, pp.365-66.



twenty one billion dollar).<sup>13</sup> Syria was in a position to abort the entire project because both western and eastern pipelines would cross its territories.<sup>14</sup>

For a variety of reasons, the Arab states were skeptical about the entire Turkish project. It put their economic survival at the mercy of Turkey, and included Israel, which was anathema to the Arab world at that time. Furthermore, the ecological impact was not clear, reaching agreement on it was highly unlikely, the financial support of extra-regional states such as Japan, EU and US was not guaranteed, and it negatively influenced Syrian and Iraqi apportionment - Turkey would increase its consumption from the Tigris and the Euphrates.<sup>15</sup> Finally, it was not clear whether the peace pipeline was to be considered as an international river or whether a special agreement should be concluded.<sup>16</sup> For the sake of selling the project to the Arabs, Turkey dropped Israel from the plan, but the Arab stance remained unchanged. It has proved that the new Turkish stance was just a tactic: after a meeting with Ozal on 8 April 1991, Peres, then the head of Labor Party, stated that Turkey was ready for the '*peace pipeline*' in order to make peace in the region, confirming that any future wars in the Middle East would break out because of water, not territories.<sup>17</sup> It is worth recalling that after the establishment of modern Turkey in 1923, Turkish-Arab relations were always in trouble. Under Mustapha Kamal, the former leader of the Arab and Muslim world did the maximum to convert itself into an European country at the expenses of its historic relations with the Arabs. The Arab

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<sup>13</sup>. Magdy Soubhy, "The Water Issue in the Ongoing Peace Negotiations," *The Water Issue in the Middle East*, Vol.II, Center of Strategic Studies, Research and Authentication, pp.111-12.

<sup>14</sup>. Soubhy, "The Water Issue in the Ongoing Peace Negotiations", p.115.

<sup>15</sup>. Auda, "The water problem of the West Bank and Gaza Strip", p.154.

<sup>16</sup>. Hassan, "Water in the Multilateral Negotiations", p.215.

<sup>17</sup>. Soubhy, "The Water Issue in the Ongoing Peace Negotiations", pp.112-13.



world thus came to regard Turkey as a western satellite, continually selling American and Israeli proposals. In coordination with the United States (the '*gavel-holder*' of the WRWG), Turkey called for an international conference for cooperation on water to be held in Istanbul in November 1991. However, this conference was never held because of Syrian opposition. Damascus argued that there was no room for regional cooperation with Israel while Arab territories remained under occupation, and that Turkey had refused to reach an agreement with Syria and Iraq concerning the Euphrates.<sup>18</sup> This meant that the admission of the WRWG to the Madrid process did not start with a clean slate.

In the Moscow Conference in 1992, the Israeli water commissioner confirmed that Israel favored the cooperative use of unused resources by building desalination plans and coordination efforts to control pollution. In other words, no negotiations on water redistribution should take place. Meanwhile, Jordan also was suffering from significant water shortage.<sup>19</sup> Meanwhile, the Palestinians were asking for control over their own water resources.

### **The Official Track Diplomacy**

The WRWG's task was to establish general principles for water usage for non-navigation purposes in the region, consider cooperation plans for the Jordan River basin, assess the Turkish proposals for exporting water to the region, and examine the option of desalination of sea water. As in the ACRS (the Israelis called it *RS&AC*), the adversaries had different views regarding the WRWG mandate. Israel called it a "*Water Sharing Group*" which should focus on: (1) the possibility of

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<sup>18</sup>. Soubhy, "The Water Issue in The Middle East", pp.36

<sup>19</sup>. Beschor, *Water and Instability in the Middle East...*, pp.15-23.



introducing new water resources, and (2) reallocation of the existing water shares, if any, which should not be confined only to the Jordan River basin, but also take in other basins in region. This meant inclusion of the Nile River. Of course, Israel sold this idea to the West. By contrast, the Arab side believed that the WRWG mandate should include: (1) the conclusion of fair and proper rules that should govern any water reallocation among the riparian on the Jordan River basin and the West Bank aquifers, (2) establishing general guidelines for optimal use of water in the region, and (3) enhancing water resources in the region by introducing new resources such as desalination. In other words, whereas Israel advocated a comprehensive water management approach, the Arabs embraced a separate sub-regional cooperation approach because each basin had its own legal status.<sup>20</sup> There were two further differences between the Arab and Israeli approaches. In the first place, the Arabs underlined the need for water reallocation whereas Israel called for maintenance of the status quo. In the second, the Israelis insisted that the Nile River should be subject to the WRWG, especially during Likud terms, while the Arabs rejected this idea. Egypt was aware of the Israeli approach and thus made it clear from the first round that the Nile water had nothing to do with the WRWG. The Nile River basin had its own legal international status, designed by a set of international treaties that determined each state's allocation. Egypt could not transfer part of its allocation out of the basin; otherwise, it would make a significant change in the basin geography by adding a new state. As long as none of the

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<sup>20</sup>. Prof. Sallah El-Din Amar (Professor of international law in Cairo University, member of the Egyptian delegation to the Madrid Conference 1991, and advisor to the Egyptian delegation to the multilateral Working Group), "Water in the Multilateral Negotiations," *The Arab-Israeli Negotiations and the future of peace in the Middle East*, edited by Dr. Moustafa Elwy, The Center of Political Research, Faculty of Political Science, Cairo University, 1994, pp. 479-81.



participants was riparian in the Nile basin, there was no room to involve the Nile water in the ongoing negotiations. And even if one or more of the Nile riparian joined the WRWG later, Egypt would continue to emphasize that this forum had nothing to do with the Nile River.<sup>21</sup>

### **Developments prior to the Declaration of Principles (1993)**

This phase reflected a climate of tension and huge discrepancies between the rivals. Israel's strategy was based on three pillars. It determined to ignore all previous plans for water allocation in favor of the existing situation, which was the best it could get; foil any Arab water cooperation plans that would exclude Israel (such as Syrian-Jordanian cooperation on the Jordan River basin), and advocate Lake Tiberius as the major regional water storage reservoir for all water projects, except for the Nile River because of geographical distance.<sup>22</sup> Jordan's dilemma was that it needed regional water cooperation to enhance its water resources, which meant Israeli involvement to obtain the support of Western financial institutions. Yet cooperation with Israel, at this stage, was impossible in the absence of any positive development in the Bilaterals.

Despite the absence of Lebanon from the WRWG, Israel proposed two projects for cooperation with it. The first of these was a hydro water project on the Hasabani River, where the water reservoir would be placed in Lebanese territories and the power station within Israel's borders. The second proposal was to, transfer 100mcm of water from Litani to Tiberius instead of letting it flow towards the Mediterranean.<sup>23</sup> In response to these proposals, Lebanon signaled that it would consider the proposal to sell

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<sup>21</sup>. Amar , "Water in the Multilateral Negotiations", pp.481-82.

<sup>22</sup>. Soubhy, "The Water Issue in the Ongoing Peace Negotiations", p.200.

<sup>23</sup>. Soubhy, "The Water Issue in the Ongoing Peace Negotiations", p.199.



water to neighboring countries if a comprehensive peace was reached in the Middle East. The Syrian Minister of Irrigation attached a similar condition to regional water cooperation.<sup>24</sup>

The Palestinian position was that if the Arabs had control over their legitimate water resources, there would be no Arab water crisis. Israel turned its own internal water crisis into a so-called "*Middle East water crisis*", aiming at obtaining US, EU and Japanese financial support.<sup>25</sup> Israel's position, of course, violated the basic rules of international law (the Fourth Geneva Convention) and was also contradictory: being upstream, Gaza's ground water should be confined to it; being downstream, it had exclusive rights to exploit the West Bank's ground water.<sup>26</sup> The Palestinians espoused the notion of redistribution, demanding: (1) full control over the endogenous underground and surface water resources, and (2) equitable apportionment from the international sources i.e. the Jordan River and the groups of small rivers that flow from the West Bank towards Israel.<sup>27</sup> The Palestinians' negotiating strategy was based on the principles of international law, avoiding mediation or arbitration because they feared that these methods would be subject to balance of power considerations rather than justice.<sup>28</sup> Due to the fact that the Israeli per capita income was far more than the Palestinian one, the Israeli consumer could afford the relative cost of the desalinated water much more easily than the Palestinian one. The share of the Israeli agriculture sector in GDP was about 5 percent and constituted the same percentage of employment. As a result, reducing water to this sector would not cause appreciable harm to the Israeli economy. The

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<sup>24</sup>. Soubhy, "The Water Issue in the Ongoing Peace Negotiations", p.121.

<sup>25</sup>. Auda, The water problem of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, p.127.

<sup>26</sup>. Auda, The water problem of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, p.156.

<sup>27</sup>. Elmusa, "The Land-Water Nexus in The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict ", pp.60-61.

<sup>28</sup>. Elmusa, "The Land-Water Nexus in The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict ", p.66.



Palestinians, for their part, proposed to sell some of their surplus water, or trade water with Israel. (One side may be willing to exchange a larger quantity of brackish water in one location in return for a smaller quantity of fresh water in another place, and so on.) Therefore, the issue of redistribution would no longer be a zero-sum game.<sup>29</sup> In short, the adversaries were talking two different languages: for the Israelis, the issue was how to increase water resources; for the Palestinians, it was redistribution.<sup>30</sup>

During the first round of the WRWG in Vienna (13-14 May 1992), the Palestinian delegation accused Israel of stealing its water and transferring it to the Negev. The Israeli delegation in turn criticized this approach bitterly, accusing the Palestinians of trying to wreck the negotiations. The situation was even worse in the second round, in Washington. The Palestinian delegation reiterated its demand for redistribution and called for a fact-finding mission to the Palestinians' occupied territories to report to the WRWG, accusing the Israelis of seizing 80 per cent of their water. It also demanded that the common underground aquifers with Israel should be discussed. As a result, the Israeli delegation refused to approach the Palestinians on an equal footing, maintaining that its proposals were addressed only to states. It proposed to establish a regional water data bank that would produce public data on water resources, rivers, climate, and technical surveys about water exploitation. The Palestinian delegation opposed the project in part because the bank was useless as long as the Israelis continued to consider the Palestinian occupied territories' water as endogenous Israeli

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<sup>29</sup>. Elmusa, "The Land-Water Nexus in The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict", pp.66-72.

<sup>30</sup>. Soubhy, " The Water Issue in the Ongoing Peace Negotiations", p119.



sources, and in part because the Syrian and Lebanese absences would definitely hinder the bank's task.<sup>31</sup>

To sum up, this phase was a dialogue of the deaf: Israel confirmed its '*opposition to reapportioning existing water supplies*;<sup>32</sup> Jordan affirmed that these negotiations should "*move from a position of disparity to equitable utilization of water*;"<sup>33</sup> while the Palestinians "*called for the restoration of historic rights and a minimum quota of 200mcm per year to be granted retrospectively*."<sup>34</sup> Meanwhile, Egypt managed to keep the Nile out of any future water deal, and the Turkish proposal kept a low profile due to the Arabs' coolness towards it. However, a minor success was achieved in the Vienna round: Palestinians, Jordanians, and Israelis agreed, in principle, to exchange data.<sup>35</sup>

### **After the DOP**

Despite the fact that the Israeli position remained unchanged, this phase was colored by a positive political climate as a result of the signing of the DOP,<sup>36</sup> and the participants became more willing to engage in real business. The Oslo Accords included the following important points: (1) the chief task of the WRWG was to enhance cooperation on water resources, (2) this should not affect the development or utilization of existing resources, (3) all arrangements on new and additional water resources would be limited in time and subject to periodical joint review,

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<sup>31</sup>. Soubhy, "The Water Issue in the Ongoing Peace Negotiations", pp.118-119.

<sup>32</sup>. Beschor, *Water and Instability in the Middle East*., p.24.

<sup>33</sup>. Beschor, *Water and Instability in the Middle East*., pp.24-5.

<sup>34</sup>. Beschor, *Water and Instability in the Middle East*., p.24.

<sup>35</sup>. Beschor, *Water and Instability in the Middle East*., p.24.

<sup>36</sup>. Israel refused to negotiate the water issue in the DOP, but municipal supplies. The antagonists agreed on addressing this issue within the framework of final status negotiations, which would start in the third year of a five-year interim period. (See Beschor ,p.23).



and (4) cooperation would also include water management and efficiency of its use.<sup>37</sup> During the meeting of the WRWG in China in October 1993, Oman proposed a regional organization for water desalination, and offered to host the next round.<sup>38</sup> Of course, in contrast to the previous rounds, the Palestinians were positive regarding this proposal. On 13 February 1994 in Oslo, the three Jordan River riparian (Israel-Jordan-PA) concluded a '*Declaration on Principles for Cooperation on Water.*' They also called on Syria and Lebanon to sign the declaration. The declaration was a complete reflection of the Israeli position - the issue of reallocation of existing water was totally omitted. In other words, Israel sold its point of view to Jordan and the Palestinians in order to apply additional pressure on the other Jordan riparian, i.e. Syria and Lebanon. The Jordanian-Israeli Peace Treaty of 1994 also gave a new momentum to the WRWG because it included a comprehensive agreement on Jordan River apportionment between the two parties. Of course, these developments proved that a breakthrough in the Bilaterals could have a positive impact on the Multilaterals; yet the opposite was not true.

## **Track-Two**

Track-two diplomacy came up with good recommendations to the WRWG. In the first place, all data on water should be available to the rivals through an international body. This was a preparatory step to start serious negotiations. In the second, a minimum amount of water for basic human needs under different circumstances should be allocated as a point of departure for any official negotiations. In the third, allocating water

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<sup>37</sup>. <http://www.Israel-mfa.gov.il/peace/water.html>.

<sup>38</sup>. Soubhy, "The Water Issue in the Ongoing Peace Negotiations", p.120.



above this minimum in light of various factors (equitable utilization) could be the second step. (The experience of the US -Mexico negotiations on the Colorado River proved that a fixed level agreement would lead to political tension because of short-term and long-term changes in the water flow.) Finally, a cooperative and scientific regional commission should be established as a conflict resolution mechanism.<sup>39</sup>

As a trial balloon, a Jewish scholar close to the Israeli government<sup>40</sup> called for the creation of an institutional framework for water. There should be, he argued, an Israeli-Palestinian water forum for both short-run and long run planning, including underground water allocation and protection. Secondly, this would embrace the Jordan River riparian, namely Israel, Jordan, the Palestinians, Syria, and most likely Lebanon. Thirdly, there should be long-term regional water projects, including all the second group plus Egypt, Turkey, Sudan and most likely Iraq. Each lower body would be represented in the higher one so that unsolved problems would be transferred upwards.<sup>41</sup> Of course, the proposed structure was completely consistent with the Israeli strategy of exporting its water crisis to the entire region. If the Palestinians insisted on having control over West Bank and Gaza water, the problem would be transferred to the higher level to guarantee the involvement of the states of the region.

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<sup>39</sup>.Peter H.Gleick, "Reducing the Risks of Water-Related Conflict in the Middle East", *Practical Peacemaking in the Middle East: The Environment, Water, Refugees, and Economic Cooperation and Development*, Vol. II, edited by Steven Spiegel and David J. Pervin, Garland Publishing, INC. New York & London, p. 99-112.

<sup>40</sup>.Gideon Fishelson, the Dean of students at Tel Aviv University and the scientific coordinator of the Armand Hammer Fund for Research on Economic Cooperation in the Middle East. He also served on governmental committees in Israel.

<sup>41</sup>.Gideon Fishelson, "Addressing the Problem of Water in the Middle East", *Practical Peacemaking in the Middle East: The Environment, Water, Refugees, and Economic Cooperation and Development*, Vol. II, edited by Steven Spiegel and David J. Pervin, Garland Publishing, INC. New York & London, p.119-26.



In response to the Israeli trial balloon, an Arab intellectual close to officials presented the Palestinian point of view.<sup>42</sup> He noted that the long history of the Middle East conflict posed a significant obstacle to the fruition of long-term water projects. These required political will and usually acceptance by a third party, for example the Israeli approval of the Unity Dam between Jordan and Syria. Due to the Israeli policy of stealing the Palestinian water, distrust and disparity between the two sides were quite obvious. Hence, the point of departure was to establish a climate of mutual trust through certain water CBMs. Among other measures, water redistribution schemes could alleviate the tension in the region and encourage the Arabs to address long-term water projects that would include Israel.<sup>43</sup>

Another scholar launched a US trial balloon.<sup>44</sup> He advocated that despite the rapid population growth of the Israelis and Palestinians, they would not need any additional water resources in the future, if they reallocated their water share economically: 80 per cent of their water was devoted to irrigation. According to international prices, a large fraction of this water did not produce economic products. However, both Israelis and Palestinians had strong motives to continue this misallocation. Israeli agriculture was driven by the needs of warfare and ideology: (1) self-dependence on food (2) physical control over remote sensitive areas by establishing settlements that would combat infiltration and guerrilla operations, (3) control over areas inside Israel with Arab majorities and separating them from the Palestinian populations of the West Bank and

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<sup>42</sup>.Sulayman al-Qudsi, a visiting associate professor at the University of California since 1989, and concurrently serves at the California Energy Commission.

<sup>43</sup>.Sulayman al-Qudsi, 'Water Resources: Use, Constraints and potential for Cooperation in the Middle East', *Practical Peacemaking in the Middle East; The Environment, Water, Refugees, and Economic Cooperation and Development*, Vol. II, edited by Steven Spiegel and David J. Pervin, Garland Publishing, INC. New York & London, p.186-88.

<sup>44</sup>.Peter Berck, Professor in Dept. of Agriculture and Resource Economics, University of California, Berkeley.



Gaza, and (4) the belief of many Israelis, particularly older ones, that agriculture was the soul of the Jewish state. Hence, Israel had subsidized agriculture at the expense of other economic sectors, leaving local prices of many products far higher than international rates. The Palestinians got considerable benefit from these policies through selling their products inside Israeli at high prices. In other words, subsidization of Israeli agriculture resulted in Israeli indirect subsidization of Palestinian agriculture as well. The Palestinians had also strong reasons for enhancing agricultural activities. Self-dependence in food made them less vulnerable to Israeli pressure, especially during the Uprising I and II. Secondly, agriculture was one of the few sectors in which the Palestinians could work on land under their '*own control*' instead of working inside Israel, which satisfied their nationalistic will. And thirdly, under Israeli laws, lands that were not actively cultivated were subject to expropriation. However, if Israelis and Palestinians reached a peace agreement, these motives would disappear, and agriculture would lose the priority it currently enjoyed. Hence, both Israelis and Palestinians should stop subsidizing water for irrigation.<sup>45</sup> In other words, the American paper endorsed the Israeli stance of maintaining the status quo rather than reallocating the water shares as the Arabs had asked for. In short, the US supported the Israeli point of view in track two as in the official track diplomacy.

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<sup>45</sup>. Peter Berck and Jonathan Lipow, "Water and an Israeli-Palestinian Peace Settlement", *Practical Peacemaking in the Middle East: The Environment, Water, Refugees, and Economic Cooperation and Development, Vol. II*, edited by Steven Spiegel and David J. Pervin, Garland Publishing, INC. New York & London, pp.141-55.



## Conclusion

Unlike the case in the ACRS, in the WRWG the Arabs had failed to shape a unified strategy to face the Israelis. This could be attributed to diverse factors. In the first place, the Arab states were riparian in various river basins: Egypt and Sudan in the Nile; Jordan, Israel, Syria, and the Palestinians for the Jordan River; and Syria and Iraq in the Euphrates and Tigris. In the second, the Arabs were fully dependent on international financial institutions and as a result failed to implement any project that did not accommodate Israeli interests, i.e. the Unity Dam. In the third, inter-Arab water conflicts were unfortunately a feature of many basins, notably the Syria-Iraq dispute over the Euphrates, and the Syria-Jordan dispute over the Jordan River.

The major task of the WRWG was to consider the issues of the water of the Jordan River basin, and the Palestinian occupied territories. Yet the absence of Syria and Lebanon put a question mark over the relevance of any discussion of these matters. The WRWG reflected two different approaches to surmount the water problem: On the one hand, there was the approach of the Arabs, who claimed that the water crisis emanated from the Israeli practice of stealing their water. The Arabs insisted that water redistribution was essential. On the other hand, the Israeli point of departure was to insist on maintaining the status quo, while urging the importance of cooperation to enhance water resources by reducing wastage and introducing new resources. Israel proposed the promotion of irrigation systems, recycling, desalination, and obtaining water from other countries, such as Egypt and Turkey. After the DOP 1993 and the Jordanian-Israeli Peace Treaty 1994, Israelis, Jordanians,



and Palestinians agreed to focus on regional water cooperation. The WRWG achieved little progress. The absence of Syria and Lebanon, coupled with the lack of international financial support for these huge projects, proved fatal.



## Chapter 10

### The Refugees Working Group (RWG)

UNSCR 181, in November 1947, resulted in the eruption of bloody clashes between Jews and Arabs. By the end of the 1948 War, the overwhelming majority of the Palestinians were forced to leave their homes in territories occupied by the Jewish armed forces for neighboring countries.<sup>1</sup> They fled from their territories in part because the Jewish gangs scared Palestinian civilians,<sup>2</sup> in part because the Jewish community in Palestine was far better organized with a shadow government, including military, security forces, and even postal system, and in part because the Jews regarded the battle as a straggle for life or death. Since then, of course, as evidenced in the Palestinian Uprising I in 1987, the Palestinian attitude has come to resemble that of the Jews in 1948.

To Arabs, the refugees' problem represented an injustice committed against the Palestinian people by the Western powers and Israel. To the Israelis, the continuation of the problem was a result of the Arabs' adamant refusal to assume responsibility for it, which was in any case created by the Arabs themselves.<sup>3</sup> To many Americans, it signaled Arab failure to address the Middle East conflict in general and the Palestinian

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<sup>1</sup>. Except where indicated in '*Introduction*,' and '*Origin of the problem*' rely for their detail on the authoritative account by Don Peretz, *Palestinian, Refugees, and the Middle East Peace Process*, Washington D.C., United State Institute of Peace, 1993.

<sup>2</sup>. The slaughter in Deir Yaseen village committed by the Zionist gang, the Irgun Tzvai Leumi, stood as an example.

<sup>3</sup>. It attempted to collect and produce data claiming that the Arab leaders including the Palestinian ones urged the Palestinian people to deport. It accused the Arab media of calling the Palestinians for temporary deportation, promising them of returning after the Arab armies' victory (the Israeli attempts to find such broadcasts were not successful).



dilemma in particular. This chapter will explore the issue of the Palestinian refugees from more than one angle i.e. humanitarian, security, and political. It will also shed light on the main task of the RWG and the outcome of its work.

### **Origin of the problem**

On 11 December 1948, the UN General Assembly adopted resolution 194, which was inspired by the final report of the UN's Count Bernadotte. It stated that "*the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss or damage to property which, under principles of international law or in equity, should be made good by the Governments or authorities responsible.*" Israel was not yet a member of the UN but it was understood that it accepted the resolution upon admission.

By the early 1950s, the official Arab position was consistent with UNSCR 194. However, Israel resisted this because repatriation meant jeopardizing the nature of the Jewish state: it had serious doubts about the loyalty of the Palestinians towards the Zionist state. However, Israel accepted repatriation of some 10,000 to 50,000 in the framework of reunification of families provided with strict security clearance.

In June 1959, the UN Secretary General, Dag Hammarskjöld, initiated a new plan to address the refugee problem. He called for the creation of one single economic unit where free mobility of capital and labor was guaranteed among Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan, the Arabia peninsula, and Israel. Surplus labor from overpopulated areas like Egypt and Jordan should be free to immigrate to areas of labor shortage



such as Iraq, Syria and Israel. On the other hand, free mobility of capital from oil producing countries like Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait to countries like Egypt and Jordan should be secured. Due to inter-Arab conflict and the Middle East conflict, these countries had gone far with their own infrastructure development plans, but little was fulfilled in the domain of regional cooperation. The plan was partially fulfilled in the 1970s within a different context: more than 100,000 refugees obtained work in the Gulf states, but they failed to enjoy citizenship or practice any political rights. The refugees, in turn, sent some money back to their relatives in the camps.

As a result of the 1967 War, some 250,000 Palestinians in the West Bank crossed to Jordan and became dependent on either UNRWA or the Jordan government. Israel became responsible for refugees in the Palestinian occupied territories. The Palestinian exodus was caused by the same reasons as in the 1948 War.<sup>4</sup> As a result of placing one million Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank under Israeli jurisdiction, Israel experienced a continuous debate on the proper approach to handling the new situation. If this number was added to the Arab minority in Israel, the total number of the Arabs would exceed one-third of the total population. With the high Palestinian birth rate, many Israelis feared that the annexation of these territories would make Jews a minority in a few years. Various proposals were made to address the so-called demographic problem. These included the idea that areas heavily populated by Palestinians should enjoy autonomy in civil affairs, though the Israeli army would retain military bases in them. Another suggestion was the

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<sup>4</sup> The Israeli army, for example, forced about 20,000 Palestinians living in six villages along the former armistice demarcation line between Israel and Jordan to leave their homeland, claiming that these villages had been used as a military bases. Some 200 Arab families in Jerusalem were given few hours' notice to leave the city. Many refugees and inhabitant of the Jordan Valley fled inside Jordan because of the postwar military actions and shelling.



return of the West Bank minus Jerusalem to Jordan in a peace package with the Arab world. There was also the proposal that a one state should be established in which all Jews and Palestinians would live together; yet political power was divided by a fixed ratio in favor of Jews, rather than on a population basis. In October 1968, the Israeli Foreign Minister, Abba Eban, proposed to establish a joint refugees' integration and rehabilitation commission, aiming at settling the Palestinian refugees in the hosting countries. The Arab reaction was negative, insisting instead on full implementation of UN 194 and thereby the immediate return of all refugees and displaced persons.

### **The situation of the Palestinian refugees in the 1990s**

Unlike in the Bilaterals, the issues in the conflict (the number of refugees and the value of compensation) were agreed upon neither between the antagonists nor in the UN. No precise official data about the refugees' number were agreed upon between the UN and the hosting countries.<sup>5</sup> Both UNRWA and Israel were at odds regarding Jerusalem: the former included Jerusalem refugees as a part of the West Bank; the latter insisted on excluding them. Furthermore, evaluation of Palestinian lost properties posed another point of disagreement. The United Nation Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP), evaluation based on 1950 purchasing power was 120 million Palestine pounds purchasing power. The Arabs multiply this evaluation by 10 to 20 times. They also asked for compensation for the loss of income consequent upon the loss

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<sup>5</sup>. For the Arab sources, before and during the 1948 War, about 900 thousand Palestinians left Israeli territories UNRWA estimated them by 725 thousand only. According to UNRWA statistics of 1991, the Palestinian refugees were estimated by about 2.5 million whereas the Arab sources assured that the number reached 2.8 million.



of properties. Yet the Israelis estimated some 20 to 50 per cent less than those of the UN and Arab sources.

In general, the situation of the Palestinian refugees in the Arab hosting countries has been shaped by uncertainty and hostility. The refugees' documents have always been subject to long and complicated renewal procedures. The refugees' privileges have always been subject to limitation - even cancellation - due to the political situation between the hosting countries and the PLO. The freedom of movement from one Arab country to another was not guaranteed. And with the exception of Syria, Iraq, and Jordan, they were deprived from both access to governmental services and the right to own properties. In other words, the Palestinian refugees in the Arab hosting countries became, in one way or another, stateless.<sup>6</sup>

Due to the different motives and political conditions in the hosting countries, the Palestinian refugees were approached differently. Lebanon, for example, because of demographic complications,<sup>7</sup> regarded them as a temporary phenomenon. Jordan was the only hosting country to settle the refugees with passports, though it refused point-blank to take in any more for fear of upsetting the state's ethnic balance. In Syria, by contrast, they had some of the same rights and responsibilities as Syrian citizens, including conscription into the army, but did not have political rights - voting and nomination for parliament.<sup>8</sup> Despite the fact that the refugees were less than 2 percent of the Syrian population, the Syrian government

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<sup>6</sup>.Abbes F. Shiblak,"In search of Durable Solution: Residency Status and Civil Rights of Palestinians in Host Arab States", *Practical Peacemaking in the Middle East: The Environment, Water, Refugees, and Economic Cooperation and Development*,\_Vol. II edited by Steven L.Spiegel and\_David J.Pervin, Garland Publishing, INC. New York & London 1995, pp. 237-245.

<sup>7</sup>.The problem was rather ethnic, alerting the entire fabric of the society (5 Muslims for every 6 Christians), especially the 90 percent of refugees were Muslims.

<sup>8</sup>.AbdelAlla Sallah, "The Palestinian Refugees Between Repatriation and Settlement", *International Political Journal -Al-Siyassa Al- Dawliya (IPJ)*,Vol.114, October 1993, p.133.



had no clear development plans to assimilate unskilled refugees. Egypt prevented any large immigration from Gaza to its territories, providing Palestinians only with some aid.<sup>9</sup>

Among all Palestinian refugees in the Arab hosting countries, those in Lebanon presented the most complicated problem. They had no civil rights, such as being admitted to government hospitals, joining secondary schools, or employment - in fact, they were not allowed to work at all.<sup>10</sup> The Lebanese Foreign Minister, Faris Buwayz, made it clear that "*Lebanon can not assimilate the Palestinians and melt them into the Lebanese identity*"<sup>11</sup> and could not afford "*to take care of the Palestinians' need*."<sup>12</sup> They also became more marginalized in international aid policy after the Oslo Accords. During 1993-94, Gaza received seven times more aid than that of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.<sup>13</sup> International concern was focused on about 1 million Palestine refugees in the Palestinian occupied territories to prove the positive impact of the Oslo Accords.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, they had little chance to return either to their place of origin (northern Israel), or to the territories under the Palestinian Authority (PA),<sup>15</sup> or to seek political asylum in Europe after the Taif Agreement in November 1989 that ended the Lebanese Civil War.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, due to the PLO's economic crisis after Gulf War II, it drastically cut its own aid to the refugees in

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<sup>9</sup>. Pertez, *Palestinian, Refugees, and the Middle East Peace Process* ..., pp.286-87.

<sup>10</sup>. Rosemary Sayigh, "Palestinians in Lebanon: Harsh Present, Uncertain Future", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XXV, No 1, autumn 1995, p.p.44.

<sup>11</sup>. "Lebanese Foreign Minister Faris Buwayz, remarks on Palestinian refugees in Lebanon", Beirut, 18 April 1994, Document and Source Materials, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XXIV, No. 1, autumn 1994, p.131.

<sup>12</sup>. "Lebanese Foreign Minister Faris Buwayz, remarks on Palestinian refugees in Lebanon", pp.130-31.

<sup>13</sup>. Sayigh, "Palestinians in Lebanon: Harsh Present, Uncertain Future", p.38.

<sup>14</sup>. Nawaf A. Salam, "Between Repatriation and Resettlement: Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XXIV, No. 1, autumn 1994, p.22.

<sup>15</sup>. Sayigh, "Palestinians in Lebanon: Harsh Present, Uncertain Future", p.37.

<sup>16</sup>. Sayigh, "Palestinians in Lebanon: Harsh Present, Uncertain Future", p.50.



Lebanon.<sup>17</sup> During the UNRWA meeting in Amman in March 1995, the Palestinian delegation asserted that the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon were not the PA's responsibility, but UNRWA's.<sup>18</sup>

Less than 1 percent of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon had relatives in the Palestinian occupied territories because most came from the Galilee and coastal Palestine and therefore the right of return to these territories had very little to do with them, which was not the case with the refugees in Jordan. Moreover, the Palestinians in Lebanon could not afford to relocate in the West Bank because they had few capital assets.<sup>19</sup> To conclude, the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon would present a special dilemma for the RWG. What were attitudes like to the refugee issue in Israel?

In *The New Middle East*, Peres put the entire responsibility for the refugees on the shoulders of the Arab countries, in part because they had called on the Arabs to flee from Palestine to clear the battle field, and in part because they had failed to assimilate them in their territories.<sup>20</sup> The Arab claim regarding the "*right of return*" ran against the complex historical background of conflict, he argued, and could wipe out the national character of Israel, turning the Jewish majority into a minority. No single Israeli government could agree to the destruction of its national entity.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, an effort certainly had to be exerted to improve the quality of life in the refugee camps, and Israel was ready to cooperate in this. The transitional period should, however, witness a radical change in the performance of the UN relief agencies: rehabilitation instead of relief,

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<sup>17</sup>. Sayigh, "Palestinians in Lebanon: Harsh Present, Uncertain Future", p.39.

<sup>18</sup>. Sayigh, "Palestinians in Lebanon: Harsh Present, Uncertain Future", p.41.

<sup>19</sup>. Rex Brynen, "Imagining A solution: Final Status Arrangements And Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XXVI, No.2, winter 1997, p.48.

<sup>20</sup>. Shimon Peres with Arye Naor, *The New Middle East*, Henry Holt and Company, Inc. New York, 1993, pp.186-87.

<sup>21</sup>. Peres, *The New Middle East...*, p.189.



and the creation of economic infrastructure instead of the dispensing of aid. Towns should replace refugee camps, and therefore there would be no need to retain the refugees' status. The PA could issue identity cards for those refugees instead of the UN document either in the areas controlled by its police or by the Israeli army. In the final status stage, the Jordanian-Palestinian confederation would have to absorb the Palestinian refugees currently in Lebanon and the Diasporas, if they wanted to return. The refugee camps located in other Arab countries would also have to see the building of houses. Once peace prevailed in the Middle East, Israel would be ready to open its borders to the confederation so that the Palestinians could visit their relatives.<sup>22</sup>

The Likud almost advocated the same position. In the view of Ariel Sharon, *"the Palestinian refugees' problem was a tragedy the Palestinians brought upon themselves. But one tragedy must not be replaced by another. If we want to continue living in this country, a solution to the refugee problem must be found elsewhere - even if it [went] against the Camp David accords."*<sup>23</sup> Netanyahu's adviser, Dore Gold, stated, *"the Government [would] oppose 'the right of return' of Arab populations to any part of the Land of Israel west of the Jordan River."*<sup>24</sup> This position was consistent with the Knesset resolution of 1961 that stated that *"it [was] not possible for the Arab refugees to return to the territory of Israel, and the only solution to the problem [was] to resettle them in the Arab countries."*<sup>25</sup> According to Netanyahu himself, there was no room even to discuss the right of return. Israel should encourage Jewish immigration to its territories, especially after the re-

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<sup>22</sup>.Peres, *The New Middle East*., p.192-93.

<sup>23</sup>.Brynen, "Imagining A solution: Final Status Arrangements And Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon":" p.46.

<sup>24</sup>.Brynen, *Imagining A solution: Final Status Arrangements And Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon*"" , p.46.

<sup>25</sup>.Sallah ,*"Between Repatriation and Resettlement: Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon"* , p.21.



emergence of anti-Semitic trends in Europe and the unknown future of 100 thousand Jews in South Africa following the collapse of the Apartheid regime. Despite the high Palestinian birth rate, immigration could guarantee the nature of the Jewish state without giving up the Palestinian occupied territories. The great waves of Jews departing the USSR played a decisive role in keeping the balance in favor of Jews. He refused both the ultra-nationalistic approach, which called for a comprehensive transfer of the Palestinians from the West Bank to Jordan, and the leftist position, which was based on abdicating the West Bank.<sup>26</sup>

To sum up, both the Likud and the Labor agreed that the right of return should not be applied to Israel, though they were at odds on the issue of whether the refugees were entitled to return to the PA's territories.

## **The Official Track**

In contrast to the subjects of the other Working Groups, the Madrid terms of reference (UNSCR 242) clearly referred to the refugees' problem and the need to reach a just settlement. And in the Moscow Conference, the Foreign Minister of Egypt had called for a special working group to be established in order to address it. The first round of the RWG followed quickly the Moscow Conference i.e. January 1992.<sup>27</sup> Of course, this reflected the antagonists' agreement on the necessity of establishing a special working group to address this issue. Nevertheless, they differed on its mandate. The Egyptian philosophy was to expose the problem

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<sup>26</sup>. Benjamin Netanyahu, *A place Among the Nations*, Dar El-Jaleel for publishing and Palestinian Research and Studies, Second edition, Amman, 1996, pp.353-63.

<sup>27</sup>. Ambassador Dr.Rada Shihata (the head of Egyptian delegation to the RWG) , "The Refugees Question in the Multilateral Negotiations", *The Arab-Israeli Negotiations and the future of peace in the Middle East*, edited by Dr. Moustafa Elwy, The Center of Political Research, Faculty of Political Science, Cairo University, Cairo, 1994, p.498.



from political, legal, and human perspectives in a new international forum, argue that it had always been an integral part of the peace process, and create a back door for the participation of the Palestinians in the Diaspora. In the view of Cairo, the RWG should be confined to the Palestinian refugees, avoiding extension of its mandate to other groups of refugees in the region. In addition, the terms of reference should be the relevant UN resolutions (194, 242, and 338), international law, the UN Charter, and the World Declaration of Human Rights. The UN and its concerned agencies should also be invited to take part in meetings, and the RWG should develop short, medium, and long-term strategies to address the multidimensional aspects of the issue simultaneously. Finally, priority should be given to promoting political, economic, and social advancement of the Palestinian refugees in the Palestinian occupied territories.<sup>28</sup>

As for the Palestinians, their position focused on UNSCR 194, but also welcomed any measures to alleviate the suffering of the refugees provided this did not prejudice their political rights of return. It also called for UNRWA participation in the meetings. The Jordanian delegation restated the Palestinian position with due consideration to the negative impact of the refugees issue on its country's economy. By contrast, the Israeli stance stressed that the refugee problem emanated from the Arab refusal to endorse UNSCR 181, and their determination to launch a war of annihilation against the Jewish state. It also contained the complaint that the Arabs were exploiting the problem as a political weapon, and that the number of refugees and displaced persons was increased as a result to the preemptive war of 1967 against Arab aggression. It also pointed out that about 800 000 Jewish refugees

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<sup>28</sup>. Shihata , "The Refugees Question in the Multilateral Negotiations", ,pp.522-30.



(590 000 arriving in Israel) had been forced to quit their homes in the Arab world since the outbreak of the Middle East conflict; the word '*refugees*' in UNSCR 242 should thus be extended to include them as well. Finally, the Israelis maintained that the so-called refugee problem was just a demographic exchange between some Arab states and Israel, and that it could be solved through international organizations.<sup>29</sup>

What was the American point of view? Washington held that the RWG should have a practical emphasis, the Bilaterals being the proper forum to approach issues like repatriation, resettlement, and compensation. It also favored establishing a database for refugees and displaced persons, including Palestinians, Jews, Lebanese, and Syrians, and enhancing the role of regional and international organizations in promoting the refugees' standard of living without prejudice to the final settlement. In other words, the American position was quite the opposite of the Arab one. The Canadian position was similar but also thought that UNSCR 194 should be considered, together with the right of return.<sup>30</sup>

As for the EU, it confirmed the need to reach a just, durable, and comprehensive settlement based on UNSCRs 242 and 338, taking into consideration the basic rights of the population. It also referred to the historical dimension of the refugee problem and sought to define it and offer tentative solutions. In other words, it called for a simultaneous approach to the political and humanitarian issues. However, the Finish delegation took a step further, arguing for the right of return and compensation for those who chose not to take it up. China, India, and Turkey called for full implementation of UNSCR 194.<sup>31</sup> To sum up, the US was always pro- Israel; Europe was more sympathetic to the Arab

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<sup>29</sup>. Shihata, "The Refugees Question in the Multilateral Negotiations", pp.526-28.

<sup>30</sup>. Shihata, "The Refugees Question in the Multilateral Negotiations", pp.523-25.

<sup>31</sup>. Shihata, "The Refugees Question in the Multilateral Negotiations", pp.525-26.



point of view; while others, notably the members of the Non-Aligned Movement, fully endorsed the Palestinians' demands.

Predictably enough, the Israeli delegation boycotted the first round of the RWG as a protest against the participation of Palestinians from the Diaspora. The result of this, though, was that when it took part in the second, it had to accept the agenda, since this had been agreed in the first. Moreover, the agenda included an item on the reunification of families, which was the last thing Israel wanted.<sup>32</sup> In the art of diplomacy, a state should not boycott a meeting of importance to it without being sure that there is a good agent (another state, international organization, NGO) that would block any decision directed against its interests, especially if the boycott decision is temporary. Why did the United States not serve as a good agent for Israel and therefore permit the Arab side to pass its agenda? The answer is that Washington was willing to pretend to be an honest broker at this early stage; it was also anxious to induce the Arabs to participate in the Multilaterals.

Following the second round, it will be clear, then, that the RWG faced three major challenges: disagreement over its mandate; deliberating on humanitarian, legal, and political questions without prejudice to the Israel-Palestinian track (especially the proviso of the Oslo Accords that the refugee problem had to be negotiated in the final stage); and how to deal with immediate humanitarian problems without prejudicing long-term issues of a political and legal nature.<sup>33</sup> After long discussion, the participants agreed to concentrate on ameliorating the tragic situation of the Palestinian refugees, especially in the field of public health, child-care,

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<sup>32</sup>.Ambassador Dr. Ahmed Ottoman( Member of the Egyptian delegation to the RWG and head of the delegation later), "Comments on the Rada Shihata's Paper: The Refugees Question in the Multilateral Negotiations ", *The Arab-Israeli Negotiations and the Future of peace in the Middle East*, Faculty of Political Science, Cairo University, Cairo, 1994, p.559.

<sup>33</sup>. Shihata, *"The Refugees Question in the Multilateral Negotiations"*, pp.529-31.



developing human resources, vocational training, and the reunification of families. The RWG also established certain criteria to avoid any projects that might jeopardize the refugees' political rights.<sup>34</sup> In other words, the US point of view was predominant.

As for the RWG mandate, the Jordanians wanted to include hundreds of thousands of Palestinian returnees from the Gulf to Jordan. However, the Canadians - who were particularly vocal on this point - came to the view that the RWG should focus only on the Palestinians of no citizenship. They also suggested that academics should be asked to prepare studies on how the refugees should be addressed among the participants. Canada then secured agreement to an agenda for the second meeting. This included an item on data gathering, another on family reunification, and five on improving the quality of life in the Palestinian occupied territories.<sup>35</sup> By the end of the third round, in Oslo, the Canadian delegation had established a clear division of labor for the RWG's agenda. Thus, Norway assumed responsibility for shepherding the database theme; the EC mandate was economic and social infrastructure; the United States took the lead on training; France followed up the family reunification item; and Italy undertook the health issue.<sup>36</sup>

The Oslo Accords had a tangible impact on the fourth round of the RWG, which took place in Tunis in 1993. Both Israelis and Palestinians agreed on negotiating the question of the 1948 refugees in the framework of the permanent status negotiations, and the admission of the displaced persons from 1967 through a Quadrilateral Committee (Israel-the PLO-

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<sup>34</sup>.Ottoman, "Comments on the Rada's Paper: The Refugees Question in the Multilateral Negotiations", pp.557-58.

<sup>35</sup>.Howard Adelman "The Multilateral Working Group on Refugees: Cover-up in Preparation for a Breakthrough", *Practical Peacemaking in the Middle East: The Environment, Water, Refugees, and Economic Cooperation and Development*, Vol. II, edited by Steven Spiegel and David J. Pervin, Garland Publishing, INC. New York & London, p.208-10.

<sup>36</sup>. Adelman, "The Multilateral Working Group on Refugees: Cover-up in Preparation for a Breakthrough", p.212.



Jordan-Egypt). Meanwhile, bilateral Israeli-Jordanian talks approached the question of re-admission of former Palestinian residents of the occupied territories who had overstayed their permits abroad.<sup>37</sup> During this round, Israel also committed itself to accepting the return of 5000 displaced persons each year, though this was too little in comparison to the total number of refugees and displaced persons.<sup>38</sup> The RWG basically focused on improving the refugees' standard of living. In May 1994, the Cairo round adopted more concrete steps in this respect.<sup>39</sup> It was of a technical nature rather than a political one.

In preparation for the Quadrilateral Committee, a high level Jordanian-Palestinian meeting took place in Amman on 8 December 1994, where a definition of displaced persons was agreed. They would include the Palestinian citizens of the West Bank-Gaza Strip-East Jerusalem who were outside their homeland before the outbreak of the 1967 War, those who were forced to leave their homeland during and after the war, and those who carried Israeli identification cards - whether they were deported or had lost their cards or lost their right to return due to Israeli measures.<sup>40</sup> However, this achievement was of little significance because Israel was not ready to admit all of the displaced persons into the PA's territories before reaching an overall agreement on final status

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<sup>37</sup>. "The refugee Working Group", Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <http://www. Israel-mfa. gov.il/ peace/ refugees.html>.

<sup>38</sup>. Walid Abdel Naser, "The Refugees Issue and the Future Regional Arrangement in the Middle East", *IPJ*, Vol. 155, January 1994, p. 208.

<sup>39</sup>. (a) developing human resources with assistance of Israel, the US, Netherlands, Germany, Turkey and China, (b) improving child welfare with aid from Sweden, (c) ameliorating social and economic infrastructure through the US aid, and (d) establishing a regional laboratory for public health in the West Bank. The World Bank allocated a substantial portion of its emergency assistance program to support these fields. (See The refugee Working Group, Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <http://www. Israel-mfa. gov.il/ peace/ refugees.html>.)

<sup>40</sup>. "Jordanian and Palestinian Delegation to the Committee on the Repatriation of Displaced Palestinians", Amman, Jordan, , *Journal Of Palestine Studies*, Documents and Source Material, 8 December 1994, p.147.



issues. Otherwise, it would lose a crucial card in the final status negotiations.

During the RWG meetings, the participants floated different ideas. One of them was a Jordanian-Palestinian confederation, as such a body could assimilate about 2 million Palestinians refugees (about 80 per cent of the total) with political, economic, and social rights; the displaced persons could be assimilated in the confederation as well. It would also receive huge investments from the EU and Japan. Other proposals called on the hosting Arab countries to settle them, as the United States and Europe had done with Palestinians arriving on their own shores. Israel should also accept the return of a limited number in the framework of the reunification of families. The creation of an international compensation fund was also proposed for those who wanted to return neither to the confederation nor to Israel.<sup>41</sup> Despite the possibility that these ideas might establish the framework of a solution, there were critical problems ahead. In the first place, the PA could not renounce the right of return; otherwise, the refugees would turn to HAMAS. In the second, the major Israeli concern was the refugee' camps in the Palestinian occupied territories, because they were the source of the Uprising I, whereas the PA's concern was for all of the Palestinian refugees. In the third, refugee settlements in some Arab hosting countries, particularly Lebanon, were in danger of upsetting the fragile demographic balance. In the fourth, there was no definite commitment from the donors to support refugee settlements.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>.Abdel Monien Said, "An Overview on the Negotiation", *IPJ*, Vol.115, January 1994, p.163.



## Track Two

As a trial balloon, a Palestinian official<sup>43</sup> proposed a political humanitarian approach based on the four pillars: (1) a guaranteed right of return to the PA territories for at least half a million Palestinian refugees during the interim period, (2) creation of good conditions for the returnees by attracting international investments, (3) guaranteed freedom of movement and visits to the PA territories for those who could not return to their homes (4) provision to the latter of travel documents first issued from the PA, and passports later, and (4) a future Palestinian-Jordanian confederation which would solve the refugee issue in Jordan.<sup>44</sup>

In response to the Palestinian proposal, a Jewish official<sup>45</sup> observed that eight refugee camps in Gaza constituted one third of the entire Palestinian refugees, and half of the Strip population. It was essential to advocate a new policy to seek durable employment for the Gaza refugees. The Gaza economy depended, he maintained, on exporting labor to Israel (38 per cent of GNP) which was a vulnerable source. Economic stability should be based on ability to produce exportable goods rather than exporting labor.<sup>46</sup> In other words, Israel was only ready to improve the

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<sup>42</sup>. Said, "An Overview on the Negotiation", p.163.

<sup>43</sup>. Samir Huleileh is a member of the Palestinian delegation to the Peace Talks in the Regional Economic Development Working Group, and a member of the Palestinian economic delegation to the Paris Talks.

<sup>44</sup>. Samir Huleileh, "The Peace Process and the Palestinian Refugees: New Concepts and New Realities" *Practical Peacemaking in the Middle East: The Environment, Water, Refugees, and Economic Cooperation and Development, Vol. II*, edited by Steven L. Spiegel and David J. Pervin, Garland Publishing, INC. New York & London 1995, p.254

<sup>45</sup>. Ezra Sadan is a director of the Volcani Center Agricultural Research Organization of the Israeli Ministry of Agriculture.

<sup>46</sup>. Ezra Sadan, "Durable Employment for the Refugee-Populated Gaza Strip", *Practical Peacemaking in the Middle East: The Environment, Water, Refugees, and Economic Cooperation and Development, Vol. II*, edited by Steven L. Spiegel and David J. Pervin, Garland Publishing, INC. New York & London, 1995, pp.265-67.



refugees' standard of living through vocational training programs, not to grant them the right of return.

The track-two process also came up with ideas that might have been of help to the RWG. A scholar<sup>47</sup> advocated that any successful settlement for the refugees issue should comprise two elements: repatriation to the PA territories, and resettlement in the hosting countries. The question of compensation for the Palestinian abandoned properties could be given up in return for Jewish properties abandoned in Arab and Muslim countries - an idea promoted by former Israel Prime Minister, Menachem Begin.<sup>48</sup> Another intellectual suggested a solution for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, though it was based on fulfillment of two contradictory conditions: (a) the need to avoid upsetting its fragile demographic equilibrium, and (b) improving their situation in the country. The solution might lie in creating new legislation for long-term residence permits, thereby enabling them to enjoy economic and social rights such as the Green Card in America. The new status would not be an automatic right, and could be forfeited - for example by remaining abroad beyond a specific period or violating the criminal law. It was also clear that such status was not a stepping-stone to acquiring full citizenship.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>.Shai Frankiln is a Wexner Foundation Graduate fellow in political science at the University of California, Los Angeles.

<sup>48</sup>.Shai Frankiln," The Palestinian Refugees Issue: Possible Outcomes, Achievable Goals", edited by Steven Spiegel and David J.Pervin, Garland Publishing ,INC. New York & London, p.219-27.

<sup>49</sup>.Sallah, "Between Repatriation And Resettlement: Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon", pp.25-6.



## Conclusion

The Palestinian refugees presented one of the most complicated issues in the Madrid process due to the fact that it was multidimensional. To many Western researchers, the Palestinian refugees were comparable to others, such as those generated by the Greek-Turkish War in the 1920s, and the India-Pakistan War following partition in 1947. These countries opened their borders to assimilate millions of refugees who fled from enemy territories, permitting them to become citizens. However, the situation of the Palestinian refugees was different because - except for Jordan - the hosting countries were reluctant to grant them citizenship. Furthermore, the Palestinians themselves refused to acquire another nationality. Even in Jordan, where they were given citizenship, the Palestinians continued to identify themselves as such. However, the Jewish refugees' situation was similar to those of the Greek-Turkish War and the India-Pakistan War in the sense that the Arab Jews were willing to accept Israeli citizenship and the hosting country (Israel) was eager to consider them as part of its citizens.

The RWG achieved too little because the Palestinians and Israelis kept re-stating their well-known position. Furthermore, Israel referred to the expulsion of several hundred thousand Jews from Arab countries following its establishment as a counter to the Palestinian demands for compensation. Nevertheless, the PA and the Labor Party were somewhat close to an agreement based on the following pillars: (1) a guarantee of the right of return to Israel of very limited numbers of refugees in the framework of the reunification of families; (2) assurance of the refugees' right of return to any future independent Palestinian state; (3) establishment of a Palestinian-Jordanian confederation; (4) the setting up



of an international fund to compensate and rehabilitate the refugees who choose not to return to the PA territories; (4) improvement of the refugees' situation in the Arab hosting countries, and the granting to them of permanent residence status; and (5) a guarantee of freedom of movement for the refugees. In other words, the option of an independent Palestinian state would significantly contribute to solving the refugees' problem, and change the position of Palestinians in the Arab hosting countries from refugees to normal citizens living outside their country.

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## **Chapter 11**

### **The Environment Working Group (EWG)**

Since the antagonists have never addressed ecological problems in the Middle East, the EWG was the first opportunity to tackle this issue. The overlap between the concerns of the EWG and the other Working Groups was clear. For instance, during the Amman Regional Economic Conference in October 1995, the Israeli delegation submitted a document suggesting that the environment could play an outstanding role as a CBM and as an end to facilitate regional economic cooperation among the adversaries.<sup>1</sup> Of course, any economic cooperation that ignored environmental issues would be null and void. There could be no comprehensive environmental program that omitted the water issue. The impact of the arms race on the environment, especially where nuclear weapons were concerned, was obvious.<sup>2</sup> Any proposal to ameliorate the situation in the Palestinian refugee camps should consider actual ecological issues. In other words, the environment was a key factor in each of the Multilaterals. This chapter will demonstrate an overall idea about the environment in the region and the official track negotiations. It will also shed light on creative ideas on ecological cooperation in the Middle East.

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<sup>1</sup>."Regional Environmental Cooperation and Development Options", Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, [www.israel-mfa.gov.il/peace/projects/env96.html](http://www.israel-mfa.gov.il/peace/projects/env96.html).

<sup>2</sup>. Salwa Sharawi, "The Issue of Environment in the Multilateral Negotiations ", *The Arab-Israeli Negotiations and the Future of peace in the Middle East*, Faculty of Political Science, Cairo University, Cairo, 1994, p569.



## The EWG from the International perspective

The Middle East countries shared common environmental problems emanating from several factors: high growth rates, water shortage, desertification, growing environmental awareness, and pollution. There were also different possible fields of cooperation such as establishing a regional environmental management framework, combating desertification and desert rehabilitation, nature conservation, and parks.<sup>3</sup> However, any regional cooperation in the field of the environment would ideally consider the basic features of international ecological negotiations and therefore it is of importance to shed some light on this matter and its relevance to the Middle East.

Governments were the chief actors in the environmental negotiations, though NGOs were sometimes observers, or enjoyed consultative status. The Arabs gained most of their experience in negotiations on the environment through participation in the Group of 77.<sup>4</sup> The role of NGOs remained limited in the Middle East but this was compensated for to some extent by the active participation of international NGOs.<sup>5</sup>

Negotiations on the environment became one of the media's chief concerns. Ozone depletion was at the top of the agenda in North America whereas nuclear accidents were the main concern of Europe <sup>6</sup> and all

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<sup>3</sup>. "Regional Environmental Cooperation and Development Options", Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

<sup>4</sup>. Winfried Lang, "Negotiations on the Environment", *International Negotiation: Analysis, Approaches, Issues*, edited by Victor A. Kremenjuk, Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, Oxford, 1991, pp.347-48.

<sup>5</sup>. Sharawi, "The Issue of Environment in the Multilateral Negotiations", p.564.

<sup>6</sup>. Lang, "Negotiations on the Environment", p.348.



states exploited the media in support of their cause.<sup>7</sup> However, the situation was different in the Arab world, where public opinion was not highly acquainted with ecological issues. The Israeli public, too, focused on national security above anything else, including the environment. Moreover, to the extent that the regional actors had environmental concerns, these naturally varied with their different circumstances. Since Israel was the only nuclear state in the region, the Arab side focused on the risk of nuclear accident. By contrast, Israel's chief concern was air and sea pollution.

As in other multilateral negotiations, the president or chairperson sometimes made the difference between success and failure. The executive director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) went far beyond his mandate and served as mediator in the ozone depletion negotiations. The legal advisor of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) was of a great help to the participants concerning legal matters.<sup>8</sup> In the EWG, Japan had a significant role to play. Its background inspired much confidence: it was a leading industrialized country in the field of the environment, offering eight billion dollars to the developing countries in the Earth Conference.<sup>9</sup> Scientific evidence related to actual or potential damage to the environment was the cornerstone of any negotiations on this subject. Reports on the progressive thinning out of the stratospheric ozone layer and the link established between this phenomenon and the production of CFCs constituted the basis of ozone depletion negotiations. However, the credibility of scientific reports was challenged by some delegations and interest groups, the latter working to block any prohibition or restriction imposed on their industries. Thus, scientific arguments versus economic

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<sup>7</sup>. Lang, "Negotiations on the Environment", p.352.

<sup>8</sup>. Lang, "Negotiations on the Environment", pp.349-50.



interests shaped the debate and outcome of the negotiations (though there was a legal dimension as well). For example, scientific research indicated the need for a 90 to 100 percent reduction in sulphur emissions, but the sulphur producers could not afford such a radical step, and a 30 percent reduction was held to be a reasonable compromise.<sup>10</sup> The EWG also addressed scientific reports on the negative impact of Israeli nuclear activities on the environment, pollution in the Gulf of Aqaba, and desertification.

Internal politics also had a significant impact on the course of the environmental negotiations. West Germany, for example, was unenthusiastic about air pollution negotiations during the 1970s but turned into a major campaigner on ecological issues due to the emergence of the 'Greens', a new political party. As for Austria, its anti-nuclear position in the nuclear accident negotiations could be attributed to the late 1970s referendum when Austrians rejected the nuclear option.<sup>11</sup> The EWG would also be affected by public opinion and internal politics. Thus Israel's rumored nuclear capabilities were a point of dispute with the Arabs because they made Arab public opinion fearful. However, public opinion in Egypt, Jordan, and the PA shared a conviction with the Israeli public that there could be no tourism without a good environment; therefore, cooperation for a better environment was essential.

Unlike Likud's intellectuals, who remained silent on this issue, Shimon Peres considered the environment in his volume *'The New Middle East.'* Here he stated his view that desertification was the chief enemy of the region, and that land degradation as a direct result either of over-exploitation or of neglect led to more. Over-population growth also

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<sup>9</sup>. Sharawi, "The Issue of Environment in the Multilateral Negotiations", p.576.

<sup>10</sup>. Lang, "Negotiations on the Environment", pp.350-54.

<sup>11</sup>. Lang, "Negotiations on the Environment", p.351.



led to over-use of natural resources, which in turn resulted in more desertification. To complicate the matter further, the region suffered from a serious lack of water. Victory over desertification depended on the optimal usage of water and science. Desalination, recycling water, and developing new types of food requiring less irrigation were the only solution. Israel was quite a pioneer in the field of genetic engineering and ready, Peres said, to share this experience with its neighbors. Technological partnership should not wait for the establishing of full diplomatic relations. Morocco, for instance, was already receiving the benefit of Israeli experience in the absence of full diplomatic relations. Syria was welcome to share this experience if it decided to do so.<sup>12</sup> He proposed to establish different centers for war against the desert, the wise use of water, and agricultural research and development. International financial support would, of course, be a key factor.<sup>13</sup> Yossi Sarid, then the Israeli Minister of Environment, confirmed that *“war and protection of the environment are two contradictory phenomena.”* He also advocated that *“peace [offered] an opportunity for the people of the region to redirect resources from security concerns to environmental projects and, in addition, to obtain international aid and foreign investment for the construction and improvement of environmental infrastructures.”*<sup>14</sup>

## The Official Track

The question of setting the agenda was, of course, a critical issue.

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<sup>12</sup>. Shimon Peres with Arye Naor, *The New Middle East*, Henry Holt and Company, Inc. New York, 1993. pp.115-20.

<sup>13</sup>. Peres, *The New Middle East*., pp. 121-22.

<sup>14</sup>. "Regional Environmental Cooperation and Development Options". Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs



Should the actors start with the complicated issues such as nuclear explosion and radiated materials, or begin with marginal ones like mosquito proliferation in the Gulf of Aqaba? Or should they address these issues simultaneously? Was the EWG's target to conclude a comprehensive agreement on environmental issues or exploit the forum to float a trial balloon that would test each side's intentions (for the Arabs, the Israeli position on the nuclear issue; for Israel, the Arab readiness to address normalization through joint ventures)? Should UNEP play an active role?

The Israelis took the view that environmental issues were trans-border ones and therefore should be addressed from a regional perspective. No matter who was responsible for ecological damage, all parties concerned had to cooperate to face the problem. The EWG, they believed, presented the seeds of cooperation in the region, and extra-regional participants should be invited to offer significant financial and technological assistance. Israel regarded air pollution as a trans-border threat that could move from Haifa to Jordan within a few hours. Proliferation of mosquitoes in the Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea presented a problem for public health and tourism so that establishing a multilateral committee for this matter was highly important. A center for combating pollution in the Mediterranean Sea was desirable. The global warming phenomenon resulted in more drought and desertification in the Middle East and therefore a task force should be established to examine the best agricultural technology for desert conditions.<sup>15</sup> They also called for a project for combating desertification, which was enjoying the support of six Arab states (Egypt, Jordan, Algeria, Tunisia, and Oman, together with the PA) and backed by eleven million dollars from the

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<sup>15</sup>. Sharawi, "The Issue of Environment in the Multilateral Negotiations", pp570-72.



International Bank. The members of the EWG should also agree on getting rid of radiated material at a common site provided the technology was available.<sup>16</sup>

The Arab position was in general presented by the Egyptians. Among other things, this emphasized that preserving the environment in the Middle East could not be divorced from efforts at global environmental protection, and that therefore UN participation was essential; and that the responsibility of each state should be determined according to the harm that they had already caused. The Israeli policies resulted in significant harm to the environment i.e. destroying large area of the forests in south Lebanon. Not surprisingly, the Arabs gave due consideration to the risk of radiated pollution as a back door means of exploring Israel's nuclear capabilities.<sup>17</sup> For the sake of preserving the Red Sea environment, Egypt proposed a regional coordination center for maritime disaster and emergency, though the absence of Saudi Arabia from this forum would undermine its value.<sup>18</sup> (The Saudi strategy was one of wait and see what happened in the EWG, without any direct cooperation on these matters with Israel.)<sup>19</sup>

Environmental issues were usually of a trans-border nature that compromised a state's sovereignty but the Palestinian case proved the opposite. The Palestinian delegation exploited this forum so as to enhance the territorial sovereignty of those it represented. And after the DOP in September 1993, the Israeli delegation blessed a Palestinian proposal for an environmental authority that in the first three rounds of the EWG it had blocked. The Palestinian strategy was based on exploiting

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<sup>16</sup>. Amr El-Gawaly, "Environment: the Conflict of Cooperation", *International Political Journal-Al-Siyassa Al-Dawliya (IPJ)*, Vol.115, January 1994, pp.219.

<sup>17</sup>. Sharawi, "The Issue of Environment in the Multilateral Negotiations", pp572-74.

<sup>18</sup> This proposal was approved by the participants. Two emergencies centers were to be established in Neuaba (Sinai) and Aqaba in addition to promoting the existing one in Eilat.

<sup>19</sup>. El-Gawaly, "Environment: the Conflict of Cooperation", p.218.



the EWG for addressing other Multilateral Working Groups from the ecological point of view. They raised the environmental refugees issue and the negative impact of Israeli water policies on the ecology of the region.<sup>20</sup>

The EWG chair, Japan, believed that if the Bilaterals succeeded in bringing a peaceful end to the Middle East conflict, the extra-regional participants would inject more funds and experts to promote ecological rescue in the region. Japan itself sent a team to study the region's ecological problems, hosted a seminar on the subject,<sup>21</sup> and during the third round of the EWG in Tokyo in May 1992 urged adoption of a new code of conduct. Among other things, setting up a basic plan for preserving the environment which would determine responsibilities on national and regional level, and assessing ecological impact on any proposed project in the Middle East. Consistently with this effort, Austria proposed a memorandum of administrative behavior during the fourth round. Yet these efforts were of an academic nature rather than proposals for negotiations<sup>22</sup>

The American delegation focused on the ecological situation in the Gulf of Aqaba, describing the permanent pollution process there as a real threat to riparian on the Red Sea. Hence, Israel, Jordan, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, it said, had to agree on measures to contain it. Such cooperation would lay the groundwork for regional economic cooperation, especially between Aqaba and Eilat.<sup>23</sup> The EU devoted its own attention to calling for an effective mechanism to control pollution in the Mediterranean. The

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<sup>20</sup>. El-Gawaly, "Environment: the Conflict of Cooperation", pp. 217-222.

<sup>21</sup>. Sharawi, "The Issue of Environment in the Multilateral Negotiations", pp.575-76.

<sup>22</sup>. El-Gawaly, "Environment: the Conflict of Cooperation", pp.216-17.

<sup>23</sup>. Sharawi, "The Issue of Environment in the Multilateral Negotiations", pp.576-77.



EU has since been involved in financing 116 projects in this field, offering about six million dollars annually.<sup>24</sup>

During the meeting held in Bahrain on 25 October 1994, a code of conduct for the Middle East environment was finally concluded. The main features of this code were similar to the Japanese proposal. However, it added that comprehensive peace in the Middle East and environment protection were interdependent. Of course, this was an Arab demand and Israel was ready to accept it following the DOP. The sixth round of the EWG took place in Amman in June 1995, and considered three major projects. The first was a pollution project for the Gulf of Eilat/ Aqaba , which would establish three stations (Aqaba, Eilat, and Nuweiba) to be linked by a joint communications network and financed by the EU and Japan. The second was designed to tackle desertification, and was to be sponsored by the World Bank and carried out by five regional centers. The third, environmental management was planned to employ two centers, one in Jordan and the other in Bahrain.<sup>25</sup>

Arab negotiating strategy lacked the minimum level of coordination needed. Egypt, for example, hosted both the fourth round of the EWG, from 15 to 16 November 1993, and the Arab Council for the Environment, on 24 November. Had the Arabs been serious about coordinating their stance for this round, the Arab Council meeting should have taken place before it. Furthermore, the agenda of the Arab Council meeting did not even include any item regarding the fourth round, which meant that they were not even interested in assessing their performance. Meanwhile, Israel held preliminary meetings with the Palestinians, during which the two sides addressed the most important subjects. Another

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<sup>24</sup>. Sharawi , "The Issue of Environment in the Multilateral Negotiations", p577.

<sup>25</sup>. "Environment Working Group", *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, [www.israel-mfa.gov.il/peace/ environ.html](http://www.israel-mfa.gov.il/peace/ environ.html).



preliminary meeting took place between the Israelis and Jordanians that concluded a complete agreement on the ecological problems of the Gulf of Aqaba.<sup>26</sup>

## Track Two

A Palestinian scholar<sup>27</sup> quite close to the PA launched a trial balloon suggesting different fields of cooperation. These included promoting the Mediterranean- Red Sea marine environment, solar energy, and strengthening environmental institutions.<sup>28</sup> In response to this, two Israeli semi-officials<sup>29</sup> called for the establishing of a Middle East Action Plan similar to the Mediterranean Action Plan with some modifications to fit the region's political, economic, and environmental conditions.<sup>30</sup>

A prominent Western intellectual<sup>31</sup> called for creation of an international agreement to preserve the Middle East environment from further degradation i.e. Gulf of Aqaba.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>. El-Gawaly , "Environment: the Conflict of Cooperation", pp.215-16.

<sup>27</sup>. Ramzi M. Sansur is a faculty member at Birzeit University's Center for Environmental and Occupational Health Service, Ramallah, West Bank, and a founding member of the Middle East Water Information Network.

<sup>28</sup>. Ramzi M. Sansur, " Call for a Better Environment", *Practical peacemaking in the Middle East: The Environment, Water, Refugees, and Economic cooperation and Development*, edited by Steven L. Spiegel and David J. Pervin, Garland Publishing, INC. New York & London 1995, pp.21- 27.

<sup>29</sup>. Uri Marinov is the president of Marinov Associations in Jerusalem, Israel. Since 1969, he has been involved in creating the Israeli environmental program, serving as director general of the Israeli Ministry of Environment until 1992. He was the head of Israeli delegation to the Tokyo and Moscow Rounds of the Multilateral negotiations on environment. And Deborah Sandler is specialized in international law of environment and a member of bar association of the state of California and Israel.

<sup>30</sup>. Uri Marinov and Deborah Sandler, " A Proposed Model for Environmental Protection in the Middle East", *Practical Peacemaking in the Middle East: The Environment, Water, Refugees, And Economic Cooperation and Development*, Vol.II edited by Steven L. Spiegel and David J. Pervin, Garland and Publishing,. INC. New York & London, 1995, pp. 35-9.

<sup>31</sup>. Philip Warburg is director of the Middle East Program, and senior attorney at the Environmental Law Institute, Washington DC.

<sup>32</sup>. Philip Warburg, " Gulf of Aqaba Environmental Protection: A Survey of Regulatory, Enforcement, and Dispute Management Tools", *Practical Peacemaking in the Middle East: The Environment, Water, Refugees, and Economic Cooperation and Development*, Vol. II,



## Conclusion

Both Israelis and Arabs agreed on the essential role of extra-regional participants in the EWG, but the latter stressed the importance of their active role. On the other hand, they disagreed on the role of the EWG itself, with the Israelis wanting it to focus on purely technical matters, and the Arabs more concerned with political ones, especially environmental security and nuclear activities. Moreover, the Israelis maintained that it was pointless to try to determine which actors caused most environmental damage, while the Arabs believed that this point '*per se*' should determine the mandate of each.<sup>33</sup>

The two sides concluded the Bahrain Code of Conduct, which represented a basis for a regional environmental program. Of the many environmental projects considered, preserving the environment in the Gulf of Aqaba was the subject that caused most anxiety. As in the other multilateral tracks, solid Arab coordination was notable by its absence.

## THE END OF THE MULTILATERALS

In an attempt to rejuvenate the Multilaterals after critical difficulties had produced deadlock in the Bilaterals, Moscow hosted the Steering Committee meeting on 1 February 2001. In a joint communiqué, both the Russian Foreign Minister and Secretary of State announced the resumption of four out of the five tracks. Egypt confirmed that the

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edited by Steven L. Spiegel and David J. Pervin, Garland Publishing, INC. New York & London, 1995, p.77.

<sup>33</sup>. Sharawi , " The Issue of Environment in the Multilateral Negotiations", pp. 574-75 .



resumption of ACRS was bound to establish a comprehensive agenda, including the nuclear issue. This produced the expected Israeli refusal, and therefore this Working Group was kept on hold. The Israeli Foreign Minister warmly welcomed the communiqué, confirming that Israel did not intend to impose its agenda on others, but to develop the entire region.<sup>34</sup> The Moscow meeting outcome thus favored Israel, which had no serious interest in a resumption of the ACRS, only the ECDWG. The Arabs should have insisted that the Multilaterals were not subject to a '*pick and choose strategy*:' either Israel would demonstrate seriousness on the nuclear issue in ACRS or the entire Multilaterals would be suspended.

Due to the outbreak of the Uprising II in September 2000 in the Palestinian occupied territories that followed the collapse of the Camp David Summit II in July 2000, Egypt called for an urgent Arab Summit in Cairo on 21-22 October 2000. Here it was agreed that there would be neither official nor unofficial activities in the framework of the Multilaterals until there was a significant breakthrough in the Bilaterals. In other words, after eight years of negotiation, the Arab participants in the Multilaterals had finally realized that the Syrian position was right.

## **Overall Assessment of the Multilaterals**

The Geneva format of 1973 had not included provision for multilateral talks of the kind discussed in this and the preceding chapters. Their introduction reflected the much worsened situation of the Arab world, especially after Gulf War II. Moreover, the Multilaterals were designed to fulfill the Israeli wish to decouple territorial concessions from

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<sup>34</sup>. *Al Ahram (AA)*, 2 Feb. 2000.



normalization. Nevertheless, the Multilaterals were always waiting for a breakthrough in the Bilaterals. After the DOP, the Multilaterals witnessed tangible progress in the ECDWG, WWG, RWG, and EWG; no major change took place for ACRS because of the adamant Egyptian stance regarding Israeli nuclear capabilities.

The Multilaterals were just so much air, with no clear mandate, firm terms of reference, agreed agenda, or decision making process. They looked like academic symposia. Indeed, no substantial difference could be detected between the official meetings of the Working Groups and the conferences of scholars that supplemented them. Both were just forums to shuffle ideas without commitment. In other words, the Multilaterals were not real negotiations, but just receptions designed to prove that the process was still alive regardless of the profound disagreements in the Bilaterals - photo diplomacy. Nevertheless, even in the Multilaterals significant gaps between the antagonists were obvious. These could be seen in the discussion of definitions, conceptions, principles, priorities, agenda, and relevant mechanisms.

For ACRS, the Israelis embraced a structural vulnerability concept, stressing the acquisition of extraordinary capabilities (nuclear weapons), whereas the Arabs espoused parity as a key principle, to be applied in the entire region without exception. Hence, the ACRS Working Group was doomed to fail before proceeding one inch. As for the EDWG, this was just an instrument to make Israel the capital of the Middle East's stock market, banking services, and high tech industries, with the Arabs confined to reliance on less profitable traditional industries. The situation in the WRWG was no less complicated. The Israeli stance was based on disregarding any demands for water redistribution, and insisting instead on maintaining the status quo with resources enhanced through desalination and water exportation. The Arabs did not object to the latter



but first wanted the return of their stolen share. The RWG was no exception to the general rule. Israel adamantly refused the right of return, on the grounds that relenting on this would mean the end of Israel as a Jewish state. By contrast, the Arabs insisted on the implementation of UN resolution 194, refusing to countenance the settlement of refugees in the hosting countries. Finally, the environment posed another point of disagreement. Israel saw no reason to determine which actor caused more harm to the environment, arguing that the states of the region should share responsibility. The Arabs, however, believed that each state's share depended on the harm that it had caused. Furthermore, Israel kept the issue of the treatment of radiated material low profile to avoid any discussion of its nuclear activities; the Arab position was exactly the opposite. In short, the Multilaterals' basic contribution was merely to highlight the extent of the huge gap between the antagonists.



## **Conclusion**

Throughout the long history of the Middle East conflict, multilateral diplomacy has taken different formats. The first Arab-Zionist talks, from 1913 until 1914, took the form of pre-negotiation contacts in which the antagonists were probing each other's minimum demands. This was also the case with the Israeli-Palestinian corridor diplomacy during the second round of the Bilaterals in December 1991. The St James Conference 1939 looked like the Münster-Osnabrück negotiations (1643-48) in many ways. The main goal of the first was to reach a settlement for the future of Palestine, for the second of Germany. Both negotiations took the form of proximity talks due in the one case to the Arab refusal to have direct negotiations with the Zionists, and in the other to the Swedish refusal to meet with the Pope's representative. England and France were parties to both conflicts, as well as serving as third parties: England promised to establish a Jewish state in Palestine, while Catholic France sided with the Protestant camp at Westphalia.

The Rhodes Armistice Talks 1949 and the disengagement negotiations 1973-74 between Egypt and Syria on the one hand and Israel on the other were of a purely military nature based on a one-to one format; no unified Arab delegation to negotiate with Israel, but each Arab country should negotiate unilaterally. To penetrate the Arab front, Israel refused either to negotiate with a unified Arab delegation or to carry out simultaneous negotiations with Egypt and Syria. On the other hand, both Camp Davids I and II resembled the St James format (based on proximity talks) even though they yielded some direct contacts: for Camp David I, the negotiations were basically Anwar Sadat-Jimmy Carter and



Menachem Begin-Jimmy Carter talks; while Camp David II consisted largely of Arafat-Clinton and Barak-Clinton negotiations.

Both the Geneva (1973) and Madrid (1991) formats were alike - a ceremonial plenary after which each Arab actor pursued bilateral negotiations with Israel. However, they were different in terms of goals: Geneva aimed at consolidating the truce and then making peace; while Madrid's major goal was not only to bring peace, but also to establish the post-war order. Looking at the essence of debate in the Madrid plenary, it looked like that of the Versailles Conference at the end of the World War I - different interpretations of '*defensible frontiers*' and '*historic rights*'. Under these concepts, Italy had asked to annex some part of German and Slovenian territories. These concepts were also used by Shamir - a '*defensible frontier*' meant no withdrawal to the 4 June 1967 lines; and '*historical rights*' (King David's state) referred to the West Bank and Gaza as the biblical land of Israel. Yet these perceptions were in conflict with Woodrow Wilson's principles of self-determination and President George Bush's pledges to the Arabs during Gulf War II. Remarkably, Wilson's reaction was similar to that of Bush - the former begged the Italian people to drop these demands; and the latter appealed to the Israeli Labor party and the American Jewish lobby to support his position on postponing the settlement loan guarantees. Nevertheless, the other side's reactions were also identical. Thus, Italian public opinion regarded the Wilson speech as an unacceptable interference in their domestic policy; and the American Jewish lobby was furious and turned against Bush in the presidential elections.

Out of all examples of modern multilateral diplomacy, none resembles the Madrid Conference more than that held at San Francisco in April 1945; both adopted a step-by-step approach. Despite achieving agreement on the UN charter, San Francisco left post-war political



settlements to future conferences: the Potsdam conference 1945 (the settlement in Germany), the Greece settlement in 1947, and finally the United States- Japan treaty of ending war in 1950. Likewise, the Madrid Conference did not seek a comprehensive settlement so that there was Oslo 1993 for the Palestinians and Wadi Arava 1994 for the Jordanians. By contrast, the victorious powers at the time of the great congresses at Westphalia (1648), Vienna (1815), and Versailles (1919) concluded comprehensive settlements and imposed them on the spot.

Both the Multilateral tracks in the 1990s and the Congress of Vienna in 1815 aimed at constructing a post-war order. They also included the defeated powers as active participants. The French representative at Vienna, Talleyrand, adopted the notion of '*legitimacy*' to assure an influential French role regardless of the defeat of Napoleon. Likewise, the Palestinian delegation confirmed that any agreements on post-war arrangements, especially on refugees, would be illegitimate in the absence of representatives of the Palestinian Diaspora. Furthermore, both France and Palestinians acted as mediators. Talleyrand served as a mediator; in January 1815, he worked to overcome the deadlock between Russia and Prussia on the one hand, Britain, and Austria on the other. As for the Palestinians, they served as a mediator to overcome the Baker-Al-Shara (the Syrian Foreign Minister) deadlock on the venue and timing of meetings in the Bilaterals.

On the other hand, in many ways the Congress of Vienna and the Arab-Israeli Multilaterals remained different. For the former, the Treaty of Paris preceded it on 30 May 1814, which determined the fate of France. Hence, this issue was not subject to discussion in Vienna. By contrast, the antagonists in the Middle East addressed the territorial settlement (the Bilaterals) and the post war order (the Multilaterals) simultaneously; therefore, all actors were preoccupied with the future of



Palestine. The full Congress of Vienna did not meet at all, but the key powers held systematic committee meetings, whereas the lesser powers carried out diplomatic lobbying, which was not the case with Madrid. Here, the conference was inaugurated by a plenary and the '*Multilaterals*' were opened by another plenary, in Moscow. Above all, the essence of the Congress of Vienna was to establish equilibrium among the key powers in Europe. By contrast, the Multilaterals had the consequences of enhancing Israeli superiority not only in military capabilities (especially weapons of mass destruction), but also in economic and water resources. Had the actors reached an agreement on the post-war order in the region, it would never have maintained peace in the Middle East for a century, as had been the case with that constructed at Vienna: '*a coercive order must be revolutionary.*'

Did the various tracks and backchannels of the Madrid process constitute innovations, or were they consistent with established diplomatic practice? Looking at the antagonists' diplomatic practice in the multilateral diplomacies in the Middle East conflict, it is clear that they were fully aware that the gap between their minimum demands was unbridgeable. Starting from the St James Conference in 1939 to the Madrid Conference in 1991, their main objective was to prove to the third party that they were peace-seekers rather than to engage in serious negotiation. Each kept calling on the mediator to apply more pressure on the other side. In other words, they were posturing rather than negotiating. Of course, this was not the case with the great conferences of Westphalia (1648), Vienna (1815), Versailles (1919) and San Francisco (1945); the antagonists were engaged in real negotiations. Apart from this, the negotiation process associated with the Madrid process was consistent with the conventional diplomatic practice. If so, what was unique in the diplomatic practice of the Madrid Conference format? In



comparison to the great conferences of Westphalia, Vienna, Versailles, and San Francisco, the Madrid Conference established three precedents in the history of modern multilateral diplomacy. In the first place, the antagonists negotiated the territorial settlements (the Bilaterals) and the post war order (the Multilaterals) simultaneously. In the previous great conferences, they usually started with the former issue and ended with the latter. In the second place, the post war order agenda addressed a wide range of issues never tackled before simultaneously i.e. cooperative security, water redistribution and cooperation, comprehensive economic cooperation, refugees' resettlement and rehabilitation, and finally cooperation in the field of environment. This does not mean that these issues were quite enough to design a perfect post war order - issues like democracy and human rights were denied separate tracks. In the third place, the Madrid Conference made it clear that in addressing the territorial settlements and the post war regime simultaneously, these two issues could not be divorced from each other; the former always led the latter. In other words, failure in the Multilaterals would just be the inevitable consequence of dead lock in the Bilaterals. Hence, if the antagonists were not sure of an imminent breakthrough in the Bilaterals, the Multilaterals would strengthen one of the antagonists' negotiating positions at the expense of the other. In the Madrid, the Multilaterals served as an Israeli pressurizing card on the Arabs.

Throughout the long history of the Middle East conflict, the Arabs lacked any unified or coherent strategy. Furthermore, some Arab leaders have traded the Palestinian question either for their own interest or – at best - for bilateral relations with key powers. As an illustration, during the St James Conference 1939, the Transjordan delegation was in contact with the Zionist delegation. King Abdullah of Jordan was exploring what could be obtained from the Zionists and British in return for advocating a



flexible position toward the issue of Jewish immigration to Palestine. Meanwhile, Syria was preoccupied with the future of Syro-Palestinian union; it confirmed that larger Jewish immigration would be possible under this union. During the London Conference 1946-47, the Prime Minister of Egypt, Ismail Sidqi, supported the partition plan in return for withdrawal of the British military bases in the Suez Canal zone to the future Jewish state. During the 1990s, Egypt led the Arab world to the Madrid Conference in return for the strengthening of its bilateral relations with the United States. To sum up, many Arab leaders regarded the Palestinian question as an issue to be used rather than a problem to be solved.

The former Israeli Foreign Minister, Abba Eban, advocated a famous theory that “*the Palestinians never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity.*” Later, Kissinger developed the theory that it is better to “*take what you can get rather than demand what you want.*” These slogans came to the scene following any Israeli proposal for peace. The Israeli propaganda aimed at applying pressure on the Palestinians. From the Arab-Zionist negotiations in 1929 up to the Madrid Conference in 1991, the Israelis were busy strengthening their relations with the key powers to make the Arabs kneel to their terms of peace. Both Arabs and Israelis refused UNSCR 181, but Israel later accused the Arabs of missing the opportunity of peace in 1948. Furthermore, the Arabs accepted 242 and 338 but the Israelis refused to implement them to bring peace to the region. Indeed, there were never missed opportunities because Israel saw no need to pay the cost of a comprehensive peace as long as it enjoyed unconditional Western support. On the other hand, the former Israeli Minister of Defense, Moshe Dayan, best elaborated the Israeli negotiating strategy in these words: “*If one wheel (Egypt) of the car (the Arab world) has been removed, it can not be driven.*” In other



words, a comprehensive settlement has never been the Israeli negotiating strategy. Both Likud and Labor advocated a '*Bantustans*' option for the Palestinian people but the Labor was willing to see them with the flag of a '*Palestinian State*' ,while the Likud insisted on using the language of '*Palestinian autonomy*.'

The United States strategy aimed at playing the role of the sole third party. Apart from the St James and London Conferences, it successfully reached this goal. For this reason, it denied the EC participation in the Geneva Conference in 1973 and captured the EU role in ECDWG in the Multilaterals. Throughout the history of the conflict, the United States was willing to sabotage any agreement that did not give it a role. During the first Egyptian-Israeli disengagement talks in 1973, Kissinger advised the Israelis not to sign an agreement with the Egyptians, but wait instead for the Geneva Conference 1973. By this means, he could enhance the American role in the peace process. Moreover, any peace agreement should be made under American auspices. For this reason, Washington witnessed the signing of the Camp David Accords in 1978, the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty in 1979, the Oslo Accords in 1993, and the Jordanian-Israeli Peace Treaty in 1994.

The Eric Johnston shuttle diplomacy in 1953-55 aimed at bringing a comprehensive peace to the region based on regional water cooperation; yet he achieved no success. No Arab regime was ready for peace with Israel nor was the latter keen to offer serious concessions to this end. After that, no major development was witnessed by American policy regarding the Middle East. In early 1970s, Kissinger was appointed as National Security Advisor first, and Secretary of State later. He made a radical change in United States foreign policy, initiating a new strategy i.e. *step-by-step diplomacy*. Under this strategy, the Middle East conflict was to be divided into independent sub-tracks. The ultimate



goal was to curb hostility against the United States in the Arab world by giving the impression that it was working for peace as well as endorsing Israel. The United States was also planning to penetrate the Arab front and encourage the Arab states to conclude bilateral peace treaties with Israel. It was playing for time to enable Israel to create facts on the ground. In addition, it wanted to tame the Arabs in order to make them inclined to submit to Israeli demands.

The problem with this strategy was that it started by adopting cosmetic measures, postponing discussion on the essence of the problem as much as possible. Nevertheless, at a certain point, the antagonists had to address the essence of the conflict and then significant problems would inevitably come to the surface. This analysis is at odds with the theory that Kissinger had adopted a '*step-by-step*' approach whereas his successor Vance advocated a '*comprehensive*' strategy. After the 1973 War, Kissinger started with a disengagement agreement with Egypt in 1974, followed by a second one with Syria in the same year, and finally a second disengagement agreement with Egypt in 1975, which terminated belligerency. But at this point, Washington could no longer postpone addressing the essence of the conflict. This led to the '*comprehensive*' approach and Camp David I Summit in 1978. In other words, neither Sadat nor Jimmy Carter was for the comprehensive approach but there was no other option to keep the peace process alive. Had Kissinger been the Secretary of State in 1978, he would not have opposed the Camp David I Summit. The same analysis was still relevant for James Baker and Madeleine Albright. Baker embraced the Kissinger style, which yielded the Oslo Accords during Bill Clinton's term. Yet the situation reached a point that the United States had to face the key issues. Again, Clinton, Barak, and Arafat had to face the reality, hence Camp David II in 2000. Remarkably, the Republican presidents, Nixon and Bush, were



clever enough to initiate and keep the step-by step approach alive, leaving the dilemma of confronting the essence of the problem to the Democrats. Carter had succeeded by virtue of Sadat's submission, but Clinton failed because of Arafat's obduracy.

The Kissinger doctrine was based on the assumption that United States-Israeli strategic relations were an asset rather than a liability for American foreign policy in the Middle East. The Arabs should meet Washington's demands; otherwise, it would unleash Israel. The American scenario was that: (1) the United States unleashed Israel, (2) pro-American Arab rulers visited Washington, begging for the stopping of Tel-Aviv, (3) Washington did so in return for certain concessions, and (4) the Arabs engaged in a long dispute on who was the Arab ruler that should take the credit of stopping Israel for himself? For the short and medium term, the Kissinger theory was very right; for the long term, it was very wrong. This situation was the chief reason for the emergence of the direct action organizations i.e. Hezbollah, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Al-Qaida II; if the Arab governments kneeled to the Christian West, the people would resist. In short, this doctrine carried the chief responsibility for the 11 September attack and its aftermath.

During the course of the Middle East conflict, the antagonists and the third parties employed different negotiation tactics. One of these was '*deferring negotiations on significant issues in order to pressurize the opponent later on.*' The Oslo Accords were a by-product of this Israeli tactic. During the Israeli-Syrian negotiations (1991-99), Israel attempted to defer any talks about the scope of withdrawal until Syria made a clear definition about the type of peace it was prepared to contemplate. The Israeli tactic was not successful because of Asad's attitude.



During the early Arab-Jewish negotiations, both Arabs and Zionists adhered to the dictum that *'negotiation from a position of weakness is a mistake.'* Thus, the Zionists refused to negotiate in the wake of the Arab revolts of 1920, 1921, and 1929; while the Arabs refused to meet with Zionist leaders following the publication of the UK Colonial Secretary Malcolm MacDonald's pro-Zionist letter in February 1931; the letter was supporting the Jewish immigration. Yet both sides ignored this dictum later. The Zionists participated in the St James Conference following the 1936-9 revolution and the Geneva Conference after the 1973 War; the Arabs also participated in the Rhodes Armistice Talks and Madrid Conference following their military defeat in the 1948 War and the Gulf War II 1991.

During the early negotiations, the antagonists adhered to the tactic that *'negotiating during periods of political uncertainty is unwise.'* Both Arabs and Zionists adopted this tactics during the First and Second World Wars. However, the Arabs agreed to go to Madrid under the pressure of American rhetoric about the so-called *'New World Order'* before they had even explored its basic features.

During the Egyptian-Israeli disengagement talks in 1973, Sadat adopted the tactic of *'imposing a time limit to rush the opponent to an agreement.'* He indicated that he would sign the disengagement agreement before his official trip to some Arab capitals, one month later. His tactic was not successful. According to Henry Kissinger, *"normally a negotiator who sets a time limit weakens his own position, unless the mediator in turn is convinced that the failure of the negotiation is more dangerous to his own country than to the parties. This was far from the case in the disengagement talks."* The idea of a *package deal* was the prime Arab tactic in the Geneva and Madrid Conferences, but the balance of power was not in their favor. By contrast, during the Lebanese-Israeli



negotiations in 1983, Lebanon procrastinated whereas the Israelis were pressing for an immediate package deal. The Lebanese government hesitated to sign a peace treaty with Israel but eventually capitulated to Israeli pressure because of its previous secret relations with Tel-Aviv during the Lebanese Civil War.

Following its experience of negotiations at the St James and London Conferences, Israel embraced the tactic of *dividing the problem into different issues*. It also succeeded in selling it to the United States so that the Rhodes, Geneva and Madrid Conferences took this format. *Inviting the participation of a third party* was a second best tactic for Israel. It always called for direct negotiations with the Arabs to obtain their implicit recognition. (This is why Shamir wanted the Bilaterals to be held in the Middle East instead of Washington.) Only after direct negotiations failed, Israel invited the United States participation in order to apply more pressure on the Arabs, as when Barak called for the United States intervention (Camp David II) following the collapse of his talks with Arafat on the final settlement in late 1999.

The Egyptian delegation adopted a *bluffing* tactic during the Rhodes Armistice Talks in 1949. Once the negotiations reached a deadlock, the delegation interrupted negotiations to consult Cairo. Sadat, Arafat, and Netanyahu also used this tactic by threatening to go home during Camp David I, the signing ceremony of the DOP 1993, and the Wye River Summit respectively. However, these experiences proved that bluffing was not very effective. The *good guy-bad guy* tactic was also extensively used by the antagonists. Following Sadat's visit to Jerusalem in 1977, Menachem Begin and Moshe Dayan played the role of '*bad guy*' while Ezer Weizmann acted as a '*good guy*'. In the same vein, Rabin, Peres, and Barak warned the Arabs that if they were not flexible in negotiations, Netanyahu and Sharon would take office and the peace



process would grind to a halt. Arafat also played this tactic with Rabin and Peres; if they remained intransigent, Hamas would take office and so peace would get nowhere; either the PLO or Hamas. Remarkably, this tactic was successful in making a U-turn in their opponent's position. The Arab negotiation strategy, in the Bilaterals, was based on supporting Labor and undermining Likud i.e. the fifth round of the Bilaterals. Meanwhile, Labor recognized the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people, aiming at marginalizing Hamas from the political arena.

Both Abdullah I of Jordan and Sadat refused to employ the tactic of *evasion*, and revealed their intentions gratuitously. During the 1948 War, Abdullah confirmed to Ben Grunion that he had no intention to escalate confrontation, with the result that the latter was in a position to direct his war machine to the Egyptian front. Sadat also revealed his military plans one day following the outbreak of the 1973 War. He confirmed to Kissinger that he had no intention to go far into Sinai; hence Israel was given an opportunity to press forward on the Syrian front. By contrast, Asad employed evasion during the 1973 War, the only Arab ruler to do so; he launched a war of attrition during the Israeli-Syrian disengagement negotiations in 1974; he aimed at giving the Israelis and Americans the impression of his willingness to pursue the war even though he was in no position to do so. In fact, from Rhodes to Madrid, Syrian delegations always kept their intentions secret, using different trial balloons.

'*Back channel diplomacy*' was a tactic preferred by Abdullah I, Sadat, and Arafat. They were invariably busy in secret channels while official negotiations were going on. Abdullah launched secret negotiations with the Israelis during the Rhodes Armistice Talks. During the first and second disengagement negotiations, Sadat was negotiating



with Kissinger while informing neither his Foreign nor Defense Ministers. Arafat also initiated the Oslo channel during the Washington talks. Of course, Israel welcomed these channels in order to cut off the Arab rulers from their negotiating teams.

'*Shuttle diplomacy*' was the prime United States tactic during the course of the Middle East conflict, notably when US diplomacy was in the hands of Johnston, Kissinger, and Baker. Remarkably, Johnston was not successful, though Kissinger's efforts yielded Geneva and Baker's produced Madrid. Johnston failed, among other reasons, because he was too clear about his goals and plans. By contrast, the ambiguous approach of Kissinger and Baker tempted the Arabs into the Geneva, Camp David I, and Madrid traps. If Eric Johnston had called the adversaries to an international conference under the World Bank's auspices to discuss the financing of the Jordan River basin projects according to the Rhodes Armistice Talks format (no direct negotiations), the Arabs would probably have participated.

What, finally, of the fourteen hypotheses listed in the Introduction? First, that if key actors are able to implant a state in a specific region, they will also be able to cultivate peace in the area. This is a false hypothesis. Despite the fact that the UK succeeded in implanting Israel on Palestinian soil, it completely failed to bring peace to the Middle East. The unofficial initiative of the former British Representative in Transjordan, John Philby, in 1929, the St James Conference in 1939, and the London Conference in 1946 all reached a deadlock. On the other hand, the United States succeeded in preserving Israeli national security, but it also failed to introduce it to the Arabs as a normal actor of the region; neither the Geneva Conference in 1973 nor the Madrid Conference in 1991 made a breakthrough. The implant of the Jewish state in the hart of the Middle East caused unforeseen and complicated repercussions. Neither the West



nor the Arabs, nor the Israelis could predict them up to this moment. To make matters worse, the lack of serious Western pressure on the Israeli hardliners made the minimum demands of the antagonists could not be made coincided. Israel stipulated the following terms of peace: (1) no return to the 4 June 1967 lines, (2) unified Jerusalem is the capital of Israeli forever, (3) no right of return for the Palestinian refugees, (4) the big settlements in the West Bank should continue under Israeli jurisdiction, (5) Israel should continue controlling the Palestinian water in the West Bank, (6) it should also be the core of any economic cooperation in the region, and (7) it should maintain its nuclear arsenal, while refusing to all the Arabs to acquire their own deterrent capabilities. The Arabs stipulated just the opposite on all counts. In this situation, peace making is mission impossible.

The second hypothesis was that even if the implanted state remains very different in terms of ideology, values and culture, peace in the region would still be attainable. This is also false. In case of a severe clash of ideologies, peace is not possible. For instance, peace in Europe was possible after, not before, the collapse of the Communist ideology in the Eastern part of the continent. The situation is much worse in the case of the Middle East conflict where differences were not only confined to ideology. In the Middle East, peace is possible only in two eventualities: first, one of the antagonists will finish off the other, as when the Western white immigrants managed to eradicate the '*Red Indians*' (native Americans) from the North American continent; or second, one of the antagonists should renounce its ideology i.e. the South African model. In other words, peace is possible only with the end of the Arab race and Islamic fundamentalism or the demise of the Zionist ideology.

The third hypothesis was that the more democratic is a state, the more powerful it is in the negotiation process. This is true. The usual



argument is that democracies are weaker than dictatorial regimes in negotiations because they cannot keep secrets and '*the people*' are always throwing spanners in the works. Although this is true, it ignores the fact that full power for a negotiator means less ability for maneuvering. Israel has always been exploiting the democratic institutional dimension during the course of negotiations with the Arabs. All Israeli Prime Ministers from Begin to Barak made it clear that they did not have enough authorization to make a deal with the Arabs. They always claimed that they had fully to consult with their negotiating team, then obtain cabinet approval, and finally pass the deal in the Knesset; in some cases, a referendum was also required. During the Egyptian-Israeli Camp David negotiations 1978, Begin told Sadat that unfortunately he did not have a full mandate from his people as Sadat had. By contrast, all Arab leaders from King Abdullah I of Jordan to Arafat behaved as the sole leaders of their nations. They enjoyed full power to make deals with the Israelis and therefore they became subject to tremendous pressure from the United States and Israel. The different United States administrations applied the same tactic with the Arab rulers. When the latter complained of the United States partiality regarding the Middle East conflict, they claimed that they saw the Arab argument but could do nothing because of Congressional pressure. The Turkish government also exploited the same tactic with the United States itself. Before the American invasion of Iraq in March 2003, it approved the United States demand to open the southern Turkish borders to the American troops, but could not pass the bill in Parliament. Of course, the Arab rulers could not claim that they would deny the American army any military facilities because of their parliament objection.

Fourthly, there is the hypothesis that the more dictatorships are prevented from acquiring weapons of mass destruction (WMD), the safer



is the world. History proves that this hypothesis is wrong. The Nazi dictatorship regime did not use chemical weapons as a weapon of last resort during World War II. However, the United States democracy used two nuclear bombs against Japanese civilians without a significant need to this. It also used chemical weapons in Vietnam only to win the war, not to preserve its national security. The UK democracy also used chemical weapons in Afghanistan to suppress the Afghani people in 1919. Democratic regimes could not suppress their people; otherwise, they would have to leave office. However, they would not hesitate to suppress other nations to preserve their countries' interests. The atrocities committed by the American army since 9 September 2001 in Afghanistan and Iraq, stand as an evidence. However, the hypothesis about WMD is widely used by the West to justify its uneven handed policy in the Middle East: offering significant help to Israel to develop military nuclear capabilities and applying pressure on the Arabs to prevent them from doing the same.

Fifth was the hypothesis that the stronger a state, the fewer security arrangements it will require. This hypothesis also proves to be wrong. During the Rhodes Armistice talks in 1949, the infant Israel had stipulated equality in any armaments with the Arabs. During the disengagement negotiations in 1974-75 with Egypt and Syria, Israel lifted its ceiling of demands; any security arrangements should be in its favor. The Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty reflected this reality clearly: Sinai was almost demilitarized. During the Israeli-Syrian peace talks in 1999, Damascus accepted a mutual reduction of forces on the ratio of 10:6 in the Israeli favor. Like other negotiations, interests and balance of power govern negotiations on security arrangements. The more a state is strong, the more it is in a position to serve its interests by designing security arrangements in its favor.



What of the sixth hypothesis, that if fundamentalists and nationalists take office, negotiations will be tougher. This assumption is generally right with some exceptions. In general, the emergence of fundamentalism on both sides had a negative impact on the prospects for the conflict's settlement. Regardless of their religions, fundamentalists share one characteristic: they are completely wedded to certain principles dictated or inspired thousands of years ago. Therefore, there is no wide room for compromise. Some Jewish fundamentalists insisted on keeping Israel's biblical lands (the West Bank and Gaza) at all costs, while Arab fundamentalist groups called for Israel to be wiped from the map altogether. Of course, these demands made the settlement ceiling higher than ever. To make matters worse, the third party came to be no exception. Thus, Ronald Reagan sympathized with the Christian fundamentalist movements in the United States, including Christian Zionism. He adopted their position regarding the West Bank: the Israeli settlements were not illegal because it had been part of Israel's biblical land. Likewise, George W. Bush is also a Christian fundamentalist, and fully supports Ariel Sharon's strategy towards this territory. He also regards the conflict in Palestine as a biblical war between David (Sharon) and Goliath (Arafat). Nevertheless, the history of the Middle East conflict proves some exceptions. The Shas party, for example, has a Jewish fundamentalist ideology with an agenda mainly focused on internal issues such as financing the religious schools. The party was more flexible than Likud regarding Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights. Many Jewish fundamentalists refused to serve in the army; they believed that Jehovah, not the people, should preserve the state. Others believed that the entire Jewish state should be established after the descent of the Messiah and therefore Israel was against Jehovah's will. In other words, some Jewish fundamentalist groups are more moderate in terms of peace negotiations



than secular parties, notably the Labor party. On the other hand, the Ba'ath party in Syria is based on a nationalistic ideology, but was ready to recognize Israel providing it made a full withdrawal from the Golan. In some cases, it is harder to negotiate with Muslim fundamentalists than Arab nationalists. By contrast, it is easier to negotiate with some Jewish fundamentalists than Israeli nationalists.

The seventh hypothesis was that if Egypt advocates a certain stance in the conflict, the Arabs will follow the same approach eventually. History always proves this to be a reality. Egypt is the heart of the Arab world. It led the Arabs in all of their wars against Israel, and following Sadat's U-turn, no alternative Arab leadership emerged. On 6 December 1982, the Arab Summit took place in Morocco and adopted the Fez initiative. This was similar to the Arab position in the Geneva Conference in 1973, Sadat's speech to the Knesset in 1977, and his opening position in the Camp David I Summit in 1978. The Arab Summit in 1982 was completely different from the one held in 1979; this latter condemned any negotiations with Israel and established the Arab boycott of Egypt. On 15 November 1988, the Palestinian National Council meeting took place in Algeria to advocate a Palestinian initiative similar to the Fez initiative. This showed how Egypt is significant in the Arab world and proved Begin's insight that if Israel paid the price of peace to Egypt, it would take the entire Arab world for nothing. Egypt was also the indispensable factor that brought the Arabs to the Madrid trap.

The eighth hypothesis was that if one actor makes an unexpected gesture to achieve a psychological breakthrough, the other side will respond in kind i.e. the Sadat theory. This is false. In the art of negotiations, each party goes to great lengths to avoid making the first concession. If for some reason unavoidable, this latter should be minor and have nothing to do with the essence of the conflict. Furthermore, in



case one party has to make a concession, it should not make another one too quickly (negotiations are a process of mutual concessions). Sadat completely ignored these rules and offered significant concessions i.e. eliminating the military option, and visiting Jerusalem. He was under the illusion that Begin would respond in kind. During the early stage of the Egyptian-Israeli negotiations, Sadat asked Begin to make a nice gesture in response to his visit to Jerusalem- withdraw from the Sinai Mountains. Yet Begin abided by the rules of negotiations: (1) no party had the right to ask for a concession without offering something in return, and (2) the table of negotiation was the only place to make mutual concessions. Indeed, Sadat was now engaged in tough and long negotiations without strong cards any longer in his hand - he had conceded them voluntarily to make a psychological breakthrough. To make matters worse, he also chose wrong time for his visit to Jerusalem: The Likud government rejecting the formula of '*land for peace*', insisting on '*peace for peace*' formula. He should have waited until the Labor took office again. Therefore, he had to sign a bad agreement with Israel i.e. the Camp David Accords 1978. Both Gorbachev and Sadat applied the same approach to negotiations i.e. exaggerating the value of a psychological breakthrough. The former was the main reason for the collapse of the USSR; the latter for the disintegration of the Arab world - to an even greater extent than the Sykes-Picot agreement.

The ninth hypothesis was that if Israel reaches agreement with actors with which it has less complicated problems (Jordan, Lebanon), the actors with which it has more significant ones (Syria and the Palestinians) will be eager to adhere to a peace treaty at any cost. Both the Likud and the Labor had different tactics regarding this issue. Shamir believed that the Jordanian and Lebanese tracks should take priority whereas Rabin considered the Palestinian and Syrian tracks were the best to penetrate the



Arab front. Rabin's theory proved to be right. The Israeli-Jordanian Peace Treaty was concluded after, not before, the Palestinian one. Jordan could not afford being the first country to sign a peace treaty with Israel. Due to the Rabin failure to conclude a peace treaty with Syria, the way to Beirut was closed. Lebanon could not get away from Syrian patronage. The history of the Arab-Israeli negotiations proves this reality. Big states could only afford a separate peace treaty with Israel i.e. Egypt, but small states like Lebanon could not i.e. the treaty of May 1983.

The tenth hypothesis was that the more the negotiations are carried out through secret channels, the more fruitful they are. Back channel diplomacy was a tactic preferred by the Arab dictatorships i.e. Abdullah I, Sadat, and Arafat. They were invariably busy in secret channels while official negotiations were going on. Abdullah launched secret negotiations with the Israelis during the Rhodes Armistice Talks. During the first and second disengagement negotiations, Sadat was negotiating with Kissinger while informing neither his Foreign nor Defense Ministers. Arafat also initiated the Oslo channel during the Washington Bilateral talks. In general, no Arab ruler allows his Foreign Minister to attend a meeting with his Arab or Western counterpart. This attitude has nothing to do with their conviction of the importance of the back channel tactic. Yet they aimed at exploiting the negotiations outcome for promoting their own personal interests i.e. just to remain in office. In this context, one could claim that the failure of the Washington rounds and the success of the Oslo back channel was only to serve the PLO interests; the success of the former meant the beginning of the end to the PLO; the latter failure meant the PLO would remain in the shadows for years to come. Of course, Israel welcomed these channels in order to cut off the Arab rulers from their negotiating teams. In general, this hypothesis copes



fully with the rules of negotiations. Yet the history of the Middle East conflict is not the best case study to test this hypothesis.

The eleventh hypothesis was that the more a state enjoys democratic institutions, the more political stability it has in terms of its negotiating position, strategy, and tactic. This hypothesis is not always true. In some cases, democratic institutions cannot produce political stability. Looking at the Madrid process, Israel, which enjoyed democratic institutions at least for its own Jewish citizens, did not enjoy political stability - Shamir 1990-92, Rabin 1992-95, Peres 1995-96, Netanyahu 96-98, and Barak 1998-2000. In other words, there was no single Israeli government that completed its full term of 4 years. This political instability weakened the Israeli negotiating approach. Rabin's coalition was the strongest so that it was in a position to conclude deals with the Palestinians and Jordanians based on mutual concessions. With the exception of this, the other Israeli coalitions were fragile, and so unable to be engaged in serious negotiations based on real quid pro quos. Furthermore, each coalition dismissed any achievements registered by its predecessor. This also occurred *within* the Labor Party itself. Netanyahu, for example, refused to acknowledge the progress achieved on the Palestinian and Syrian tracks during the terms of Rabin and Peres. Although they belonged to the same party, both Peres, and Barak dismissed the Rabin pocket (commitment of Israeli withdrawal from Golan up to 4 June 1967) . Europe was no exception. During the 1980s, Italy also suffered political instability, which hindered its ability to play a role equal to its political weight in the EC negotiation process. By contrast, the Arab dictatorship regimes produced political stability. Asad, Arafat, and Hussein of Jordan remained in office throughout the Madrid process. They remained faithful to their opening position, negotiating strategies, and tactics.



What of the twelfth hypothesis, that the more a third party applies pressure on the Arabs to accommodate the Israelis' terms of peace, the more peace is within reach. This is false. David Ben-Gurion first introduced this hypothesis during the St James Conference in 1939. He failed to sell it to the UK Colonial Secretary, Malcolm MacDonald during the conference, which was concluded by the White Paper. However, Henry Kissinger advocated and developed this concept, which became the basis of the US diplomacy from the Geneva Conference in 1973 to Madrid in 1991. The United States would offer a moderate proposal for peace but in practice act as Israel advocate. This strategy was not always successful. It bore fruit with Sadat and Hussein of Jordan, but did not pay off with Asad and Arafat. Furthermore, it turned many of the people of the Islamic world against the third party itself i.e. the United States. They started to believe in the theory of '*executioner and enemy*.' Israel was not an enemy, only executioner, but the real enemy was the United States itself. In the art of diplomacy, a third party gets involved in a peacemaking process to promote, not to jeopardize, its own interests. Of course, this was one of the rare examples in the literature of multilateral diplomacy that a third party's national security became strongly endangered because of its involvement in a peacemaking process.

The penultimate hypothesis was that if a third party called for a conference with no plenipotentiary authority, the tactic of the pressure cooker (the summit's momentum) would be quite enough to conclude a settlement. This is not always true. Apart from the St James Conference in 1939, none of the Middle East conferences had plenipotentiary authority. Of course, this was an Israeli precondition to participate in any multilateral diplomacy following the St James Conference. Neither the UK nor the United States could be trusted to impose a settlement on Israel. Only Jews who lived in Israel should decide the fate of the Jewish



state. For this reason, the British Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, made it clear at the inauguration of the London Conference in 1946 that any proposal not enjoying Jewish support would ruin the conference - the pressure cooker tactic would (and in fact did) not pay off. Kissinger in the Geneva Conference of 1973 and Baker at Madrid in 1991 were no exception for the same reason. The Geneva and Madrid pressure cooker worked only (in some degree) on the Arabs. The pressure cooker bore fruit with Sadat in Camp David I in 1978, but was useless during the Clinton-Asad Summit in 2000 and with Arafat in Camp David II in 2000. To conclude, the pressure cooker could be fruitful only if a third party made it clear to the antagonists that if they did not agree, a settlement would be imposed on them based on the conference terms of references i.e. UNSCR 242, and 338. However, this was not possible either, because Britain and the United States had to accommodate the Zionist preconditions.

Finally, if Israel advocated the step-by-step approach (partial settlements with the Arabs), the peace window would be much wider to reach a comprehensive settlement. This is a false hypothesis. Approaching a wood as different trees might work sometimes, but not always. This strategy was first initiated by Israel during the Rhodes Armistice Talks in 1949. It would negotiate with Egypt the area in which it fought against its soldiers, but would not discuss Galilee with the Egyptians or Negev with the Syrians. The step-by-step strategy was designed to penetrate the Arab front and weaken the Arab negotiating position. It achieved partial victories, but never comprehensive success. Egypt was the first Arab state to sign the Armistice agreement with Israel in 1949; the rest of the ring states followed it one by one. It also bore fruit during the disengagement negotiations following the 1973 War: the first Egyptian-Israeli disengagement, in 1974; then the Syrian-Israeli



disengagement in the same year; and finally the second Egyptian-Israeli disengagement, in 1975. The strategy was also successful in concluding a series of separate peace agreements: the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty 1979, the Oslo Accords 1993, and the Jordanian-Israeli Peace Treaty 1994. Nevertheless, the strategy could not bring comprehensive and lasting peace. Arafat rejected the Clinton ideas in December 2000, among other reasons because of Syria's expected rejection, especially after the failure of the Clinton-Asad Summit in March 2000. Lebanon also could not move an inch in the negotiations with Israel without Syria. On the other hand, Israel itself could not always deal with the different tracks as separate bodies. A breakthrough on one track made a breakthrough on the other one much more difficult. Rabin confirmed to Clinton that the Israeli public needed some time to digest the Oslo Accords; only after that could he resume serious negotiations with Asad. The Netanyahu-Arafat Wye Plantation Summit in October 1998 and its negative repercussions on Israeli domestic politics did not enable the Israeli Prime Minister to conclude a package deal with Syria. He could not proceed with the draft titled '*Treaty of Peace between Israel and Syria*' concluded during summer 1998 through a back channel conducted by Ronald Lauder, an American businessman and friend of Netanyahu. To sum up, neither the Arabs nor the Israelis could always regard different tracks separately. If the step-by-step strategy failed to hit its ultimate target (comprehensive peace), the question is: Why did Israel insist on not adopting the package deal strategy with the Arabs? No Israeli leader, no matter how strong he is, could sell this strategy to the Israeli public in the presence of unconditional support from the West to the Jewish state. This represents a rare case study where unlimited endorsement from allies harms, rather than serves, an actor's interest, at least in the long term.



Looking at the whole history of the Middle East conflict, the first stage was how to establish the Jewish state, which was successfully achieved by the 1948 War. The second one was how to guarantee the national security of the infant state, which was fulfilled by the Sinai Campaign in 1956. This latter resulted in two significant outcomes: (1) almost complete termination of the Palestinian resistance in the Gaza strip backed by Egypt, and (2) demilitarizing of the entire Sinai. These two stages were accomplished without problems because: (1) the West gave total support to Israel in pursuit of these objectives; (2) Israel's indigenous capabilities were quite enough to do so; and (3) the Arabs' performance was quite poor in the face of the Israeli plans. The third stage started from 1967 to 1982. Israel was in a position to seize more territories by virtue of the United States' support and the failure of the Arab regimes. However, it faced serious problems in preserving them. This was because the West was not prepared to support Israel's retention of them forever; Israel's strategic capability was too limited to assimilate all of them; and because the Arab awakening made the Israeli dream impossible i.e. the Palestinian Uprising I and II in the occupied territories, and Hezbollah in south Lebanon. Therefore, Israel was forced to carry out a series of withdrawals: from Sinai, south Lebanon, and Gaza. The essence of the military and diplomatic conflict, including the Madrid Conference in 1991, was that the Arabs wanted to push Israel back to the second stage i.e. the 4 June 1967 line, and Israel wanted to be placed somewhere between the second stage and the third one i.e. partial withdrawal from some territories seized in 1967.

The essence of the Oslo Accords was “*a shift from the Palestinian occupied territories paradigm to an Apartheid paradigm.*” Indeed, they shaped two different ends for the Palestinian people: ‘*grand apartheid*’ for Israeli Arabs and ‘*Bantustans*’ for Palestinians in the occupied



territories. The Palestinians should have worked for a secular, democratic, non-ethnic state in the entire area of Palestine in which Jews and Arabs enjoy equal rights. This approach would also undermine the Israeli claim that Israel was the only democratic state in the Middle East; democracy is incompatible with racism and violating human rights. However, this approach is not likely to bear fruit because it fully contradicts the Zionist ideology and the US policy in the Middle East. For instance, George Bush administration succeeded in putting an end to the Apartheid regime in South Africa, but was reluctant to apply pressure on Israel. For the former, it enjoyed full support from the Parliament; in the latter, the Congress stood as a significant obstacle to advocate an evenhanded US policy. If this is indeed the case, what will the future look like?

In his volume *'Does the United States need a foreign policy?'*, Henry Kissinger argued that Washington should act in the era of *'the New World Order'* as Rome in the era of the Roman Empire. If George W. Bush might be Caesar of the Roman Empire, Osama Ben-Laden must be Hannibal of Carthage- the Punic War II in 218 BC. In this case, the Middle East conflict may turn into Punic War III.

Another analogy is that the European failure to contain the Balkan conflict in the early 1900s turned it into a wider regional one. Then the purely European war became World War I. Likewise, the Middle East conflict started as a Palestinian-Zionist conflict but after that turned into a regional one. Following 11 September 2001, the conflict clearly added an international dimension - a conflict between the Christian West and a group of Islamic direct action organizations. If these groups topple the pro-Western governments, the Middle East conflict may turn into World War III.



During World War I, the entente powers (Britain, France, and Russia) induced Italy, Romania, Greece, Portugal, China, and Japan to participate on their side in return for the promise of territories belonging to their opponents. These promises were the major obstacle to reaching a just and durable peace at Versailles 1919, which, among other reasons, led to World War II. Likewise, the election promises that US presidents regularly make to the powerful American Jewish lobby are the chief reason for blocking any possibility for lasting peace in the Middle East. Hence, if the Nazi dictatorship was the main reason for World War II, US democracy or plutocracy will be the chief reason for World War III.

Another scenario is that the ideology of Islamic fundamentalism would determine, among other factors, the victor in the coming confrontation between the Christian West led by the United States and modern China. The Muslim fundamentalists had already played a significant role in favor of the West during the Cold War i.e. Afghanistan War (Al-Qaida I). Since 11 September 2001, they have played a key role in exhausting the US economy and military power (Al-Qaida II); they have launched a long war of attrition against the US interests in different parts of the world i.e. Iraq, Afghanistan, Indonesia, and Somalia. Of course, this would make Beijing's mission easier. Would the United States employ the ideology of Islamic fundamentalism against China- the modified pattern of the theory of Bernard Lewis, *'the Arc of Crises'*? Would it raise the issue of Muslim minority in China i.e. Sinkiang? Would it establish Al-Qaida III to do this job? Would this strategy bridge the wide gap between the West and Islamic world, which took place following the 11 September 2001? If so, how would this attitude affect the US policy towards the Middle East conflict? Would this lead towards



the holding of another multilateral diplomacy for the Middle East conflict?



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