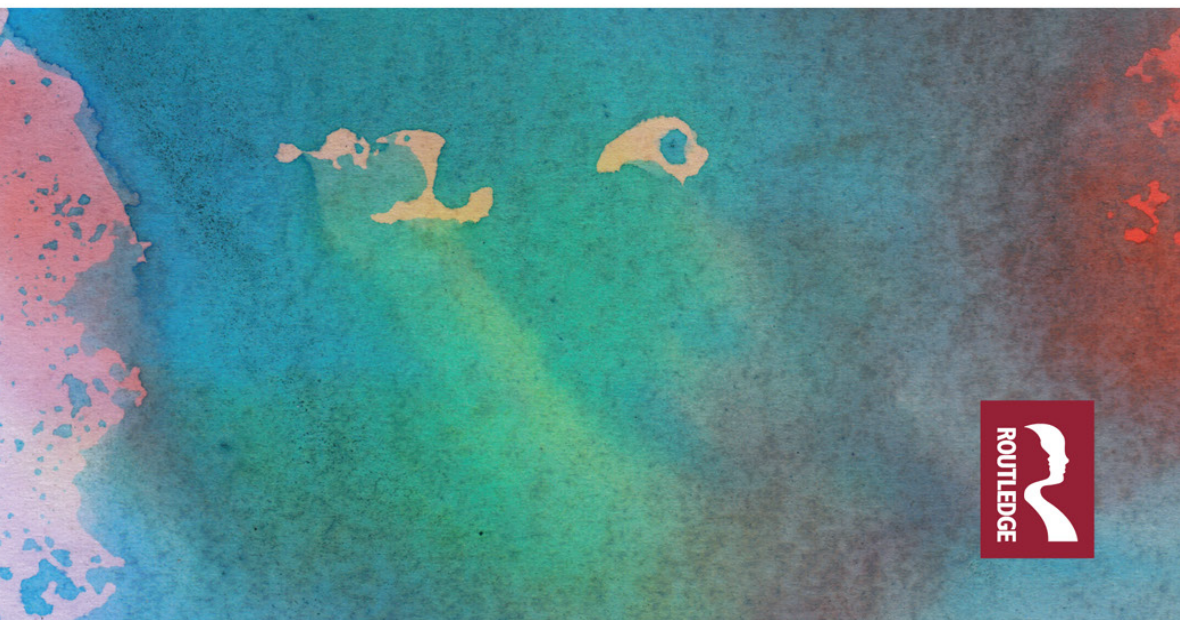
Routledge Studies in Middle Eastern Politics

THE END OF THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS

THE FAILURE OF US DIPLOMACY

Samer Bakkour



‘Bakkour presents an important and challenging analysis of the status of the Middle East peace process, presenting a counter-intuitive rationale for its creation and existence, and questions its relevance in a region and wider international security setting that are states of flux. It is essential reading for those interested in how the international relations of the Middle East have been structured, and how they may develop in the future.’

Gareth Stansfield, *Pro-Vice-Chancellor of University of Exeter, UK, College of Social Sciences and International Studies and Al-Qasimi Professor of Arab Gulf Studies, Professor of Middle East Politics*

‘Samer Bakkour offers us an incisive and powerful critique on the so-called Middle East Peace process. Bakkour makes a compelling case when he exposes the sinister and manipulative role the USA has played in this process. This book provides the best explanation so far for the failure of the peace process. It ended since the USA has extracted from the process what it needed to secure its position in the region, regardless of the failure to achieve peace. This is a depressing conclusion but a necessary one for a region that is in a dire need for an alternative and genuine peace process.’

Ilan Pappé, *Professor of History, Director of the European Centre for Palestine Studies, University of Exeter, UK*

‘The Middle East “Peace Process”, sponsored and owned by the United States, has been in existence for some 50 years. Over this period, the chances for a realistic comprehensive peace in the Middle East have steadily diminished, ongoing wars have ruined the lives and well-being of many, and the dispossession of the Arab population of Palestine has become ever more acute. The Peace Process has, in practice, been a barrier to peace and not a path towards it. The failure to resolve the Palestine issue, moreover, has fed into the wider conflicts, which have drained the resources of the Middle Eastern region, increasingly taking the form of fractious internecine struggles stoked by outside powers. The political coherence of many of the states is now at stake. Yet, strangely, established opinion in the West still views the US-owned Peace Process as key to a settled and stable future for the Middle East region. It is not.

The key issue, which this book addresses, is how and why the Peace Process not only failed to lead to peace in the region but also in practice laid the basis for continuing conflict. The initiatives pursued by the US were defined and orientated strictly according to US interests, and those were closely aligned with the interests of one side of the conflict. The Peace Process enabled, and covered up, the steady expansion of Israel and the dispossession of the Palestinian Arab population – thereby making the problem ever more intractable.

While much has been written about the Palestine issue and the Arab-Israeli conflict, this book portrays more realistically and accurately than any other the dynamics which not only ensured the failure to achieve peace but made peace impossible. It is a must-read for anyone wanting to understand, or engage with, the Middle Eastern region.'

Tim Niblock, *Emeritus Professor of Middle East Politics, University of Exeter, UK*

'Extensively documenting the role of the US in Palestine-Israel and the open-ended Oslo process, this work highlights in particular what Edward Said had predicted three decades ago: the utter failure of American foreign policy and diplomacy in the Middle East—an important addition to the critical literature on Palestine.'

Nur Masalha, *Professor of Religion and Politics and Director of the Centre for Religion and History and the Holy Land Research Project at St. Mary's University, Twickenham, UK*

The End of the Middle East Peace Process

Presenting the Middle East Peace Process as an extension of US foreign policy, this book argues that ongoing interventions justified in the name of 'peace' sustain and reproduce hegemonic power.

With an interdisciplinary approach, this book questions the conceptualisation and general understanding of the Peace Process. The author reinterprets regional conflict as an opportunity for the US through which it seeks to achieve regional dominance and control. Engaging with the different stages and components of the Peace Process, he considers economic, military, and political factors which both changed over time and remained constant. This book covers the US role of mediation in the region during the Cold War, the history and the present state of US–Israel relations, Syria's reputation as an opponent of 'peace' compared with its participation in peace negotiations, and the Palestinian–Israel conflict with attention to US involvement.

The End of the Middle East Peace Process will primarily be of interest to those hoping to gain an improved understanding of key issues, concepts, and themes relating to the Arab–Israeli conflict and US intervention in the Middle East. It will also be of value to those with an interest in the practicalities of peacebuilding.

Samer Bakkour is Lecturer of Middle East Politics, Institute of Arabic & Islamic Studies, University of Exeter, Exeter City, United Kingdom.

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The Failure of US Diplomacy

Samer Bakkour

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Preface

In the past three decades, ‘peace’ has emerged as an international priority and field of engagement distinct from, but interrelated with, development and security. ‘Peace’ and ‘peacebuilding’ are deeply political but are also in important respect elevated above and beyond it. This renders both as a higher calling that exists in serene isolation from the grubby immediacies of everyday politics.

A long-established peacebuilding axiom makes it clear that peacebuilding is a local project, and this is why ‘participation’ and ‘empowerment’ are not just viewed as tools that can be used to achieve a particular goal but also as ends to be achieved. However, on closer examination we find a highly externalised practice that is defined and orientated by external capacities, and this creates something of a research puzzle.

In this book, I will engage this puzzle by presenting the Middle East Peace Process as an extension of U.S. foreign policy. I therefore seek to contest the claim that ‘peace’ is an elevated concern that exists in serene detachment. The former President Donald Trump has effectively ripped the façade away, and so it could be objected that I am simply describing a feature that is in many respects self-evident. However, I suggest that this also applies in historical retrospect. In highlighting this, I point to a continuity of practice that, to some extent, implicates previous administrations in contemporary developments.

The Middle East Peace Process extends back over decades and across the local, regional, and international levels. It has cost billions of dollars and has preoccupied UN Secretary-Generals, U.S. presidents, and U.S. secretaries of state. However, despite this substantial and sustained investment of time and resources, meaningful peace remains elusive.

Repeated failure only elicits a further intensification of effort in the same direction, in apparent defiance of Albert Einstein’s dictum that ‘insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results’. In seeking to resolve this conundrum, it is first necessary to dispose of the connotations that we instinctively ascribe to ‘peace’. When Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin shook hands on the White House lawn on 13 September 1993, it was presented as a decisive break with a past history of conflict and bitter enmity. In actual fact, it could more accurately be described as the realisation of long-established agendas

and priorities. Edward Said was one of the few observers who realised this and grasped the Accords in their true significance.[1] However, surely even he could not have anticipated how accurate his assessment ('the Accords can neither lead to a real peace nor are likely to provide for one in the future') would prove to be.[2]

This insight clearly escaped observers who did not understand the colonial dimensions of the 'conflict' or who did not fully grasp the militarism and hegemonic impulses of Zionism. In contrast, Said understood that the Peace Process was intended to sanitise, and not end, Israel's occupation. In addition, in subsequent years, he would refuse to subscribe to the illusions and deceits that came to substitute for meaningful peace.

The Peace Process can be criticised not just on its own terms (for failing to achieve peace) but also for enabling or perpetuating dehumanisation, oppression, and violence. The 1978 Camp David Accords cleared the way for Israel's 1982 assault on Lebanon, and the 1993 Oslo Accords can be more accurately described as the subcontracting of the policing of the occupation. Both demonstrate how 'peace' and strategy became intertwined, to the point of being indistinguishable.

I therefore write this book to reiterate two key points that, in my view, are not sufficiently acknowledged, or at least not in their full implications. First, I wish to draw attention to the essential exteriority of the process by demonstrating how it has been imposed on the region and regional actors. Second, I seek to provide a critical analysis of power and the current incarnation of the Peace Process.

This book draws on my PhD thesis, and it has been written with the intention of coming to terms with contemporary developments. Events move fast in the region, and the 'contemporary' becomes history very quickly. When I was writing the PhD, I was also aware of time constraints that limited my ability to explore potentially fruitful avenues of enquiry. But I was also keen to engage with the challenge of writing for a new audience: stripping away the methodological framework and other material that caters to an 'academic' audience enabled me to refocus my attention and shift away from often arcane academic preoccupations. This was a challenge I welcomed and was eager to engage.

During the writing process, two things have consistently surprised me, despite the fact I was already aware of them to some extent. The first is the gulf between the mainstream media's portrayal of the Peace Process and the actual reality: indeed, this gap is so wide that I believe this coverage can be more accurately described as 'misinformation'. There are numerous examples of this, but the coverage of the Oslo Accords is perhaps the most shocking.

In one of the most perverse inversions of mainstream coverage, Rabin, the Israeli security hardliner who once instructed Israeli troops to 'break the bones' of Palestinian protestors during the First Intifada, was rendered to observers as a peacenik who would later be sacrificed in the name of peace. The practitioners of the Peace Process and sympathetic observers were more than happy to set aside his past services to repression and war crimes. Indeed, the revisionism extended as far as concealing his initial reluctance to commit to the Accords. He was ultimately

persuaded by the possibility of a negotiated settlement with Syria, the neutralisation of the local Palestinian leadership, Arafat's apparent willingness to compromise, and the 'impressive' progress of negotiations within the 'Oslo Channel'.[3]

The Accords could therefore more accurately be described as a marriage of convenience, in which Israel subcontracts security responsibilities to the Palestinians in return for a deeply partial and conditional recognition. Although the Accords certainly became 'securitised' under Netanyahu's government (1996–1999) and especially after the 1997 Wye River Memorandum, this was actually an embedded feature from the outset. It took no great ability or imagination to identify the continuity between Rabin's 'security first' mind-set and Netanyahu's 'land for security' formula.

Second, I was also struck by the fact that the basic preconditions for a meaningful peace were rarely, if ever, met. In part, this was due to the narrow vision of political actors, but it also reflected established frameworks of engagement. To take one example, the 2000 Camp David negotiations more closely resembled two street vendors haggling over the price of goods than a genuine attempt to resolve historical injustices. Trump's 'Deal', widely decried as a break with sanctified orthodoxies, was actually, to a substantial extent, very much in the lineage of these interactions.

The tendency for negotiations to be conceptualised and developed in isolation from historical context perhaps reflects the influence of a particular theory of history, which views it as an obstacle to be worked around or even ignored. As a historian, I am obliged to reject this and to instead insist that any proposed resolution must necessarily be rooted in the past history of the conflict. By implication, I am deeply sceptical about the potential contribution of theories that generalise across individual contexts and conflicts, such as Conflict Resolution.

Context is similarly absent when Syrians and Syria are positioned as pieces on a chessboard, as secondary or even third-order participants in a geopolitical struggle between Iran and the 'West' or even the 'West' and Russia. While the Syrian revolution was initially part of a broader regional upheaval, it was a response to the despotism and deep cynicism of the Assad regime, and it deserved better than to be co-opted into these regional and international power games and to be relegated to the status of a footnote in history.

At the time of writing, the Middle East is in flames, and even in countries where there is no war, there is no peace either. Instability and conflict are pervasive, and the possibility of a meaningful and secure existence continues to elude so many. However, the Peace Process, at least in its current incarnation, is more likely to reinforce and perpetuate established patterns of oppression, dehumanisation, and exclusion. In addition, in key respects, it could even be said to anticipate further violence. The development of an alternative framework of engagement will not be achieved by invoking a sanctified tradition but rather by critically probing and questioning existing limitations and shortcomings. This book is intended to be my own small contribution to this necessary task.

Notes

1 Edward Said, *The End of the Peace Process* (New York: Random House, 2000), pp. 78–86.
2 Ibid.
3 Avi Shlaim, 'The Rise and Fall of the Oslo Peace Process', in *International Relations of the Middle East*, edited by Louise Fawcett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 241–261.

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Said, Edward, *The End of the Peace Process*. New York: Random House, 2000.
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Peace Processes in general and the Palestinian Question in particular have always been on my mind, and before starting my PhD, I had a vague idea of the topic, which I wanted to explore. However, it was my supervisor's guidance which enabled me to progress and develop these initial seeds, and I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge Prof. Dirk van Laak for his invaluable help.

I would like to thank indeed Prof. Gareth Stansfield, who encouraged and urged me constantly to amend and update my study to be very up to date. Without his help, I would not have been able to finish this study. Words will never be enough to thank him. In the meantime, I would like to thank the publisher and reviewers for their useful comments, which developed my manuscript.

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1 Introduction

Introduction

On 6 December 2017, Donald Trump, in the dubious company of Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Saudi Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman, and assorted regional and international political luminaries, recognised Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and committed to moving the U.S. embassy to the city. With an abrupt movement, he stripped away the fabrications, illusions, and pretences that had previously sustained, and which were effectively synonymous with, the Peace Process.[1]

Media commentators invariably decried this as the 'end' of the Peace Process, as the point when the sanctified path originally trodden by Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin was abruptly paved over. They less frequently observed that the Peace Process had not existed for some time, or that Trump was in fact simply applying a decision taken in the mid-1990s by the U.S. Congress.

Indeed, it could quite clearly be objected that 'peace' was never a realistic proposition, as prominent critics of the Peace Process like Edward Said had anticipated in advance: for them, it had little to do with 'peace' and failed to meet the minimum preconditions for the resolution of the conflict and the wider Arab–Israeli conflict. However, a genuine Peace Process was quite clearly still needed: in the period 1950–2020, the Middle East experienced war and huge political and social upheaval, including internal repression, state collapse, and inter-state conflict. In the years after 1948, there were five Arab–Israeli wars, two Gulf wars and various internal (largely inter-Arab) conflicts.

In the post-Second World War era, external actors used bilateral initiatives, conferences, and summits to promote peace in the region. The U.S. was the main actor in this regard, although the Soviet Union, United Nations, and Arab League also intervened at different points in time. Although 'peace' initiatives occurred after the 1948 establishment of Israel, the concept of a Peace Process was only meaningful after the 1973 War, as this was the point when Arab states realised they could not destroy Israel through military means. The U.S., for its part, realised that a hostile state's domination of the region could increase oil prices, produce a WMD 'arms race' and destabilise pro-Western Gulf regimes. This could then jeopardise the interests and security of key U.S. allies, such as Israel, Egypt,

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and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, and even European partners in NATO.

'Peace' was therefore an extension of the U.S. desire to achieve mutual recognition between Israel and its Arab neighbours, which was viewed as necessary to ensure its integration into the wider region. The recent agreements between Israel and Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates are therefore the realisation of a desire that was present at the very start of the Peace Process.

Given the extent and scope of the current U.S.–Israel relationship, it is often assumed that this commitment was in place from the establishment of Israel in 1948. However, this is incorrect, as the highly developed relationship between the two countries can instead be traced back to the 1967 War. In important respects, as I will later demonstrate, this strategic relationship was influenced and to some extent sustained by cultural and social affinities.

However, the prominence of this relationship within contemporary international relations has not been prevented it from being misunderstood. There tend to be two main misconceptions. The first, which is often voiced by Arab critics of the U.S. foreign policy, holds that Israel is a colonial implant that is only supported by the U.S. because it sustains its hegemony in the region. The second, which to some extent follows on from the first, contends the Israel–U.S. relationship is purely strategic. Both claims, however, ignore the fact that the relationship is without parallel in international relations. As a case-in-point, consider Netanyahu's impromptu address to both houses of Congress, when he gave a presentation on the Iranian nuclear threat. It is of course near-impossible to imagine the leader of any other state providing a similar tour-de-force. Similarly, it is difficult to grasp the U.S. presenting another state's proposals as its own, as it did in the 2000 Camp David negotiations.

The Peace Process should be viewed and understood as an extension of this relationship. However, U.S. efforts notwithstanding, it had broken down to the point where security coordination (which has since been terminated) was one of the last remaining areas of cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians. Indeed, by 2009 the two sides were not even on speaking terms. In the post-Oslo era, the overwhelming impression was of stagnation and inertia, as internal political tensions, continued violence, and varying levels of international commitment inevitably impacted upon its trajectory. The framework inaugurated by the Oslo Accords in 1993 persisted, but apparently only because there was no viable alternative. But even so, the established framework for the resolution of the conflict began to appear tired, unimaginative, and poorly adapted to the scale of the challenge. A state of profound torpor began to envelop the Peace Process.

However, this in turn raises the question of why the Palestinian leadership has remained committed to it for so long. After all, it is only relatively recently that it has completely renounced the Peace Process. Here it is instructive to recall that the PA leadership were effectively imported or 'brought in from the cold' in the face of a popular uprising that the PLO initially regarded with considerable concern. It was therefore more than slightly ironic when the George W. Bush administration showed such a strong concern about Palestinian governance when

announcing the much-heralded Roadmap; not least, because his predecessors and Rabin had viewed Arafat as a potential enforcer who, on the regional model of enlightened autocracy, would impose his will on his own society. Reference to past colonial precedent/s also makes it clear to us that the emergence of a 'client class' that has come to function as a mechanism of indirect rule is not a coincidence or inadvertent development.

The past U.S., foreign policy interventions in the region have produced a suspicion that the U.S. attitude to democracy and democracy promotion is, at best, ambivalent. Regional observers can hardly have failed to notice that the U.S. appears to be more comfortable with autocratic or repressive regimes. While it is politically expedient for the U.S. to invoke democracy and human rights, as in Obama's 2009 Cairo University speech, it requires no great labour of analysis to see that this does not necessarily directly translate to U.S. foreign policy in the region. The 2013 Egyptian 'coup', which the U.S. desperately tried to rebrand as anything other than a coup, was a clear case-in-point. The long-established U.S. alliances with Mubarak and the House of Saud further underline and reiterate this.

The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, provided an opportunity for the U.S. and Americans to reassess this foreign policy legacy in the region. This would have required more searching and critical questioning and past interventions in the region and it was, needless to say, easier to stress, with varying degrees of sophistication and nuance, that Arabs and Muslims are inherently irrational and prone to inflict violence. It was perhaps inevitable that the role and significance of past U.S. foreign policy would be passed over in favour of the considerably more appealing and beguiling thesis of Arab backwardness.

The treatment of political Islam as a recidivist impulse that sought to return to the seventh century AD exemplified this. In contrast, a closer reading would instead reveal that it is in fact an attempt to come to terms with modernity, and more precisely its problematic application to the region. The project of Arab nationalism, which sought to draw on the tools and techniques of the developed 'west' while freeing itself from the chains of exploitation and under-development, therefore provided the historical and political context in which political Islam emerged and developed.

More recently, the Arab 'Spring' was similarly widely misinterpreted. The inability to address the revolutions across the Arab world in their novelty and spontaneity was clearly indicated by the direct borrowing of 'Spring' from the Prague Spring of 1968. This, no doubt, reflected the persistent Western gravitation towards Arab Muslims who want to think, look, and act like 'us'. Needless to say, this also pre-emptively cancelled the possibility that popular struggle could show cultural variation.

The U.S. policymakers initially greeted the revolutions with tentative support, but then quickly backtracked when it became clear, as with the 2012 election of Mohamed Morsi as Egyptian president, that this could backfire. Similarly, in the case of the Syrian civil war, the U.S. initially extended support to 'moderate' elements of the Syrian opposition but then reversed after becoming concerned that this could strengthen ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) and al-Nusra

Front. This hesitancy and lack of decisiveness in the face of sudden changes could be said to be the defining feature of the U.S. democracy promotion in the region.

Here it should be remembered that the U.S. role in the region was damaged beyond measure by the 2003 invasion of Iraq which, it will be remembered, was explicitly justified as an attempt to promote democracy in the region. Up until this point, the U.S. commitment had been highly equivocal, and the overwhelming impression was that it would only do this if its interests could be ensured. The 2011 NATO intervention in Libya, which was instead conducted under a Responsibility to Protect (R2P) banner, further undermined the (already questionable) U.S. claim to be a force for positive change in the region. Instead, the subsequent impression of powerful international states such as Russia and China was that it, and other NATO allies, had abused a humanitarian pretext for its own purposes.

However, even if the U.S. genuinely wished to promote democracy in the region, it would find itself confronted by profound economic, political, and social challenges. Growing population pressures, reduced export revenues, unaddressed economic and social needs, and urban environmental problems are pushing governments and state capacities to their limits.[2] Succession crises that result from the lack of well-established mechanisms for leadership change will further enable and empower extreme political voices in the region. The economic outlook for the next decade is bleak and demographic growth and rising youth unemployment will further intensify pressures on existing arrangements.[3] These pressures raise questions about the region receptiveness to U.S. influence and, by extension, the Peace Process. Given these pressures, it appears more likely that the U.S. will turn away from democracy in favour of 'stability'.

However, perhaps we are mistaken in equating the Peace Process with meaningful material change. On the contrary, it could instead be understood and grasped at the level of discourse, and as a mechanism that stabilises and anchors an uncertain and unstable reality. The public relations of the Peace Process, in which it appears as a loosely connected series of signifiers, would, from this perspective, establish a stronger basis for engagement. The need to manage and orientate perception, both in the U.S. and Arab constituencies, is clearly an important consideration in this regard. In drawing on this representation, I would like to propose that the Peace Process can be viewed and understood as a performance, in which the respective actors read from a 'script'. Although critical observers may complain of a gap between image and reality, it could well be them who is actually mistaken – in other words, instead of being a weakness, this is actually a consciously intended design feature.

In considering this and other aspects, this book will consider the extent to which 'peace' has often been indistinguishable from the interests of the U.S. and its allies. It focuses in particular on the U.S. role in the Camp David negotiations (1978 and 2000), its involvement in direct talks with the Jordanian and Syrian governments, and its bilateral and multilateral initiatives in the region. In engaging across the period 1950–2020,[4] it proposes 'peace-based' actions and

initiatives should be viewed as an extension of a U.S. diplomacy that is directed towards 'rejectionist' states and populations.

U.S. efforts to promote peace in the region have departed substantially from the established template of 'post-conflict' peacebuilding, in which representatives of the international community seek to assist the reconstruction of conflict-affected states and societies in the aftermath of violent conflict. Peacebuilding does not understand violence as a manifestation but rather as being deeply rooted within societies and social relations, and accordingly a strong body of theory and practice has emerged that focuses on the 'structural' causes of violence.

However, closer examination of the U.S engagement with conflict in the Middle East shows a clear tendency to ignore, work around, or even deny the underlying causes of conflict. For example, it has appeared disinterested in the history of the conflict and has also failed to understand 'terrorism' in a wider perspective, instead preferring to frame it as a 'security' issue and concern.

Rashid Khalidi's *Brokers of Deceit*[5] presents the U.S. as a dishonest broker that has given the appearance of working towards a peaceful settlement while actually consistently favouring and promoting the interests of Israel. He observes how the development of the Peace Process has been accompanied by the emergence of an associated language. He notes that this language occupies a particular place within the process, and functions to conceal or obfuscate the actual reality of a process that has, in his words, 'reinforced the subjugation of the Palestinian people, provided Israel and the United States with a variety of advantages, and made considerably more unlikely the prospects of a just and lasting settlement of the conflict between Israel and the Arabs'.[6]

Here Khalidi identifies the detachment of language and reality and therefore suggests that the former sanitises a reality and presents observers from understanding it in its true meaning and significance. The Peace Process has therefore given rise to a particular language, which simultaneously conceals, distorts, and misrepresents. Language is directly implicated in practice and appears as a tool that enables it to be adapted and applied.

This practice implicates the U.S. as a 'dishonest' broker', which ostensibly the role of an impartial and 'fair' mediator while consistently working to promote and realise the interests of one party to the conflict. Closer reflection therefore shows that the policies and positions of the U.S. and Israel have become so closely intertwined as to appear almost indistinguishable. As Khalidi notes, we would, in other circumstances, assume that this would immediately disqualify the U.S. from assuming the role of an impartial mediator.[7]

Indeed, he claims that the U.S. has never made a 'good faith' attempt to resolve the 'conflict'.[8] In addition, far from being a powerless observer, obliged to throw its hands up in the air when things go wrong, he suggests it is instead deeply implicated in the current situation. He identifies three defining patterns within the U.S. policy towards the 'conflict': first, an 'exaggerated attention' to domestic voices that counsel unquestioning support for Israel; second, the absence of pressure from the Gulf States, who have privileged their own survival over Palestinian solidarity; and finally, a 'complete unconcern' for Palestinians.[9]

Khalidi correctly identifies that these are established or 'structural' features of the U.S. policy that have developed since the Truman administration first recognised Israel. Successive administrations have acted in accordance with, and therefore reinforced, these patterns. Khalidi, however, focuses on three specific events in order to demonstrate his thesis that the U.S. has substantially diverged from its 'official' role as an impartial mediator. He examines the 1982 Reagan Plan, the run-up to the 1991 Madrid Conference, and the Obama administration's approach to Israeli settlement construction in the occupied West Bank.

Khalidi highlights continuity in the U.S. policy that he notes has been present since the 1940s.[10] This is particularly important because it breaks with an established tendency within media coverage, in which the good will and actions/inactions of individual participants are presented as conditions of success or failure. This personalisation of politics overlooks the role of structure and context in enabling and sustaining political action. Although Khalidi is critical of Obama, he does therefore acknowledge that circumstances beyond his control were one of the factors that prevented him from acting more effectively.[11]

Khalidi focuses on the Israel–Palestinian conflict and does not consider it from a wider regional perspective. As this book demonstrates, this is a crucial oversight because the Israeli–Palestinian conflict is effectively synonymous with the wider Arab–Israeli conflict. Furthermore, the U.S. itself has identified the need to incorporate a regional dimension into its peace-making efforts (as the example of the 2008 Annapolis Conference demonstrates). In addition, U.S. support for Israel can only be understood by referring to its wider interests and priorities. While this element and regional perspective are not entirely lacking from Khalidi's account, they are nonetheless not developed in sufficient depth or detail.

However, Khalidi does touch on this theme in other contributions, most notably in *Sowing Crisis: American Dominance and the Cold War in the Middle East*.[12] Here he provides what is essentially a historical account, although it has a degree of contemporary relevance, as a number of developments during this period have 'carried over' to the present and therefore have contemporary implications.

Khalidi notes in his Introduction that the Soviet 'threat' often provided a pretext for the establishment of the U.S. dominance within regions across the world,[13] and this is significant because it establishes a link between the Cold War and post-Cold War periods. The U.S. tendency to cite Soviet activities as an ongoing concern did not therefore reflect exaggerated 'security' concerns but rather a desire to consolidate the U.S. power and influence. In other words, the Soviet threat, as his use of the word 'pretext' establishes, functioned as a rationale for the establishment of a U.S. hegemony that would fully flower and develop under conditions of unipolarity.

Khalidi's analysis of the Peace Process very closely resembles the account put forward by Edward Said in *The End of the Peace Process: Oslo and After* (2001).[14] Said's highly prescient analysis held that the Oslo Peace Process failed to meet the minimum criteria for lasting peace. In this collection of articles, Said critically appraises both the development of the process and its implementation, highlighting the paradox through which it actually served to increase Israeli

control over the occupied territories. This is clearly contrary to the widespread misperception which holds that the end objective of the Accords was Palestinian self-determination or even the establishment of a Palestinian state. Said therefore grasped a truth that was not appreciated by many observers – namely that the establishment of 'peace' did not imply the end of the occupation. Like Khalidi, he insists on the significance of language and in particular emphasises how 'peace' was inverted and reinvented as a weapon of war.

Said is particularly critical of the leadership on both sides and criticises concessions that he quite clearly regards as a surrender. He also quite clearly grasps the extent to which the Peace Process is a media-driven phenomenon, which is concerned less with rectifying historical injustices and more with sanitising the images of the respective participants. 'Peace', he notes, had given the practitioners of Israeli state brutality a critical immunity that they by no means deserved.[15] Said quite clearly grasped the implications of detaching 'peace' from justice and historical responsibility and, in so doing, he anticipated a development in which large parts of the region would come to view the word with considerable suspicion and even hostility.

In order to understand the distance, or perhaps chasm, between U.S. practice and the criteria established by peacebuilding theory, it would perhaps first be useful to define theories and practices of 'peacebuilding', along with their corollaries of the 'comprehensive approach' and 'liberal peacebuilding'.

When considered as a practice, peacebuilding became established in the early 1990s as part of 'peace operations' (including peacekeeping and peace making) conducted in conflict-affected societies.[16] Cold War sensitivities meant the practice was effectively suspended until the early 1990s, when the emergence of a post-Cold War environment opened up new opportunities for a whole spectrum of international intervention.[17] Before the emergence and development of a peacebuilding practice, theorists had developed 'positive peace', 'structural violence', and 'conflict resolution' (which is basically a sub-field focused on the psychosocial dimensions of conflict).[18]

Although it has only been established as a practice for a short period of time, peacebuilding has experienced various conceptual and paradigmatic shifts and revolutions.[19] For example, the so-called 'local turn' sought to reconceptualise peacebuilding as an essentially 'local' undertaking. It held that the final peacebuilding product was not predetermined as, for example, in the case of a blueprint, but was instead inductive and therefore emerged *through* local participation.[20] In other words, it was defined in the process of its articulation and there was no distinction between the process and end product.

The so-called 'local turn' was an epistemic and institutional response to the problems and contradictions that derived from highly internationalised and externalised nature interventions in post-conflict environments.[21] Local participation therefore emerged as an ameliorative for technocracy and the privileging of expert knowledge, both of which had, in the course of peacebuilding interventions; themselves emerged as problems that needed to be addressed.[22] If improved peacebuilding outcomes were to be achieved, then the peacebuilding process needed to

become more inclusive and incorporate the energies and contributions of a variety of different 'local actors'. Notions of 'empowerment' also tied in nicely with the idea that peacebuilding is inherently transformative and therefore seeks to overhaul, rather than reproduce, pre-conflict arrangements.[23]

This focus on 'local participation' also overlapped with the proposition that peacebuilding should be adjusted to context. In the documentary output of different international institutions, 'contextual engagement' therefore took its place alongside 'participation' and 'empowerment' as a crucial ingredient of successful peacebuilding. This signalled a shift away from 'one-size-fits-all' approaches that were focused on reproducing rather than establishing a basis for transformative change. External actors should therefore seek to predefine change but should instead focus on providing local actors with the tools and techniques that would enable them to change their political circumstances.

However, the emphasis on 'local participation' and 'context' is essentially doctrinal shifts that occurred within the frameworks and strategies that international institutions aspired to apply in post-conflict contexts. At the level of practice, post-conflict peacebuilding continues to show a clear direction towards managerialism and homogenisation; in other words, neither has been fully 'exorcised' from the international toolkit.[24] Instead, as Boulton demonstrates, homogeneity/heterogeneity and emancipatory/managerial dichotomies are simultaneously incorporated into peacebuilding discourse and practice, with the consequence that a series of contradictions and dissonances are reproduced – this is the essential meaning and implication of his allusion to 'reconciling irreconcilables'.[25]

In conclusion, we can therefore see that peacebuilding practitioners and theorists have increasingly recognised, and even privileged, 'local' engagement as an essential determinant of peacebuilding success. To the same extent, and this largely follows by logical implication, they have also recognised the limitations of technical approaches and external influence, and have accordingly renounced the sins of technocracy and managerialism. This has both epistemic (whose knowledge is privileged?) and practical (the relationship between internal and external influence) implications. Meanwhile theoretical concepts that are long established in peacebuilding theory, such as 'positive peace' and 'structural violence', set a high threshold for future interventions and might therefore perhaps be best viewed as targets to be aspired to rather than standards to be met. We will now consider the comprehensive approach and Liberal peacebuilding, and this will help us to further ascertain and identify the conditions and criteria of successful peacebuilding.

The Comprehensive Approach and Liberal Peacebuilding

The requirement that peacebuilding should be comprehensive did not, unlike the concepts of 'structural violence' and 'positive peace', emerge from peacebuilding theory, but rather from the practical application of peacebuilding in the 'field' and, more specifically, from an analysis of inter-bureaucratic relations undertake by key international bureaucratic actors.[26] Just like the aforementioned innovations in

peacebuilding theory, the comprehensive approach therefore emerged in response to the perceived inadequacies or shortcomings in democracy promotion, development, and security-focused interventions.

It is therefore an axiom of 'best practice' that counsels the need for a 'balanced' approach that incorporates each of the respective elements (democracy promotion, development, and security), which are not understood to be mutually exclusive but are instead interpreted in their mutual relation. The British government's Stabilisation Unit, in further explaining this approach, observes that it 'develop[s] structures and processes to help align planning and implementation' and 'establish [es] relationships and cultural understanding'.[27]

The comprehensive approach first emerged in *Agenda for Peace*, a seminal UN report that was published in 1992, which helped to define the emerging international system.[28] It subsequently grew in influence up until the point when, as Gawerc notes, a consensus began to emerge within the peacebuilding field which held that 'a peace process is more likely to succeed and be sustainable if it is comprehensive and accompanied by multi-track diplomacy and public involvement'.[29]

The comprehensive approach helped to develop a general conceptual and theoretical framework that would enable international actors to grasp the implications of their interventions. Second, it helped to explain (past and present) failure; and third, it anticipated the emergence of more coherent and 'integrated' international interventions in conflict and post-conflict environments.[30] The comprehensive approach therefore had important implications for institutional relations, conceptualisation (of conflict and conflict-related concepts), and material practice. In addition, the concept of an 'integrated' approach also had implications for engagement across conflict phases (pre, conflict, and post).[31]

The comprehensive approach provided an important reference for ongoing innovations and changes, and situated them within a wider process of 'lesson learning'.[32] However, past experience suggests that only certain 'lessons' will be learnt and others will be excluded. This is clearly to be expected, given that both Liberalism and neo-Liberalism, the predominant theoretical influences on contemporary peacebuilding, are ideologies, even if this fact is sometimes denied. This is precisely why Jahn suggests that a 'critical self-analysis and revision of Liberalism itself' is one of the key preconditions of successful peacebuilding.[33]

We can make precisely the same claim in relation to the 'Liberal Peace', which Newman et al. define as the belief that 'certain kinds of (liberally constituted) societies will tend to be more peaceful, both in their domestic relations, and in their international relations, than illiberal states are'[34] MacGinty, meanwhile, defines the Liberal Peace as 'the concept, condition and practice whereby leading states, international organisations, and international financial institutions promote their version of peace through peace support interventions, control of international financial architecture, support for state sovereignty and the international status quo'.[35] He attributes recent changes to the human security paradigm, the influence of conflict resolution NGOs, and the incorporation of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) into approaches to peacebuilding.[36] This 'peace' can

be promoted through instruments that include diplomatic engagement, learning, and imitation.

The 'Liberal Peace' has become associated with the so-called 'Liberal Wars', which seek to forcibly impose Liberal values and principles on 'illiberal' others.[37] This is actually a clear departure from the established legal tradition of restrictionism, which was predominant in the mid–late 20th century, which held that the essential purpose of international law is to prevent war between states.[38] This tradition was only seriously challenged over the course of the 1990s, when a series of internal conflicts *within* states that were associated with ethnic cleansing, human rights abuses, and even genocide confronted the international community.[39] It was in this political context that Solidarism began to assert that universal human rights should override the rights associated with state sovereignty, which restrictionism had privileged. This debate broadly related to the question of whether it was legitimate for external states to override the principle of state sovereignty and claim a right of intervention in order to protect and preserve human life. This humanitarian intervention (HI) debate was however separate from a separate development in which the Security Council showed an increased willingness, during the early 1990s, to mandate the use of force under Chapter VII of the UN Charter.[40]

Liberal peacebuilding is a derivative of the Liberal Peace, and it has become synonymous with peacebuilding more generally. In engaging with post-conflict contexts, external actors work on the basis of the assumption that their task is to establish a political settlement that upholds and reinforces Liberal values and principles.[41] The economy will be run in accordance with Liberal models; the state will uphold the rule-of-law and put in place 'appropriate' economic measures; and the general citizenry will hold the government to account, whether through civil society engagement or participation in frequent elections.[42]

In both definitions, the 'international community' is positioned as 'facilitating', 'enabling', or 'empowering' local actors. However, in countries that have been deeply scarred by violent conflict, it is clearly open to question if this is a realistic expectation. On the contrary, it instead appears more likely that the 'international community' will have to take a lead in guiding the post-conflict process of reconstruction and rebuilding. Although international law forbids occupiers from imposing a political settlement, UN mandates provide the representatives of the international community with far-reaching, and often invasive, authority to remake the domestic context anew.[43] This potentially conflicts with the criteria for 'ideal' peacebuilding, as Liberal peacebuilders act outside of democratic accountability and oversight when taking and implementing decisions.

Critical Approaches to Peacebuilding

We have therefore established that there is a somewhat problematic relation, and even contradiction, between peacebuilding theory and practice. The interpretation that international institutions, powerful state actors, and cooperative local actors have of the peacebuilding process may therefore substantially depart from, or even be in opposition to, the actual practice. In order to gain a fuller insight

into this tension and its implications, it is now necessary to engage the critical literature that has emerged in response to the contradictions and shortcomings of Liberal peacebuilding.

It might be presumed that Liberal peacebuilding 'fails' when it does not achieve its stated goals and objectives. However, this is only part of the story, as Liberal Peace frequently reinforces the weaknesses it ostensibly seeks to address[44] and, in some cases, by contributing to the emergence of a 'weak' or 'limited' state, even contributes to renewed conflict.[45]

In order to grasp how Liberal peacebuilding functions, it is first necessary to reconceptualise 'power'. It is undeniably true that a multilateral peacebuilding mission could be co-opted by an interested state party. Bruno Charbonneau, for example, refers to the 2011 UN-France 2011 intervention in Côte d'Ivoire and claims it exemplifies the 'political economy of imperialism'. Other observers, meanwhile, claim there are clear parallels between contemporary interim authorities or administrators and their colonial predecessors.[46] In previous French-led peacekeeping interventions in the region, conflict management was also effectively subcontracted to a single state or group of states.[47] Perhaps with this precedent in mind, Benson and Kathman argue that bias is an ingrained feature of UN peacekeeping.[48]

Critical theorists often adopt a more sophisticated analysis of power that detaches it from the state. Foucauldian observers, for example, speak of a 'governmentality' or 'governing rationality'[49] while post-Marxist scholars focus on the political economy of peacebuilding.[50] The term 'governmentality' captures how international organisations, powerful states, and civil society actors do not operate in isolation but instead reproduce a governing style or governmentality. As in the governance literature,[51] power is not 'possessed' by any single actor but is instead dispersed, fluid, and nodal.

This establishes a fluid and adaptive control that regulates and monitors the peacebuilding subject with the intention of ensuring that it does not exceed permitted boundaries or stray beyond the outer limits of the 'appropriate'. The peacebuilding subject is thereby positioned as an object of reform.[52]

This is the reality of Liberal peacebuilding, which is diametrically opposed to the representation, which upholds legalistic fictions such as the domestic–international divide. Critical observers note that the actual practice of post-conflict intervention blurs this dividing line. Mark Duffield, for example, refers to a 'sovereign frontier' that inverts established norms of sovereignty are inverted.[53] The Liberal Peace is therefore founded upon a fiction insofar as it insists on formal mechanisms that limit the arbitrary exertion of power and establish and uphold rule-of-law, civil society, and a functioning state.[54] To the same extent, it also views 'democracy' as a purely internal matter and therefore has little to say on the democratic implications that relate to the excessive exertion of external influence in the post-conflict peacebuilding process.[55]

Liberal peacebuilding also orientates towards apolitical frameworks and solutions and this is clearly demonstrated by the example of the Oslo process, which viewed the 'politics' of the conflict (namely the occupation and other deeply

contentious political issues) as an inconvenient obstacle that needed to be worked around.[56] Several centuries ago, von Clausewitz had spoken of war as the 'continuation of politics by other means', an insight that would apparently be lost on contemporary Liberal peacebuilders.

The Oslo Accords were significant in this regard for two reasons. First, they were based on the assumption that cooperation between Palestinians and Israelis in a number of spheres would establish a basis for the negotiation of complex and thorny 'final status' issues.[57] But this was problematic for two reasons: first of all, the interim period did not generate sufficient momentum to positively impact the negotiation of these issues; second, Palestinians viewed these 'political' issues as being synonymous with the conflict itself: insofar as they were not directly engaged, it was meaningless to speak of a Peace Process.

Naser-Najjab describes how a reconciliation programme, which operated under the rubric of the people-to-people (P2P) programme, which was the grassroots 'component' of the Accords, was framed in apolitical terms and was intended to enable Palestinians and Israelis to work together on joint projects and, in some instances, on the basis of shared professional interests.[58]

The programme that Naser-Najjab describes is part of the conflict resolution approach, which begins with the assumption that conflict is psychological and that it is linked to perceptions on both sides.[59] Establishing a basis for mutual understanding requires, to a certain extent, diminishing or understating the importance of material factors, including political grievances. Naser-Najjab makes this clear in her discussion of the programme, when she notes that oversight of the wider context was not an inadvertent outcome but was consciously intended and desired.[60]

This is what Goetschel and Hagmann are referring to when they question if peace can be achieved through 'bureaucratic means'.[61] To put it differently, 'peace' is not simply a question of an improved implementation. This, however, is precisely the impression that is created by the comprehensive approach and its associated preoccupation with 'integration', 'coordination' working practices, and strategic planning.

The 'bureaucratic' approach focuses on process. One illustration of this is the work of Roland Paris, which focuses on the internal contradictions of Liberal peacebuilding. While he emphasises the importance of the improved sequencing of peacebuilding interventions, he makes it quite clear that this will not remove or overcome them.[62]

Bickerton makes this clear in his discussion of state building, where he notes that the technocratic approach, which places the emphasis on external capacities, limits the emergence of sovereign authority and ultimately functions to undermine state-building interventions. Although peacebuilders often speak of the sources of the problem as if they are endogenous, Bickerton makes it quite clear that in these instances they are actually exported.[63] MacGinty highlights the limitations of this technocratic mentality and rationality when he refers to a bureaucratic apparatus focused on 'transparency, efficiency and accountability',[64] and explains the limitations of an associated 'routine peace'. Mosse, in referring to the Development

field, refers to the same object when he relates 'a managerialist language of linear progressions, inputs and outcomes'.[65]

Cramer's analysis of the 'Liberal Peace' is very similar. He notes that Liberal theory is predisposed to view violence as somehow antithetical to itself and is, by implication, blind to the various forms of violence that Liberalism permits and practices. Indeed, under certain circumstances, it attributes this violence to a certain moral authority. In particular, he interprets the concept of 'development' as an effective denial of the various forms of violence that are inherent to Liberal capitalism. In his reading, the very imposition of categories such as 'developed' and 'undeveloped' is predicated upon, and indeed requires various forms of violence.[66]

Critical readings of Liberal peacebuilding demonstrate how technocracy and bureaucratisation produce a series of universalising and standardising effects, as recognised by a separate branch of the critical literature raises a separate question by focusing on the homogenising effects of the Liberal Peace. These contributions broadly focus on state-societal relations.[67] As with the potential of local participation, international organisations have increasingly recognised the importance of context as a peacebuilding resource. However, this has more closely resembled a co-option of context and its instrumental adaptation.[68] Some observers however hold out the possibility of a more serious and sustained engagement with local participation and context – this being the key tenet and implication of Richmond's appeal to a 'post-Liberal' peace is perhaps the clearest example in this respect.[69]

In the Middle East, the artificiality of the nation-state is at the core of its contemporary political crisis. Both Arab nationalism and Islamism, both moderate and radical, have challenged their claim to be the foundation of political authority across the region, and this in turn brings the relevance of universalistic human rights into question.[70]

Englebert and Tull refer to the example of sub-Saharan Africa and potentially provide a way of working around this problem when they note that, in this setting, the nation-state framework is actually a source and driver of violent conflict.[71] They take particular issue with the Weberian model of the state, which views the separation of the state from society as a defining feature. In its place, they draw on the state–society literature to propose that the state should be conceptualised as an outgrowth of society.[72] This directly challenges the homogenising, standardising, and universalising tendencies of the Liberal Peace. The incorporation of the Judaic and Islamic traditions of peacebuilding, which are both deeply rooted in the local context, could, for example, contribute to heterogeneity and variation.[73]

The initial stages of this chapter focused on the established tools and techniques that international peacebuilders have applied in different contexts and that have, over time, formed a consolidated body of theory and practice. The 'Liberal Peace' has emerged as the main framework that international actors apply in different contexts and it has become something of an established peacebuilding orthodoxy. Although it has historically made use of Liberal tools, it has more recently become associated with the coercive intervention and the use of force. Humanitarian intervention (HI), which combined a commitment to uphold

Liberal human rights through the use of force, perfectly embodied and illustrated this. The key conclusion to emerge from this discussion is that there is a consolidated body of theory and practice, which combines different influences (including Liberalism and Conflict Resolution theory) and traditions (including both secular and religious). In our subsequent engagement with the Middle Eastern and Israeli–Palestinian Peace Processes, we will see that the U.S. both invokes and substantially departs from this established framework of reference.

The discussion then turned to critical perspectives and accounts that have emerged in response to the contradictions, tensions, and shortcomings of Liberal peacebuilding. Broadly speaking, these different accounts seek to answer the question of why this predominant form of peacebuilding so frequently falls short of its stated aims and intentions. The critical literature is therefore, in large part, a response to the Liberal Peace and Liberal peacebuilding. In addition, it draws on different influences, including Foucauldian and post-Marxist theory and the literature on state–society relations.

The critical literature highlights a number of themes that will be engaged in the course of our subsequent discussion of the Peace Processes. The tendency to work around politics, for example, has been identified as an aspect or feature of the Israeli–Palestinian Peace Process. To the same extent, the highly elitist and even exclusionary character of the Peace Process underlines the extent to which Palestinians have rarely been given the opportunity to determine their own destinies. And finally, the 'securitisation' of the Peace Process has reflected a tendency to overlook or even deny the deeply political character of the conflict. These and other critical insights and parallels will be engaged in the subsequent chapters.

Chapter Overview

From the early 1990s onwards, the 'international community' engaged in a series of interventions in conflict-affected societies that had been deeply impacted by sustained violent conflict. Along the concept of peacebuilding originated in the 1960s, the exigencies of the Cold War prevented it from being implemented in subsequent years. It was only in 1991, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, that it became possible to envisage its widespread application in the aftermath of violent conflict.

Chapter 1 provides insight into both the theory and practice of post-conflict peacebuilding. It engages with the comprehensive approach and Liberal peacebuilding, which have both accompanied the development of post-conflict peacebuilding and helped to define its key features; as a result, 'peacebuilding' has become inextricably intertwined with Liberalism, with the consequence that 'Liberal Peacebuilding' has become the predominant form. The chapter then engages with critical perspectives that highlight how 'peace' has been effectively co-opted into the pursuit of strategic objectives.

The essential contribution of Chapter 2 is to discuss themes of peace and to provide critical insight into the use of peace for strategic means. In strict terms, the Oslo Accords depart quite substantially from the model of post-conflict

peacebuilding that was established and applied in the 1990s and following decades. The key contribution of this chapter is therefore to provide theoretical insights and perspectives that can be applied to the specific example of the Oslo Accords and the U.S. intervention in the region more generally.

Chapter 3 focuses on the U.S. role in the region. It identifies both key strategic priorities and also tensions between them (e.g. between continued support for Israel and autocratic regimes in the Gulf). It notes that the roots of the U.S. involvement in the region can be traced back to the demise of the British and French colonial power, although the U.S. has in many respects continued from where they left off. U.S. involvement, including the political and military support given to key strategic allies, has resulted in the militarisation of the region, a development whose implications extended beyond the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. U.S. energy interests that predated the Cold War, meanwhile, persist and continue to exert a defining influence on the U.S. regional policy.

Officially, however, the U.S. remains committed to promoting peace in the region. This is clearest in the case of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, where its mediation played a crucial role in the implementation of the Oslo Accords and subsequent peace initiatives. This chapter first considers the theory of mediation, with the intention of providing insight into key concepts and practices. It then asks how/if the U.S. practice in the period 1950–1990 approximated to the theory.

In the case of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, the U.S. does not need to further the perception that it is a balanced or even 'neutral' mediator. Indeed, it is precisely the opposite – instead, its close cultural, political, and strategic ties with Israel, which are unparalleled in contemporary international relations, are widely believed, including by Palestinian observers, to recommend it as an effective mediator that will be able to achieve a lasting peace settlement. Chapter 4 considers this theme in more depth and detail. This chapter examines the U.S.–Israel relationship, which is not purely political or strategic but instead rests on a series of religious and cultural pillars that help to sustain, strengthen, and perpetuate the relationship. The Judeo-Christian tradition, shared settler traditions, and cultural affinities are all examples. They are both positive and negative, as the preceding discussion of Orientalism has confirmed. Whereas some have been consciously developed and cultivated, others preceded the establishment of the relationship. Importantly, the chapter also clarifies that the different aspects of the relationship did not develop alongside each other – for example, Israel's strategic potential was only recognised by the U.S. strategists after its resounding victory in the 1967 War.

After the 1979 Camp David agreement removed Egypt from the Israeli–Arab conflict, how Syria emerged as the state with the greatest potential to inflict lasting military damage on Israel is articulated in Chapter 5. Its potential threat was acknowledged by Israeli leaders and strategists – peace with Syria was one of Rabin's reasons for acquiescing to the Oslo Accords, and Ehud Barak threatened to shift to the 'Oslo track' during the abortive Camp David negotiations in 2000.

The U.S.–Syria relations have long been difficult and complicated. This was only partially due to Syria's Cold War alliance with the Soviet Union and was in fact more attributable to Syria's stated desire to unsettle and challenge the regional status quo. Its state sponsorship of terrorism, which included direct attacks on the U.S. personnel and infrastructure in the region, was a further sticking point in relations between the two countries. At the beginning of the 1990s, the First Gulf War raised the prospect of a 'thaw' in relations. When the Oslo Accords were initially unveiled, Syria was viewed as a constructive partner, and negotiations with it proceeded along a separate 'track'. Similarly, when Bashar al-Assad was elected president on 17 July 2000, it was viewed in the west as a positive development, as he was viewed as a potential reformer. In other words, relations between the two countries, and also between Israel and Syria, are considerably more complex than the established narrative which holds that Syria, as a leader of the 'rejectionist front', is implacably opposed to Western influence in the region. The historical record is considerably more complex, and Chapter 4 demonstrates this in more detail.

Chapter 6 focuses on the Palestinian 'Peace Process' and engages with it from the perspective of the U.S. government, who were predisposed to view the Palestinian issue as a 'problem' rather than as an issue of justice. It begins with the Madrid Conference, although the Peace Process arguably began in 1988, when the PLO formally recognised Israel within its 1967 'borders'. The chapter makes it clear that the Israeli–Palestinian conflict is inseparable from the more general Arab–Israeli conflict, and therefore also highlights how other state actors, such as Jordan and Syria, influenced the 'Oslo' negotiations between the PLO and Israel. It is generally critical of the Peace Process and views it as falling some distance short of the 'comprehensive' peace demanded by Syria and anticipated by peacebuilding theory (see Chapter 1). It concludes that criticism of Trump's approach to the Peace Process is entirely warranted but largely misplaced: his essential role has been to make the implicit explicit and to make the understated overt. Indeed, it is open to question if the Peace Process actually 'existed', other than as fabrication, illusion, or self-serving deceit.

As shown in Conclusion, the essential contribution of the book is to place the Peace Process in a wider perspective and to consider it in relation to peacebuilding theory, mediation theory, and regional politics. It is intended to both supplement Critical contributions to the peacebuilding literature and also more specific critiques of the Peace Process itself.

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2 Different Dimensions of Conflict and Peace

The Historical Dimension: The Cold War

The Cold War did not merely provide the backdrop for the Arab–Israeli conflict and was instead deeply implicated in it. U.S. engagement with the region was in large part due to its interest in its natural resources, which it had coveted from afar in the interwar period. The establishment of the U.S.–Saudi alliance in this period anticipated later engagements and interventions.

In contrast, the Soviet role in the region in the post-Second World War period was limited and did not extend beyond strategic relationships with key states: there was, in terms of both depth and scope, no counterpart to the U.S.–Israel relationship. In direct opposition to the U.S., which became deeply invested in promoting peace in the region, the Soviet Union sought to create conflict. Whereas the U.S. regional role was hardly beyond reproach, its Soviet counterpart was even more cynical.

Although the importance of the region had been recognised for centuries, its strategic importance grew even further in the Cold War. Yezid observes that Western policymakers increasingly feared that Soviet penetration of the region would outflank the Atlantic alliance. And they were also concerned that Soviet control of the region's oil resources could damage the Western economy.[1] However, while this Cold War lens provided a certain coherence to U.S. actions in the region, it also imposed clear limitations and resulted, for example, in the U.S. extending support to pro-Western governments that lacked legitimacy.[2]

During the Cold War, the U.S. and other Western states sought to establish defence alliances in the Middle East, as part of a global strategy that would contain the Soviet Union. Although the U.S. demurred from formal extended deterrence commitments, it did introduce several informal counterparts rooted in regional political and strategic relationships. These operated alongside various presidential declarations and formal security agreements, some of which involved the deployment of American forces.

One of the main priorities for U.S. strategists in the immediate post-war period was to identify how Soviet expansionism could be checked. The 1947 Truman Doctrine therefore established that '[I]t must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples, who are resisting attempts at takeover'. George Kennan explained how this could be achieved. He said:

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> *The safety of the U.S. is predicated upon our ability to balance hostile or undependable forces in the world. We must place them against one another if necessary, so that the conflict will be with each other, rather than turning intolerance, violence and fanaticism against the United States*.[3]

The U.S. had a clear advantage in the immediate post-Second World War era because it was not burdened by colonial history.[4] Some Arab states also credited the U.S. with removing European colonial power from the region, which gave it a degree of soft power.[5] One of America's initial contributions was to help establish a mutual cooperation pact between Turkey and Iraq. The resulting Baghdad Pact (1955) was subsequently sustained by the British government.

It might be presupposed that the U.S. status as an anti-colonial power would underpin a commitment to Jewish self-determination. This was accompanied by Western guilt about the Holocaust. However, both dovetailed with a darker political influence and inheritance, namely the anti-Semitism and anti-immigrant sentiment that had taken root in the U.S. after the 1929 economic crisis. The belief that Jews were instinctively sympathetic to communism also provided a clear incentive for Truman to reject Jewish refugees. Amanda Morrison (2018) cites a Gallup poll of Americans conducted almost immediately after Kristallnacht, which showed just over three-quarters of respondents were opposed to accepting more Jewish refugees.[6] She also notes anti-Semitism 'permeated American society' in this period and also influenced immigration policy. At the Évian Conference of 1938, representatives of almost all of the (32) countries made it clear they were unwilling to increase their quotas to accept more Jewish refugees. A poll one year later suggested that more than three-quarters (83 per cent) of Americans opposed accepting more Jewish refugees.[7]

This was accompanied by the emergence of the so-called 'Jewish vote', a term that reflected a belief that American Jews had the potential to exert a strong influence on the course of U.S. elections. U.S. Jews traditionally tended to vote Democrat, as former President Trump recently acknowledged in his appeal to them to support Israel by voting for him. Newport further affirms that Jewish support for the Democrats is a 'very well-established fact of American political life'.[8]

This belief was of course by no means unconnected to the tendency to think of Jews as a group, who were possessed of a tendency to think and act *en bloc.* Both had/have positive and negative connotations: in the first instance appearing as an acknowledgement of Jewish success in the U.S. and in the second dovetailing with well-established anti-Semitic tropes.

However, Lawrence Davidson observes that when Harry Truman recognised the State of Israel, this was just of a number of factors that influenced his decision. He explains that Truman's personal religious beliefs, the overlap between Jewish and U.S. settler traditions, the emergence of a Zionist lobby, and Truman's personal suspicion towards the State Department were also important factors that influenced the U.S. position.[9]

The U.S. also had an added incentive to recognise Israel because it wanted to prevent the Soviet Union from filling the gap left by the former colonial powers.

It therefore sought to promote peace and stability through peace agreements and to recruit regional partners to help contain the Soviet Union.[10] However, this aspiration was complicated by the rising tide of Arab nationalism.[11] Although it was initially successful in limiting Nasser's influence, the gap between states in the north and south of the region widened in the following years, and this opened up new opportunities for the Soviets.[12]

Within the region, the pro-West group included (post-Nasser) Egypt, the Gulf States, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, North Yemen, and Tunisia. Both Turkey and Iran (until 1979) were also allied with the West.[13] Relations with the group were however complicated by its members' tendency to view Israel as a colonial outgrowth.

Domestic instability provided a clear rationale for external engagement and intervention, and the members of both groups quickly learned to exploit them for their own purposes by, for example, using the external resources they received from Peace Processes to suppress internal threats.[14] When the local tension escalated to a crisis level, there was a clear danger that both the U.S. and the USSR would become directly involved and for this reason, '[e]ach conflict in the Middle East [raised] the spectre of confrontations between the superpowers'.[15] In reality, however, both the U.S. and the Soviet Union were reluctant to directly engage with the region.[16]

U.S.–Soviet relations were governed by the 'balance of power', which meant that state leaders had to continually play their own national interest off against changes at the international level.[17] Weaker Arab states became client states of either superpower, although domestic and regional constraints sometimes limited their ability to meet external commitments. Both the Liberty incident of the 1967 War (when the U.S. initially blamed the Soviet Union rather than Israel for an attack on its intelligence-gathering ship)[18] and the Israeli occupation of the Golan Height highlighted how easily the Arab–Israeli conflict could be internationalised.

U.S. interests in the region were opposed by a pro-Soviet group that consisted of Algeria, Libya, (post-1969) Sudan, Iraq, South Yemen, the PLO, and Syria. The Soviet Union sought to limit Western influence by shipping arms to Arab states (such as Egypt, Iraq, and Syria) and competing with U.S. efforts to establish peace agreements.[19] As the Cold War progressed, the support of one of the superpower patrons became an essential resource that local actors sought to use for their own purposes.[20]

While the international division of the world into two 'camps' caused clear tensions, it also created a relative stability, as the very real possibility of nuclear Armageddon forced the two sides to establish a limited working relationship. However, this 'stability' came with a clear cost, as it was only achieved by displacing tension onto other regions.[21] The Soviet Union consistently supported its Arab allies but also tried to prevent rash and dangerous actions by its clients while limiting its own involvement. It justified its relationship with Nasser's Egypt by invoking 'anti-imperialism'.[22] However, it was just as likely motivated by a concern 'that the sharp rise in American prestige in the region meant a concomitant drop in Soviet influence'.[23]

The Soviet entrance into the region could be traced back to 1954, when Western countries refused to sell arms to the Egyptians, who then turned to Czechoslovakia and received a promise that they would receive the same weapon systems that Israel had received from a French arms deal.[24] From the mid-1950s onwards, the Soviets supported pro-Palestinian states and cultivated anti-Israel sentiment in the region.[25] Palestinians and the Arab states, for their part, originally viewed Soviet support as a way of balancing the U.S.–Israel strategic alliance.[26]

The Cold War was later framed onto the Arab–Israeli conflict and the U.S. used the Peace Process to develop relationships with Arab states and Israel and also used financial support to develop relationships with Egypt, Israel, Jordan, and other states. International tensions were projected onto the region and negated the possibility of a lasting peace[27] by producing stalemates and conflicts.[28] But influence also travelled in the other direction, as international practices, including peacekeeping and UN conflict management tools, were developed in the region.[29]

In exerting its influence in the region, the Soviet Union initially wanted to establish a 'buffer zone'. It was vulnerable to a nuclear submarine attack from the Indian Ocean or the Mediterranean Sea. It also had no warm water seaports near its industrial centres and, as its military and commercial capacity grew, it sought an increased presence in the region.[30] In 1954, after a 1925 treaty with Turkey expired, it issued claims for bases in the Bosporus and Dardanelles Straits and also tried to strengthen links with Arab partners.[31]

The risk of confrontation substantially increased when the Soviets intervened in the 1970 Jordan crisis, but there was no evidence they wished to become directly involved. In this instance Kissinger and Nixon overreacted by viewing this as a global crisis. In reality, there was little at stake for the Soviets in Jordan. When the Syrians entered the country in September, the Soviets became cautious and later took credit for engaging with Damascus and helping to end the fighting.[32] However, it was likely that Israel's decision to move tanks closer to its border with Jordan persuaded Syria to withdraw the tanks it had sent into the country to support PLO forces in the conflict.[33]

After receiving a warning from the U.S., the Soviet Union swiftly curtailed actions in the Gulf region in the late 1970s and also, in 1983, distanced itself from provocative Syrian actions in the Lebanese Civil War. The Soviet Union was unwilling to provide military assistance to the Palestinians and Syrian army and failed to prevent U.S. soldiers from deploying to the country, and this further underlined its irrelevance.[34] After this, it returned to the previous policy of non-assertiveness.[35]

In the mid-1980s, its position further changed. Gorbachev now argued that peace could only be achieved through a dual recognition of Israel's right to security and the Palestinian right to self-determination. In reality, this was not a 'shift' and was more an acknowledgement of a reality (the Soviet Union's effective irrelevance in the region). Gorbachev's changes, including the downscaling of ideological commitments, diplomatic recognition of the State of Israel and the easing of emigration restrictions on Russian Jews, did nonetheless have clear implications for the conflict. After the First Gulf War ended in February 1991, the Soviet

Union continued to participate in U.S.-backed peace efforts.[36] These interventions were not unimportant as they helped to change the PLO's political positions.[37]

It is important not to overstate the Soviet role in the region during the Cold War, as it did not engage in aggressive and reckless expansionism and actually deliberately sought to avoid confrontation with the U.S. Contrary to Cold War dogma, the Soviet Union never issued a 'mortal challenge' to the U.S. in the region.[38] In reality, its influence was quite superficial and was restricted to military assistance to partners who retained a substantial degree of autonomy. Further Soviet penetration of the region was always likely to be constrained by the limited public appeal of atheistic communism.

As in other parts of the world in the Cold War, the main Soviet contribution was to provide a rationale for the expansion of U.S. influence in the region: indeed, an observer could quite easily be forgiven for concluding that if Soviet communism did not exist, then the U.S. would have to invent it. After Sadat expelled his Soviet advisors in 1973, Soviet influence in the region began to decline after the 1973 War. Subsequent Soviet actions in the region were more like an implicit acknowledgement of irrelevance.

The Regional Dimension: Middle Eastern Politics

What we think of as the contemporary Middle East was originally created by colonial administrators who, after the First World War, divided Greater Syria and the wider region into individual nation-states. However, far from creating a sustainable political settlement, the Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916),[39] Balfour Declaration (1917),[40] and the creation of Israel (1948) sketched the fault-lines of future conflicts.

Far from reflecting established cultural, political, and social realities, it would therefore be more accurate to describe the 'Middle East' as a product of the British Foreign Office's colonial mind-set. Matthews describes it as an invention of the European mind and, intriguingly, as an imperial and bourgeois product with geographical and political aspects.[41]

The British government's definition of the Middle East included the Arab Orient, Egypt, Sudan, Turkey, Afghanistan, and the Arab peninsula but did not extend to North Africa. The American government also omitted it although then, perhaps by way of compensation, added Cyprus, Iran, Israel, and Pakistan. Setting aside these arcane terminological distinctions and disputes, it is perhaps more significant that neither definition recognises cultural cohesion or invokes the standard definition of a region. This is a 'blind spot' in Western perspectives, which predisposes observers to view the Arab world as a mixture of distinct cultural groups, ethnicities, nations, and peoples rather than as a single, coherent unit.[42]

The differences in the aforementioned definitions notwithstanding, the essential point remains the same – the legacy of colonialism persisted beyond its formal end and it only continues because it is politically expedient. The 'Middle East' is a convention that is honoured for purposes of convenience.

The U.S. now maintains close political and strategic relationships with all six of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar,

Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates), each of which hosts U.S. military facilities and personnel. It also has military agreements with Jordan and Egypt. The depth and scope of the relationship vary in each instance.

The examples of Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey provide instructive insight into U.S. priorities and commitments. The 1955 Baghdad Pact (which was later known as CENTO or Central Treaty Organisation) established U.S. military bases in Jordan. The 1957 Eisenhower Declaration then gave these bases a foremost role in helping to maintain the 'independence and integrity' of regional partners.[43] Although Jordan's strengthening relationship with the U.S. provided a number of clear benefits, it also complicated its relations with the Arab nationalist states.[44] In 1957, the Anglo-Jordanian Treaty ended and King Hussein dismissed his prime minister and army chief. The U.S. responded by providing troops and aid and committed further support one year later when Iraq's King Faisal II was overthrown.[45] The U.S.–Jordan alliance would henceforth be constructed on these foundations.[46]

The peace agreement between the two countries was publicly announced in July 1994,[47] and the U.S. responded by reducing Jordan's debt from $700 million to $220 million.[48] In his speech to the U.S. Congress on 27 July 1994, Hussein said he believed the U.S. would help to broker a lasting peace.[49] But his confidence was by no means universally shared in the Arab world. This appeared to confirm an Arab saying, which holds that, just as the Arabs are a problem for the U.S., the U.S. is a problem for the Arabs.[50]

Roosevelt established the basis of a long-term alliance when he committed the U.S. to protect Saudi Arabia from internal and external threats and, in return, the Saudis promised to meet U.S. oil needs.[51] This restricted Saudi autonomy in economic or foreign policy and also made the House of Saud, whose regional support is limited or even non-existent, entirely dependent on the U.S.[52]

Relations between the Saudis and other GCC states remain tense, most notably on economic issues (e.g. oil production quotas), unresolved territorial claims (e.g. Saudi Arabia-Qatar/Oman), and border disputes (Oman–United Arab Emirates (UAE)), and this has inhibited efforts to turn the GCC into an effective regional security organisation.

In the contemporary environment, most GCC states resent Saudi Arabia for its domination of the GCC and its past heavy-handedness with its neighbours. Personal jealousies and tribal animosities further distort relations between GCC members and prevent the trust from emerging. The prospect that external security threats (most notably Iraq's 1991 invasion of Kuwait) would produce increased cooperation has not been realised, as defence cooperation has only grown slowly. In recognising the institutional underdevelopment of the GCC and other regional institutions, the U.S. has prioritised the Peace Process as an alternative way of exerting influence.[53]

Turkey is another important part of the regional security equation that has a large population, has a developed economy, has various military bases, and is close to Europe. Its long-established secularism has provided a welcome bulwark against Islamism and its historical efforts to limit Russian and Islamist influence

further recommend it. It has previously cooperated with Israel in the security field and has historically pursued a moderate foreign policy, which includes a long-standing commitment to non-proliferation. In the event of a peace deal between Israel and Syria, its regional role would however be complicated.[54]

U.S. arrangements with these strategic allies are however complicated by its relations with Israel. U.S. ties could also undermine the legitimacy of Arab partners and even empower extremist political actors.[55] It is perhaps surprising to note that the U.S. has acknowledged and was, at one point, willing to engage with Islamists.[56] U.S. caution in engaging with the region is justified, as it is a tinder-box that could easily collapse into violent conflict when ethnic and sectarian groups seek to secede from recognised states. The region's stability and security would be undermined and Iran's power and influence would be enhanced. Turkey's 'Kurdish Question' would be asked with renewed intensity and Syria and Turkey would be tempted to interfere in Iraq's internal affairs.[57]

The U.S. also has a vested interest in promoting peace in the region, as it has established oil interests and growing economic interests. When it stresses the potential contribution of free markets, interdependence, and shared economic interests, it raises more than a slight suspicion of self-interest. The U.S. is among the top five trading allies for each GCC country. More than 700 U.S.-affiliated organisations or U.S.-based companies, which employ more than 16,000 Americans, currently operate in the area.[58] This has produced a U.S. trade surplus and, since the mid-1990s, helped to lower overall trade deficits. U.S. exports to the GCC countries account for more than 650,000 U.S. jobs and provide the main source of income for nearly 2.4 million Americans.[59] The country's business also provides the main form of assistance for 50,000 U.S. dependants in the GCC states.[60]

Over the past four decades, U.S. commercial interests in the Middle East have steadily grown and the GCC region has become a hub for trade, services, and investment that criss-cross Europe, the Far East, and Africa. The region has played an essential role in the domestic economies of Western industrialised states, and it has the potential to become a global market that joins up to one billion people.[61] GCC investment has enabled the U.S. to maintain a low and constant interest rate and the willingness of GCC states to adjust their oil production has also assisted the industrialised states.

In addition to peace, the U.S. also arguably has a vested interest in promoting conflict in the region, as it extracts substantial profits from the arms trade. By the mid-1970s, U.S. arms exports to the region accounted for more than three-quarters of its overall exports to developing countries. The region's arms purchases were more than half of the world's total, accounting for a total annual expenditure of $6.1 billion. The U.S. has exported weapons and weapons systems worth more than $90 billion to the Middle East since the first Gulf War, and it is established as the largest exporter of arms to the region. Tens of thousands of Americans are also employed in defence industries.

However, the U.S. sees no contradiction between the fact that it exports such large amounts of arms while simultaneously working to promote peace. However,

this is perhaps not surprising, as it does not believe that its single-minded pursuit of its own economic interest conflicts with its mediator role.[62] The U.S. State Department has historically sought to maintain this balance (or at the least give the appearance of it) but has, in so doing, conflicted with the embedded biases of U.S. foreign policy. The resulting foreign policy of dishonesty has deeply alienated Arab public opinion.[63]

The International Dimension: Oil and U.S. Strategy

The first agreement between the American firms (who would later become known as ARAMCO (Arabian–American Oil Company) and Saudi Arabia was established between 1933 and 1935. A U.S. official in the region observed that Saudi oil resources were a stupendous resource for strategic power and one of the most significant material prizes in the history of the world.

Cheap oil has become essential to U.S. industrial development and profitability and it is important to remember that the price of Middle Eastern oil is about 12 per cent of Alaskan oil.[64] The region's oil resources are not yet fully utilised and developmental drilling is still seeking out additional oil reserves, which are substantial when compared against the current rate of production and are about ten times the level of U.S. production. Since the end of the Cold War, the region's oil has accounted for approximately half of U.S. oil consumption: the Persian Gulf accounted for almost one-quarter of this figure, of which Saudi Arabia accounts for two-thirds.[65]

The Middle East has abundant natural resources of coal, gold, iron ore, natural gas, oil, and phosphate.[66] Oil meets 40 per cent of U.S. primary energy requirements, and the Persian Gulf currently accounts for around half of U.S. oil imports. Several crucial sectors of industrialised economies, including construction, engineering, and military equipment sales, rely on this resource. Oil-producing countries also need to import capital items from the U.S. in order to sustain their ambitious development strategies.[67]

Approximately 62 per cent of global oil reserves are located in the Middle East, and it supplies one-quarter of the annual global demand. More than half of U.S. crude oil imports come from the region and U.S.-based oil companies retain important commercial interests.[68] These include a one-quarter share of the Iraq Petroleum Company; Bahrain's and Saudi Arabia's entire concessions; and half of Kuwait's concessions. This gives the U.S. a clear incentive to intervene in the region and maintain a regional security presence that will meet the requirements of key allies.[69]

While the U.S. share of this oil market is relatively small (15 per cent), it retains an interest in its stability and has accordingly sought to secure it, contain external threats and block regional threats to its free flow.[70] Foreign investors, global managers, and U.S. strategists know full well what the code word 'stability' refers to.[71] Stability has long been the key U.S. priority in the region, occasional flirtations with improved governance and human rights notwithstanding.[72]

Before the Second World War the U.S. had a very limited interest in the region as U.S. oil companies were content to focus on their internal production of oil.

Since the 1930s, it had been aware of the region's huge energy potential and it was already aware of its geostrategic significance (it bridges three continents) and proximity to the Soviet Union.[73] However, its ability to exert influence was clearly limited by British and French colonialism. At the start of the Second World War, the U.S. forced Britain into conceding its petroleum interests in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Iraq.[74] The Saudi concessions would subsequently prove to be the most important of the four.

The development of this interest was clearly anticipated by John Loftus, the special assistant to the director of International Trade Policy in the State Department, who claimed in 1945 that '"a review of diplomatic history of the past 35 years will show that petroleum has historically played a larger part in the external relations of the United States than any other commodity".[75] But it was only in the post-Second World War era that Middle Eastern oil became, in the words of Toby Craig Jones, an 'obsession'.[76]

In 1945, Truman observed that the region was becoming increasingly central to the world's oil supply and he also anticipated in advance that U.S. firms would increasingly be involved in its extraction and exploitation. The 'Open Door' Principle meant U.S. firms could maintain existing concessions, explore opportunities in new areas.[77] By the end of the 1940s, U.S. oil had dropped from 70 per cent to 51 per cent of U.S. oil consumption and Middle Eastern oil rose to account for 16 per cent.[78] In 1951, he acknowledged the region's 'vast' natural resources,[79] which in subsequent years became established as a key U.S. national and strategic interest.[80] The presidential doctrines of Eisenhower, Nixon, and Carter all recognised and reiterated the importance of the region's oil resources.[81] In 1980, the Carter Doctrine committed the U.S. to defend its national interests in the Persian Gulf.

The U.S. then positioned itself in a consistent opposition to 'radical' nationalism in the region: in Iran in 1953, the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) sponsored a coup that removed the Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh, after he committed the grave offence of proposing to nationalise the country's oil sector.[82] In the 1960s, U.S. policy sought to combat the 'threat' that Arab nationalism posed to U.S. control of regional oil resources.[83] This priority dovetailed with the commitment to uphold Israel's security and limit the Soviet threat.[84]

In 1969, as part of a broader strategic alignment overseen by the then secretary of state Henry Kissinger, the U.S. sought to enhance the military capabilities of regional partners and enable them to assume a greater degree of responsibility for their own security and self-defence. This involved the building up of national armies and increased arms sales, and this established the basis for a new strategic relationship.[85]

The establishment of OPEC (Oil and Petroleum Exporting Countries), an oil cartel, in 1973 was a key development that reiterated the vulnerability of Western economies and, by implication, the importance of retaining strategic control over this essential resource. In addition, U.S. dependence on foreign oil further increased after the crisis. Imports already accounted for more than one-third of domestic use (35 per cent) and internal oil production had begun to move to the

top end of its capacity.[86] The implications of the crisis were far-reaching, as 'petrodollars' (earned from increased oil prices) were then invested back into Western economies.

However, it is surprising that the U.S. only began to appreciate the strategic importance of this resource after the 1973 oil crisis.[87] It also provided a heightened awareness of the fact that unconditional U.S. support for Israel had a clear price[88] and alerted U.S. policymakers to the fact that unilateral Israeli actions could adversely influence U.S. interests. The U.S. then resolved to oversee the Sinai disengagement procedures and committed to working towards the 1979 Camp David Accords.[89] However, it was unable to avert the destabilising effects of an arms race between Iran and Saudi Arabia, the two pillars of its regional strategy, and nor was it able to prevent the Iranian Revolution from overthrowing the Shah.[90] During the subsequent Iran–Iraq war, the U.S. intervened in the latter stages of the conflict to protect Kuwaiti oil tankers from attack by Iranian military forces. The first Gulf War (1990–1991) was also a consequence of Saddam Hussein's desire to gain greater control of the region's oil supply.[91] This was the first of two wars over the past three decades in which the U.S. showed its willingness to use war to maintain its political control over Middle Eastern oil.[92]

The Ideological Dimension: Zionism and Orientalism

Zionism has been defined as 'a political movement devoted to the creation of a state for Jews in Palestine', although admittedly this definition conceals as much as it reveals. First, the historical, political, and cultural context in which Zionism emerged, namely the failure of the assimilationist movement in Europe. Second, it also does not acknowledge its ideological and political coalescence, and to a certain extent its indebtedness to, European colonialism and imperialism. Finally, it does not recognise the racial dimensions and connotations of Zionism, which the United Nations General Assembly denounced as a 'form of racism and racial discrimination' in a 1975 resolution.[93] Zionists, for their part, claim Zionism is an authentic expression of a guaranteed right to self-determination that is upheld by international law.

Thomas Baylis seeks to highlight the 'dark side' of Zionism or, more specifically, its inherent militarism and desire to establish dominance over the 'native' population of Historical Palestine.[94] In a striking twist, he does not seek to understand Zionism from the perspective of Jews but rather from the perspective of Zionism's victims, namely the dispossessed and persecuted Palestinians. Zionism's defining axiom of a 'land without people for a people without land' is in this respect fairly damning as it unconsciously reproduces the concept of *terra nullius*, which has become inextricably intertwined with colonial designs in innumerable colonial contexts.

The oversight of the 'native' population was not just therefore an inadvertent by-product but was a necessary precondition for Zionism. From this perspective, Zionism appears a historical peculiarity or anomaly, detached from the general movement towards decolonisation that occurred in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s.

However, it is only relatively that (predominantly academic) observers have again reverted to understanding Zionism in these terms.

Sahar Huneidi, for example, argues that Zionism is inherently racist.[95] In stressing the importance of the word 'inherently', she first seeks to dispel the myth that Israel was originally a 'liberal' or even 'progressive' enterprise that somehow become 'corrupted' or 'degraded' over time. Instead, she insists that its internal character and its alignment with colonial power indict it as a racist, exclusionary ideology. She makes the important point that after Zionists were forced to reject the religious category of 'Jew', they were ultimately forced to fall back on a racial alternative.

In addition to recognising the importance and significance of contemporary events in the development of Zionism, it is important to recognise aspects or elements that extend back over centuries and even millennia. John Rose provides insight into this aspect of Zionism when he considers its mythological dimensions.[96] In doing so, he acknowledges an aspect that is integral to any nationalism – namely the cultivation and development of a 'national myth' that helps to bind disparate parts into a coherent whole.

However, although Zionism is invariably justified as an expression of authentic Jewish nationalism, its relationship with Jews and Judaism more generally is somewhat more problematic and convoluted. To a certain extent, to take one example, Revisionist Zionism has been defined by the internalisation of anti-Semitic tropes. Although it has both secular and religious strands, the former has predominated, as is shown by the fact that the 'founding fathers' of Israel and Zionism were staunchly secular. John Rose therefore notes that David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first prime minister, was adept at deploying biblical tales that he did not believe in. The concept of *Eretz Israel* is, therefore, he notes, 'a potent mixture of ancient Judaism and modern nationalism'.[97] In addition, he later notes that Ben-Gurion 'deliberately cultivated the ambiguous mixing of Judaism and state politics'.[98] In a separate contribution, Nur Masalha makes a very similar claim about the abuse of the Bible for political purposes. He makes it clear that this is, however, part of a more general distortion of history and the historical record and cites the political mobilisation of archaeology as evidence of this.[99]

Zionism emerged in response to the crisis of European Jews in the late nineteenth and early 20th centuries, who were confronted by a rising tide of anti-Semitism and a realisation that the assimilationist project had failed and they would never be entirely accepted in their 'home' countries. Zionism, as a 'post assimilatory movement', therefore benefitted the shattered illusions of those, including Theodor Herzl,[100] who had once strongly supported assimilation.

Zionism rested on an essential contradiction. In the first instance, it was very much a product of Europe. However, in the second it was a clear rejection of the continent and the discrimination that Jews had suffered there. In addition, while it presented itself as a liberation movement, it did so in the full knowledge that the achievement of its goals would inflict suffering and humiliation on those who would pay the cost of this national endeavour.

Zionism was also based on a form of internalised racism. In common with anti-Semites, it loathed the 'Ghetto Jew' and sought to create a 'New Jew' by

establishing a Jewish homeland in Historical Palestine. In addition, for some Western European Jews, the establishment of a Jewish state was a preferable alternative to a mass influx of *Ostjuden* (Jews from Eastern Europe), who they associated with socially harmful activities such as gambling and prostitution.[101]

A particularly significant moment in the development of Zionism occurred in March 1881, when Tsar Alexander II was assassinated. The notorious Russian pogroms that followed transformed previously staunch assimilationists into committed Zionists. The 1894 Dreyfus Affair also contributed to the perception of a 'rising tide' of Zionism.

In responding to these developments, Herzl asserted that public law in countries of Jewish residence should guarantee a national home to the Jewish people and he therefore established an international campaign that offered 20 million lira (2 million for Palestine and the remainder to help with an economic crisis) to the Sultan of Turkey and diplomatic representations to Germany's Kaiser Wilhelm. However, his efforts were unsuccessful. Wealthy Jews later (unsuccessfully) explored the possibility of acquiring land in both Argentina and the U.S. before deciding on Palestine. They knew full well that this would result in mass population displacement but appeared to regard this as an unfortunate necessity or even as welcome self-sacrifice. Zangwill, a prominent Zionist, went even further in 1911, claiming: 'Why shouldn't the Palestinians welcome an opportunity to make a magnanimous gesture by giving up their homeland to be used by the Jews who had been so badly treated in Christian Europe?'[102]

Here he explicitly voiced the colonial belief the colonised should welcome their own dispossession. Baylis observes:

> The spread of nineteenth-century-European colonialism throughout Africa, Asia and the Americas was considered by the Europeans to be their gift of high civilization to the natives—a more or less 'altruistic' injection of high culture, religion, and national character that could only be an advance for backward peoples.[103]

But Zionists were under no illusions that this would be sufficient, and they were fully aware that Palestinians would not willingly submit to colonial rule, and would have to be subdued through force. In 1923, Vladimir Jabotinsky, the founder of Revisionist Zionism, wrote:

> Every indigenous people will resist alien settlers as long as they see any hope of ridding themselves of the danger of foreign settlement. This is how the Arabs will behave and go on behaving so long as they possess a gleam of hope that they can prevent 'Palestine' from becoming the Land of Israel … nothing in the world can cause them to relinquish this hope, precisely because they are not a rabble but a living people.[104]

However, he did not assume, at least initially, that Zionist goals could be achieved through the transfer or removal of the native population, and indeed originally appeared to believe that the Palestinian population in Palestine would be granted

autonomy.[105] In this respect, he clearly distinguished himself from other Zionist leaders who were willing to envisage, to varying degrees and extents, the forced removal of the 'native' population. Gil S Rubin attributes this in large part to his support of minority rights for Jews in Eastern Europe – clearly it would be contradictory to support these rights in one context but not another. However, Rubin claims that he eventually abandoned this position and shifted towards transfer shortly after the outbreak of the Second World War.[106] As Rubin notes, other Zionist leaders, including Ben-Gurion and Weizmann, also entertained the prospect of some form of power sharing between Jews and Arabs and then changed their positions in the 1940s.[107] Indeed, he suggests, the establishment of a Jewish nation-state was not always the foremost objective for Zionists, which directly contradicts Baylis's original claim (at the beginning of this sub-section) that it was 'a political movement devoted to the creation of a state for Jews in Palestine'.[108]

Rubin's characterisation of Jabotinsky and Zionism more generally is however directly challenged by Nur Masalha, whose work on the Palestinian *Nakba* suggests it was the final realisation of tendencies and predispositions strongly rooted in Zionism; indeed, in common with Ilan Pappé,[109] he suggests this event was the implementation of a pre-planned policy, a claim that is strongly rejected by Benny Morris.

In Expulsion of the Palestinians, perhaps his most seminal work, Masalha highlights the centrality and significance of the concept within Zionism.[110] 'Transfer' was used as a proposed solution to the 'Arab problem', or at least to indicate that 'Judea and Samaria' was already predominantly populated by Arab Palestinians.[111] Masalha makes it clear that transfer was considered a realistic proposition by Zionist leaders from the 19th century until the 1948 war. Jabotinsky, in continuing to entertain the possibility of power-sharing and Arab minority rights therefore appeared to be, when compared to his counterparts, to be a relative Liberal. This was a particularly perverse development precisely because he was a hugely controversial figure within the Jewish political community, who was frequently accused of harbouring far-Right and even fascist political sympathies. However, for a long period of time the political ambitions of Zionists appeared to be little more than wishful thinking. At the end of the 18th century, only about 5,000 Jews (from a worldwide population of three million) lived in Palestine.[112] In the period 1881–1914, 2.65 million Jews emigrated from Eastern Europe and Russia after experiencing sustained discrimination. However, most migrated to the U.S. and less than 2 per cent travelled to Palestine.[113] Before the First World War, the Zionist movement was relatively small and most American Jews of the time were immigrants from Eastern Europe who were sceptical about Zionism.

The key change came in 1917, when almost four centuries of Ottoman rule in Palestine ended. The Balfour Declaration of 1917, which committed Britain to the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Historical Palestine, was then followed, five years later, by a League of Nations mandate that entrusted Britain with responsibility for administering Palestine.[114] Between 1917 and 1920, the Jewish population of Historical Palestine more than quadrupled from 60,000 to 280,000

and just 15 years later, increased to over 400,000.[115] The Arab rebellion of 1936–1939 then broke out in response to this large-scale emigration.[116] In 1937, the Peel Commission recommended the establishment of two states before a 1939 White Paper rejected this proposal and committed to establish a Palestinian state and restrict Jewish immigration and land purchases.

The U.S. was also forced to adopt an equivocal position in this period. A congressional resolution in support of Zionism would have aggravated Arab public opinion and harmed the overall war effort. In 1941 and early 1942, David Ben-Gurion, the Zionist leader, spent ten weeks in Washington in a (fruitless) effort to arrange a meeting with President Roosevelt. However, Roosevelt did find time to meet with King Ibn Saud, the Saudi Monarch, after the Yalta Conference, on 14 February 1945. Roosevelt was even claimed to have told Ibn Saud he would 'do nothing to help the Jews against the Arabs and would make no move hostile to the Arab people'.[117]

The U.S. was also a junior partner to the British before the Second World War and was committed to a policy of isolationism. There was also a pervasive atmosphere of anti-Semitism in the country, and this perhaps explains why there were so few protests when Roosevelt, after prompting from the U.S. secretary of state, turned away around 1,000 Jewish refugees.[118]

After the Second World War, British administrators were unable to find a solution and asked the UN to intervene. On 3 September 1947, the UN Special Committee on Palestine proposed that Jews should be given 57 per cent of land and Palestinians should receive the remainder. Although Jews broadly supported this proposal, it was equally broadly rejected by Palestinians.[119] Conflict broke out in Palestine before the State of Israel declared its independence on 14 May 1948, and the Arab states entered the War the day after.

Orientalism

The concept of Orientalism first entered the Western consciousness with the publication of Edward Said's book of the same name, which was originally published in 1979. In this seminal work, Said's main concern was to consider how the Arab–Islamic world had been imagined and reconstructed by the West. He defined Orientalism as 'a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction between "the Orient" and (most of the time) the Occident'.[120]

Orientalism, when refracted through products of the Enlightenment such as 'development', 'modernity', and 'progress', leads the West to view the Islamic 'other' through a series of skewed distortions. The region does not present itself as it is but is instead only grasped through a series of false binaries that set darkness against light and progress against regression. Although *Orientalism* is primarily concerned with culture, it is immediately apparent and obvious that Said's analysis is deeply immersed within politics and power relations. His approach therefore appears as the exact opposite of Robert Kagan's *Of Paradise and Power*, which draws attention to the cultural and social significance of a political concept (democracy).[121]

When U.S. presidents cite Israel's democratic status as a justification for the extensive assistance that is provided to the country, they do not simply acknowledge a shared political status; on the contrary, they invoke sentiments and predispositions that are deeply rooted in American society and culture. The 'otherness' of Jews is therefore overcome by this emblem of a shared Judeo-Christian culture. This does not just inculcate support for Israel but also generates hostility to those who would threaten or seek to destroy it.[122] Tellingly, this commitment even persists in instances when it is detrimental to U.S. strategic objectives.[123]

Both European culture and Zionism have a shared conviction that the Oriental Muslim world is inherently hostile. This is something of an irony, as Jews experienced much more extensive persecution, including genocide, in Europe. Palestinian Arabs account for around a fifth of Israel's current population and, in contemporary Europe; Islam is not 'other' but is instead an important part of its civilisation and culture. But still this impression persists that Islam is somehow irredeemably 'other'. Israel, in contrast, is approvingly celebrated as 'Western' – Americans typically do not view it as 'Oriental' because its film, television, economic status, and types of consumption are so Americanised. This reiterates the importance of the cultural dimension that establishes a foundation for U.S.–Israel political relations.[124]

Contemporary animosities towards Islam are frequently built on past history of conflict and an associated perception that it is a threat to the West's power and economic prosperity. Over the course of centuries, Western kings launched Crusades to liberate the Holy Land from Islamic 'infidels'. As European nations became more powerful, Western imperialism used the Islamic threat to develop its own interests. Arabs were then expelled from Spain and Turks were driven back from Vienna's gates.[125] In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the U.S. sought to expand shipping routes into the Mediterranean but was confronted by Barbary pirates (from Algiers, Morocco, Tripoli, and Tunis) who demanded tribute for assuring safe passage. The U.S. refused to pay and its sailors were taken hostage. After a war in 1801–1805, Tripoli was defeated.

These unfortunate and unwelcome historical precedents are only partially offset by the positive connotation associated with exotic beings, haunting memories, and romance. In the contemporary period, it is unfortunately more likely that the Orient will be viewed as backward, regressive, and a potential threat. Such perceptions derive from discourses that are imposed on the Orient and are sustained through force, both discursive and material. He observes:

> [Orientalism is] the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient. Dealing with it by making statements about it, authoring views of it, describing it, by teaching, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.[126]

Orientalism is simultaneously a product and (re)producer of these relations of force. The Occident is established as a source of authority and is also constituted

by this relationship, which indicates the Occident finds itself, and a rationale for the exertion of its power, in the Orient's limitations. Shatz therefore observes, 'The aim of Orientalism, as a system of representations, sometimes explicit, more often implicit, was to produce another, the better to secure the stability and supremacy of the Western self'.[127]

The Islamic 'Other' was preserved in aseptic isolation by the Western gaze, with the result that it was viewed as constant and unchanging. Textualist accounts of the Qu'ran are a clear case-in-point, as they fail to acknowledge that texts, and their meaning, function in a wider social context. This reification of the Orient is an assertion of ownership that seeks to preserve the Orient from the local influences that would otherwise 'corrupt' it.[128]

Said explains how Orientalism recast control and domination as a responsibility, and even obligation, owed to Orientals.[129] This was of course a rephrasing of the colonial 'burden' that weighed on colonisers. He also borrowed and developed Foucault's power-knowledge nexus in order to demonstrate how a coercive 'knowledge' of the Orient was directly implicated in material practices of domination and control.

Orientalism rests on an initial knowledge claim about the Orient and a claim to know it intimately. This presents knowledge as a power relation that is exerted over the subject. It is not just a knowledge of the subject but also of its various conditions of possibility.

U.S. intellectuals were by no means immune to these cultural prejudices, which were reproduced in wider cultural norms.[130] In the 1930s and 1940s, many U.S. magazines presented the Muslim world in negative. To take one example, *National Geographic*, for example, printed pictures of Bedouin tribes, under the apparent impression that they were synonymous with Muslims more generally. The subtext was quite clear: although Muslims are backwards, primitive, and undeveloped, they are at least partially redeemed by their exoticism.[131]

Orientalists also sought to explain all developments in the region through the lens of Islam, which was invariably presented as a 'limiting point' of 'enlightened' external influence.[132] This feature was invariably viewed as negative and was used to explain assorted phenomena such as the limited progress of modernisation in the region. Islam was, in these terms, presented as an obstacle to reform and modernisation.

Islam was therefore viewed as impeding a neo-liberal template of peace promotion that had been developed by successive U.S. administrations and Congress since the time when William Burns, the former assistant secretary for the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, served in the Bush (snr) administration.[133] However, this has little to do with Islam: while Arab states are generally keen to reap the benefits of free trade, they are much less enthusiastic about the American hegemony that accompanies it, and even view it as a form of imperialism.[134]

U.S. culture also reproduces and reinforces Orientalism. In the three decades before 1998, more than 300 major films presented Islam negatively.[135] Western television shows and comic books also routinely reduce Muslims and Arabs to little more than a set of stereotypes.[136] An Arab–Islamic world that was presumed

to be incapable of representing itself was therefore reproduced through a series of distortions and misrepresentations.

These cultural prejudices were superimposed on fears about Soviet influence in the region, which substantially increased after the Suez Canal Crisis and were later supplemented by concerns about Arab nationalism (which overlapped with the Soviet threat to some extent) and Islamism. But such fears were not proportional as Soviet atheism had limited influence in a region where religious influence was so pronounced. Indeed, the Soviet withdrawal from the region began almost a decade before the collapse of the Soviet Union in November 1991.[137]

The development of Islamism or political Islam since the 1970s should be understood in this wider context of hostility and prejudice. Significant events included the terrorist attack on the 1972 Munich Olympics; the 1973 Arab oil embargo; the 1976 Entebbe hijacking; the 1980 seizure of American hostages by Iranian revolutionaries; the 1983 bomb attack in Lebanon that killed 241 U.S. marines; and the Salman Rushdie affair.[138] The media's decontextualised representation of terrorist attacks that killed Israeli civilians also impacted the views of the U.S. congress, the media, and the general American public[139] and reinforced the belief that Islam was a recidivist threat. However, a number of scholars, including John Esposito, suggest that Islam only achieved its full potential as an official enemy of the U.S. after the collapse of the Soviet Union.[140] In this reading, Huntingdon's 'clash of civilisation' provided the U.S. with a new security paradigm.

In the Cold War, it would have been possible to view Orientalism as a background influence. After the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, this was clearly no longer possible. In the post-September 2001 world, Orientalism has however taken on a new lease of life. Islam is denigrated both because it is 'other' and because it is also seen as a rejection of modernity and its associated achievements. It has been depicted both as inherently violent and a threat to Western interests and security, and this has in turn produced an extensive security architecture that subjects Muslims to suspicion, surveillance, and monitoring.

Before Orientalism was a kind of understated prejudice. Now, however, it manifested in the form of open Islamophobia. Hostility to Arabs and Muslims became a kind of acceptable prejudice. Orientalism has implications for various aspects of the regional conflict and Middle East Peace Process. It is most obvious in tropes about under-development and terrorism. However, it could also manifest in international development projects that seek to promote development in Arab–Islamic societies. To the same extent, it could also influence international engagements that operate under a human right, state-building, or peacebuilding rubric.

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3 The U.S. Role in the Region

Mediation in Perspective

The U.S. role within the region is somewhat Janus-faced. In its official statements and declarations, it is committed to promoting democracy, freedom, and human rights across the region.[1] In the immediate aftermath of colonialism, this claim had certain credibility, as the U.S. had consistently opposed colonial power across the globe before the war. However, in the post-Second World War era this illusion quickly faded, as the U.S. assumed a colonial role in the region.[2] In subsequent decades, the U.S. would be exposed to the accusation that it upheld a 'double standard' in the region – it is supposed that commitment to Liberal principles and values was belied by the baser impulses that underpinned its political practices.[3]

The U.S. is the main mediator in the region and whenever there is conflict there is accordingly an expectation that it will step in and work towards a resolution.[4] However, the U.S. has historically been reluctant to do this. While it might be presupposed that its regional alliances undermine its ability to operate as a neutral mediator, this is not in fact the case, as Mediation theory does not automatically view this as instantly disqualifying any claim to mediate.[5]

In practice, however, the closeness of the U.S. alliance with Israel has inhibited its ability to effectively mediate, although here it should also be remembered that Arab leaderships (including the PLO) have viewed U.S. commitment as a precondition for successful Mediation. Its apparent unwillingness to pressurise its ally or to impose preconditions for negotiation clearly draws the effectiveness of its Mediation into question.[6] Other regional alliances (most notably with the Saudis and Egypt) also have the potential to limit public engagement and outreach.[7]

In practice, it is therefore clear that, in acting as a mediator, the U.S. has substantially departed from an established body of theory and precedent. The expectation that it would perform the traditional role of a mediator has therefore been, to a large extent, frustrated.[8] This reflects the 'ideal type' character of these models, the political pressures that act on the U.S. government, and the idiosyncrasies of the conflict itself.

The actual U.S. role in the region clearly has the potential to undermine its interventions in the region, not least because its relations with Israel, its contradictory messages on democratic reform,[9] and also its alliance with the House of Saud

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and other Arab autocracies all further the impression that it is actually a regressive influence that is largely concerned with advancing its own interests.[10]

With the exception of its steadfast and unshakeable commitment to Israel, the U.S. can also hardly be said to be a reliable ally – its recent withdrawal of support for the Kurds in Syria was just the latest development in a long story of betrayal and broken promises.[11] Its conduct in the Israeli–Palestinian Peace Process has also hardly been beyond reproach, and the decision to blame Yasser Arafat for the collapse of the 2000 Camp David negotiations was, in retrospect, disastrous.[12] In later years, the hope that the 'Arab Spring' would produce a shift away from the previous approach of supporting 'moderate' autocracies swiftly evaporated, frustrating hopes that the U.S. would promote the values and principles so elegantly espoused by Obama in his 2009 speech at Cairo University.[13]

However, the depiction of the U.S. as an overpowering, hegemonic force is far from accurate, as Arab leaders have repeatedly called for it to assume a leadership role. But its preference is to work through regional allies and this is why the Gulf War of 1991, which was the point at which the U.S. role in the region began to expand, was one of the few occasions in which it has actually been willing to take a lead.[14] Even then, it was not purely of regional significance and therefore should also be considered as a 'dramatic reassertion of U.S. global power'.[15] U.S. military forces are now based in six Middle Eastern states, including Saudi Arabia (the wealthiest), Egypt (the most populous), and Israel (the strongest regional military power).

The U.S. power underpins both the Peace Process and broader regional security.[16] As the global hegemon, it is able to exert its power and influence to deter aggression, promote free trade, and sustain the status quo.[17] U.S. hegemony therefore seeks to maintain the dollar as the main international reserve currency and transaction unit; structure the international economic order around the U.S. interests and priorities; and ensure no competitor emerges to challenge the U.S. primacy.[18]

Over the course of the Palestinian–Israeli conflict, dozens of third parties have offered their services: in some cases, they sought a comprehensive peace whereas in others they aimed to achieve the disengagement of forces or interim political agreements.[19] However, they rarely enjoyed success in either respect, and the past history of the conflict is replete with examples of failed third party intervention.[20]

Mediation is one of the oldest forms of conflict resolution that has been extensively used by individuals, states, and organisations to peacefully resolve interstate conflict.[21] Although definitions of the practice vary, it is commonly understood as the intervention of a third party in a dispute between two or more parties, which seeks to resolve the disputed matter.[22] Bercovitch et al. define it as:

> [A] process of conflict management where the disputants seek the assistance of, or accept an offer of help from, an individual, group, state or organization to settle their conflict or resolve their differences without resorting to physical violence or invoking the authority of the law.[23]

However, just as with peacebuilding, Mediation is often used as a 'catch-all' to refer to any intervention by a third party in a conflict. Perhaps in acknowledgement of this, Bercovitch later provided a more precise definition:

> [Mediation is a] process of conflict management, related to but distinct from the parties' own efforts, whereby the disputing parties or their representatives seek the assistance, or accept the offer of help from an individual, group, state or organization to change, affect or influence their perceptions or behaviour, without resorting to physical force, or invoking the authority of the law.[24]

Past examples of Mediation include Ralph Bunche's Mediation of the 1949 armistice agreements between Israel and the Arab states that helped to establish the 'Green Line', the armistice line that is often (incorrectly) referred to as Israel's 'border'.[25] Eight years later, Robert Anderson[26] (unsuccessfully) encouraged Israel and the Arab states to compromise.[27] In 1968, the Swedish Ambassador to Moscow was appointed by the United Nations Secretary-General and tasked with resolving the conflict. However, he was undermined by the distance between the two sides, the weakness of the United Nations, and a lack of resources.[28]

This confirms that there was a weak basis for peacebuilding in the years before the 1973 war. Although Israel was rhetorically committed to the 'land for peace' formula, it was fully aware that it had no need to make concessions to the Arab states. The Arab states, for their part, remained committed to restoring the honour that had been lost in the 1967 War. The U.S. only became fully committed after the upheaval of the 1973 War.[29]

Mediation is premised on the assumption that the parties will be unable to transition from war to peace without outside help. However, the involvement of the external mediator will inevitably raise questions of power and, by implication, politics.[30] For this reason, Mediation is not a neutral process in which an impartial partner helps the two sides to resolve their differences. When the conflict impinges on mediator interests, accusations of bias and partiality will inevitably follow.[31]

The role of the mediator and the Mediation strategy is important. In engaging with them, observers may make one of two errors. First, they may overstate the autonomy of the parties and therefore misrepresent their ability to act independently of structural and/or contextual constraints.[32] Second, they may instead progress to the opposite extreme and present the parties as passive objects who are manipulated at the mediator's will.[33]

The mediator will need to acknowledge that some types of conflict are more responsive to Mediation than others. Bercovitch et al. claim that territorial or security-based conflicts are more likely to be resolved than those rooted in ideology or independence claims.[34] However, in the Palestinian–Israel conflict this is clearly problematic, as territory and ideology are inextricably interwoven to the point where they become almost indistinguishable.

Mediation would also appear to be better suited to intractable conflicts, when neither side is in a position to impose its will, whether through force or other means.[35] If there is a 'mutually hurting stalemate', then both sides will have a

clear incentive to resolve their differences through Mediation.[36] This suggests that the practice rests on a relative balance of power, which in turn raises the question of if it can be applied to conflicts, such as the Arab–Israeli or Palestinian–Israeli conflicts where no such balance exists.

The Palestinian–Israeli conflict has a clear asymmetry of power. Although Israel's marketing of itself as David stood against the Arab Goliath contains a kernel of truth, this is in large part a self-serving fiction. In addition, the concept suggests a fundamental change of mentality, in which the parties come to realise the futility of continued armed conflict. However, Israel's high society and leadership remain highly militarised. Palestinians do not present a military threat, and so Israelis are predisposed to ask why they should make concessions.[37] And Sadat's peace initiative was controversial precisely because the Arab public and political opinion remained committed to destroying Israel.

Since its establishment, the Israeli preference has been to impose its terms and preferences on Arabs. Israel's deeply colonial mentality has conditioned it to believe that Arabs only understand force, and various other factors (including the respective levels of development) prevent them from seeing Palestinians as 'equals' who can be negotiated with, whether on a personal or political level.[38]

The absence of balance in the conflict raises important questions about the role of the mediator. It is unclear if they should seek to 'compensate' the weaker party by 'counterbalancing' the role of the dominant party or if they should instead engage with the stronger party to counsel the benefits of moderation.[39] The U.S. has historically favoured the second approach and has sought to justify this position by claiming that this enables it to exert greater influence.[40]

Mediation is also frequently discussed at the level of psychology and by referring to the subjective beliefs and perceptions of participants. Kelman, for example, cites the Israeli–Palestinian conflict as an illustration of the importance of generating trust.[41] The respective parties must believe that the mediator has good intentions and will not seek to achieve a settlement through deception or other underhand means. However, the use of incentives, whether positive or punitive, could easily produce the perception that the mediator is seeking to impose a settlement, which could undermine trust.[42]

However, it is also important to establish inter-subjective understanding/s, as this will provide the basis for any agreement. However, this will clearly be difficult when even the very nature of 'success' and 'failure' is disputed.[43]

The emphasis on relations and perceptions also assumes that the respective parties approach Mediation with the best of intentions and are fully committed to resolving the conflict. However, this overlooks the possibility they may have ulterior motives, and have engaged with the intention of pursuing other objectives.[44] It is insufficiently recognised, for example, that Israel's participation in the Peace Process was an important part of its public relations.[45]

However, it is striking that the discussion of Mediation just as frequently focuses on the role of the mediator who can be unbiased and weak; strong and unbiased; strong and biased; and biased and weak.[46] There is, however, no pre-requirement for them to be disinterested and/or 'neutral'. It was certainly previously something

of a received wisdom in the Mediation field that the mediator must be 'impartial' and/or 'neutral'; however, this overlooks the fact that if the mediator is invested in the outcome to come extent, whether through positive (personal, national, or organisational) or negative (refugee influxes) incentives, then it is more likely to engage in order to secure an outcome that promotes its interests,[47] and this is partially because the implementation of any agreement will be more successful if the mediator is willing to commit military or economic resources.[48] Wallensteen and Svensson make this clear when they argue that 'Leverage, or in other words, the ability to influence the parties, is arguably a more important asset for mediators than their neutrality [;] since links with one side can create possibilities for influence, bias and leverage are sometimes connected.'[49] Bercovitch also adds that third parties are more likely to engage with a conflict if they have established relations with at least one party, strategic/regional interests in resolving the conflict or appropriate expertise or resources.[50]

Pascal da Rocha's claim that mediators tend to be 'outside' a conflict quite clearly does not apply to the Palestinian–Israeli conflict, as the U.S. is implicated in various ways, including direct arms sales.[51] But it is also important to recognise that the U.S. is also implicated when it *fails* to act or offer a sufficiently strong condemnation.

One of the main problems with weak and unbiased mediators like the UN is therefore that they are not invested in achieving a specific outcome. Humanitarianism is a partial, and not entirely convincing, substitute for self-interest.[52] Keith Watenpaugh's *Bread from Stones* provides a critique of modern humanitarianism that shows how it became detached from, and ultimately failed to engage, the legal and political rights of its objects, even to the point of becoming an effective accomplice to 'soft' ethnic cleansing. His discussion of the role of narrative and visual images in creating a sense of identification with far-off strangers has a clear relation to the Humanitarian Intervention (HI) debate and to the contemporary significance of humanitarianism more generally.[53] Even if we accept this criticism, it is possible to conceive of circumstances where disinterested mediators could make a positive contribution – they could, for example, maintain communication, create proposals, and/or work between directly opposed positions.[54]

Other observers claim a powerful mediator is more likely to be successful. Sisk, for example, advocates a powerful peace-making that uses persuasion, pressure, and military power.[55] Wallensteen and Svensson, however, reject this and observe that Mediation 'aims at conflict resolution and primarily achieves this through negotiations, by resorting to reason and logic'. This 'consensual' approach is still, it should be noted, predominant in the field.[56] However, it is worthwhile to consider if 'consent' and 'coercion' are in fact opposites. It is difficult, for example, to sustain the proposition that consent is ever produced in the complete absence of any form of coercion. Power, after all, can be exerted in any number of ways, many of which are indistinct or not immediately apparent.

For example, it may be difficult to distinguish between 'facilitative' and 'manipulative' mediation,[57] not least because the former may imply the latter to

some extent. The so-called 'mediation with muscle', which involves the offering of various positive and negative inducements,[58] is instead an acknowledgement of the fact that the theory and practice of Mediation have always diverged to some extent.

This has been acknowledged in the literature. In 1985, for example, Touval and Zartman distinguished between 'formulative', 'facilitative', and 'manipulative' mediation.[59] Thirteen years before, Kressel identified reflective (the mediator educates him/herself about different aspects of the conflict), nondirective (the parties take responsibility), and directive conduct.[60] This confirms that Mediation is not somehow violated if an agreement is to some degree coerced, and it also establishes that such conduct is as much a part of Mediation as more consensual counterparts, which include brokering and channelling and relaying information.[61] This is particularly important because both sides of the conflict lack perspective. The broker can offer incentives or guarantees and can apply appropriate pressure, which is especially important when the two sides do not recognise each other.[62]

The mediator should also acknowledge the importance of timing. Bercovitch et al. suggest there is a 'window' of between 12 and 36 months (after the conflict begins) when Mediation is likely to be most effective.[63] Kleiboer observes that '[i]t is assumed that conflicts pass through a life cycle that encompasses a number of distinguishable phases, and that certain phases are more amenable to intervention than others'.[64]Within the literature, there is, however, a clear split between advocates of 'early' and 'late' intervention.[65] 'Early' intervention could help to prevent conflict. However, in other cases, intervention may only be possible after a 'hurting' stalemate. This brings to mind Zartmann's concept of 'ripeness',[66] which is the optimal 'moment' when intervention is most likely to produce positive effects. For Zartmann and other observers, the task of the mediator is not to engineer openings, but rather to anticipate when they are most likely to occur.

The importance of timing is clearly acknowledged in the literature, and it is therefore perhaps surprising that it is so infrequently acknowledged as a factor that contributed to the collapse of the 2000 Camp David summit.[67] Rather than acknowledging that Arafat had to be essentially forced into even participating in the summit, most observers tend to focus on the course of negotiations and the concessions that he was or was not willing to make.

It is also a mistake to assume that the timing of intervention is attributable to the conflict 'life-cycle'. In reality, intervention is more likely to be defined by external considerations, such as electoral cycles or considerations, as by the 'ripeness' of the conflict.[68] This is one reason why negotiations are pushed even when there is a high probability of failure or collapse.

Any account of Mediation must therefore take the wider political, social, and historical context into account. This point is further reiterated by the concept of internal cohesion which, as Kleiboer notes, refers both to the level of internal agreement within the party and the degree of external support that the party enjoys.[69] One example of the first is a proposed agreement that is supported by political representatives but which is opposed by influential military actors. An

example of the second is an agreement, or even negotiations, that lack public support.

Regime type has important implications for this discussion. Regional peace agreements have, to date, been signed with partially democratic or authoritarian states. All three of the major peace negotiations in the region (with Egypt, Jordan, and the PLO) did not have a democratic component. For example, the negotiation, implementation,[70] and 'final status'[71] components of the Oslo process almost entirely lacked democratic accountability, oversight, and transparency. In the post-2000 era, the Accords have actually contributed to a constitutional crisis in the Palestinian territories by conflicting with the operative Basic Law.[72]

Mediation is therefore influenced by factors that include the mediator's comparative advantages, timing, impartiality, and the wider context. Studies of outcomes of the process, however, tend to focus more on external security guarantees, peace dividends, and factors that influence the successful implementation and sustainability of any agreement.[73]

Conflicts are by their very nature messy and complicated, and it should therefore come as no surprise that intervention in a conflict situation by a third party gives rise to a whole host of potential challenges.[74] Part of the problem arises from the fact that the concept encompasses such a broad range of actors and contexts: Mediation by a superpower is very different from Mediation by an international organisation, and this makes it difficult to speak in general terms about the practice. But even then there is a clear tendency to orientate towards a 'best practice' that can be applied irrespective of context. To take one example, the title of Jacob Bercovitch's *Resolving International Conflicts: The Theory and Practice of Mediation* therefore produces the impression, whether intentionally or unintentionally, that it is possible to speak about, and conceptualise, Mediation as a *general* practice.[75]

The concept of Mediation is also problematic because it occludes or conceals power relations. Although concepts such as 'neutrality' and 'bias' are no longer unquestioningly accepted, they still exert a residual influence and this impacts the actions of mediators when they engage with conflict situations.[76]

These potential contradictions have long been acknowledged within Mediation theory, but this does not appear to have translated to the political field, where misconceptions about 'disinterested' and 'neutral' mediation can prevail. In the case of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, the U.S. is quite clearly an interested mediator.[77] In this case, timing or sequencing will appear as second- or even third-order considerations, as the events of the 2000 Camp David peace summit so clearly demonstrated.[78]

U.S. Mediation in Practice: 1950s to 2000s

In 1955, Nasser's promotion of Arab nationalism began to gather momentum. The U.S. was concerned about increased Soviet influence in the region, and Eisenhower saw Nasser as a natural leader of an anti-Communist Arab league. When the U.S. and the Soviet Union offered to help Nasser construct the Aswan

Dam, which was essential to Egypt's development, he decided to play them off against each other and initially turned to the U.S. for support.[79] After Eisenhower imposed a range of complicated conditions, Nasser then switched his attentions to the Soviet Union and, on 27 September 1955, Czechoslovakia agreed to mediate the provision of Soviet support.

On 26 July 1956, Nasser announced the nationalisation of the Suez Canal. A protracted period of political crisis followed before Britain, France, and Israel invaded Egypt. Eisenhower immediately denounced the invasion as the last, desperate grasp of old-style colonialism and a flagrant violation of international law. However, the sanctity of international law was not his primary motivation as he wished to limit Soviet influence in the region by appealing to Arab political opinion. On October 31, he called on the UN Security Council to demand Israel's withdrawal from areas that it had occupied during the conflict and also called on other states to halt their aid assistance to Israel.[80]

When Kennedy succeeded Eisenhower as the U.S. president, he showed a clearer sympathy for neutral states and he also set ideology and established allegiances to one side in his engagements with Arab states. He invested particular expectations in Nasser and hoped to persuade him to adopt a less belligerent position on Israel. However, he made it clear that a U.S. recognition of basic Palestinian rights would not be part of this bargain.[81] When the Yemen War broke out in 1963, Kennedy, however, reverted to his predecessor's defence of conservative forces in the region.

Upon coming to power, Kennedy favoured establishing a balance of power between Israel and the Arabs. However, he then shifted emphasis and tried to develop a strategic relationship with Israel.[82] This was the beginning of the U.S. effort to engineer a regional balance of power that favoured Israel. Kennedy told Golda Meir, the Israeli prime minister, that his country was a partner of Israel and then spelt out his expectations.[83]

When Lyndon Johnson became president on 22 November 1963, the U.S. position was increasingly precarious. Johnson was not sympathetic to Arab aspirations and relations with Arab nationalist leaders deteriorated significantly during his time in office. Under his presidency, the U.S. also supplied Israel with highly sophisticated offensive armaments, marking a significant departure from its previous policy of providing moderate amounts of defensive weapons.[84]

The 1967 War further depleted the capital that the U.S. had built up during the Suez crisis. The U.S. government now viewed Egypt as an aggressive, expansionist state. Although Johnson was well aware of the importance of the region and of the Soviet desire to expand its influence, he also had no plans to make any bold incursions, as he was preoccupied with Vietnam, which was both his burden and the source of his eventual downfall.[85] Johnson (in common with subsequent administrations) believed that growing Soviet influence in the region could transform moderate regimes into Soviet clients or even pan-Arab radicals. He believed that peace hinged on the Arab elites and populations accepting Israel and international actors grasping the wider implications of unrest in the region.[86]

When Richard Nixon became president in 1968, he sought to improve Arab–U.S. relations and reduce instability in the Middle East. No previous administration had entered office with such a strong emphasis on the region.[87] Nixon and Henry Kissinger, his secretary of state, adopted an approach with three elements, specifically *détente*, linkage, and power politics. These were significant and important innovations.[88]

Kissinger did not seek to impose a peace settlement, as he believed this would only be sustainable when the Soviets and key Arab states moderated their political demands. His main priority was to reduce Soviet interference in the Arab countries by discrediting their claim to be an ally.[89]

This was consistent with the Nixon Doctrine, which the U.S. president first outlined in July 1969. The Doctrine established oil as the central priority of the U.S. regional strategy.[90] It also emphasised the importance of local powers in Southeast Asia as a way of preventing the U.S. from preventing entangled in the region, and this had important implications for Middle Eastern policy.

The 1973 War was the peak of Soviet influence in the region, which rapidly declined after Sadat turned to the U.S. The 1973 War was a watershed in the Arab–Israel conflict. The war demonstrated that the Egyptian military could inflict serious damage upon its Israeli counterpart. On 6 October 1973 (the Jewish Day of Atonement, which is why it is known as the 'Yom Kippur War'), Egyptian and Syrian forces attacked Israel's positions in Sinai and the Golan Heights and breached its defence lines. Their advance was only halted when the U.S. began airlifting advanced weapons into the country. This enabled the Israelis to counter and cross the Suez into Egypt and move within 20 miles of Damascus. The fighting was brought to an end by Security Council Resolution 338, which established a ceasefire.[91] This resolution also established the basis for the Geneva Conference, the first Arab–Israeli peace conference that was led by Henry Kissinger, the American Secretary of State. UNSC Resolution 338, Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy, the Geneva Conference, the Joint Statement of the USSR and USA, and the Camp David Accords all therefore opened up new opportunities for the U.S. strategy.

Both sides saw the conference as an opportunity to further their own interests.[92] During proceedings, the Israelis made it clear they did not wish to engage with the Palestinian question. The U.S. did not challenge this position, mainly because of internal political pressure and the State Department's desire to keep the Soviets out of any regional peace initiatives. Israel also had no clear incentive to accept the conference's conclusions, which made it even less likely that the issue would be pushed.[93]

The joint U.S–Soviet statement reiterated the importance of Israel's security for the U.S. foreign policy, and thus indirectly bore the clear imprint of the pro-Israel lobby.[94] The U.S. indicated its intention to resolve the Palestinian 'problem', including the long-term status of the Palestinian territories, although only on the condition this would not conflict with the continued flow of cheap oil and the limitation of Soviet regional influence.[95]

The U.S. would have preferred bilateral negotiations but engaged with the intention of undermining Soviet influence in Egypt and reducing the threat of future oil embargos. A disengagement agreement was eventually produced and finalised in January 1974. It established that Israel would withdraw several miles into the Sinai, establishing a basis for truce lines and monitored buffer zones. Egyptian forces in turn relocated to the east bank of the Suez Canal and a small adjoining strip in the Sinai Peninsula. In May 1974 Israel committed to withdrawing from territory occupied in the 1973 War. However, it continued territory seized in the preceding war, including the Golan Heights.[96]

The 1973 War clearly illustrated that the Arab–Israeli conflict had the potential to undermine détente and even spark a superpower confrontation. The U.S. was particularly concerned that the Soviets, who Sadat had expelled from Egypt one year earlier, could resume the military role[97] they had performed before the War. And indeed, the negative regional reaction to Sadat's peace initiative did provide the Soviets with new opportunities to exert influence in the region.[98] However, Kissinger's 'step-by-step' policy of limited disengagement, which deliberately excluded the Soviets, clearly indicated that any increase in influence would be starting from a low base.[99] However, this aspiration was substantially undermined by the December 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, which discredited the pretence that it was anti-imperialist. The Iran–Iraq War (1980–1988) also strengthened ties between the U.S. and Gulf states.[100]

Saudi Arabia became a favoured ally under Carter, as the U.S. worked towards détente. But the Shah's fall from power in January 1979 and the seizure of American hostages from the U.S. embassy in November 1979 complicated its regional designs. After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the U.S. shifted its focus to Soviet penetration of the oil-rich and strategically important Persian Gulf.[101] The 1980 Carter Doctrine indicated America's willingness to use military force against any threat to its regional interests. It was announced in response to the collapse of the Shah's regime in Iran, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and the escalation of the Iran–Iraq War (in particular Iran's threat to close the Strait of Hormuz and prevent oil exports leaving). Carter also established CENTCOM (The United States Central Command), a rapid deployment force with the ability to promptly respond to crises in the Middle East and elsewhere.[102] Initial U.S. efforts to reassure Gulf oil producers later consolidated into a regular consultation process.[103]

Ronald Reagan's election in 1981 raised the prospect of renewed Cold War tensions. Political Islam emerged over the course of the decade and potentially posed a threat to U.S. interests in the region, including its access to oil.[104] In November 1988, George Bush (Sr.) became the U.S. president. Bush committed to block the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and ballistic missiles, counter-terrorism, discourage conventional arms sales, ensure the continued flow of oil, facilitate the Peace Process and promote the stability and security of U.S. allies. Although he hoped to reduce hostility between Israel and the Palestinians, he made it clear that this would not come at the cost of Israel's security.[105]

Bush was certain that U.S. oil imports would increase, and he therefore identified the stability of the Gulf area as a key priority. He foresaw that military and political turbulence would directly impact the U.S. economy by disrupting supply lines and increasing oil prices. Bush reiterated the U.S. commitment to states in the region that required U.S. reassurance and protection[106]and recognised the region's importance to geopolitical objectives. Bush and James Baker, his secretary of state, were former Texas oilmen and were therefore aware of the need to maintain good relations with Arab oil producers. However, they ultimately paid a heavy price for their determination to pursue a comprehensive 'land for peace' settlement.[107]

After the end of the First Gulf War, Bush committed himself to resolving the Arab–Israeli conflict. Intensive and skilful U.S. diplomacy then enabled the U.S. to exploit its status as the world's only superpower.[108] It also benefitted from the support of many Arab countries, including Syria. The PLO was, however, diplomatically marginalised due to Arafat's disastrous decision to support Saddam Hussein in the First Gulf War. The organisation's finances were also negatively impacted, as Gulf state financial support was withdrawn in response.[109]

The First Gulf War also served to highlight the irrelevance of the Soviet Union in the region. After the USSR collapsed, Russia struggled to develop a new foreign policy and between 1991 and 1993, it was questionable if it even had a Middle Eastern policy. The collapse of the Soviet Union established the U.S. as the pre-eminent regional actor with an unrivalled military and strategic superiority that it showcased in the war.[110] Regional partners were highly dependent on the U.S.,[111] which further enhanced its ability to exert its influence, if not impose its will.[112]

A Washington Institute for Strategic Studies report observed that the U.S. was in a unique position at this point in time. Its victory in the Gulf had given it an unparalleled international prestige and it was the only remaining superpower.[113] During the war, it clearly demonstrated the ability to rally a coalition of international governments and it also maintained a special relationship with major Middle Eastern states such as Egypt, Israel, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia. In the post-cold war era, the U.S. could do more at a lower cost.

U.S. interest in the region changed when the Cold War ended, although some alliances and priorities persisted.[114] One national security priority was to guarantee the uninterrupted flow of oil at prices acceptable to the U.S. and other advanced industrial countries. Clinton's national security strategies are committed to enhancing security and promoting democratic ideals, human rights, and prosperity.[115] The U.S. would henceforth ensure Israel's security, establish a foundation for a comprehensive peace in the region, and assist the continued export of Arab oil.[116] Clinton wanted to shift away from balancing. He observed:

> As long as we are able to maintain our military presence in the region, as long as we succeed in restricting the military ambitions of both Iraq and Iran. And as long as we can rely on our allies - Egypt, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the other GCC countries, and Turkey - to preserve a balance of power in our

> favour in the wider Middle East region, we will no longer depend on one to counter the other.[117]

In the mid-1993s, Clinton tried to use economic cooperation, and specifically the U.S.–Israel free trade agreement, to produce positive political action by Israeli and Palestinian representatives.[118] Jordan and Egypt would also be given an opportunity to accede to the agreement. Clinton hoped to use his power to encourage partners to share his vision for regional economic integration. He sought congressional support for his plan but was ultimately unsuccessful. His proposed industrial zones were, however, more successful.[119]

During the period, U.S. Mediation in the region shifted from an initial strategy of containment focused on Arab nationalism and the Soviet Union (which both overlapped to some extent) to a sophisticated and multi-dimensional counterpart that sought to integrate Israel and its Arab antagonists into the global economic system. It could be traced back to a time when Arab states were formally committed to the destruction of Israel, and it later flowered into covert cooperation in a number of areas that were directly supported by the U.S. military.[120] The 'carrots' of aid and economic incentives then emerged to complement the 'stick'.[121] Scott Lasensky observes that the U.S. has committed more than two billion dollars (USD) to the West Bank and Gaza Strip since 1980. He observes that it was originally given in the hope it would create a constituency for peace; however, as the Peace Process deteriorated, it was instead committed in the hope of slowing or even halting deterioration. Given the various pathologies associated with aid, both in the oPt and elsewhere, Lasensky is almost certainly too generous in presenting it as a sound, if ultimately sour, investment.[122]

The U.S. Role in Mediation

The U.S. has been, at different points in time, a diplomatic supporter, military supplier, and financial sponsor, and it has also occasionally combined these roles. But it has not sought to define the terms of peace and/or enforce peace from outside.[123] U.S. Mediation in the region has nonetheless been popularly perceived as being concerned with promoting peace and stability.

In its engagement with the region, the U.S. has shown a reluctance to directly intervene and has instead chosen to work through key partners, such as Israel and Saudi Arabia. However, when its interests are directly threatened, as during the First Gulf War, it has been willing to assert itself. Even though its presence in the region remains highly controversial, there is still an expectation, and even desire, among regional elites that it will push Israel to make the necessary concessions. This is consistent with the widespread perception that the U.S. is a 'natural' mediator that can use 'carrots' to promote peace.[124]

However, in certain instances, this is little more than an article of faith. The PA had, until recently, invested its hopes in the U.S., despite the mass of historical evidence that warned against this action. This 'dishonest broker', in the words of Nasser Aruri,[125] had repeatedly demonstrated that it could not be trusted. The U.S.

therefore colluded in the 'myth' that Arafat walked away from a historic peace agreement[126] in the hope this would aid Ehud Barak's re-election. More recently, Mahmoud Abbas, who was anointed with the U.S. and Israeli support when he succeeded Arafat, has now come to grasp the full implications of America's 'good offices'.[127]

All parties are fully aware that neutrality is a ritual that is largely performed for purposes of political convenience.[128] Bias is often referred to as an example of American bad faith, but this is not necessarily the case. Although it is frequently criticised by Arab observers, they are to some extent adjusted to it. Indeed, Arab elites sometimes welcome the U.S. 'tilt' towards Israel on the grounds that it could enable it to influence Israeli positions.[129]

Bias is deeply ingrained in the U.S. role in the region, but there is a degree of variation between administrations, as Spiegel demonstrates when he draws attention to the role of the president[130] the contribution of his/her advisers, the foreign policy decision-making system and bureaucratic and interest group influence. Financial/political interest, religious belief, and identity have historically proven to be more important than ideology.[131] In addition, there is no distinctively 'Republican' or 'Democrat' position.[132] Although Democrats do tend to lean more strongly towards Israel. Democrat presidents have tended to be reluctant to acknowledge, let alone address, Palestinian rights or even Palestinians and they have also been unwilling to lead negotiations.[133] Democrats have historically been more dependent on Jewish financial contributions and the Jewish vote,[134] and both Clinton and Obama had strongly pro-Israel views when they were elected to office.[135]

In resisting Arab pressures, the U.S. has repeatedly made it clear that it would prefer a more passive role. This 'hands off' approach would then leave the respective parties to establish any agreement. For example, in the 1974 Geneva Conference the U.S. made it clear that it would not seek to impose its own preferences, and this meant that it enjoyed considerably more autonomy and was able to put different proposals forward.[136] This was also true of the 1978 Camp David negotiations between Israel and Egypt, when Carter was rarely required to commit the U.S. to a specific action.[137] Despite this, he was still willing to take a lead when circumstances required.[138]

Carter also recalled previous U.S. presidents in showing a clear preference to focus on the Arab–Israeli conflict (although the agreement did refer to the territories). In the 2000 Camp David negotiations, Clinton also kept the Syria 'track' open, which raised questions about his commitment to resolving the conflict.[139] In addition, he brought the relationship between the Arab–Israeli and Palestinian–Israeli conflicts into question: this was particularly problematic because Arab states had historically insisted that the Arab–Israeli conflict would only end after the Palestinian–Israeli conflict was resolved.

The U.S. could also refer to the previous examples of Mediation that were not counterproductive and even partially successful. Both sides supported William Rogers's efforts. Between June 1970 and April 1972, he tried to achieve a ceasefire that would establish the basis for political negotiations.[140] In addition, Henry

Kissinger helped the Egyptian and Israeli armed forces to disengage after the 1973 War.[141] Even aspects of Clinton's Mediation in the 2000 negotiations can be cited as examples of success because Barak showed a willingness to make greater concessions than any previous Israeli prime minister did.

The literature on the U.S. role in the Palestinian–Israeli conflict is all too frequently marked by an excessive credulity. This takes the form of a (largely unquestioning) acceptance of the ostensible goals and purposes of the process and a general unwillingness to view it as an extension of the U.S. power. Aruri observes that 'it has been widely assumed in the United States that the "peace process" can be taken at face value, with the U.S. government playing the role of disinterested party valiantly searching for resolution of the conflict'.[142] The good faith and intention of the U.S. negotiators are therefore generally accepted without argument or demurral.

Steve Spiegel focuses on the American perspective of the Peace Process. William Quandt emphasises the interactions between the Arab countries and the American hegemon. In addition, Tillman Seth and Camille Mansour focus on the outcomes of the process and clearly distinguish between optimists (who focus on strategic benefits and improved cultural and religious relations) and pessimists.

These contributions, however, show three general weaknesses. First, they tend to present one side of the relationship. Second, they also misunderstand the concept of 'process', and more precisely the position of the respective actors in this process; third, they also tend to overemphasise the respective roles of the leaderships (including interactions between them), which causes them to overlook the negotiation structure (bilateral/multilateral; open/secret; third party/no third party).

David Makovsky's *Making Peace with the PLO*, for example, focuses on the decisions taken by Palestinian and Israeli leaders. He describes, in extensive and even exhaustive detail, how Yitzhak Rabin, Israel's prime minister, decided to move the talks from Washington to Oslo once he realised that Faisal Husseini (the Palestinian negotiator) had been absent from half the Washington sessions.[143] Dennis Ross, James Baker's under-secretary of state, helped to design the Oslo Accords. He is particularly critical of Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian president, who he claims 'was equivocating in circumstances in which there was no more time, at least for Clinton; in which he had the backing for accepting the Clinton proposal from nearly every significant Arab leader'.[144] Ross further alleges that [Arafat's] unwillingness to make choices, and the absence of leadership, especially among Palestinians, are all factors that have made peace difficult to achieve'.[145]In so doing, he effortlessly reproduces the first (one-sidedness) and third (over-emphasising the role of individuals) weaknesses of the general literature.

Yossi Beilin observes that the arrangement and scheduling of peace talks can be important. In comparing the Washington peace negotiations against the 'secret channel' talks that produced the Oslo Accords, he observes that the former were 'too exposed to the media, too official [and] too orderly', whereas the latter 'enabled us to skip the sloganizing and talk to the point'.[146] In this instance, the subtext is more revealing than what Beilin says: 'sloganizing' translates as 'insistence on

Palestinian political rights' and 'exposed to the media' as 'too transparent and open'. For Beilin, as for other mediators, negotiations should be shielded from the wider public and the only parties (i.e. who exert influence over proceedings) are those who engage in direct negotiations.

Mainstream media coverage of the conflict has produced a number of misconceptions. For example, Corbin attributes the 'success' of the 1978 Camp David agreement, the Oslo Accords (1993), and the Jordan Treaty (1994)) to U.S. involvement.[147] However, this is not accurate in the case of the Accords, as the actual U.S. contribution in the early stages was to loan the White House lawn to the signing ceremony.[148] The situation was clearly very different in the case of the 1994 Jordan Treaty, when the U.S. had to actively intervene to overcome the reservations of an 'a reluctant Israel'.[149]

In emphasising the role of the U.S. in contributing to peace, these accounts are directly opposed to the contributions of Said, who in considering the failures of the Peace Process in general is highly critical of the U.S., and Khalidi, whose focuses more specifically on the U.S. in the Peace Process. Said's highly prescient analysis anticipated the subsequent demise of the Peace Process and his broad critique (not just of the U.S. foreign policy but also internal Palestinian politics) has aged very well.[150]

Khalidi adopts a broader historical analysis that traces the U.S. foreign policy back to Truman's recognition of Israel, and this enables him to identify broad trends that cut across administrations. While he shows a degree of sympathy for Obama's 'predicament', his overarching analysis ultimately leads him to a critique of the U.S. rather than the good intentions (or otherwise) of individual politicians. Both Said and Khalidi strongly emphasise the ways in which past U.S. interventions have obstructed peace.[151]

In *Sowing Crisis*, Khalidi instead directly challenges the very credibility of the U.S. (and other external powers) claim to be an impartial mediator. Here he directly refers to the past history of U.S. subversion in the region, in which it sought to undermine democracy and meddled in civil wars. In highlighting the extent to which external interference has destabilised the region and undermined political development, he directly challenges the authority (moral and political) of the 'international community'.[152]

Other critical accounts instead place this specific process in the wider context of an exploitative, neo-colonial, and imperial U.S. foreign policy that seeks to ensure the continued flow of energy resources and petro-dollars.[153] The U.S. formally recognises the independence of states across the region but this does not extend to practice that consistently and systematically seeks to undermine this independence. Israel performs the role of an 'enforcer' in this arrangement, which threatens and inflicts violence on its patron's behalf.[154]

This highlights something of a 'blind spot' in the U.S. attitude towards colonialism. Americans have throughout history viewed themselves as anti-colonialists who defeated the British Empire and resisted colonial power in the 19th and early 20th centuries. However, the past history of the country's interventions in the region shows this to be a self-serving myth. *Divide et imperia*[155] has

been the predominant tendency, and the weakening of regional institutions and the strengthening of external dependence (especially in the security field)[156] has enabled the U.S. to pursue and realise its regional aims.

The analysis of U.S. Mediation therefore divides between those who take the proposition of a Peace Process seriously and those who reject it as fraudulent and self-serving. The former is predisposed to focus on questions of implementation and therefore seriously entertain the claim that improved communication or trust could produce improved outcomes. The latter, however, reject this premise and consider 'peace' in terms of its strategic potential and application. Their concern is not therefore the process itself (its internal configuration, weaknesses, and future potential) but rather its broader significance and/or implication.

From my perspective, the proposition that the contradictions of U.S. Mediation can be ironed out through improved implementation is deeply problematic of the two, not least because it overlooks the importance and significance of power and also (uncritically) accepts the good intentions of the respective parties. Mediation theory also insists on the primacy of process and this overlooks the fact that interactions between participants occur within established structures. In short, to accept the premise of the Peace Process on its own terms does not just require a leap of credulity but rather its suspension.

Conclusion

The U.S. role dates back to the beginning of the 20th century. It is also, in important respects, a continuation of pre-established tendencies. In just one of many historical ironies in the region, a steadfast opponent of colonial power has taken on the 'white man's burden'. It has aligned with an Israeli settler colonial state and openly supports regressive tendencies in the Arab world, while emitting pious principles in partial justification.

U.S. interests in the region have remained relatively constant, and so have the policies that it applies when pursuing them. For this reason, the continuities of U.S. policy are more noticeable than the discontinuities, and this applies both to transitions between presidents and Republican and Democrat administrations. The similarities between the 'Palestinian' provisions of the 1978 Camp David Accords and the 1993 Oslo Accords are, in this respect, highly striking.

This does not mean that U.S. strategy has been rigid, inflexible, and/or unchanging. On the contrary, there have been striking innovations, which include the pressure exerted by the Bush (Sr.) administration before the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference, and Carter's Mediation in the first Arab–Israeli peace treaty. Nonetheless, there is perhaps a tendency for the failures of U.S. strategy (e.g. the 1979 'loss' of Iran) to be remembered to a greater extent than the successes. In addition, there is also a tendency for the achievements of particular administrations (most notably the Nixon administration) to be overlooked. This could be due to any number of factors including, of course, partisan politics.

The U.S. should of course not expect gratitude for its role in the region, not least because it has so frequently pursued its own self-interest. However, it should

at the very least receive a fair appraisal. It is clearly not forthcoming when it is asserted that the EU should play a more prominent role in the region. This is because the EU approach, which emphasises human rights and international law, is not so much an alternative as the product of a very specific division of labour. In other words, the EU is in a position to espouse high-minded concepts and ideas precisely because the U.S. is otherwise engaged with vexed security challenges. If the roles were reversed, then it is highly likely that its positions would follow.

Criticisms of U.S. Mediation in the region are also sometimes inaccurate. For example, in the aftermath of 11 September 2001, it was frequently alleged that the U.S. had over-extended itself through excessive intervention. In contrast, this chapter has made it clear that the U.S. has in actual fact been highly reluctant to directly intervene in the region and has only done so when it believes its key interests are at stake. Similarly, the accusation that the U.S. approach to the region has been excessively militaristic overlooks the fact that the U.S. has applied economic tools and incentives for more than 40 years. Indeed, the U.S. has subtly integrated these economic instruments into its military aid and support in the region, which quite clearly contradicts the premise of a crude or rudimentary application of military force.

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4 U.S.–Israel Relations

Solid and Extraordinary Relations

Both the extent of the U.S.–Israel relationship and its level of bipartisan support are unique in the U.S. international affairs.[1] This relationship has cultural, economic, political, and religious dimensions and is manifested in various forms, including the repeated use of the U.S. veto to strike down UN resolutions.[2] Initially, it was characterised by short termism and then, in its later phases, developed into caution.[3]

Schoenbaum describes a 'strong and strange' relationship that is without parallel in international relations. In addition, he adds there are few precedents of a powerful and large patron and a small dependent, resourceful, and determined client working together to leave such a substantial mark on the region and world.[4]

Points of divergence and differing emphases notwithstanding, successive Democrat (Truman, Kennedy, Johnson, Carter, and Clinton) and Republican (Nixon and Reagan) administrations have upheld strong commitments to Israel.[5] Relevant documents include the 1975 Egyptian–Israeli Disengagement Agreement (or Sinai II), the 1979 Camp David peace treaty between Egypt and Israel, and (1981 and 1988) memorandums of understanding that envisaged substantially enhanced cooperation across the economic, medical, military, and research sectors.[6]

The U.S.–Israel relations are rooted in the U.S. domestic politics and are sustained by various constituencies of interest rooted in the U.S. commercial, political, and social life.[7] Although diaspora groups have long been established, the end of the Cold War made it more likely that they would influence U.S. foreign policy. Said, however, questions this claim and argues they are only influential when their agendas align with the U.S. objectives.[8]

In this regard, it is, however, instructive to note that the U.S. position has aligned with American Israel Public Affairs Committee's (AIPAC), and not vice versa. Before 1967, the U.S. viewed Jerusalem as an international city. Afterwards, it claimed the holy places should be placed under international protection and called for the city's future to be resolved through negotiations between Israelis and Arabs. The Clinton administration went even further and committed funds to the Jewish settlement of the so-called 'Greater Jerusalem'.

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In 1990, an AIPAC-supported congressional resolution called for Jerusalem to be recognised as Israel's indivisible capital. The Senate and House of Representatives both approved it later in the same year.[9] On 8 November 1995, Congress passed Public Law (P.L.) 104-45, which would see the U.S. embassy moved from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, although the president was entitled to waive this decision if he/she believed it to be in the national interest. On 27 July 2000, Clinton told an Israeli interviewer that he would prefer to move the embassy to Jerusalem. However, he subsequently issued waivers and kept them in Tel Aviv.

The 2003 Foreign Relations Authorization Act (Section 214 of P.L. 107–228) reiterated that Congress was committed to moving the embassy. It declared that publications financed under its authority should list Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, and added that any U.S. citizen born in Jerusalem was entitled to ask for Israel to be listed as his/her birthplace.[10] On 30 September 2002, the President Bush (Jnr) said he considered the section to be advisory, and the U.S. policy towards Jerusalem therefore remained unchanged.[11]

This example underlines that the Peace Process is separate from the U.S.–Israel relations. The process is a product of these relations and does not define, much less determine them. In 1998, Al Gore confirmed this. He said: 'Our relationship with Israel does not depend on the peace process, it transcends the peace process.'[12] In other words, the 'concessions' that Israel makes for peace do not have clear implications for the U.S.–Israel relations.[13]

It is clearly insufficient to consider this relationship solely at the level of the 'international', as Israel is part of the U.S. domestic politics and vice versa. Acts of solidarity, which are especially visible in war,[14] underline the strength of this commitment. The U.S. looks at Israel and sees itself reflected back, and this is the significance of Al Gore's observation that 'the Jewish love of justice has built a powerful democracy'.[15] Richard Gephardt, the House minority leader under Clinton, further clarifies:

> [The United States] is a nation conceived in liberty. This is a nation that has a Declaration of Independence that said all people are created equal; endowed by their Creator with certain freedoms – life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Israel also is a democracy based on those ideals. […] We thank Israel for preserving th[ese] principles.[16]

The former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu previously likened the relationship to 'a family sitting around the dinner table' and, after pausing to congratulate himself on his analogy, added 'there is nothing on earth that will split this family'.[17] A 1992 Chicago Council survey also found that almost two-thirds (64 per cent) of Americans viewed Israel as being necessary for the achievement of the U.S. foreign policy objectives. Just under half believed the U.S. should intervene militarily if any Arab state attacked Israel.[18]

The American Jewish community has historically favoured the democrats. Eisenhower received 40 per cent of the Jewish vote in his re-election campaign in 1956 but when his vice-president, Richard Nixon, ran to succeed him, he

only received 18 per cent of the Jewish vote and lost a close election to John F. Kennedy. In 1976, Carter received 64 per cent of the Jewish vote but this declined to 45 per cent when he stood against Ronald Reagan for re-election in 1981; in 1988, Bush (Sr.) received 35 per cent of the Jewish vote, but this fell to 11 per cent four years later.[19] Truman (in 1948), Nixon (in 1972), and Clinton (in 1996) all maintained their previous level of support within the American Jewish community in the following election.[20] Exit polls showed that 85 per cent of Jewish-Americans voted for Clinton in the 1992 presidential elections and Tony Smith suggests that around 60 per cent of the money that Bill Clinton received for his 1992 election campaign came from Jewish groups and individual donors. Most of the Friends of Israel, who made important media and funding contributions to Clinton's 1992 campaign, also participated in his campaign four years later. Jewish funds of U.S.$40–45 million were mostly raised from private sources.[21]

In the period 1949–1973, U.S. aid to Israel was relatively low at an annual total of U.S.$122 million, totalling U.S.$3.1 billion for the entire period. Loans given immediately before and during the Yom Kippur War accounted for a significant part (U.S.$1 billion) of this amount.[22] Since then, Israel has received an annual total of roughly U.S.$3 billion in the army and financial aid, which supplements four other aid sources. Financial aid was originally provided to Israel under the U.S. Product Exchange Program, whose 'tied aid' encourages international governments to buy American products. After 1978, it was changed into a single block payment.[23] Domestic lobbying groups focused on business/corporate interests, ethnic identity, foreign governments, and labour interests threaten to switch allegiances during elections, work through lobbying apparatuses, and draw on American symbols and ideas. Their continued influence helps to explain the continuation of this aid support.[24]

Although the relationship has produced benefits for both parties, it is deeply controversial and has been strongly criticised.[25] Israel's treatment of Palestinians, both within its own territory and the oPt, raises clear questions about the American commitment to human rights. But it is not merely that the U.S. fails to uphold these rights – on the contrary, its aid to Israel has typically increased in proportion to repression in the oPt,[26] creating the unfortunate impression that Israel is actually being rewarded for its human rights abuses.

But even taking into account the scale of Israel's human rights violations, it is still surprising that Arab public opinion is more critical of Israel's human rights violations than those perpetrated by their own governments. Arab hostility to Israel derives from both secular (the belief that Israel is a colonial settler state) and religious (the city of Jerusalem is Islam's third-holiest city) sources and is also attributable to the fact that Arab governments use Israel's human rights abuses to distract attention away from their own actions.

The U.S. could address this situation by pressurising Israel, but this would require it to depart from a long-standing reluctance to do this. Khaled Elgindy observes:

> Since the United States came to dominate the Oslo process in the mid-1990s, U.S administrations from both political parties have largely avoided applying

> pressure on Israel. The rationale behind this was that Israeli leaders would be more willing to take 'risks for peace' if they felt politically and militarily Secure.[27]

The U.S. has adopted the exact opposite approach to the Palestinian leadership. Dennis Ross, Clinton's Middle Eastern coordinator and U.S. diplomat, justifies this approach by arguing there will only be peace if Israel is strong and the relationship between the U.S. and Israel prevails. This has, however, resulted in a perverse situation where AIPAC representatives are members of the U.S. negotiating team.[28]

Ross's position also rests on an assumption that Israel will accommodate U.S. sensitivities to some extent. This was possible during the 'Oslo years', when 'security' established a shared agenda between the two parties. Israel's demands could, to this extent, be viewed as eminently reasonable, as all states are entitled to be secure. However, Israel's 'security' focus emerged from a very specific mentality and institutional context. To this extent, Israel's insistence on its 'security' needs was quite transparently not a demand that it should be treated in the same way as any other state. Instead, it helped to create an environment where Israel felt able to assert its own needs and priorities as the basis, and even rationale, of negotiations. Had the U.S. remained committed to the appearance of even-handedness, Israel's subsequent shift to an annexationist agenda would have presented an even more formidable challenge to U.S. diplomacy.

However, perhaps even this is open to question as the Peace Process has repeatedly demonstrated an ability to endure considerable turbulence, including Gerald Ford's call for a 'reassessment' of the U.S.–Israel relations, Carter's 1977 disagreement with Begin and Bush's and Shamir's 1990 spat over loan guarantees.[29] Arab leaders were not disconcerted or pleased by these disagreements and instead viewed them as normal or natural.[30]

Underlying cultural, historical, and political ties helped to soften the impact of these disagreements. Examples included biblical influences, historical events, and even the sense of guilt created by the Holocaust.[31] A common link was also established by the Americanisation of the Holocaust. Demsky refers to the tendency to view this historical event from the perspective of the American liberators and also refers to the relationship of U.S. politicians with the Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C. and NATO's 1999 bombing of Kosovo to demonstrate this. In this manner, the Jewish experience of the *Shoah* was incorporated, and arguably even co-opted.[32]

Indeed, it is important to note that the Holocaust did not immediately imprint on the American consciousness and only did so after 40 years in 'the wilderness'. Hilene Flanzbaum's edited book provides insight into how this occurred. In her Introduction she discusses the re-editing of Anne Frank's diary, noting how it was sanitised for U.S. consumption with the aim of catering to a U.S. audience.[33] She adds that 'our knowledge of the Holocaust in America has rarely been delivered by direct witness; it comes to us by way of representations, and representations of representations, through editors and publishers, producers and directors'.[34] This

creates a clear tendency between the desire to universalise the event and to understand it in its specificity.

In acknowledging the historical significance of the Holocaust, Carter established a Department of Justice Office that would investigate Nazi war crimes.[35] In the early–mid 1990s, genocide in Bosnia revived public interest in the Holocaust. In 1993, 'Schindler's List', an academy award-winning film, introduced a new generation of Americans to the horrors of the Holocaust. When it was shown for the first time on network television, a corporate sponsor underwrote the whole film so it would be shown without commercials.[36]

Negative influences were also important. They included the strong streak of anti-Semitism in U.S. political culture and the belief that Jews are instinctively sympathetic towards Communism. In the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, anti-Semitism may have caused some Americans to view a Jewish state as a preferable alternative to large-scale Jewish immigration.[37]

The Jewish/Religious Dimension

The perception that the U.S. has of its own Jewish community is also important.[38] Jews are widely viewed as educated, hard-working, wealthy, and successful, and this resonates with the 'Protestant work ethic' that is so deeply rooted in American culture. U.S. militarism is similarly mirrored by its Israeli counterpart.[39]

Many of Israel's residents have roots in Europe or North America and the two countries are developed and share a Judeo-Christian heritage and settler tradition.[40] There was a clear sense of shared experience that conjoined the Israeli kibbutzniks and the early American pioneers, which was conveyed in films such as *Exodus*.[41] However, not all settlers were equal in Israel – Ashkenazi Jews who hailed from Europe could claim a clear privilege over Mizrahi Jews who had previously lived in Arab countries. This distinction was subsequently reproduced as a kind of internal racism that denigrated the latter as being 'tainted' by Arab customs, cultures, and practices. The same was of course of the American immigrant experience, where a racially inscribed hierarchy has historically prevailed.

Both countries also view themselves as places where the oppressed masses of the world can find refuge.[42] Both Americans and Israelis had experienced European persecution and rejected the 'old world' in return. In the words of Tom Daschle, the former Senate minority leader, '[w]e each invented ourselves'.[43]

Religion is another important factor. Although the separation of church and state is a defining feature of the U.S. political system, this does not mean that religion does not play an important role in public life; indeed, the fact that religion provides a valued alternative to Liberal traditions sets the U.S. apart from other industrialised states.[44] The U.S. has long viewed itself as being 'one country under God' and religious overtones frequently creep into politics, as is shown when U.S. politicians draw on antecedents that stretch

back to the first settlers and speak of the 'chosen people', 'New Jerusalem', and the 'promised land'.[45]

Reagan once invoked the Puritan minister John Winthrop ('a city set upon a hill with the eyes of all people upon them') when he spoke of America as a 'shining city on a Hill' under God's blessing. He also told a religious broadcaster's convention that he believed the U.S. was part of a divine plan. In 1984, he invoked Israel's 'light onto the nations' when he spoke to a convention of the American Legion and promised to maintain the U.S. as a beacon for the rest of the world that would champion freedom and peace.[46] Religion was also clearly in the background when the Cold War was depicted as a Manichean struggle between the forces of light and darkness that pitted God-fearing democrats against atheistic communists.[47]

Jews and American evangelicals also both view the birth or rebirth of Israel as a kind of contemporary re-enactment of the biblical Exodus.[48] Evangelical assistance to the 'chosen people' is intended to redeem the Holy Land and hasten their saviour's 'Second Coming'.[49]

The 'Holy Land' is also deeply significant for American believers. Wilson Carey McWilliams observes that the Bible is the basis of Western culture, which is invoked and reproduced in shared idioms, meanings, and political thought. In 1998, the vice-president Al Gore said: 'I was born in 1948, and when I was growing up watching world events, I saw in Israel a democracy surrounded by enemies, threatened with extinction, fighting for existence, sharing our values and my Bible'.[50]

Christian Zionism, which extends support to Israel in the belief that it will hasten the Second Coming, first emerged after the Six-Day War, at the same time as U.S. political opinion was shifting towards supporting Israel. Its partisan adherents strongly assert the 'right' of Israel to occupy the '67' territories and parts of contemporary Jordan, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, and also pray fervently that Israel will replace the Haram al-Sharif with the 'Temple Mount'.[51] Their literalist interpretation of the Bible therefore leads them to support the effective expulsion of non-Jews from contemporary Israel and the oPt and their replacement by God's 'chosen people'. This type of extremism is precisely why some claim it should instead be known as 'Christian fundamentalism'.[52]

In May 2021, Ron Dermer, Israel's former ambassador to the U.S., suggested that Israel should prioritise its relationship with U.S. evangelicals over its relationship with U.S. Jews, on the grounds that they are actually the 'backbone' of the country's support in the U.S. Walker Robins, however, suggests that this relationship reached its zenith during the Trump administration and is shortly due to encounter turbulence. During the Trump administration, Christian Zionists lobbied for the U.S. embassy to be moved from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and also for the U.S. to withdraw from its nuclear agreement with Iran.[53]

However, as with Islamic Fundamentalism, observers often treat Christian Zionism as homogenous and overlook internal shades and nuances.[54] Robins

suggests this is actually the case, and puts forward evidence to support his claim that support for Israel is declining among younger Southern Baptists, who he claims are more invested in questions of social justice and increasingly weary of conservative politics. In addition, he makes the important point that support for Israel within this community was historically by no means as uniform and constant as might otherwise be assumed.[55]

The discussion of the role of religion in the conflict tends to focus on the extremes of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. However, this overlooks the fact that the Judeo-Christian heritage has a 'softer' influence on U.S. politics, including the positions and viewpoints of presidents. Pro-Israel sentiment does not always rest on positive foundations, and throughout its history, the relationship has also been strengthened by more negative or baser influences. Pro-Israel sentiment surmounts the political divide and is deeply rooted in an American political culture that is, in this and other respects, deeply influenced by religion.

The Technological and Strategic Dimension

The U.S.–Israel relationship is often traced back to the 1967 War, with the clear implication that this is a strategic relationship, which can be understood in terms of Israel's ability to contribute to U.S. goals and objectives in the region. Chomsky, Zunes, and the Egyptian scholar Abdel-Wahab Elmessiri also highlight this strategic dimension as the most important reason for the continued U.S. support. Its importance was clear in the Cold War, when Israel helped to prevent the spread of Communism.[56] In the 1970s, this produced an exponential increase in support for Israel within U.S. foreign policy circles.[57]

This alliance also produced a number of less immediately obvious benefits. Steven Spiegel notes that Israel often acted as a silent partner for the U.S. in the region and therefore deterred Soviet plans to extend into the Persian Gulf or the Mediterranean. Its military engagements with Soviet-backed Arab states also tested U.S. military equipment under combat conditions and therefore indirectly contributed to U.S. military capacity.[58]

However, this alliance only began to develop almost two decades after the foundation of Israel. Although Truman offered de facto recognition of Israel minutes after Israel's declaration of independence, a close strategic partnership only emerged later, when U.S. strategists realised Israel could help to counterbalance the Soviet Union and Arab nationalism.[59] In overcoming its initial ambivalence about the implications for Arab public opinion, the U.S. increasingly came to realise the possible benefits of a militarised Israel.[60]

Israel's level of development in large part results from the relations it has developed with the U.S., including in the areas of education, energy, environment, health, and space exploration. Knowledge has underpinned this relationship and Israel has financially contributed to more than 400 U.S. academic institutions. Free trade agreements and development activities have further complemented and strengthened these links.[61]

Ben-Zvi argues that the U.S.–Israel relationship can be largely understood from a strategic perspective that integrates military, scientific, and technological dimensions. Israel's successful high-tech industries are for example heavily dependent on defence investment spin-offs.[62] The U.S. has provided Israel with large amounts of military equipment on the condition that it will consult before use, although emergencies are an exception. Israel's activities in Lebanon, to take the clearest example, have probably violated U.S. law.[63]

Although the relationship produces clear and obvious strategic benefits, a number of security analysts nonetheless argue that it is essentially irrational.[64] Anthony Rusonik implies this when he suggests that moral considerations may better explain the relationship.[65] George Ball, a former under-secretary of state, is more to the point when he observes that the relationship cost the U.S.$70 billion in arms sales in the late 1980s. The financial costs, both in the form of the limitation of U.S. access to lower-cost oil and the direct costs of the Peace Process, are substantial.[66] At the political level, the relationship has also limited the U.S. ability to proactively engage with political developments in the region, including both Arab nationalism and Political Islam.[67]

John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, in emphasising the role of the 'Israel Lobby', similarly argued that Israel was not a strategic asset and that, by implication, the U.S. commitment to it could not be understood on purely strategic grounds.[68] In support of this claim, they could also point to the fact that the alliance imposes restrictions on relations with traditionally pro-Western regimes, such as Jordan and Saudi Arabia.[69] The Saudis, for example, cut oil production during the 1973 War, refused to participate in the (1978) Camp David negotiations, and also rejected Reagan's efforts to develop a regional strategic consensus. The pro-Israel lobby, meanwhile, has sought to undermine Arab appeals to regional security and has therefore blocked Jordanian and Saudi requests for arms.[70] Perhaps inevitably, even the proposition of an 'Israel lobby' proved to be highly controversial and (perhaps inevitably) gave rise to accusations of anti-Semitism and other equally polemical criticisms.

In a critical account, Robert C Lieberman claimed that most of the evidence did not support the claim of direct influence over U.S. foreign policy. He does acknowledge, however, that the ability of the 'lobby' to frame the parameters of policy agendas and discourses is a research agenda that deserves more extensive engagement.[71] Importantly, he does not just provide a critique of the specific thesis but also of the appropriateness of a 'causal logic' in this specific context.

The political fallout from Israel's capture of the Golan Heights, the Arab oil embargo, and the First Gulf War all produced negative impacts and gave credence to the claim that, in this case, the U.S. is beholden to a 'strategic ideology'.[72] Ideology impedes or otherwise frustrates a full grasp of empirical realities. However, it is not just politicians who are prone to misread the conflict in these terms. Jerome Slater therefore observes: '[C]ontrary to the prevailing view, Israel rather than the Palestinians bears the greater share of the responsibility, not only

for the latest breakdown of the peace process, but for the entire course of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since 1948.'

During the Cold War, the relationship also drove leading Arab states, such as Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, and Syria, into the Soviet embrace. However, there was already high-level opposition to the relationship even before this. George Marshall, Truman's secretary of state, therefore advised against recognising Israel, as he believed this would be viewed negatively by Arab oil producers.[73]

On 15 September 2020, the situation changed when Bahrain and the UAE normalised their relations with Israel (Bahrain subsequently backtracked and established 'peaceful diplomatic relations' with Israel and Sudan normalised its relations with Israel a month later when it signed the Israel–Sudan normalisation agreement). The Accords open up the possibility of extensive Israeli economic access to the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf, and also anticipate cooperation in a number of spheres, including tourism and infrastructural development.[74]

The other Gulf States continued to resist U.S. diplomatic pressures, and Kuwait was particularly continuing to insist that the establishment of a Palestinian state must be a precondition for normalised relations with Israel. The Accords are primarily focused on integrating Israel into the wider Middle East and make little reference to the Palestinian question, which was instead addressed by the so-called 'Deal of the Century'. The agreement was framed against the expansion of Iran's influence in the wider region and continued divisions within the GCC.

This development also challenged Mearsheimer's and Waltz's that Israel is a strategic liability within the region. This is demonstrated by the position of Mohammed Bin Salman, Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince, who pressurised Bahrain to reach an agreement with Israel. While a number of countries within the region continue to hold to the consensus around the 2002 Arab League peace initiative, the positions of the Saudis (who have not normalised because of domestic political pressures) makes the likelihood of future changes more likely.

Cultural Antecedents

Many Americans, and in particular liberals who grew up in the post-Second World War era, are sentimentally attached to Israel and have a highly idealised image of it.[75] This part reflects the fact that the two countries share a wide range of values.[76] Increased public interest in the Holocaust and the rise of the religious Right reduced U.S. anti-Semitism. And Israel's position in American mind-sets was in turn further strengthened by the rise of Islamophobia after the Iranian Revolution and the Iranian hostage crisis, along with the growing threat of terrorism.[77]

'Soft' or 'intangible'[78] factors should be incorporated into political analysis. However, they are frequently overlooked to the point of being 'grossly ignored'.[79] In the case of the U.S.–Israel relationship, this is a particularly grave oversight because culture is such an important part of this 'moralized strategic partnership'.[80]

The concept of 'political culture' or the system of empirical beliefs, expressive symbol, and values that define the surrounding environment of political action (including foreign policy) is particularly useful here.[81] Payne applies the concept

to the U.S. and presents it as a strange combination of diversity (cultural, ethnic, and racial) and endemic provincialism.[82]

Camille Mansour, meanwhile, highlights the essential contradiction that defines Zionism. She observes:

> Israel perceives itself and is perceived as being part of European and Western culture. It identifies and is identified with the West and its Judeo-Christian heritage […] although Zionism and the creation of Israel signified in a certain sense the rejection of the Jews by Europeans and concomitantly, the refusal of Jews to assimilate in Europe, the Yeshiva and Israel are nonetheless seen as belonging to Western civilization.[83]

The perception that the U.S. has of its own Jewish community is also important.[84] Jews are viewed as educated, wealthy, and successful, with a capacity for hard work, and this strongly appeals to the 'Protestant work ethic'. There are also clear parallels between U.S. and Israeli militarism.[85]

The two countries also share a settler tradition.[86] The shared experience of the Israeli kibbutzniks and the early American pioneers was clearly depicted in films such as *Exodus*.[87] Both see themselves as places of hope, where the oppressed masses of the world can find refuge.[88] Both Americans and Israelis view themselves as having been persecuted by Europeans and as having rejected the 'old world' in return.

Two pillars help to sustain the relationship between Israel and the U.S. The first is the integration of Jews into American society and the second is the commitment that Americans have to Israel. The features of this special relationship were already in place before the American Jewish community mobilised, but this further strengthened and reinforced it. On closer reflection, the political role of America's Jewish community appears to have been strengthened by the special relationship, rather than vice versa.[89]

The belief that Israel is an underdog, forced to struggle for survival in an unforgiving neighbourhood, is particularly perverse but is nonetheless a motif of U.S. perceptions of the conflict. Eytan Gilboa's account of the 1967 and 1973 wars describes how the casting of Israel and the Arab states as (respectively) David and Goliath helped to generate U.S. support for Israel.[90]

One Republican Senator observed:

> A few years ago, I travelled to Israel and it was a transforming experience for me as I became aware of how small Israel is. I realized how rapidly an enemy could cross the small narrow band and attack any part of Israel. I understood then the significance of the Golan Heights and the issue of turning them over to enemies where they could be used to do whatever they chose.[91]

This concern with Israel's security is often rationalised as further evidence of the instinctive American sympathy for the poor and defenceless when they are aggressively attacked by an outside invader.[92] But this requires a quite staggering

inversion of the reality: The aggressor is Palestinian children throwing stones and the victim is a nuclear-armed state with one of the world's most powerful armies that has inflicted extensive harm on an occupied people for more than half-a-century.

Historical Overview

1948–1966

The U.S. political commitment to Israel was established in 1922 when the U.S. Congress approved the Balfour Declaration on the basis of a bipartisan consensus.[93] In his 1944 presidential campaign, the U.S. President Roosevelt committed himself to the establishment of Israel. He said:

> I know how long and ardently the Jewish people have worked and prayed for the establishment of Palestine as a free and democratic Jewish commonwealth. I am convinced that the American people give their support to this aim. If re-elected, I shall help to bring about its earliest realization.[94]

Truman's administration was much more openly sympathetic to Israel.[95] While Israel had a clear function (the blocking of communist expansion) in the Cold War, its defence appeared all-consuming after it ended.[96] Sick suggests that the U.S. commitment to the Peace Process affects and determines every other aspect of Middle East policy. Everything is subordinated to it, in a way that is often counter-productive and even unhealthy.[97]

When the state of Israel was established in 1948, Arab states in the region committed to destroying it, and this entered the region into a series of highly destructive wars.[98] Under Truman, Roosevelt's successor, the U.S. government became increasingly receptive to Jewish public opinion. On 4 October 1946, it endorsed the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry's recommendation that 100,000 Jewish refugees from Europe should be allowed to migrate to Palestine. On 29 November 1947, the General Assembly voted (by 33 votes to 13, with 10 abstentions) to approve the partition of Palestine into a Jewish and Arab state. The Arab public viewed this as an imperialist plot that would implant an alien entity with the aim of dividing the Arab world.[99]

Truman viewed the Partition Plan as a potential model for UN intervention in future conflicts,[100] and this was one of the reasons why he supported it when it was unveiled in November 1947. He later informally recognised Israel when it announced its independence on 14 May 1948.[101]

The Arab states rejected the Partition Plan and then attacked Israel. The War of Independence/the *Nakba* began when the British mandate ended on 14 May 1948, and it followed on from the Israeli declaration of independence that was issued earlier in the same day.[102] After 15 months of fighting, the two sides entered into negotiations that gave Israel 80 per cent of the territory of Historical Palestine. Israel later offered to return part of this territory, subject to a border agreement,

but this was rejected by the Arabs. At the end of the war, the West Bank and Gaza Strip were respectively occupied by Jordan and Egypt.[103]

In 1949, the U.S. formally recognised the newly established state of Israel. Americans felt a strong emotional commitment to the country and its future security and well-being. Although the U.S. commitment to a Middle Eastern Peace Process is in many respects an extension of its loyalty to Israel, it has also been, at different points, unwilling to pressurise its partner to take the necessary steps for peace. In addition, it has also tolerated considerable turbulence that has even threatened to destabilise its relations with Israel.[104]

In 1950, the U.S. joint chiefs of staff expressed concern that the Arabs might decide to join the USSR if they believed that the U.S. and other Western powers did not support their policies. Most of Truman's advisors in the military, State Department, and his own presidential staff argued against supporting Israel,[105] but he ultimately rejected their advice. Truman believed the 'international community' had an obligation to fulfil the promise of the Balfour Declaration and acknowledge the suffering of Jewish Holocaust survivors.[106] Polling showed that almost two-thirds of the U.S. respondents supported the establishment of a Jewish state.[107]

In 1952, General Omar Bradley, the head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, suggested that Israel could provide two of the 19 divisions required to protect the region. However, this was rejected on the grounds it would complicate political and military relations with Egypt and Iraq.[108] Six years later, the National Security Council Planning Board admitted that it had not succeeded in building an Arab state alliance.[109]

Opponents to the relationship with Israel expressed concern that it could harm U.S.–Arab relations. U.S. oil firms operated in the region, and oil was also a significant part of the Marshall Plan that laid out the steps for Europe's economic recovery. Military planners also emphasised the importance of continued access to the region's military facilities, and to Saudi Arabia's Dhahran base in particular. There was also a fear that a pro-Israel stance could push Arabs to adopt more extreme positions, and in turn open up opportunities for the Soviets.[110]

Eisenhower was well aware of the importance of oil and the fact that the political support of the Arab states was necessary to prevent further Soviet encroachment in the region. But he failed to appreciate either Israel's need for unconditional support or the intensity of Arab hostility to Israel.[111] The U.S. nonetheless sought to promote political stability by preventing low-level conflict between Israel and its Arab neighbours. Eisenhower was generally pro-Israel, although he did not share Truman's personal attachment to Israel. But at this time, Israel's strategic importance was not fully developed and there was a greater regional equilibrium.[112]

In 1953, the U.S. strongly condemned Israel's attack on Qibya, a village in the Jordanian West Bank, and in the following year, it blocked all economic and military aid to Israel. The Suez Canal crisis of 1956–1957 was the defining event of this period and the last gasp of a dying colonialism. In July 1956, Nasser nationalised the Suez Canal with the aim of preventing shipping intended for Israel from traveling any further. Eisenhower opposed the intervention because

he believed it would harm long-term U.S. interests in the region.[113] On 29 October 1956, Israel launched a pre-emptive attack on Egypt and conquered the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula in a few days. Britain and France then invaded the Suez Canal area. After an international outcry, Israel removed its troops from the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip in November 1956 and March 1957 (respectively). Eisenhower was infuriated, in large part because he had not been informed in advance,[114] and believed this would impede U.S. political and security interests in the region.[115] UN forces were then deployed to both the Gaza Strip and Sinai and tasked with a peacekeeping mandate.[116] This followed UN involvement after the 1948 War and established a basis for regional peacekeeping.[117]

Successive U.S. administrations sought to establish an Arab–Israeli peace, although without success. Events in the region, including the Iraq Revolution, the Jordanian crisis, and the Lebanese Civil War (which required U.S. intervention), were framed against the backdrop of rising Arab nationalism and socialism in the region and forced a reassessment of Israel's strategic value.[118] By the final two years of his term, Eisenhower's initial assessment of Israel had fundamentally altered and successive U.S. administrations adopted this same line into the 1970s.[119] As the region became increasingly volatile, the U.S. needed a dependable ally.[120]

The Kennedy administration, partly in response to domestic influence, provided Israel with modern strategic weapons, as did its successor, which established a sound basis for the U.S.–Israel relationship.[121] The Kennedy administration also removed several obstacles that had previously impeded the development of this relationship, including the arms embargo (Kennedy duly approved the sale of anti-aircraft Hawk missiles to Israel). It would be no exaggeration to refer to Kennedy as the 'father' of the U.S.–Israel alliance. However, in the short term he sought a balance of power, and therefore tried to strengthen ties with Nasser.[122] But, with an eye on long-term priorities, he also turned a blind eye to Israel's development of nuclear weapons, despite knowing full well that it would change the balance of power for good.[123] The U.S. then imposed a strict and inflexible norm of non-proliferation on other states in the region. The Johnson administration did not significantly diverge from its predecessor on regional matters, although it was forced to prioritise the Vietnam War.[124]

1967–1972

The Johnson administration's sale of military equipment and an alleged 'green light' contributed to Israel's successes in the 1967 War, when it captured the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the Golan Heights.[125] When UN Security Resolution 242 was passed, Henry Kissinger objected it would increase Soviet influence in the region.

Although the resolution introduced the principle of 'land for peace',[126] it notoriously failed to mention the Palestinians[127] and therefore, in retrospect, appeared as a deeply equivocal contribution. Arab delegates broadly supported it but objected that it appeared to implicitly recognise Israel. This lack of clarity presaged the 'constructive ambiguity' of the Peace Process and the Camp David Accords, the

Madrid Peace Process, and the Israel–Jordan peace agreement before it. Arab and Israeli delegates also referred to it during Security Council deliberations, with the consequence it was co-opted into Cold War intrigues. It also sustained U.S. efforts to resolve the conflict. U.S. representatives cited it when they argued that settlements beyond the 'Green Line' would not promote peace and should not receive U.S. funding. It was also referenced in the discussion of East Jerusalem, freedom of Palestinian movement (on the understanding it did not extend beyond the 'line') and even the maintenance of Israel's military superiority, including the tacit acceptance of its nuclear capacity.[128] However, U.S. diplomats were entirely selective in their references to it.[129]

William Quandt, a former National Security Council staff member, in reflecting on the period before 1970, observes that:

> [The U.S] pursued a relatively even-handed zero-sum Cold War policy designed in the belief that American support for Israel was an impediment to US-Arab relations… [and that] by granting economic and military aid to the enemy of the Arabs, the United States was providing the Soviet Union with an opportunity to extend its influence in the Middle East.[130]

Although the relationship between the two countries is rooted in shared cultural affinities, their strategic relationship only began to consolidate after the 1967 War. Before it broke out, Johnson made it clear that he would not be averse to an Israeli attack on Egypt, although Israel's military chiefs hardly needed any encouragement.[131] Johnson had not previously been focused on the region. Nevertheless, this now changed and it became a key priority for him.[132]

After the war broke out, he did not criticise Israel's aggression and, in a UN meeting, the U.S. delegate (Arthur Goldberg) backed Israel's desire to maintain its new boundaries and opposed a UN proposal to revert to the pre-war status. U.S. diplomatic support also helped Israel to capture Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Golan Heights.[133] The war underlined Israel's strategic potential and was the beginning of a de facto U.S.–Israel alliance. The U.S. now supported almost all of Israel's key foreign policy objectives.[134] The war crippled Nasser, who was a Soviet client and the main U.S. adversary in the area. It provided relief to moderate Arab countries and a welcome distraction from the Vietnam War.[135]

However, the war also produced a number of 'final status' questions, which included Israeli control of the Sinai Peninsula (60,000 square km), East Jerusalem, the Jordanian West Bank (6,000 square km), the Gaza Strip (360 square km), and the Golan Heights (12,000 square km). The Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula had particular strategic importance, and control of the River Jordan was particularly important in a region with severe water scarcity.[136] After the war, more than one million Palestinians lived under Israel's military rule, and Israeli settlement activity began almost immediately.[137] The war weakened the legitimacy of the Arab states as patrons of the Palestinian liberation struggle.[138]

It was only after the war that the concept of a Peace Process emerged. Up until this point, the possibility of a resolution was remote or even non-existent.[139] In

part, this was because a certain self-criticism emerged in Arab intellectual circles and gave rise to an associated sense of political realism.

In September, representatives of the Arab states met in the Sudanese capital of Khartoum and adopted a rejectionist position that pre-emptively ruled out negotiations, recognition, or peace. Israel, meanwhile, unilaterally expanded Jerusalem's municipal boundaries and unilaterally annexed East Jerusalem, while offering its residents the opportunity to become Israeli citizens. It tried to create the impression that the territories it now occupied were 'bargaining chips' that would be used in negotiations with Egypt, Jordan, and Syria.[140] The 'trade' of these territories would then enable Israel to achieve security and long-term sustainability. Occupation was therefore presented as a temporary measure.

The Arab rejection of 'land for peace' therefore benefitted Israel, as it would not need to show its hand. They were only rhetorically committed to Israel's destruction and were actually committed to 'neither war nor peace'. Palestinians realised this, along with the implication that Historical Palestine would only be liberated through their own efforts.[141] However, the Arab League, with Nasser at the forefront, recognised this in 1964, when they established the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO).[142]

It was also initially hoped that the war could help to resolve the Arab–Israeli conflict. The U.S. was determined to protect Israel's gains and indicated it would use its diplomatic influence to block any proposed withdrawal.[143] Johnson observed:

> I have long had a deep feeling of sympathy for Israel and its people, gallantly building and defending a modern nation against great odds and the tragic background of Jewish experience in this area as the location where our civilization began.

His conviction was further strengthened by what he once described as his 'natural' antipathy to Nasser and Pan-Arabism.[144]

In the 'Black September' crisis' of September 1970, when the PLO sought to overthrow Jordan's King Hussein, Israeli assistance played an essential counter-revolutionary role. Nixon and Kissinger then fundamentally re-evaluated Israel's strategic significance.[145] Israel and the Shah's Iran would henceforth emerge as invaluable lynchpins of U.S. policy within the region. After 'Black September', when Israel and the U.S. colluded to keep Hussein in power,[146] after the failed uprising, U.S. aid to Israel increased from an annual total of around U.S.$100 million to U.S.$1 billion, which clearly diverged from the 'even-handed' approach favoured by the State Department.[147]

Kissinger recognised that Israel was a significant strategic asset and he accordingly sought to enhance its regional strength. Even before his election, Nixon was committed to Israel and he spoke in a Jewish assembly in September 1968 during his electoral campaign, when he suggested the U.S. should support Israel as the only 'pro freedom' state in the region that could play an essential role in blocking Soviet expansion.[148]

Nixon was well aware that Israel could not, as he put it, continue to 'survive indefinitely as an island in the midst of a sea of hatred'.[149] Although he still needed to clear up Johnson's mess in South-East Asia, the Middle East was one of his core priorities. He was also aware of the possibility that another Arab–Israeli War could draw in the two superpowers, and he therefore sought a new 'balance of power' that would offset Soviet influence. Although he promised that the U.S. would not stand idle while Israel was driven into the sea, he was not willing to risk a direct confrontation with the Soviet Union. He sought a closer engagement with 'moderate' Arab states such as Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia, as he believed this would help to achieve Israeli and U.S. security interests.

1973–1980

When OPEC (Oil and Petroleum Exporting Countries) responded to the Yom Kippur War by artificially inflating oil prices between October 1973 and March 1974, the dangers of pursuing an unbalanced one-sided approach were clearly highlighted. Two weeks after the conflict broke out; Saudi Arabia sought to protest against continued U.S. support for Israel by imposing an embargo on oil supplies to some European countries and the U.S. This decision initially had a limited effect. However, in the following November, Arab oil producers announced the production levels of September 1973 would be reduced by 25 per cent, and indicated this new level would remain in place until Israel agreed to withdraw from the oPt.[150]

The embargo and the resulting shortages caused significant price rises and a long recession in the West. King Faisal had previously been reluctant to use the oil weapon. However, after the embargo was introduced, he did not view oil as apolitical.[151] In the period between the end of the Camp David summit and the signing of the Egyptian–Israeli peace treaty, Saudi oil policy continued to be political.[152]Kissinger began his shuttle diplomacy trips and Israel and Syria signed a disengagement agreement. Some Nixon administration officials also argued that Arab oil producers should be confronted, and even suggested the seizure of important oil fields. However, Nixon instead chose to engage the Peace Process with renewed intensity.[153]

Sadat realised that he could not depend on the Soviet Union for diplomatic, economic, or military support, and he therefore ejected 20,000 Soviet military advisors before launching the 1973 War. Sadat viewed negotiations as a way of achieving economic security, whereas Israel instead was more focused on conventional security. After the 1973 War, he therefore sought to focus on domestic problems.[154]

After the 1973 ('Yom Kippur') War, the U.S. became involved in the Arab–Israeli conflict to an unprecedented extent and both Nixon and Ford helped to establish disengagement arrangements. Kissinger sought to manipulate the military stalemate for political purposes and, on 5 November 1973, initiated a 'shuttle diplomacy' that engaged several actors in the region. His main priority was to improve relations with the Egyptians and convince them of the benefits of a

peaceful settlement. He also wanted to demonstrate to Arab oil producers that the U.S. could bring the conflict to an end and convince Israelis that peace, rather than war, was the best way to achieve their goals. However, he also took care to ensure that the domestic Jewish constituency was not alienated by any of these steps.[155]

Nixon's successor Gerald Ford announced that he would reassess U.S. Middle Eastern policy, and was loudly condemned by pro-Israel constituencies, including 76 senators who forwarded a letter to him that called for the continuation of economic and military aid to Israel. The signatories also criticised Ford's decision to withhold future Israeli requests for military equipment and supported Israel's desire to maintain a presence in the Egyptian Sinai.[156]

In September 1975, Egypt and Israel signed the Sinai II Agreements. However, it was the Israeli/American *Memorandum of Understanding*, a confidential document that was not ratified by the Senate that proved to be particularly controversial. It committed to provide most of the aid requested for the forthcoming year, substantially increase military assistance (including the delivery of large amounts of sophisticated weapons), compensate Israel for the return of the Gulf of Suez oil fields, and also provided clear political guarantees (including a commitment to consult in the event of military interference by a 'third party', a term that coyly invoked the Soviet Union). The memorandum substantially strengthened U.S.–Israel relations and was a crowning achievement of Israel's 'American' diplomacy.[157]

Ford was determined to secure the region's oil supply and keep the Soviets out. He saw that reaffirming the U.S. commitment to Israel's freedom and security would help to achieve this. Both Nixon and Ford feared that the absence of peace could radicalise moderate Arabs and create more regional enemies for the U.S. Ford did, however, express concern about the single-mindedness of the Israel lobby and observed that when he even raised the possibility of reassessing U.S. policy on Israel, he was invariably accused of being anti-Israel and even anti-Semitic.[158] He opened himself up to this threat in 1975 when he and Kissinger threatened to reassess the U.S.–Israel relationship and freeze arms sales if Israel did not accept the second disengagement agreement with Egypt.

After Jimmy Carter took office on 20 January 1977, he focused on achieving a comprehensive Middle Eastern peace, and he enjoyed broad domestic support in this respect.[159] He was the first post-Second World War president to focus on the region. He did not only view the conflict in national security terms but instead viewed it as being imbued with religious significance. Carter repeatedly claimed that the modern State of Israel was a fulfilment of biblical prophecy and he openly confessed that the land of Israel 'has always meant a great deal to me'.[160] A poll of the time showed half the American population shared this sentiment: 30 per cent of respondents cited a future event of biblical significance and 20 per cent referred to other forms of religious significance.

Although Carter's Southern Baptist religious roots predisposed him to admire Israel, he was also committed to 'land for peace'. He believed there was no inherent tension between the two.[161] He viewed cooperation with the Soviets as necessary for peace in the region and saw stabilisation of the oil supply as a way of

preventing a more significant oil crisis. Ironically, this 'crisis' ultimately benefitted the U.S., as the foreign exchange reserves (or 'petrodollars') were then reinvested in the U.S. economy. Gulf oil producers then became stakeholders in the integrity of the major industrial economies, and this was confirmed when the Saudis developed an interest in price moderation and oil market regulation.[162] But artificially maintained prices damage the long-term competitiveness of non-oil energy sources and also encourage the purchase of oil supplies from non-OPEC sources.

Oil now replaced anti-communism as Washington's primary regional concern.[163] In 1977, Brzezinski proposed a plan for Palestinian self-government in the oPt, which Israel rejected it on the grounds that Carter did not guarantee their concessions.[164] Quandt observes that Carter had, by the second year of his presidency, grasped that he could not gain concessions from Israel. Furthermore, he also understood that any confrontation with Israel would adversely affect his domestic support. He began to retreat from his original goal of a comprehensive peace and became increasingly cautious.[165]He was more responsive to Israel's military and economic needs and he reaffirmed the 1975 commitment to ensure its oil supply if it was unable to procure oil for itself. These efforts bore fruit in 1978 when his promise of a substantial increase in the U.S. foreign aid gained significant concessions from Menachem Begin, the Israeli prime minister.

On 5–17 September 1978, Carter convened the Camp David summit and encouraged both sides to make the necessary concessions.[166] He persisted despite the negative impact on his approval ratings, having apparently been persuaded of the long-term strategic benefits. The final agreement was essentially a bilateral peace treaty between Israel and Egypt[167] that contained a framework for bilateral peace and regional peace. Key principles for a lasting peace between the two countries were set out, and so was a framework for Palestinian self-rule over a five-year transitional period that would culminate in Palestinian autonomy.[168] Carter's recognition of the specificity of the Palestinian conflict set him apart from his predecessors. The conflict had previously been regarded as a sub-component of the wider Israeli–Arab conflict. Indeed, Carter's recognition of the Palestinians as a national group went beyond the limited parameters of UN Resolution 242.[169] However, he did not subsequently insist on the implementation of the provisions, as he feared it would undermine his electoral prospects.[170]

Although Egypt sought to encourage other Arab states to participate in the negotiations, this was not possible. On reflection, this was perhaps positive as the bilateral negotiation format was better-suited to the complex issues.[171]In many respects, Carter (1977–1981) followed from where Kissinger had left off, as his willingness to pressurise Menachem Begin confirmed. But his commitment to peace was noticeably stronger than any of his predecessors.[172] He viewed the Middle East as a singularly significant foreign policy issue, and he therefore committed the majority of his time and energy to it, while showing an exceptional level of personal commitment.

The issue of the final political status of the oPt threatened to derail negotiations, which only continued when Carter threatened to cancel the bilateral relationship[173]

before extending 'carrots' to Israel (oil supplies and the acceptance of its plans to build new air bases in the Negev Desert). Cater therefore clearly grasped that Israel was reluctant to make further compromises before future negotiations. Sadat recognised the strategic importance of the Sinai, and therefore viewed its return as a key priority.

Under the terms of the final agreement, Israel was given the right to pass through the Suez Canal. The Straits of Tiran and the Gulf of Agaba were also recognised as international waterways and were subject to international law and maritime guidelines.[174] The Sinai Peninsula was returned to Egypt. The agreement built bridges with the Arab world and helped to placate European partners who had previously criticised America's support of Israeli expansionism. It also established an alternative to Soviet and Islamic influence in the region. From Sadat's perspective, the benefits were even clearer as he would be able to recover lost Egyptian territory, end the confrontation with Israel, and access substantial U.S. economic and military assistance. It was, however, not universally welcomed, as some observers believed it would impede a comprehensive peace settlement.[175]

Carter was the first U.S. president to address the Knesset (Israel's Parliament) on 12 March 1979, where he spoke of how the prophet Isaiah had foretold the agreement by beating swords into ploughshares. When Carter returned to the U.S., he praised both Begin and Sadat by quoting another biblical proverb ('when a man's way pleases the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him'). The *Washington Post* and *New York Times* hailed the Accords and a *Newsweek* article claimed they were Carter's biggest achievement. However, it is less frequently recognised they contributed to direct conflict. Many Americans view the peace agreement as a crowning achievement of U.S. diplomacy and its '[p]oliticians regularly embrace Camp David as the centrepiece of American policy towards the Mideast',[176] an analysis that was not widely shared by Arab observers.[177] U.S. enthusiasm was in large part linked to the Vietnam disaster, which had so profoundly shaken American self-confidence. The U.S. had achieved few diplomatic successes in the intervening period, and the agreement filled this very conspicuous gap.[178]

The claim of some observers that the general framework could be transferred to negotiations with Syria was not realistic,[179] but it was certainly conceivable that some 'lessons' could be applied more generally as part of a 'land for peace' model.[180] The agreement committed to achieving a 'comprehensive' peace between Israel and its Arab neighbours that would be negotiated on the basis of UN resolutions 242 and 338, and would establish the basis for negotiations for diplomatic relations between the parties, define the boundaries of Israel's and Egypt's boundaries, enable a phased Israeli withdrawal from Sinai, and help to answer the 'Palestinian Question'.[181] However, this optimism was misplaced – the agreements did not discuss Israeli withdrawal from the OPT, overlooked Israel's settlement activity, and had little to say about the final political status of the territories. The agreement also cut the USSR out of the Peace Process and made Israel secure on at least one front.[182] With Egypt removed from the equation, an Arab attack on Israel became difficult and even inconceivable. The U.S., however,

believed that it would enable Israel to more proactively engage with peace and underline the U.S. commitment to the region.[183]

Corporate America also supported his peace endeavours[184] and, after the agreement, substantial U.S. investment flowed into Egypt's banking and financial sectors. Nasser had previously aspired to similar investment, but this was at odds with his commitment to independent economic development.[185] After the Accords, the strategic relationship with Egypt also become increasingly important to the U.S. American military aid to the country was originally linked to the peace agreement with Israel but this changed over time, and it became integrated into wider U.S. regional strategy.[186]

The Camp David agreement was significant because it established Egypt as one of the leading recipients of U.S. military aid in the region, second only to Israel. The U.S. has since annually provided U.S.$5 billion to Israel and Egypt. However, this has failed to convince sceptical Arab political elites or publics, with the result that a 'cold' peace has prevailed between the two countries.[187] Both the PA and Syria aspired to similar arrangements, but their hopes could not surmount the gap between their own interests and those of the U.S.[188] If an agreement had been achieved, Syria could have expected to receive tens of billions of dollars.[189]

The prospect of any such agreement was limited by the fact that rejectionism is widely supported by the Arab publics. The very premise of a negotiated settlement, let alone efforts to negotiate one, is therefore widely opposed. Carter recognised this when he traced conflict in the region back to prevailing mindsets.[190] Since the agreement came into effect, Egypt has received an annual average of around U.S.$1.2 billion in aid. In return, it acts as a counterweight to hostile regional powers, places a number of military bases at the service of the U.S., and controls the Suez Canal. After the Gulf War, these strategic ties strengthened and the U.S. forgave billions of dollars of Egyptian debt in return.[191] Aid helps to sustain Israel, maintains the U.S. role in the Peace Process, enhances Israel's energy interests, and also makes Arab elites more sympathetic to U.S. aims.[192]

A number of important developments occurred in 1979: Camp David changed the regional balance of power; the overthrow of the Shah increased Israel's strategic value;[193] and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan signalled the end of détente and the renewal of the Cold War. In Summer 1979, the Saudis responded to the Iranian Revolution by increasing oil production and then later did the same in the autumn of the following year after the Iran–Iraq War broke out.[194]

1981–1990

In the early 1980s, Israel began to act unilaterally, and sometimes in ways that contradicted U.S. interests. Examples included Israel's bombing of the Osirak nuclear reactor in June 1981 and its annexation of the Golan Heights in the following December. Although the U.S. criticised both actions, however it did not, with the partial exception of briefly suspending a memorandum of strategic cooperation after the Golan annexation, take any decisive action.[195]

When Ronald Reagan became president in January 1981, the Peace Process was no longer at the centre of U.S. foreign policy. Although the U.S. was reluctant to formalise its relations with Israel, it increasingly recognised its strategic importance. In the pre-election period, Reagan wrote: 'Only by [a] full appreciation of the critical role which the state of Israel plays in our strategic calculus can we build the foundation for thwarting Moscow's designs on territories and resources vital to our security and our national well-being.'[196]

Reagan entered office with a strong commitment to Israel. After the collapse of the Shah's regime, Israel's value, both as an ally and obstacle to Soviet expansionism, was substantially enhanced. Israel's strategic value therefore increasingly displaced the desire to resolve the Palestinian–Israeli conflict.[197]

After Israel invaded Lebanon on 6 June 1982, Reagan recognised the benefits, which included crushing the PLO (a 'terrorist' organisation and Soviet client) and harming Syria (an enemy of Israel and Soviet proxy).[198] Although he was concerned about the potential impact on the U.S. economy, he wanted to send a message that the U.S. could be relied on to support its regional friends.[199]

The Reagan administration, in responding to strategic imperatives and domestic pressures, later tried to pursue peace in the region, but was unwilling or unable to exert diplomatic pressure on Israel. Reagan viewed Israel as a focus-point for Western influence and hoped that, by working together with 'moderate' allies such as Jordan and the Saudis, it could restrict Soviet expansion, protect regional oil supplies, and inhibit anti-American sentiment. However, the strategic alliance with Israel increasingly impeded the prospect of a two-state solution.[200]

Reagan's loyalty to Israel was not, however, repaid. For example, Begin preemptively dismissed Reagan's 1982 proposal ('American Peace Initiative for the Peoples of the Middle East') because it dared to propose that Jordanian-linked self-administration and a five-year freeze on Israeli settlement activity could be followed by Palestinian self-government.[201]

These were by no means the only diplomatic tensions between the two countries, and it is therefore significant that strategic and political relations were, in subsequent years, effectively detached. Dore Gold notes:

> [S]trategic cooperation between Washington and Jerusalem developed on a separate track from the diplomatic relationship. As strategic ties with Israel came to be perceived as an American interest, it made no sense to condition their growth on diplomatic process [progress?] in the area of Arab–Israeli negotiations.[202]
>
> Helena Cobban reflects on this development by noting that, over a seven-year period, the Reagan administration's justifications for supporting Israel shifted from a moral to a strategic basis. This included a 1981 Memorandum of Understanding on strategic cooperation, which made provision for joint military exercises, joint readiness exercises and the establishment of a joint supervisory council (9).[203] The U.S also tacitly supported Israel's

> 1982 invasion of Lebanon, although it continued to deny that it had provided a 'green light'. Four years later, Israel was included in the 1986 Strategic Defence Initiative research programme, and substantial increases in Israeli arms sales to the U.S followed.

Cobban implies that this consolidation of the relationship occurred in the absence of a serious consideration of Israel's actual strategic value. This echoes Mearsheimer's and Waltz's critique that the strategic rationale for supporting Israel is weak. Cobban makes a very similar point by referring to inter-departmental infighting within the Reagan administration and specifically cites members of the administration who rejected this line of argument. She concludes with the observation that support for Israel was only compelling if the moral justification is combined with its strategic counterpart.

Tellingly, by the time he left presidential office, Reagan had reverted to a moral justification. He wrote: 'My determination to preserve Israel was as strong when I left the White House as when I enter it. We share democracy and many other values with this tiny ally in the wide area of the Middle East'.[204]

1991–2017

The end of the Cold War in 1991 created a clear conundrum for those who emphasised the importance of Israel's strategic value in the U.S.–Israel relationship. In the post-Cold War era, this value was clearly somewhat diminished. Indeed, many analysts claimed this would disrupt the relationship, and Ben-Zvi even claimed to have identified signs of erosion.[205]

The Gulf War substantially strengthened the U.S. position in the area. But although AIPAC sought to present Israel as an unsinkable aircraft carrier, it only played a very limited role, especially in comparison to Syria and Saudi Arabia. The U.S. even had to send Patriot missile batteries to Israel, which provided protection against Hussein's Scud missiles.[206]

Reagan's successor Bush hoped that the success of the 1991 Gulf War would reinvigorate the Middle Eastern Peace Process, and he urged Syria to seize the emerging openings. However, he was also aware that Israel's presence in the coalition against Saddam Hussein could complicate relations with Arab partners, which were fragile at best. They would implode if Israel unilaterally responded to an Iraqi attack and he therefore refused Israel's request to participate in the international coalition.[207]

The Bush administration now focused on maintaining access to the region's oil reserves at a stable price and mitigating and stabilising the Arab–Israeli conflict.[208] Significantly, it also supported a UN resolution that condemned Israel's 'excessive' use of force in response to the Palestinian *Intifada*, which broke out in 1987. It also cited the Geneva Convention to reiterate its belief that Israel, as the occupying power, was responsible for the well-being of the occupied population.

However, his subsequent attempts to openly confront Israel over its settlement activity resulted in him losing almost a quarter (24 per cent) of his support within

the U.S. Jewish community. He then entered into a bitter battle with AIPAC lobbyists and famously complained that he was 'one lonely little guy down here asking Congress to delay its consideration of loan guarantees for 120 days'.[209] However, he ultimately prevailed by ensuring its participation in the Madrid Conference, which he viewed as a legacy of the Gulf War, the product of closer cooperation with Arab states and an instrument that could be used to defend Israel.[210]

His actions were strongly criticised by Clinton, who vowed that '[i]f I ever let Israel down, God would never forgive me … I'll never let Israel down'.[211] His subsequent 1992 election marked the end of efforts to return Israel to the 1967 'borders'. When Clinton took office, there was increased optimism that an Israel–Palestinian peace could be achieved, not least because Yitzhak Rabin's Labor-led government appeared willing to cede land for peace. The Oslo Accords were widely heralded as the most significant breakthrough in Middle East negotiations since Camp David. However, the Clinton administration no longer viewed settlements or the wider occupation as illegal and instead described them as 'disputed'. East Jerusalem, meanwhile, was not even dignified with this label.[212]

Although the U.S. ostensibly remained committed to resolving the conflict on the basis of international law, and specifically UNSC 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the Clinton administration's practical interventions marginalised and even undermined this legal foundation. But this was not a design flaw and was actually consciously intended by the U.S. Madeleine Albright, the U.S. Secretary of State, made this quite clear when she said: 'Resolution language referring to final status issues should be dropped, since these issues are now under negotiations by the parties themselves. These include refugees, settlements, territorial sovereignty and the status of Israel.'[213]

This has, as in many other instances, opened up a clear gap between America's formal position and its actual practice.[214] The Clinton administration's commitment to UNSC Resolution 242 was also partially undermined by the exceptions that it granted, including those related to East Jerusalem, settlement blocs, and the 'natural' growth of existing settlements.[215]

Senators Joseph Lieberman (D-CT) and Connie Mack (R-FL) co-authored a bipartisan letter that was signed by 79 other Senators. They told Clinton that the U.S. should act in accordance with established practice, and should therefore facilitate rather than apply public pressure to Israel. They asserted Israel's security was the foundation of the entire Peace Process and claimed that, if it was assured, Israel would be able to take risks for peace. This highlighted an essential contradiction between the U.S. commitment to Israel and its (supposed) role in promoting peace in the region. Nasser Aruri observes: 'Arabs and Palestinians have been required to deal with the dangerous belief that the U.S. was able to deliver a fair, just and lasting peace in the region.' In addition, adds: 'The U.S., in its protection and alliance of Israel could not also credibly discharge its self-defined role as the catalyst for peace.'[216]

This signalled that the U.S. remained committed to Israel. In a 1994 speech to the Israeli Knesset, Clinton said: 'Israel's survival is important to our interests [;]

it is linked to every value we hold dear'.[217] Three years later, Al Gore, his vice-president, spoke to the AIPAC Conference. He said: 'Quite simply, we will not permit an outside interest to drive a wedge between ourselves and Israel. The commitment to Israel's security is ongoing.' Moreover, added: 'Above all, let me assert my unshakable belief that this unique relationship is good for the United States of America. We will never depart from this path.'[218]

At the 2002 Beirut Summit for Peace, Prince Abdullah Bin Abdul-Aziz, the crown prince of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, issued a statement that called for full Israeli withdrawal from the territories it had occupied in 1967. It called for relevant Security Council Resolutions (242 and 338) and the 'land for peace' principle to be fully implemented, and also called on Israel to accept an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital; in return, they offered a full normalisation of relations and a comprehensive peace.

In April 2003, Bush (Jnr) published the 'Road Map', which was a significant shift in U.S. policy because it referred to a Palestinian state for the first time.[219] The Palestinians accepted without any reservations while the Israelis accepted in principle and then demanded 100 amendments.[220] Sharon eventually rejected the document and decided to unilaterally withdraw from the Gaza Strip in 2005.[221]

When Barack Obama became the U.S. president, he gave a lecture at Cairo University, which underlined his commitment to a Palestinian–Israeli peace.[222] John Kerry, his secretary of state, then held a meeting between Mahmoud Abbas and Benjamin Netanyahu at the White House that was headed by Obama. These talks collapsed after Netanyahu refused to freeze settlement construction and rejected Obama's call for the establishment of a Palestinian state based on the 1967 'borders' (including East Jerusalem).[223] In 2013, Kerry made several visits to Palestine, which helped him to develop a clear agenda focused on safe borders, UN Resolution 181, the Palestinian refugee problem, Jerusalem, Israel's security needs and the termination of the conflict.

Conclusion

The U.S.–Israeli relationship has various dimensions but the strategic dimension, which has only emerged relatively recently, is frequently highlighted as its most important part. However, it is important not to over-emphasise it as the relationship is rooted in historical and cultural antecedents that guide and, to a certain extent, define it. They give the relationship its depth and set it apart from other counterparts.

These antecedents are not merely symbolic but also have a practical implication for the implementation of U.S. foreign policy in the region and, by extension, the Peace Process. A shared framework of reference therefore orientates the U.S.–Israel relationship, gives it a clear sense of purpose, and cements underpinning ties.

There is a clear danger that observers could, in focusing on the strategic benefits of the relationship, overlook the utility of 'culture' and other soft power

aspects. But, in so doing, they would entertain the reductionist illusion that the U.S. supports Israel because it is an extension of its own foreign policy interests. This would prevent them from grasping the relationship from a comprehensive perspective.

It is therefore insufficient to situate the relationship within a cost–benefit calculation and to entirely focus on its strategic benefits for one party. Arab observers commit this mistake when they present Israel as a colonial imposition and so do theorists of foreign policy when they over-emphasise the rationality of U.S. foreign policy. Both errors, however, ultimately terminate in the same place.

This over-emphasis on the strategic benefits of the relationship also overlooks the fact that it comes with very real costs, which impose themselves on U.S. foreign policy and inhibit its flexibility and manoeuvrability. It is no coincidence that this is not widely acknowledged as a number of factors, including embedded policy tendencies and pressure group activities militate against an uninhibited discussion of the costs and wider implications of the relationship.

This is shown by the fact that the 1978 Camp David Accords are still broadly perceived within the U.S. as a foreign policy achievement that is worthy of celebration and even emulation. This is clearly surprising as their most lasting contributions have been to clear the way for military aggression and sustain internal repression. The institutionalisation of the aid framework also reassures Israeli politicians (although any such reassurance is of course scarcely required) that they are free to violate Palestinian human rights with impunity. Even when considered in its own terms, the agreement can only be described as a limited success: the 'cold peace' between the country renders a 'peace' that is the absence of war, which is the inversion of the 'peace' proposed by peacebuilding theory. For these theorists, 'peace' is defined by its limitless potential. In contrast, this 'cold peace' does not just fail to surmount its limitations but is actually defined by them.

Here it is instructive to recall that the 'concessions' that Israel has been willing to make in the case of peace have frequently been overstated, often deliberately. This was the case in the 2000 Camp David negotiations, when it was insufficiently recognised that Barak's 'concessions' were only 'generous' in relation to what Israel had previously been willing to consider. Furthermore, while the U.S. can point to changes in the Israeli position as evidence of its influence, these 'gains' have been comprehensively evaporated by Israel's dramatic shift towards annexation. This does not appear to have negatively impacted U.S.–Israel relations, which suggests that the Peace Process can be detached from U.S.–Israel relations when it is convenient. This compartmentalisation of policy clearly benefits the U.S. by shielding it from the implications of its actions in specific areas.

Each U.S. president in the post-Second World War era recognised the importance of Israel and committed to its continued survival. While this commitment remained constant, administrations exerted varying amounts of pressure on Israel in order to obtain the required concessions. However, the likelihood that this would yield success was limited by two constraints. First, any U.S. threat to completely sever ties was not credible. Second (and this largely followed from the first), presidents were fully aware that they would be punished at the ballot box if

they were perceived as anti-Israel. This did not rule out the possibility of pressure being exerted, but it did suggest that any such action would need to be offset by gratuitous demonstrations of loyalty to Israel. From the outset, these ritualised performances were ingrained into the public relations of the Peace Process.

The dangers presented by Israel's drift towards open extremism should also be acknowledged. Successive U.S. administrations have alternated between either implicitly condoning Israel's abuses or offering criticisms in the most qualified of terms, but this has only been sustainable when Israel has behaved with a degree of restraint. Indeed, this has arguably been the main contribution of a Peace Process that has enabled Israel to conceal its true intentions and to advance its extremist political agenda of annexation, dispossession, and population replacement. However, Israel's flouting of international law and defiance of UN Security Council Resolutions were already pre-established and were just more understated.[224]

While this sensitivity aided the U.S. at particular points, Arab advocates of the Peace Process have always been in a difficult position.[225] In seeking to alleviate their difficulties, the U.S. should: (1) calculate the total amount that Israel spends on civilian settlements in the Golan Heights and West Bank and then deduct it from the economic aid that it gives to Israel; (2) remove economic aid to Israel from the category of security assistance and create a regular mechanism within the Agency for International Development. This will help to ensure that funds are not committed to settlement activities; (3) encourage public debate in the U.S. about the conflict. This will help to promote a comprehensive settlement that meets the needs of both sides.

The U.S.–Israel relationship has not been without discord or rupture, and these 'interruptions' perhaps provide an opportunity for productive engagement. However, for a large part of the post-Second World War era, this was not possible because of Arab rejectionism. However, it is still open to question if Arab states can show the required ingenuity and flexibility to effectively exploit future disputes.

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5 America and the Syrian Track

Cold War Relations

Syria has historically been defined as a region rather than a territorially defined nation-state,[1] and its history extends back more than 3,500 years. It has been the principal trade route between the Occident and the Orient and has, throughout its history, been invaded by Assyria, Chaldea, Greece, Mongolia, Persia, Rome, Seljuk, and Turkey.[2] Contemporary Syria borders Israel, Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, and Iraq and is situated between Europe, Asia, and Africa. Even after the French Mandate ended in 1946, it was subject to various degrees of external influence and was, in the Cold War, a key part of the Soviet Union's regional strategy.[3] Its considerable geopolitical, political, and strategic importance means it must be acknowledged by any plan to bring peace to the region.[4]

When the State of Israel was established in May 1948, it was carved from the territory once known as *Bilad al-Sham*, meaning that Syrians, as well as Palestinians, were dispossessed when it was established.[5] The following 1948 War was a disaster for Arabs and for Syria in particular. This was confirmed in the negotiations to end the conflict, when it offered to sign a peace agreement rather than an armistice. Although this seismic event affected the entire Arab world, Israel's immediate effects were most clear in the Levant, where it directly challenged Syria's regional influence and threatened to undermine its internal legitimacy.

Syria's regional role has been largely understood, and this is linked to a (perhaps wilful) misunderstanding of 'rejectionism'. In common with other Arab nationalist regimes, Syria's domestic legitimacy rested on its steadfast commitment to fight and oppose Israel. However, it also sought a regional realignment in the form of Greater Syria.[6] Syria was a key Cold War ally of Russia, and Hafez al-Assad sought to exploit superpower tensions to develop his country's military capabilities.[7]

However, Syria was not a satellite state and actually had considerable autonomy. Soviet assistance was restricted to enhancing defensive capability, although this was justified on the grounds that the U.S. would simply respond by increasing its weapons sales to Israel. But this gave Syria considerable autonomy to pursue its main objectives[8] and, in return, the Syrian ports of Tartous and Latakia gave the Soviet Union (and subsequently Russia) access to the Mediterranean. After

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the collapse of the Soviet Union, Syria sought to establish a dialogue with the U.S. and establish improved relations with the Arab world, and with Egypt and the Gulf States in particular.[9]

The Soviet Union's influence in the region was, however, historically limited because the conservative and monarchical states were strongly opposed to the ideology of Soviet Communism, which they viewed as even more pernicious than Western Liberalism. In 1958, its Egyptian client state did, however, unify with Syria to establish the United Arab Republic (UAR), with the aim of preventing a communist coup in Syria. However, Nasser's high-handedness caused Syria to withdraw after three years.[10]

The U.S. recognised that Communism held limited appeal in the region and therefore sought to establish an alliance with Egypt (post-1973), Iran (pre-1979), Israel, and Turkey. Sadat's pivot to the U.S. and the invasion of Afghanistan (in 1979) severely undermined Soviet influence within the region, and Iraq and Syria were its two remaining regional allies in the latter stages of the Cold War.

Israel's 1978 and 1982 invasions of Lebanon and later U.S. intervention confirmed the Soviet Union's diminished regional influence. Raymond Garthoff observes that the Soviet Union's failure to intervene on the PLO's behalf cost its regional political capital.[11] Military intervention by multinational peacekeeping forces in the country and offshore bombardment by U.S. naval ships were both dangerous escalations that had the potential to produce confrontations between the superpowers. As pan-Arabism declined in this period, Arab states turned inwards. However, their reliance on the U.S. persisted.[12]

In the Cold War, the Soviet–Syrian relationship was functional and strategic and was not rooted in culture, ideology, or religion, which suggested it would only persist for as long as Syria had a clear strategic value. In 1980, the Soviets formally committed their support to the regime by signing a 'Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation'.

Soviet support for Syria's rejectionist stance changed after Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in 1985. Eduard Shevardnadze, the new Soviet foreign minister, claimed that Soviet strategic thinking now rejected antagonism,[13] ideological clichés, rigidities of thought, and the belief in military solutions. It committed to reducing nuclear arms, eradicating famine, tackling environmental destruction, and seeking 'strategic parity' in nuclear weapons.[14] These strategic and doctrinal shifts would take some time to implement, and in any case, the Soviets were willing to set them to one side when circumstances demanded.[15] However, they nonetheless had clear and important implications for the relationship with Syria.[16]

Syria was now forced to reassess its military and regional strategy and its arms policies changed, as the Soviets now demanded hard currency,[17] which meant their general arms sales decreased after 1985. Military relations between the two nations also deteriorated, but this did not happen immediately or dramatically, and remnants of the previous arrangement persisted. The Soviet Union could also not entirely discount Syria, as it was close to its southern border and therefore retained some strategic value.

In December 1989, Syria restored diplomatic relations with Egypt, and its ties with the Soviet Union ended in August 1991.[18] Hafez al-Assad now needed to search for a new patron and strategy. He engaged the U.S. in constructive dialogue on the subject of Lebanon (although ending Syrian hegemony was not on the agenda) and intensified his diplomatic engagement with Egypt and the Gulf Arab states.[19]

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990 provided Syria with the opportunity to secure its regional position in the post-Cold War era. In return for its support for the invasion, Syria received U.S.$700 million in credits from the European countries and Japan, and over U.S.$2 billion from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states.[20]

U.S.–Syria Relations

In the years after the establishment of Israel, the U.S. was torn between a comprehensive peace agreement that would ensure its security and other priorities, which included upholding Lebanon's independence, containing Iran and Iraq, and fighting international terrorism.[21] Stephen Zunes therefore highlights how America's status as a superpower often conflicted with its efforts to mediate between Syria and Israel.[22]

Although U.S. engagement did not produce a peace agreement, it helped the respective participants to learn about each other and also contributed to a general framework that could help to achieve a future settlement. Furthermore, three successive Israeli prime ministers indicated they would be willing to offer concessions if it would help to reach a peace agreement, and Hafez al-Assad indicated he was willing to pursue a full peace agreement and work towards normalised relations with Israel.[23] Given the extent of popular hostility to Israel, this underlined the extent to which the government was able to insulate itself from popular pressures in the foreign policy field. This autonomy also enabled the government to orient towards the U.S.[24]

Syria also tried to convince regional and international observers that a lasting regional peace could only be achieved through its offices. The fact that it is the foremost 'frontline' state with the ability to inflict substantial damage on Israel helped it in this respect. And it has repeatedly reminded Israel that regional peace will be impossible until its requirements are met.[25] However, it is clear that any Israel–Syria 'reconciliation' could only be achieved under U.S. auspices. The 'Cold Peace' between Egypt and Israel clearly demonstrates what must be avoided and highlights the need for a multidimensional agreement (economic, political, and strategic) that is genuinely inclusive.[26]

Itamar Rabinovitch, Israel's chief negotiator with Syria in the period 1992–1996, observes that Rabin had demonstrated his commitment to achieving peace with Syria by committing to a full withdrawal from the Golan Heights. Syrian government sources suggested that this commitment had been made as early as August 1993 (p. 4). Rabinovitch also suggests that Rabin was at this stage

predisposed to 'play off' the Syrian option against its Palestinian counterpart.[27] However, the Netanyahu government that won the 1996 election maintained that this was not binding and in any case rested on reciprocal actions that the Syrian government failed to take.

Rabinovitch also later claims that there was no breakthrough at any time during the negotiations,[28] and he also refers to considerable differences in the specifics of any specific agreement.[29] Tellingly, he also notes that Rabin remained sceptical about the possibility of achieving a peace agreement, and adds that Assad viewed peace with Israel as a way of building a new relationship with the U.S.[30] However, his ability to commit to peace was limited by a number of factors, including his own suspicions of Israel's agenda, domestic political constraints, and the absence of personal meetings between the respective leaders.[31] And discussion of future negotiations will also need to take Lebanon into account. Its civil war of the 1980s created new opportunities for U.S. intervention and it was in this respect consistent with other internationalised 'local' conflicts.[32] Lebanon was particularly vulnerable to external interference because, after its 1921 separation from Syria, it was viewed as 'secular'. Before 1978, the U.S. had historically sought to justify its interventions in the country as being concerned with rescuing and protecting its own citizens. However, in the period afterwards, it demonstrated an increased willingness to interfere in the country's internal affairs. As the country disintegrated, these interventions could be justified (or rationalised) as part of a concern with regional security and stability.[33]

Some American and Israeli observers claimed that Hafez al-Assad disowned his anti-Americanism when he agreed to negotiate a peace deal with Israel. But it was more likely he would seek to use any agreement to advance his long-standing objections to American power and influence.[34] If peace had been established with Israel, then it is likely that the U.S. would have overlooked Syria's long-standing interference in Lebanon's internal affairs and occupation of its neighbour's land. Any peace agreement would also complicate Syria–Turkey relations, especially as the latter has developed relations with the U.S.

Syria had made it clear it was open to peace in the 30 years before the Madrid Peace Conference, and this was not therefore an isolated initiative. However, the end of the Cold War provided it with an extra incentive to engage with these talks.[35] However, the likelihood of success was limited by the fact that hostility to Israel was widespread among Syrians. This still applies.

Ironically, the end of the Cold War actually provided opportunities to improve Syrian military capacities, as it was able to diversity military suppliers and buy more sophisticated weaponry.[36] It apparently placed an order with Russia for 68 MiG-29 combat aircraft and 24 Su-24 bombers and obtained Scud-C missiles from North Korea and solid fuel M-9 missiles from China. At the regional political level, Syria also sought to achieve an understanding with Israel while working with Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the Gulf Arab states, and the U.S. to establish a new 'balance of power' formula that would underpin a military doctrine based on strategic deterrence.

Syria and the Peace Process

Contrary to the widespread (mis)perception that it is implacably opposed to peace,[37] Syria's ultimate objective has always been a 'peace of the strong' that would restore the dignity lost in the 1967 War when Israel occupied the Golan Heights. For dozens of years, Syria has been the foremost enemy of Israel within the Arab world.[38] It views itself as the 'beating heart of Arab-ism' and is strongly committed to fighting the Israeli occupier, and this perception is widely shared in the Arab world.[39] Many Syrians view Israel as a serious threat to their country's territorial integrity, and the cultural and economic growth of the wider region.[40]

The 1967 War was a disaster for the Arab states, but it gave Assad valuable insight into Syria's military limitations. He was aware of the importance of Israel's aerial supremacy, which derived from U.S. assistance. In adjusting to this, the Egyptians and Syrians cooperated to a greater extent in the Yom Kippur War,[41] and this enabled them to fight on two fronts. Although not a victory in the military sense, the Yom Kippur War was a moral and psychological victory for the Arab participants, and it helped them realise Israel was not invincible.[42]

After Sadat withdrew from the alliance between Syria and Egypt, Syria's negotiating strength was significantly reduced. Henry Kissinger pithily observed that while Hafez al-Assad would have liked to destroy Israel, this would ultimately ensure his own destruction. Kissinger added that Syria would need to regain its own territory before it could pursue larger ambitions, including the unification of the Arab nation.[43]

At this time, Syria was actively engaged with the Peace Process, and even sought to develop a counterpart to Kissinger's step-by-step approach by developing a joint position with Egypt that could be presented to Israel. Assad suggested it was first necessary to implement UNSCR 242, as this would end the state of belligerency and establish a basis for the normalisation of relations. However, this was not a 'good faith' proposal, as he full well that Israel had no intention of returning to the pre-1967 'borders'.[44]

In the early stages of the second round of disengagement talks, Syria also expressed a willingness to attend an international conference based on the 'land for peace' formula of UNSCR 242 and 338. Israel made it clear that it was unwilling to accept this proposal, as it believed it could produce binding obligations.[45] The U.S., for its part, believed this could create an opening for Soviet influence and jeopardise the influence it had gained through its alliance with Egypt.

As regional realities changed, the Egyptian and Syrian leaderships became less focused on destroying Israel and more concerned with liberating the occupied Palestinian territories.[46] This was perhaps surprising because Syria had come close to 'liberating' the Golan Heights in the 1973 War.

In the period 1974–1978, Syria indicated it was willing to participate in a Middle Eastern Peace Process based on UNSCR 242 and 338. Its bargaining position was, however, undermined when Egypt negotiated a separate peace. It rejected the U.S.-sponsored process and instead argued in favour of a comprehensive solution

to the Arab–Israeli conflict. The U.S., for its part, was determined to negotiate separate peace deals, and therefore excluded Syria from the 1974 Geneva Conference and the Middle Eastern Peace Process. Syria's rejectionist stance consolidated in this context.[47]

During a 1974 visit to Damascus, Richard Nixon informed Assad that the U.S. favoured the restoration of the 1967 boundaries and, by implication, the return of the Golan Heights to Syria. But Henry Kissinger controlled U.S. Middle East strategy and was focused on first securing an Israeli–Egyptian settlement. President Gerald Ford also took a pro-Israel stance on the Golan issue: he accepted Kissinger's step-by-step strategy and Israel's request that any future interim agreement should only make cosmetic changes to the Golan line.

In late 1976 and early 1977, Syria indicated its willingness to resume negotiations in Geneva. Hafez al-Assad said he was willing to sign a peace agreement provided Israel withdrew from all territories occupied in 1967 and agreed to the creation of a Palestinian state in the oPt. He also implied the U.S. should play a major role in mediating this settlement. In return, Jimmy Carter said that real peace between Arabs and Israelis could be achieved and indicated he would help achieve this. He again committed the U.S. to a comprehensive settlement and raised the prospect of a multi-party international conference.[48]

However, when the U.S. tacitly tolerated Israel's expansionism, Syria reverted to rejectionism. The likelihood of an agreement was in any case complicated by Syria's close ties to the Soviet Union. After the Camp David Accords, U.S.–Soviet relations became increasingly polarised and the election of Ronald Reagan as U.S. President further exacerbated these tensions.[49]

After the Camp David Accords, Syria was diplomatically isolated. In response, it adopted tactical rejectionism, which was embodied in the 1980 Treaty of Friendship with the USSR and its rejection of the Fahd Peace Plan[50] in the following year.[51] However, this was not its preference and it was in many respects imposed by the international system, as the Syrian political elite recognised.[52]

The old adage that the Middle East cannot go to war without Egypt or create peace without Syria gained credence throughout the 1980s. The U.S. was hostile to the Hafez al-Assad Regime for many reasons, and not least the fact that it had been complicit in more U.S. deaths than any other state since the end of the Vietnam War.[53] Syria sought to prevent the PLO and Jordan from reconciling after the 1970 'Black September' civil war, and also fuelled further conflict by sponsoring/supporting assassinations, military activities along the Jordanian border, and rebellions by PLO factions.

In 1989, Syria's strategy again shifted when it restored relations with Egypt and sought to become part of the 'New World Order'. This change was in large part induced by the collapse of the Soviet Union,[54] and it was in this context that Syria's potential contribution to a future Middle Eastern Peace Process was increasingly discussed.[55] Hafez al-Assad's quest for U.S. acceptance[56] was a response to the extent of U.S. influence in the region.[57]

Syria's contribution in the 1991 Gulf crisis significantly improved U.S.–Syrian relations, and the U.S. helped to rehabilitate a regime it had previously labelled as

a supporter of international terrorism.[58] Hafez al-Assad was satisfied by this, and in a newspaper interview with *Al-Akhbar*, he observed that 'the opportunities for peace [had] become better than at any other time before'.[59] He could reflect on this development with considerable satisfaction, and also on the flexibility and skill that had engendered it.[60]

Syria made it clear that it sought a comprehensive peace settlement that would be based on UNSCR 242, 338, and 425. Syria's engagement with the Peace Process in the early 1990s was not therefore a substantial departure from its previous commitment to a 'comprehensive' peace that rested on an Arab consensus. To some extent, his position was vindicated before the Madrid Conference, as the diplomatic weight of Egypt and Saudi Arabia helped to counter-balance the U.S.–Israel strategic alliance.[61]

Before the Conference, Assad demonstrated considerable flexibility in departing from his previous positions. He therefore dropped the condition that Israel had to commit itself to withdraw from the occupied territories; did not insist that the PLO had to be included in negotiations; and also dropped his previous demand for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. Instead, he merely asked participants to recognise that the Palestinian problem had to be resolved.[62]

In July 1991, James Baker, the U.S. secretary of state, travelled to Damascus with the aim of gaining Syrian approval for the proposals that would be presented to the conference. After the meeting, the U.S. sent Syria a letter of assurance that made it clear that while the Madrid Peace Conference and subsequent peace initiatives would refer to UN Resolutions 242 and 338, no binding conditions would be placed on participants.[63]

The Madrid Peace Conference, which was based on UNSCR 242, was established after Syria agreed to be part of the international coalition that drove Iraq from Kuwait.[64] Significantly, Syria was the first country to accept the invitation: the road to regional peace, it increasingly appeared, led through Damascus.

Syria's decision to join the coalition was influenced by its continued rivalry with the Iraq's Baathist regime (Syria supported Iran in the Iran–Iraq war) and an ongoing concern that international developments threatened to deplete Syria's regional profile.[65] There was also a clear economic incentive, as the collapse of the Soviet Union had increased its dependence on the Gulf states.[66] During the crisis, they transferred U.S.$2 billion to Syria, further supplementing the benefits of increased oil prices. Al-Assad made it quite clear that his country would not be forced into an 'imposed war' by Saddam Hussein.[67]

Syria's participation was not just symbolic as it also helped to counteract the possibility of a counter-alliance of 'radical' Arab states. Assad engaged with far-reaching intentions and expectations, by implication, the outcome of the conference could not be restricted to the status of the Golan Heights and nor could it deny the question of justice.[68]

The Palestinian cause had previously been a diplomatic constraint because it was so strongly tied to the regime's internal and external legitimacy. The signing of separate peace agreements by Jordan and the PLO could conceivably provide Syria with greater manoeuvrability, and the issue of the Golan Heights could

now be engaged separately. However, this was precisely what the U.S. sought to achieve, as it believed that a separate agreement would enable it to strengthen its relationship with other Arab countries and extend its influence throughout the wider region.[69]

The regime's previous rejectionist stance could easily give rise to the misconception that it was opposed to peace on principle. However, its peace overtures along with its participation in the Madrid Conference quite clearly demonstrated that this was not the case.

The Madrid Peace Conference, which was jointly sponsored by the U.S. and the Soviet Union, and which included the UN as a passive observer, established the basis for direct negotiations between Israel and Syria. It began in October 1991. Syria played a leading role and sought to persuade other Arab delegates to present a united front, while claiming that individual peace agreements, and the Camp David Accords, had weakened the Arab position. It suggested a meeting in Damascus on 23 October 1991 that would establish a common position. Before the conference began, the Syrian government made it clear that it regarded 'peace' as synonymous with a complete Israeli withdrawal from the '1967' territories and the full restoration of Palestinian rights.[70] Syria then engaged with the aim of ending the Israeli occupation and containing Israel's regional influence.[71]

During the negotiations, the U.S. was clearly unwilling to use its influence to force Israel to make territorial concessions. This appeared to be a preference, as the collapse of the Soviet Union meant it was now in a position to exert its influence to an unprecedented extent.[72]

In addition to its international engagements, the Syrian political elite sought to re-educate Syrians about the benefits of peace and, as a result, the 'honourable peace' became part of popular discourse. However, Syrian diplomats were also keen to project an image of strength and this was why their representations in the opening stages of the conference so clearly presented animosity and a lack of trust.[73]

The Conference failed because neither side acknowledged that the underpinning principle ('land for peace') and grounds for negotiation (UNSC Resolutions 242 and 338) had evaporated. Syrian delegates also quickly concluded that their Israeli counterparts were being deliberately intransigent and wanted to force them out of the Peace Process. These provocations included the unilateral deportation of Hamas members to southern Lebanon. The Syrian delegates did not respond, as they were fully aware this would be in Israel's interest and, in any case, they were in a vulnerable international position. Their flexibility was, however, not limitless, and they therefore continued to insist on several non-negotiable demands.[74]

In contrast to several of his predecessors (most notably Carter and Bush),[75] who were personally and politically invested in the Peace Process, Clinton appeared peripheral and even ceremonial. Warren Christopher, his secretary of state, did seek to break the deadlock with Syria when he hosted private discussions at Maryland's Wye Plantation.[76] The first round of talks began on 27 December 1993 and concluded on 29 December 1993 and was then followed by

a second round between 3 and 5 January 1996. This 'track' then collapsed after Syria refused to participate in a further round of talks.[77]

In these talks, the U.S. recognised that the Golan Heights were a strategic asset to Israel and that its water reserves were essential in a region that experienced perennial shortages. For Syria, in contrast, primarily valued the Heights because they symbolised a sense of honour and pride that had been lost in the 1967 War. However, they also have a clear strategic importance, as they are only 40 miles away from Damascus.

The symbolic significance of Syrian representatives meeting with Clinton in Geneva was arguably as important as the content of the talks. Assad made his intentions quite clear in his public address ('In honour we fought. In honour, we shall negotiate. In honour, we shall make peace'),[78] which was notably devoid of the socialist or anti-imperialist rhetoric that Arab dictators had previously indulged in when giving major international speeches.[79]

This meeting also enhanced Assad's international prestige, improved bilateral relations between the countries, and helped to clarify Syria's regional role and communicate it to a wider audience.[80] However, Clinton did not remove Syria from a list of state sponsors of terrorism, which would have enabled it to receive American investments, loans, and technologies.[81]

Although Syria supported Arab solidarity in the face of international intrigues and local co-option, it was also aware that it could not prevent local actors from pursuing their own initiatives, as when Jordan and the PLO signed separate peace treaties with Israel.[82] Jordan's long-established openness to U.S. peace initiatives in the region derives from its close relationship with the U.S. One official in the Jordanian government said: 'We [the Jordanians] should not be surprised if the Americans attempted to keep up the pressure on us until we have agreed to sign a peace treaty'. Geopolitical factors are another factor, as the country shares borders with Iraq, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and the West Bank.[83] Before the Six-Day War, the King made peace with Nasser, joined the Syrian–Egyptian Defence Pact and placed his armed forces under Egyptian command. His actions placed considerable strains on Jordan–U.S. relations.

However, just three years later, he was struggling to remain in power, as the PLO threatened to seize the country.[84] Nixon responded by providing large-scale military and financial aid. Jordan's subsequent (and limited) participation in the 1973 October war did not significantly impact on U.S.–Jordan relations. However, the King's internal repression of Jordan's Palestinian population was strongly condemned by other Arab states.[85] More than one-third of the country's population is Palestinian, and this is still a highly sensitive matter.[86]

The Peace Process has helped Jordan to become more politically assured, and it has replaced Egypt as the Arab mediator with America.[87] Jordanian delegates led a joint Jordanian–Palestinian team in the Madrid Peace Conference and Hussein engaged Israeli representatives in bilateral peace negotiations. It was significant, for example, that the Israeli Knesset was more supportive of the peace agreement with Jordan than the counterpart agreement with Egypt.

Hussein did, however, disengage from the Peace Process at different points. In 1978, for example, he refused to accept Camp David's proposals for Palestinian 'autonomy', as he did not want to become Israel's security subcontractor.[88] In addition, he insisted that the ending of Israel's occupation of the West Bank was a precondition for Jordanian participation. In a September 1982 speech, Ronald Reagan hinted at the possibility of an association between the Gaza Strip, West Bank, and Jordan; Hussein, however, resisted subsequent overtures from the U.S., as he believed there was not a sufficiently strong basis for proceeding.[89]

His refusal to join the Western-led coalition against Saddam Hussein came as a surprise to observers who presumed that Jordan was the most pro-Western of Arab states. Bush then withheld around U.S.$55 million of military and economic aid, and when the Secretary of State James Baker travelled to the region in March 1991, he did not stay in Amman. By the end of the following month, Hussein had switched track and sought to persuade the Americans that his country had a role to play in implementing the international blockade of Iraq and helping to negotiate an Arab–Israeli peace settlement.[90] Hussein was, however, reported to be shocked by the extent of the concessions that the PLO leadership was reported to have made in the 'secret channel' negotiations. His concerns proved to be prophetic as the resulting Accords exacerbated Yasser Arafat's internal weaknesses and were also not, contrary to popular misconception and misunderstanding, an initial step in the direction of Palestinian statehood.

Syria remained committed to the Peace Process, and this was shown when it committed to influencing Hezbollah's activities in southern Lebanon.[91] This was, however, potentially jeopardised by 'Operation Grapes of Wrath', a prolonged IDF offensive against Hezbollah forces in southern Lebanon that was launched in April 1996, whose military pretext barely concealed its electoral importance for the Labor Party's. The Clinton administration unconditionally supported the operation, which rapidly spun out of control. Assad then seized the opportunity and helped to negotiate a cease-fire that was accepted by the U.S. and Israel.[92]

Conclusion

Although Syria was a close regional ally of the Soviet Union, it had considerable autonomy in foreign affairs, and this was especially true after 1973, when Soviet influence in the region reached its zenith. Remnants of the alliance (such as the naval base at Tartous) are historic relics, a vestige of an era that has since passed. Even at its height, the relationship with the Soviet Union was limited to military cooperation and arms sales: the limited appeal of Communism within the region meant that the relationship was always destined to lack the scope and depth of the U.S.–Israel relationship, to take one example.

The Soviet priority was, as we have seen, the exact inverse of the U.S., and it therefore endeavoured to promote conflict in the region. While Syria was certainly an important part of this strategy, it had considerable autonomy in foreign affairs: this was shown by its participation in peace talks after the 1973 War and

the Madrid Conference, which shortly preceded the collapse of the Soviet Union. The claim that it opposed peace on principle was a convenient political fiction that bore little or no relation to the actual reality.

The regime's adversaries were by no means solely to blame for the persistence of this misconception. The regime itself assiduously sought to position itself as a steadfast opponent of Israel and the West, and it did so in the full knowledge that this self-aggrandising posturing was key to its domestic legitimacy. It therefore presented itself as the vanguard of Arab opposition to Western influence in the region. The centrality of militarism and self-sacrifice in its political discourse also reinforced the perception it was implacably opposed to 'peace'.

However, this was largely for show and was intended to reassure allies and deter adversaries. By as early as 1948, Syria had indicated its willingness to accept a peace agreement. In subsequent years, its intention was essentially to negotiate a peace agreement from a position of strength. Its efforts to undermine the Peace Process, as shown by its support for Hezbollah and Hamas, were not a rejection of peace per se, but rather a rejection of the peace that was on offer.

The sincerity of Syria's commitment was admittedly open to question, as Hafez al-Assad made a somewhat unlikely peacenik. However, the U.S. commitment was at times equally open to question: this was shown in the 2000 Camp David negotiations, when Clinton held open the possibility of a separate agreement with Syria in an attempt to extract compromises from Palestinian representatives.

Had a peace agreement been achieved, it is likely that al-Assad would have used 'peace' to advance his strategic interests and priorities, in precisely the same way as Israel has done. In any case, Syria remained open to this possibility for decades and the fact that it did not come to pass was more due to Cold War priorities than his supposed 'rejectionism'.

Syria's steadfastness on particular points is by no means exceptional, as the example of Jordan's King Hussein demonstrates. Although Jordan is frequently held up as an exemplar of a regional partner, Hussein actually diverged from Western partners at key points, including the First Gulf War and the negotiation of the Oslo Accords. While he was uncomfortable with the number and extent of concessions that Arafat made to Israel, his own peace agreement with Israel was negotiated from a position of weakness.

The example of Syria raises a suspicion that Israel and the U.S. were reluctant to diplomatically engage with an Arab country that was determined to negotiate from a position of strength. The 1979 peace agreement was perhaps the exception in this regard, as it was negotiated on the back of Egypt and Syria's initial military advances in the 1973 War. In all other instances, the impression is that the U.S. seeks out weak, compromised, and acquiescent leaders who have no alternative but to make concessions. From this perspective, 'peace' appears more like surrender.

Assad's call for a 'peace with honour' opens up this essential contradiction at the heart of the Peace Process. In the 1991 Madrid Conference, the insistence of Syrian and Palestinian delegates on upholding essential rights and conditions resulted in the talks collapsing. Salvation was, however, at hand, in the form

of PLO negotiators who were willing to make 'necessary' compromises in the 'secret channel' talks. The lesson was quite clear: Arabs should expect 'peace' on the terms given to them. They were grateful supplicants rather than genuine partners in a joint project.

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6 The Palestinian ‘Problem’

The notion of a Palestinian ‘problem’ is inadvertently revealing, as it brings to mind a collection of vexed international statesmen being diverted from more pressing and important matters to attend to a ‘problem’, in much the same way as one might be forced to attend to a broken sink or table. This problem ‘exists’ insofar as it afflicts them and their ability to go about their daily work.

The notion of a ‘problem’, in other words, suggests something that needs to be ‘fixed’. It effectively robs Palestinians of agency and suggests that it is incumbent upon outsiders to resolve the ‘problem’. It would clearly be better if it did not exist, but it does, and so it must be begrudgingly attended to. It is not an issue of justice, or of a moral obligation but rather a ‘problem’ that prevents things from functioning as they ought to. It impedes the effective functioning of the system and prevents it from achieving optimal capacity.

This is, in essence, the level at which the ‘international community’ and Israel have chosen to pitch the issue. The Palestinian leadership is also responsible for this, as it allowed established rights and entitlements to be relegated to the status of negotiable ‘final status’ issues. The proposition that the rights of Palestinian refugees who were forcibly expelled from their homes should be an item to be haggled over is of course grossly offensive, but these are the terms of reference that the respective parties have accepted.

The advocates of Palestinian ‘moderation’ would have us celebrate this as progress and as evidence of the Palestinian leadership’s increasing pragmatism. However, this overlooks the fact that the Palestinia Lieberation Organization (PLO) had actually incrementally inched towards the two-state solution since the mid-1970s onwards. The PLO’s 1988 decision to recognise Israel in its pre-1967 ‘borders’ was not an abrupt or sudden diplomatic breakthrough or departure but rather the formal culmination of a drawn-out process.

There is also a widespread popular misconception that the Israelis made concessions and compromises in search of peace. This is quite clearly false as the only ‘concession’ that Israel made was to recognise the PLO and to agree to enter into negotiations with it. In contrast, the PLO’s ‘concessions’ were more striking and numerous. They included the renunciation of 77 per cent of Historical Palestine and the alteration of the status of the territories, which changed from being ‘occupied’ to being ‘disputed’. A legal terminology and vernacular was

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therefore complemented and even replaced, by a political rationality. The status of the oPt under international law had previously been crystal-clear, but the subordination of law to negotiation now injected a degree of ambiguity.

In addition, contrary to popular misconception, Israel was not formally committed to the establishment of a Palestinian state. Many observers presumed that this was the case but in actual fact this was subject to the vagaries of 'constructive ambiguity' and, by the end of the 'interim period', the goodwill of the Israeli occupiers. An Israel commitment to the two-state solution only came later, with the publication of the 2003 Road Map. Even then, it was questionable if it actually contained the seeds of substantive statehood.

A further contradiction arose within the fact that the Accords did not end the occupation – Oslo II instead envisaged what can more accurately be described as redeployment. In addition to failing to address existing problems, the Accords also introduced new ones – for example, movement between the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Israel was increasingly restricted, both by the creation of new administrative zones (A, B, and C) and by the additional restrictions that Israel imposed on Palestinian movement.

Additional problems also arose from the newly imported governing elite. The PLO leadership had operated in exile and therefore had a poor grasp of the situation on the ground. Their experience of 'governance' extended to the parts of Jordan and Lebanon that had been under their de facto control, which hardly established a promising precedent for the implementation of the Accords. After the PLO's 1982 expulsion from Beirut, Arafat's leadership style had also become increasingly authoritarian and the Accords actually reinforced this democratic deficit. The international community and Israel were also happy to turn a blind eye to developments such as the expansion of the Palestinian security forces beyond permitted limits; such transgressions were tolerated on the condition that they would help to 'pacify' the territories: it was only later, after the outbreak of the *Al-Aqsa Intifada*, that external donors developed a serious interest in 'good governance' and 'democratic accountability'. Even then, the U.S. and the international community refused to honour the results of the 2006 PLC elections.

This chapter proposes to demonstrate how the Palestinian 'problem' has, in the contemporary context, been treated in terms that effectively deny its status as a historical injustice in which the very existence of a people, along with their associated rights, has been systematically and flagrantly denied. Instead, the Palestinian 'problem' has more frequently been treated as a product to be bartered over, an inconvenience, a security issue, and an object of technocratic intervention.

The Madrid Conference

In return for the support of its Arab allies in the First Gulf War, the U.S. promised it would start working towards a historic agreement. There was now a widespread regional belief that the U.S. was able to uphold its principles and values.[1] Before the Conference, Bush (Sr.) explained how it was linked into his core foreign policy goals, including establishing shared security arrangements and limiting the

proliferation of WMD and WMD delivery systems. He also promised to establish conditions for regional peace and stability by promoting economic growth and development.[2]

The Madrid Conference was designed to promote U.S. influence in the region, and it emerged from previous geopolitical developments that included the terminal decline of the Soviet Union, the PLO's diplomatic marginalisation, and the First Gulf War.[3] When the Soviet Union refused to extend political or military support to Iraq during the conflict,[4] it further confirmed its own geopolitical irrelevance and the emergence of a 'New World Order'.[5] The U.S. viewed this wider context as establishing a sound basis for the Conference,[6] which would encourage Israeli and Arab participants to make concessions.[7]

The talks adopted the principle of territorial compromise, applied a distinctively regional framework, and sought to promote security.[8] The U.S. was fully committed to resolving the Arab–Israeli conflict as it believed this would further its own interests. The large Arab contingent repeatedly expressed an expectation that the U.S. would use its influence to advance the negotiations, but the U.S. was determined to resist this: it rejected Mediation as a strategy[9] and instead sought to facilitate proceedings.[10] Arab participants favoured broad participation, the full engagement of the UN, and, by implication, the complete implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions. They expected the U.S. to uphold the general principle of 'land for peace' and encourage Israel to withdraw from the territories it had occupied in 1967.[11]

Israel, which had initially been opposed to an international conference,[12] opposed the UN's involvement.[13] It denied that relevant UNSC resolutions imposed obligations on it, and claimed this did not detract from its more general commitment to peace.[14] After the First Gulf War, Israel was not in a position to resist sustained U.S. pressure that included the threatened withholding of loan guarantees. However, Shamir agreed to a conference as long as it would not have the authority to impose a settlement.[15] From the outset, it was therefore established that the Conference would not have decision-making powers.[16]

The Conference began in March 1991, just weeks after the end of the Gulf War. Between March and October, secretary of state James Baker made eight trips to the Middle East. Bush (Sr.) reiterated his country's long-standing position and insisted a comprehensive Arab–Israeli peace must be rooted in relevant UN resolutions. He also reiterated that participants should honour and uphold the principle of 'land for peace', recognise Palestinian political rights, and acknowledge Israel's entitlement to security.[17]

The U.S. wanted to prevent the Conference from becoming bogged down and therefore drew on 'constructive ambiguity'.[18] Although the U.S. was reluctant to impose terms, Bush (Sr.) was willing to pressurise Israel when he believed that U.S. interests were at stake. For example, when he responded to Israel's settlement activities by postponing U.S.$10 billion in loan guarantees, he made it clear this reflected a 'strongly held view'.[19] Moshe Arens, Israel's former foreign and defence minister, claimed this action was without precedent in Israel–U.S. relations, and the diplomatic fall-out contributed to Shamir's defeat in Israel's June

1992 elections. Bush's position, however, improved the U.S. standing in a large part of the Arab world.[20]

Conference invitations were sent to Israel, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, the Palestinians (but not the PLO, which was excluded), and Egypt. The EC president, the GCC secretary-general, and a UN Secretary-General representative were all present in an observer capacity. The U.S. also kept Russia informed, in the hope this would make it more likely to exert pressure on Syria and the PLO. The U.S., in turn, needed to pressure Israel to even attend.[21] The two countries cooperated on the letters of invitation, with the aim of establishing common interpretations and expectations. This broad base of participation was welcomed on the grounds it would help to sustain a collective peace.[22]

In its communications with Syria and the PLO, the U.S. called for the end of the occupation, the cessation of Israeli settlement activity, and international recognition of the Palestinian claim to East Jerusalem. This was consistent with UNSCR 242 and 338,[23] and it also recognised that Israel's effective annexation of the Golan Heights in 1981 was illegal. Both Syria and the PLO accepted these reiterations of the U.S. position without objecting they were inconsistent with ongoing developments on the ground.[24]

The U.S. was, however, quite clearly guilty of upholding double standards, as even the most unreflective of observers could not fail to be struck by the contrast between the international response to Iraq's occupation of Kuwait and Israel's occupation of the oPt. There was also a clear contradiction between America's ostensible recognition of Palestinian rights and its willingness to exploit the PLO's weaknesses for its own purposes.[25]

The PLO was fully aware of how much the international and regional environment had changed after the Cold War and the First Gulf War.[26] The PLO had lost the financial support of oil-producing Gulf nations, and hundreds of thousands of Palestinian workers were deported. This was significant as Gulf remittances had previously accounted for an annual total inflow of more than U.S.$100 million. This created a serious internal crisis within the PLO, and it was consequently expected to agree to any serious diplomatic overture.[27] Both the local Palestinian leadership in the oPt and the PLO leadership actively sought U.S. leadership in the negotiations with Israelis, which reflected their awareness of their own weakness and belief that the U.S. was the only country that could pressurise Israel into agreeing to a fair deal. Both sides therefore had their own reasons for supporting U.S. involvement.[28]

Israel continued to place great faith in its relationship with the U.S. Although it had been reluctant to engage with the Conference, its concerns were qualified by the fact it was not required to negotiate directly with the PLO and would not be pressured to acquiesce to the cessation of settlement construction in the oPt or Palestinian self-determination. It was further reassured by Gerald Ford's 1976 guarantee to Yitzhak Rabin that any Syrian settlement would not overlook the strategic importance of the Golan Heights[29] and the fact that many of Bush's (Sr.) staff were members of AIPAC or public supporters of Israel. In 1991, his staff included Dennis B. Ross (director of the state department's policy planning

staff), Aaron David Miller (state Department Policy Planning staff member), Daniel C. Kurtzer (deputy assistant secretary of state), William J. Burns (principal deputy director of the State Department policy planning staff), and Richard N. Haass (special assistant to the president for national security affairs).[30]

The Conference would proceed through direct negotiations along Israeli/Arab and Israeli/Palestinian tracks that were interdependent, and which referred back to UNSCR 242 and 338.[31] A regional dimension was incorporated to prevent the talks from being 'bogged down' by the Palestinian issue.[32]

The final (tenth) round of negotiations concluded in July 1993. Israel issued a statement that it could not accept proposals that would result in a sovereign Palestinian state and would not contribute to the settlement of the conflict. Although the Conference produced a number of positive effects (including direct negotiations and the establishment of bridging positions), it fell short of its initial objectives. In retrospect, perhaps its main contribution was to provide impetus to the secret back-channel talks between Israeli and PLO representatives that began before the Conference.[33]

Negotiating the Oslo Accords

On 20 January 1993, the Knesset removed the ban that had previously prevented Israelis from contacting the PLO, in clear anticipation that the Israeli and PLO leaderships would soon engage in direct negotiations.[34] The Israeli government subsequently acknowledged that the timing of the proposal was strongly influenced by the U.S. elections.[35]

The 'Oslo' process began in December 1992 and negotiations were held in Oslo because of the influence of the Norwegian government, who originally led discussions across three phases. The 'Oslo' back channels were initially intended to supplement the formal peace negotiations, and both the PLO and Israel agreed that any agreement obtained in this channel could then be used by the U.S. as a proposal in other contexts.[36]

One of the main obstacles was that 'high-level' approval was required at particular points in the negotiations.[37] Norway said it would keep the U.S. informed about the back-channel and, after each meeting, its deputy foreign minister (Egeland) reported to the U.S. State Department[38] (it has, however, been claimed that the U.S. lacked complete information).[39] It is a myth that the channel was a secret that was jealously protected by the two parties[40] although the Americans were kept up-to-date; they were surprised by the direction and pace of negotiations.[41]

The Accords were adopted by the U.S., who did not appear to be concerned that they had originally developed under different auspices, and this most probably reflected the fact they aligned with its key regional priorities and commitments.[42] It is still open to question if the Accords were flawed from the outset or if their implementation was the problem. They established the basis for military redeployment rather than withdrawal; offered a political status that was apparently indistinguishable from the 'autonomy' that Palestinians had previously rejected;

and postponed the so-called 'final status' issues that Palestinians regarded as synonymous with the conflict to a later date.[43] Equally significantly, the Declaration of Principles was also fatally undermined by a lack of clarity, particularly on issues such as settlers and borders.[44] The more general concept of a 'Peace Process' was also deeply problematic as few, if any; Palestinian grievances were addressed, much less resolved.

The resolution of the refugee issue, which Palestinians consider to be synonymous with the conflict itself, was made conditional on the satisfaction of Israel's security demands. In addition, although the Accords ostensibly aspired to Palestinian self-determination, they actually reinforced Israel's control of the oPt. The establishment of artificial distinctions (Gazans, Palestinians-in-exile, Palestinians in Israel, and West Bank Palestinians) also undermined the unity of the Palestinian nation. In addition, the Accords did not touch on the final status of the West Bank, and there was no assurance that its territorial integrity would be maintained after the end of the interim period. Closer inspection in fact suggested precisely the opposite – namely that the Accords would establish an Israeli protectorate that would provide a bridge to the wider Arab world.

The first five rounds of meetings were attended by two Israel academics, who participated in 13 rounds of meetings over an eight-month period. The first Israeli meeting was held on 20 January 1993: Yair Hirschfeld and Ron Pundik were the Israeli participants, and Ahmed Query and Hassan Asfour (his assistant) were their Palestinian counterparts. The Declaration of Principles was drafted in the final (13th) round of discussions, which were held on 20 August 1993.[45]

The talks almost broke down on several occasions. The eleventh round opened in an atmosphere of considerable tension, after Israeli participants strongly objected to proposed Palestinian amendments of re-deployment procedure and control of border crossings, and even threatened to withdraw. Savir sought to defuse the crisis by outlining seven points, which he asked Arafat to accept. He explained that once they were accepted, direct negotiations between the PLO and Israel could begin. Savir requested:

- Recognition of Israel's right to exist in peace and security.
- A PLO commitment to resolve the conflict by peaceful means.
- Acceptance of UNSR 242 and 338 as the basis for negotiations.
- The PLO'S full renunciation of terrorism.
- A commitment to resolve differences through negotiation.
- The end of the *Intifada*.
- The full rescinding of the clauses of the Palestinian Covenant that explicitly called for Israel's destruction or otherwise contradicted the Peace Process.[46]

Round twelve took place between 13 and 15 August 1993 and engaged with mutual recognition and the declaration of principles. At one point, the negotiations were potentially derailed when Israel threatened to switch to the Syrian track,[47] which was probably a deliberate attempt to pressurise the Palestinians. The Israeli representatives were fully aware that the PLO was sensitive about

being marginalised after the Madrid Peace Conference and sought to exploit this for its own purposes.[48]

Negotiations were also deeply impacted by the wider context. The First Intifada was ongoing and the oPt was still occupied.[49] Shimon Peres also candidly admitted that he submitted several proposals to the negotiators that would have been rejected outright if he had been acknowledged as the author. Israel was also aware that the PLO was sensitive about being further marginalised after the Madrid Peace Conference.[50]

The election of a Labor government under the leadership of Yitzhak Rabin changed the political dynamics of the Peace Process to an even greater extent. The 1992 elections returned Bill Clinton as the new Democrat president. Clinton was fully aware of the level of pro-Israel sentiment within his own party and U.S. politics more generally.[51] In his election campaign, he described Israel as his strongest regional ally, and his campaign was strongly focused on Israel's interests and priorities. He was duly rewarded with almost 80 per cent of the Jewish vote.[52]

In a *New York Times* interview, which was published just before the public signing of the Oslo Accords, he discussed a trip to Israel with his pastor, who had forecast that he would become U.S. president one day. Clinton, however, was particularly struck by his pastor's subsequent remark: 'Just remember, God will never forgive you if you turn your back on Israel'.[53]

Clinton had every intention of following this advice and promised to maintain existing levels of aid assistance to Israel, further enhance U.S.–Israeli military and technology cooperation, and establish a U.S.–Israeli high-tech commission. He also committed to end the Arab economic boycott of Israel.[54] In contrast to his predecessor, Clinton viewed Israeli settlements as a 'complication' rather than as a flagrant illegality that openly defied the expressed will of the international community.

Even in the absence of a Soviet competitor, the U.S. was unwilling to compel Israel to behave in a certain way and the contrast between Clinton and his predecessor was striking in this respect. The strategic incentive to accommodate Israel had disappeared, but U.S. policy showed no intention of changing in response.

Another popular misconception holds that the Oslo Accords significantly broke with the established conventions and practices of the Peace Process. While this may have been true of Israel–Palestinian relations, it did not apply to U.S. policy more generally: indeed, from this perspective the continuities appear considerably more striking than the discontinuities,[55] with the Accords appearing in the lineage of previous peace initiatives.[56] Christison therefore claimed that while the Conference failed to achieve its stated objectives, it did at least invest the Peace Process with a degree of momentum. In addition, developments within the Conference impacted the 'secret channel' negotiators, which underlined that they were, at least to some extent, interrelated and part of a single process.[57]

For Palestinians, there was a clear distinction between the Madrid Conference, when Palestinian representatives had insisted on a negotiated settlement that upheld key Palestinian conditions, and the Oslo Accords, in which Israel recognised the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and

agreed to enter into negotiations on this basis.[58] In return, it agreed to recognise the PLO.[59]

An entirely different arrangement could have been put in place, as Shimon Peres and King Hussein had previously secretly agreed that the West Bank would be returned to Jordan in exchange for mutual peace and security guarantees. However, Israel's internal politics meant this deal could not be concluded. After Warren Christopher promised to wipe out all of Jordan's foreign aid debts, Jordan pushed ahead with peace negotiations. The Washington Declaration of 25 July 1994 then provided the basis for a formal peace treaty, which:

1. Established the Jordan River as the boundary between Jordan and the West Bank.
2. Normalised political and diplomatic relations between Israel and Jordan.
3. Established the basis for antiterrorism co-operation.
4. Established the principle of mutual respect for each other's territory.
5. Established the basis for equal rights of access to the waters of the River Jordan (along with other joint water supplies).
6. Established the basis for a joint resolution of the Palestinian refugee problem.[60]

Jordan primarily agreed to these conditions as a way of improving its relations with the U.S., although it was also aware of the economic benefits that a peace treaty with Israel would produce. However, the benefits, including F-16 warplanes and advanced M60 tanks, further exacerbated Jordanian dependence on the U.S. Jordan also agreed to the establishment of a base that would enable the U.S. to conduct F-16 flights over Southern Iraq. In a perverse development, 'peace' therefore enabled the establishment of a base that was added to the long list of U.S. military bases in the region.[61]

Implementing the Accords

The Israeli–Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip (also known as Oslo II) was signed by Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin on 28 September 1995.[62] It sought to enable the implementation of Oslo I, and its main contribution was to divide the West Bank and Gaza into three areas (A, B, and C) and establish a basis for a phased Israeli 'withdrawal' (it would be more accurate to describe it as a redeployment) from parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It also anticipated the basis for the establishment of an 88-member Palestinian legislature (Palestinian Legislative Council or PLC), and elections followed in January 1996.[63]

Ron Pundak describes the 'Oslo spirit' as the goal 'of working towards a conceptual change which would lead to a dialogue based, as far as possible, on fairness, equality and common objectives'.[64] Pundak claims that implementation later become a particular problem as this 'spirit' did not extend to the Israeli officials who designed the implementation agreements or who were responsible for negotiating with the Palestinians on implementation matters.[65]

However, the oversights were arguably as important as these 'achievements', as Oslo II failed to address rapidly accelerating Israeli settlement construction, both in the Greater Jerusalem area and the West Bank more generally. The U.S. also repeatedly failed to address this issue in its bilateral diplomacy with Israel.[66]

The U.S. preferred not to intervene, as it believed this would help the negotiations to gain momentum. But at different points Clinton was keen to ensure that his own personal contribution, and that of the U.S., was acknowledged.[67] On the day before the Sharm al-Sheikh summit (on 13 March 1996), Clinton visited Israel and, in directly addressing the Knesset, promised to provide financial support and military equipment to Israel.[68]

Any influence that the U.S. exerted during the 'Oslo years' was, more often than not, negative.[69] It repeatedly sought to impose Israel's plans on the Palestinians (even to the point of presenting Israeli proposals as its own), ignored the substantive content of UN Resolutions 242 and 383 (while ostensibly upholding them as the basis of negotiations), and failed to acknowledge the opinions of the international community. The continuation of U.S. aid to Israel, despite its repeated violations of the letter and spirit of the Accords, also created the impression that it was being rewarded for its violations. Arab observers saw that the U.S. appeared to be entirely comfortable with Israel violating Palestinian rights, ignoring UN resolutions, flouting international law, and occupying Palestinian land[70]; Slater explains how Clinton's departure from the policies of previous U.S. administrations, in addition to his failure to engage moral reference points, deprived him of any clear sense of political direction.

Edward Said, a prominent critic of the Peace Process, blamed the U.S. for exploiting the inherent injustices and inequities of the process and helping to promote Israeli occupation and settlement practices through other means. Said also strongly criticised the PA for its complicity.

Benjamin Netanyahu's election as Israel's prime minister in May 1996 was a key turning point in the Peace Process. The U.S. had previously at least given lip service to the principle of reciprocity but this pleasantry swiftly evaporated once Netanyahu demanded that Israel's priorities should be privileged. During his election campaign, he strongly resisted further 'concessions' to the PA and insisted that Jerusalem would remain as Israel's undivided capital.

Whereas the Peace Process had been self-sustaining to some extent under the Labor coalition, the U.S. was now obliged to intervene more frequently in order to address obstacles.[71] Oslo II had been retrieved by U.S. intervention and some observers claimed this established a precedent.[72] However, this overlooked the fact that the U.S. only intervened at points of potential collapse and was not willing to impose specific conditions on Israel. The appearance of a powerless superpower further depleted the U.S. reputation in the region.

The signing of the Hebron Agreement on 17 January 1997 did not restore any real sense of momentum. It instituted an arrangement where Palestinian security forces worked in the H1 area of the city and Israeli soldiers and security forces ensured the security of Jewish settlers in the H2 area.[73]Although the Agreement prevented the process from collapsing, its main implication was that the U.S. was

not willing to take the required steps for peace.[74] It also again reiterated that Israel was willing and able to exploit the 'constructive ambiguity' of the Accords. This was of course to be expected in the absence of effective arbitration measures, and here it should be remembered that this was not a design oversight but rather an Israeli precondition for committing in the first instance.[75]

On 17 March 1997, the Israeli government began construction of a new Jewish settlement in *Gabal Abu Ghneem/Har-Homa*, which is part of Arab East Jerusalem. Arafat suspended the Peace Process and a wave of suicide bombings followed before Israel responded by outlining a further expansion of West Bank settlements on 2 April 1997. The Netanyahu's government's repeated failure to honour withdrawal commitments created a crisis that continued throughout 1997[76] and on 20 March 1998, Netanyahu rejected a U.S. proposal that Israel should withdraw from 13.1 per cent of the West Bank.[77] Five months later, Netanyahu accepted this, but only on the (absurd) condition that 3 per cent of the territory would be maintained as a nature reserve. Madeleine Albright, the U.S. secretary of state, recognised that this farcical turn of events could cause the collapse of the entire Peace Process and announced a peace summit would be held in the U.S.

The Wye River Memorandum

The summit, which began on 15 October 1998, was hosted at the Aspen Institute's Wye River Conference Centre.

The Wye River Memorandum was produced, and Arafat and Netanyahu signed it on 23 October 1998. One anonymous official, in providing an unintended insight into U.S. priorities, admitted that Clinton was keen not to alienate conservative Jews , because he was relying on them to help pay off the large debt accumulated by his 1996 election campaign.[78] The memorandum would result in:

1. Israel's withdrawal from 13 per cent of the West Bank over a period of 90 days.
2. A subsequent transfer of 14.2 per cent of West Bank land from joint Israeli–Palestinian control to Palestinian control.
3. The establishment of a Palestinian–Israeli committee that would help to oversee third-phase troop withdrawals.
4. The creation of a safe passage corridor that would establish a connection between the Gaza Strip and West Bank.
5. The opening of a Palestinian airport and seaport.
6. The phased release of 750 Palestinian political prisoners.
7. Increased counter-terrorism activities by the PA (including the arrest of 30 Palestinians who Israel accused of terrorism).
8. The Palestinian drafting of a detailed plan of counter-terrorism action that would then be submitted to the CIA.
9. The removal of 'hostile' (i.e. anti-Israel) clauses from the Palestinian Covenant.

Netanyahu, with American support, succeeded in replacing the 'land for peace' principle with a 'land for security' counterpart.[79] Reciprocity was therefore undermined at the expense of conditionality. The Memorandum also established the U.S. as arbiter, inspector, and guarantor, with responsibility for almost every aspect of agreement implementation.[80]

Along with the memorandum, Bill Clinton also presented Netanyahu with five letters that each set out a number of assurances. These reiterated a 'strong commitment to Israel's security' and also promised that the U.S. would not adopt any position or express any views on the next Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank.

Clinton also clarified that Israel alone was responsible for deciding its security needs and indicated that the U.S. would henceforth oppose any 'unilateral declaration' of the Palestinian state. Israel's relatively modest concessions were only obtained after considerable U.S. engagement and engagement. Despite this, Netanyahu still attempted to scuttle the memorandum on the last day of negotiations by insisting that Jonathan Pollard, a convicted Israeli spy (who U.S. intelligence officials still considered to be a risk to American security), should be released.[81]

The Camp David Negotiations (2000)

In the Camp David negotiations, the Clinton administration went further than its predecessors. By this point, the Peace Process was no longer self-sustaining, and it required U.S. intervention at almost every step. The U.S. had been indirectly involved in the negotiation of the Accords, but it was now required to intermittently be catalyst, intermediar, guarantor, facilitator, mediator, energiser, and messenger.[82] In many senses, the summit (which took place between 11 and 25 July) was an implicit acknowledgement of the failure of the Oslo process, and an attempt to salvage something from the wreckage. It was also an attempt (conscious or unconscious) to emulate Jimmy Carter's 1978 Camp David summit.[83]

The Palestinians were critical of Clinton's reluctance to push an agenda and suggested that he allowed Israel to determine the terms of reference without taking into account 'real' interests in the region. The Clinton administration, for its part, argued that peace could not be imposed from without.[84]

In retrospect, perhaps the most important feature of the summit was that a U.S. president, for the first time, put forward an offer that was close to Palestinian requirements.[85] Clinton was also closely engaged with the negotiations as they progressed and developed[86] and his involvement even extended to sartorial arrangements – he banned suits and ties and said the participants should present themselves in casual clothing, as this would make it easier for the two sides to engage with each other. He also prepared extensively for the summit.[87]

The negotiators ate meals together, and Madeleine Albright even invited them to play in a basketball game. While such innovations appeared harmless, they trivialised the conflict by suggesting that it could be conceived and understood at the level of personal relations and individual perceptions. This implied an oversight of the structural dimensions of the conflict,[88] and this emphasis came at the

expense of a more sustained engagement with procedural factors (most notably the schedule) that had a greater potential to undermine negotiations.[89]

The U.S. also retained the option of switching to the Syrian track at any point of negotiations. Any agreement with Syria would implicitly involve Lebanon, and this would create a situation in which the Palestinian territories were the only 'front-line' actor not to have a peace agreement with Israel. However, this is quite transparently a conceit, as both the U.S. and Israel were more clearly invested in reaching an agreement with the Palestinians.[90] Even if it had been more plausible, this tactic would still have created suspicion and resentment among Palestinian negotiators.

Israel also, under pressure from the Clinton administration, put forward a settlement offer that was far in advance of its previous proposals. Although Arafat rejected Israel's offer outright, the two sides came close to addressing the core underlying issues of the conflict. Hussein Agha therefore notes that the talks focused on all core issues, including Jerusalem, the Right of Return, Jerusalem, borders/security issues, and even water arrangements.[91] However, the U.S. ability to exploit these openings was limited by its oversensitivity to Israel's 'needs' and its poor grasp of the moves that Israel made during negotiations.[92] After the process collapsed, the U.S. should have acknowledged this rather than heap blame on Arafat.[93]

Jerome Slater offers an analysis that very closely aligns with Said and Khalidi when he attributes the burden of responsibility for failure to Israel, which he charges with failing to acknowledge Palestinian demands for moral justice.[94] Indeed, he has considerable justification in doing so precisely because, as Said observes, this aspect was conspicuous by its absence from the Accords.

Slater makes the important point that Rabin remained committed to a hard-line position 'that in effect would prevent any truly viable Palestinian state from being created'.[95] He notes that Rabin and Peres violated the spirit and even the letter of agreements, and also refers to Barak's failure to honour agreed commitments in the run-up to the 2000 Camp David negotiations, noting that he failed to oversee the phased withdrawal of Israeli troops, withdraw from several Arab villages that neighboured Jerusalem, and also 'imposed repeated closures and economic hardship on Palestinians'. In addition, he authorised settlement construction at a level, which exceeded that seen under Netanyahu.[96]

In considering the past record of successive Israeli prime ministers during the 'Oslo years', Slater also makes the important point that they have failed to fully overturn an established mythology and have, as a consequence, become captive to it. As he explains, the influence of this mythology is far-reaching and extends from the establishment of the State of Israel to the Arab–Israeli conflict. Although key elements of this mythology were effectively debunked by the Israeli 'New Historians' of the 1980s, it continues to exert a powerful influence on current-day Israeli politicians.

Both Khalidi and Said present the failure of the Peace Process as one of principle, or more precisely the failure to approximate to basic principles of justice and fairness. This is clearly distinguished from Oren Barak's critique, which

instead examines the extent to which the Accords departed from an established literature, theoretical foundation, and past experience.[97] He suggests that it was a profound mistake to attempt to resolve the conflict on the basis of an interstate approach, and instead suggests that it should be understood and engaged as an intergroup conflict. He observes that this has particularly important implications for the role of leaders, who cannot be expected to impose decisions in the same way as state leaders.[98] Speaking in terms of an intergroup conflict presupposes a broader framework of reference, and this highlights the limitations of, as Ehud Barak did in 2000, speaking in terms of a single summit that would 'end' the conflict.[99] Oren Barak does therefore indirectly coalesce with Said's analysis, insofar as he recognises that the Oslo Accords failed to meet essential Palestinian (and also Israeli) needs. He ultimately attributes the failure to the poor 'fit' between the applied framework and the specific requirements of the conflict.

Shlomo Ben-Ami presents the failure of the Accords as a failure of mentality, in which the respective leaders failed to make the mental and political transition that is required of genuine peacebuilders (unsurprisingly, he reserves his harshest criticisms for Arafat). However, he also gives insight into the limitations of the Accords themselves and is particularly critical of Peres's economic vision for peace, which he views as an illusion that ignores the deeply political character of the conflict, and of the absence of internationally agreed implementation and monitoring mechanisms.[100] Ultimately, however, the reader is led to the conclusion that, in direct contrast to his title, the two sides did not come 'close' to peace during the course of negotiations. Incidentally, this is the conclusion that Slater reaches.

The Post-Oslo Period

It has already been noted that the political negotiations of the Oslo Accords were undermined by economic and social deterioration in the oPt, which was in no small part due to Israel restrictions that were justified in the name of security. Sara Roy sets out many of the defining features of the post-Oslo environment in a 2012 article that was published in the *Journal of Palestine Studies*.[101] Here Roy refers to the 'dismembering' of Palestinian society and notes that this is not just a process of decay but also one in which future 'opportunities are precluded by an increasingly deformed environment'.[102]

In the post-Oslo period, political divisions between the West Bank and Gaza Strip have grown and the fragmentation of the West Bank has proceeded apace. This, as Roy notes, is a long-standing Israeli objective that can be traced back to the 1978 Drobless Plan, which proposed to integrate parts of the territory into Israel through enhanced settlement activity.[103] Although the Accords envisaged that the Strip and West Bank would be part of a single state, and indeed put associated measures into effect, the division between the two had become obvious by the end of the 1990s. Fragmentation has also enabled the negotiation of the 'final status' of the oPt and the refugee issue to be effectively delinked, meaning that

the 'Palestinian problem' has, to a large extent, been engaged and treated as a territorial dispute.

Roy also refers to the extent to which the occupation has become 'routine' and 'everyday',[104] but does not reflect on the reasons for this. Here it should be remembered that Israel's occupation was previously justified as a temporary security measure that would end when a peace agreement was established with hostile Arab states. The Oslo Accords, however, changed the status of the territories, with the consequence that they were regarded as 'disputed' rather than 'occupied'. As Roy notes, Israelis do not just object to the term 'occupation' but instead seek to 'eliminat[e] the term altogether as inapplicable'.[105] But what Roy refers to as the 'progressively routine nature of the occupation'[106] is therefore effectively an outgrowth of the Peace Process.

The 'Oslo years' extended from the September 1993 signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements to the collapse of the Camp David talks in 2000. The Second *Intifada* broke out in September 2000 after Ariel Sharon's highly provocative visit to the Temple Mount. Even during the 1990s, as we have seen, the Oslo process lost momentum and was only sustained by direct U.S. intervention. After 2000, however, Oslo's structures were only kept in place because of 'inertia' and the absence of a better alternative. Nathan Brown describes how key international actors 'clung' to aspects of the interim arrangements, including the continuation of the PA, the continued operation of the Paris Protocol (the economic framework of the Accords, which*, inter alia,* established a customs union and made arrangements for Israeli collection of Value-Added Tax), security coordination, the maintenance of security coordination between the PA and Israel, and associated peace initiatives (mediation, conferences, statements, etc.).[107]

The Taba Summit was held three months after the collapse of the Camp David negotiations, and negotiators claim it came closer to ending the conflict than any previous initiative. The Peace Process then repeatedly stalled despite intermittent attempts to revive it, including Ariel Sharon's disengagement plan, which included a 6 June 2004 withdrawal from the Gaza Strip.

Israel's apparent willingness to undertake unilateral steps in the name of peace was by no means welcomed by Palestinian negotiators, as it potentially undermined the principles of negotiation and reciprocity, which were both synonymous with the Peace Process. The Arab League, for its part, issued its own unilateral commitment in 2002, when its members stated that they would recognise Israel if it withdrew from the territories it occupied in 1967.

The Roadmap was significant as it heralded an international consensus on a Palestinian state: up until this point, it had been, in accordance with constructive ambiguity, elliptically hinted and suggested. After 2004, the 'international community' (and particularly the EU) therefore committed to building the institutions of the future Palestinian state. Security sector reform emerged as a particular priority, and this was not a significant innovation but instead appeared as an outgrowth of a 'security' emphasis that had been embedded in the Accords from the outset. The Palestinian Authority emerged as the focus of this reform agenda, as

it was assumed that improved outputs and general performance would benefit the Peace Process.

Israel's focus on the 'concessions' that it was willing to make was also a feature of this era. In the case of Sharon's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, this was particularly problematic as Dov Weisglass, a leading official in Sharon's government, had made it clear the intention was to 'freez[e] the Peace Process'.[108] This was, of course, precisely the opposite of the Israeli government has stated purpose, which was to revive the Peace Process. The construction of the so-called 'Separation Wall', which could more accurately be described as a calculated 'land grab', further underlined the Sharon government's duplicity.

The Annapolis Conference was held in late spring 2007 and was framed against the backdrop of growing Palestinian disunity after Hamas seized control of the Gaza Strip on 15 June. Tellingly, the Bush administration viewed this bitter split as an opportunity to progress and develop the Peace Process. The Conference sought to establish a comprehensive peace and included a broad number of representatives from across the Arab world, including from Syria. Conceived as a way of restarting the Roadmap, the Conference ultimately resulted in both the Israeli and Palestinian leaderships restating their commitment to the two-state solution.

However, negotiations seemed misplaced given that Israeli violations of the letter and spirit of the Accords, in addition to growing Palestinian hostility to the very concept of 'peace', meant that any 'concessions' were effective without practical implication. This inability to appreciate the importance of the wider context in which negotiations took place, which included public opinion and the internal Palestinian political situation, was a frequently recurring Israeli and U.S. weakness. Indeed, they often appeared to expect that the Palestinian leadership would 'enforce' any agreement from 'above'. Elgindy observes

> Another misguided notion that has undergirded American mediation efforts over the last couple of decades was the belief that Palestinian politics could be ignored, neutralized or otherwise subordinated to perceived needs of the peace process. […] Oslo became a vehicle not just for resolving the conflict, but also for transforming Palestinian politics with the aim of turning them into a suitable partner.[109]

The key point here is that Palestinians were not viewed as partners in peace but rather as objects of reform, whose society and politics were deemed to be in need of reform that would be enabled through external supervision and monitoring. After the publication of the Roadmap, the Bush administration therefore demanded that Palestinians should elect 'new leaders'. While at first glance this appeared to be a departure from basic democratic principle, it should be remembered that this is in fact entirely consistent with an established model of U.S. foreign policy that views democracy as an instrument of external reform.

The development of a state building discourse and practice after 2004 was also significant, as it implicated Palestinian society and politics, rather than the occupation, as the problem that needed to be addressed. Shikaki observes:

> [N]eoliberalism operationalises itself through an ideological separation of the political and economic spheres so that any discussion about relations of political domination and constraint (the architecture of Israel's elaborate military occupation of Palestinian life and land are removed from, or even internalized in, proposed policy options.[110]

This inverts the 'insider-outsider' relationship and places the 'outside' in the 'inside'. This clearly recalls Shikaki's rendering of Toufic Haddad's *Palestine Ltd*. Haddad, he explains, shows how international donors and financial institutions 'actively attempt[ed] to construct, legitimate and internalize a new political, economic and social reality within Palestinian society that would enable the perpetuation of Israeli domination over Palestinians under the guise of peacebuilding and economic development'.[111]

It is clearly difficult to speak of Palestinian 'participation' in this process, as this would require a Palestinian actor or agent that exists outside of it. However, because Palestinian agency is constituted by the process, this clearly does not apply. Needless to say, the statehood of *Palestine Ltd* was quite clearly some distance removed from the vision of national independence that had animated and sustained the Palestinian national struggle over decades. Rather, in distinctively Foucauldian terms, it instead rendered a subjectivity constituted in power relations and refracted through a knowledge of the state, society, and economy.

Barack Obama became the U.S. president on 20 January 2009, and it was widely expected that he would help to revive the Peace Process. When he came to power, the two sides were not even on speaking terms, and he made the suspension of settlement activity a precondition for resuming peace talks. Talks did briefly restart in 2010, but then almost immediately collapsed. In February 2011, the U.S. vetoed a Security Council resolution that condemned the expansion of Israel's settlements.

Tabraz alleges that the Obama administration's subsequent interventions in the conflict showed a striking inattention to the history of U.S. mediation in the Peace Process. He specifically cites its efforts to promote a framework agreement, noting that it 'leaves every detail open and [leaves] every paragraph of the text susceptible to a dozen interpretations'.[112] He also reflects on the importance of language within the conflict and Peace Process and notes that it is often what is being elided, rather than said, that is crucially important.[113] This reflects what he terms as a 'pattern of exclusion', in which Palestinian political rights are persistently denied. In the case of the Oslo Accords, 'mutual recognition' on grossly unequal terms reinforced and even legitimised this pattern.

After 2011, the U.S. provided diplomatic cover to Israel against the diplomatic fallout of the Goldstone report, which documented Israel's war crimes during the 2009 'Cast Lead' campaign; continued to oppose Palestinian efforts to accede to the ICC (International Criminal Court), despite the fact that it would have enabled the PA to hold Israel to account for these and other crimes; and also opposed Palestinian efforts to be recognised as a UN member state. U.S. support for Israel ranged from informal advice to high-level diplomatic action.

Feldman and Shikaki offered a critical assessment of Obama's initial engagement with Palestine. They observe that Netanyahu's initial rejection of the two-state solution was followed by a grudging acceptance of it in his September 2009 speech at Bar-Ilan University.[114] Curiously, however, they accompany this with the (eminently debatable) claim that he had previously operated on the basis of this principle.[115] It seems far more likely that he was committed to frustrate the emergence of a Palestinian state even while, for purposes of political convenience, appearing willing to entertain the prospect.

The U.S. also refused to criticise Israel's attacks on the Gaza Strip. In 2012, 'Operation Pillar of Defence' killed 168 Palestinians. In July–August 2014, 'Operation Protective Edge' resulted in the deaths of around 2,200 Palestinians and the targeted destruction of civilian infrastructure. Aside from its diplomatic support, the U.S. was also deeply implicated in these attacks by Israel's use of U.S.-supplied weapons.

The 2014 war inflicted terrible violence and destruction on Gaza's population. Around half a million Gazans were displaced; more than 3,000 homes were destroyed or severely damaged; and crucial infrastructure, including 120 schools, was also damaged.[116] The total cost of the conflict was estimated to have been around U.S.$4.4 billion.[117] By the time the war came to an end, 2,168 Palestinians were dead, almost one-quarter (521) of whom were children.[118] UN statistics suggested that combatants accounted for between 15 per cent[119] and 31 per cent of Palestinian fatalities.[120]

The PA was, however, placed in a difficult position because it opposed Hamas and had, in some cases, even encouraged Israel to impose more punitive restrictions on the Strip. This left the PA, and Abbas, in particular, exposed to the allegation of collaborating with the Israelis. And if Abbas continued to commit to this arrangement in the absence of clear and demonstrable, then it would raise the suspicion that his primary interest was in personally benefitting himself. This perhaps helps to explain why, in 2013–2014, he committed to direct peace talks with the Israelis. Ilan Goldenberg, in reflecting on the 'lessons' of these talks, notes that the talks were conducted in an acrimonious environment. However, Goldenberg overemphasises the importance of trust and caution[121] which are, at best, secondary considerations given that both parties only agreed to enter talks after being effectively coerced by the U.S. Indeed, this further reiterates that Goldenberg begins from the assumption that the Israeli government committed to negotiations with the intention of reaching an agreement. This is made still clearer when he refers to the proposed E-1 settlement as 'problematic',[122] a considerable understatement given the widespread consensus that its approval would present an insurmountable obstacle to the realisation of a Palestinian state.

Goldenberg also expresses the slightly strange view that negotiations are actually a benefit in themselves and that they should continue even if there is no breakthrough. This suggests that if the respective parties are still talking to each other, then this is progress of sorts. This claim can be disputed on various grounds, but perhaps the main one is that interminable talks detract from Abbas's personal authority and potentially even jeopardise it.

This is perhaps most clearly demonstrated by the controversial practice of security coordination, which is (significantly) the last remaining part of the Oslo Accords.[123] During the Oslo years, this was a key priority for international donors and Israel, and it is accordingly no surprise that it has persisted beyond other elements of the Accords. Coordination has historically been to some extent insulated from the broader Peace Process but this has changed in recent years, largely as a result of unilateral Israeli actions. In such a deeply politicised context, it was clearly mistaken to believe that security coordination could appropriately be engaged and understood as a neutral undertaking.

A similar lack of political analysis is also apparent in Zaki Shalom's 2015 article, when he refers to a number of factors that limit the Obama administration's ability to exert a positive influence, including the domestic politics on both sides and the absence of 'trust' between both parties. However, he does not reflect on the fact that 'trust' clearly presumes that both sides intend to engage in good faith, which is clearly not something that can be taken for granted in the case of Benjamin Netanyahu.[124]

Shalom also notes a pivot in Obama's approach, in which he moved from directly criticising provocative actions by Israel to understating or even 'balancing' this criticism. Again, if such actions were undertaken in the expectation that Israel would reciprocate, this represented a quite degree of credulity on the part of the Obama administration.[125]

Through the course of its engagement with both parties, the administration could hardly have been unaware of the scale of the challenge that it was facing, and this clearly influenced Obama's decision to shift away from the comprehensive peace settlement that he had originally proposed. In keeping with this approach, Obama privileged economic cooperation and also renounced a timetable.[126]

Before the 2015 election, Netanyahu indulged in openly racist scaremongering when he warned Jewish Israeli voters that Arab voters were 'heading to the polling station in droves'.[127] He also, in directly contradicting the formal position of his own government, said he would resist the establishment of a Palestinian state. In the same year, his government also inflicted collective punishments on Palestinians, including punitive restrictions on movement and home demolitions.[128]

In the 2019 election, Israeli candidates appealed to voters by bragging about how many Palestinians they had killed. Elor Azaria, the Israeli soldier who shot a Palestinian assailant in the head while he was lying unconscious, featured in a Likud MK's electoral campaign.[129] Meanwhile, Israeli leaders never missed an opportunity to voice their grave concerns about Palestinian 'incitement' and 'glorification' of terrorism/terrorists.

In this period, the Peace Process was effectively sustained on 'life support'. The commitment of both sides only extended as far as their own vested interests, and although Abbas periodically threatened to dissolve the PA,[130] this was hardly a credible threat as he was so deeply invested in the Peace Process. The U.S. could only wring its hands and offer bland words of encouragement to both sides. Indeed, Kerry was only able to offer anything meaningful once his intervention had collapsed. In a speech that strikingly broke with the usual diplomatic

formalities, Kerry offered a damning appraisal of the Peace Process and Israel's commitment to it. His observations were strikingly to-the-point and candid.

Kerry was speaking after the U.S. refusal to veto a UNSC resolution that condemned Israel's settlement activity in the West Bank. His central theme was that Israel's status, as a democracy, would be clearly jeopardised if it continued on its current path. Ehud Olmert, Israel's former prime minister, and progressive Israelis had similarly warned that Israel was in danger of becoming an apartheid state if it did not change path.[131]

At points, Kerry was strikingly undiplomatic. He observed

> The prime minister publicly supports a two-state solution. But his current coalition is the most right-wing in Israel's history with an agenda driven by the most extreme elements […] In fact, Israel has increasingly consolidated control over much of the West Bank for its own purposes.

And added

> [T]he settler agenda is defining the future of Israel. Moreover, their stated purpose is clear. They believe in one state — greater Israel. In fact, one prominent minister who heads a pro-settler party declared just after the U.S. election, and I quote, 'The era of the two-state solution is over'.[132]

For all his candidness, Kerry was disingenuous in at least two respects. First, he implicitly criticised the incumbent Israeli government and extremist elements within it. However, this overlooked the fact that Israel's colonisation activities had begun almost immediately after the end of 1967. The Allon Plan, which envisaged the annexation of up to 40 per cent of the West Bank and functioned as unofficial Israel state policy, clearly indicated Israel's actual intentions. To the same extent, Kerry's plea for change could more actually be described as the death knell of the two-state solution.

In conclusion, it is sobering to reflect that in the initial stages of the post-Oslo era there was at least a degree of optimism. The Roadmap provided a clear framework for international engagement and established a Palestinian state as a key goal. Despite the establishment of the Quartet, the process continued to operate under U.S. leadership.

Arafat's death in 2004 was also important, as it necessitated a new Palestinian leader, which the U.S. had established as a clear pre-condition. But the actual U.S. commitment to the process remained open to question, not least because the Roadmap was a by-product of the 2003 Iraq War, and was a concession to allies who requested it in return for supporting Bush's illegal war.

The process lost impetus and momentum, and efforts to resolve the situation, such as the Annapolis Conference, repeated the error of Camp David by failing to acknowledge that negotiations functioned in a wider context and could scarcely be expected to persist in the absence of confidence-building actions and initiatives. Benjamin Netanyahu became Israeli prime minister in 2009, despite receiving fewer votes than Tzipi Livni. This was a clear blow to the Peace Process, as

Livni was an immeasurably more credible partner for peace; Netanyahu had, in contrast, spent most of the 1990s opposing the process, whether within (1996–1999) or outside government.

It was, of course, hardly to be anticipated that the U.S. would question Netanyahu credentials as a partner for peace or call on Israelis to vote for a more 'moderate' leader without a long history of supporting and condoning violence. The 'international community' would not cultivate Livni as an alternative leader or force the Israeli president to create a specific post for her. To the same extent, Israel would not be called on to 'reform' its domestic political and social arrangements so that they would be more conducive to peace. However, this, and more, would of course be expected, and even demanded, of Palestinians.

It is certainly true that demands of peace create the most unlikely of peacemakers, as the precedents of both Rabin and Abbas attest. Nevertheless, it was surely a stretch too far to entertain the proposition that Netanyahu, in an unholy alliance with extremist settler groups and religious fanatics, was actually committed to peace. Subsequent events would quite clearly demonstrate that Netanyahu's 'concessions' could more accurately be described as readjustments in pursuit of unchanging strategic priorities.

The U.S. ultimately came to acknowledge this. Given the scars that both Kerry and Obama bore from their battles with Netanyahu, this was hardly a surprise and was indeed to be expected. In retrospect, Kerry's speech reads more like an elegy for the Peace Process than a plea for future change. Kerry's unique achievement was therefore to clearly and explicitly spell out what had always been understood but not openly stated.

The Trump Administration and the End of the Peace Process

The Trump administration now proudly flouts the international consensus that had previously sustained U.S. interventions in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. It has dispensed with the appearance of even-handedness, shown outright contempt for international law, and aligned with the most extreme elements of Israeli political opinion.[133]

In June 2019, the Trump administration unveiled the economic components of the 'Deal' in a 'Peace for Prosperity' workshop held in Manama, the Bahraini capital. The political components were subsequently released to the public on 28 January 2020. *Peace for Prosperity: A Vision to Improve the Lives of the Palestinian and Israeli People*. Bishara Said notes it is particularly dangerous because it supports the 'facts on the ground' that Israel has established.[134]

Trump's 'Deal' openly defies UN resolutions, the Accords, the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, and the principle of Palestinian self-determination. Nonetheless, it should be recognised that particular acts, such as the moving of the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem and the ending of UNRWA funding, can be traced back to the Jerusalem Act of 1995 and Public Law 101-246.[135]

Trump's visit to Riyadh in May 2017 resulted in the tightening of the Israeli siege on the Gaza Strip. This action apparently derived from intimate discussions

between the president's son-in-law Jared Kushner and Saudi Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman. The Saudi heir to the throne is unrelentingly focused on becoming King, and he is apparently convinced that this can only be achieved through his alliance with Trump. The recently published book *Fire and Fury* explains that Trump considers him to be 'their' man. Indeed, Bin Salman forced Mahmoud Abbas to cancel an official trip to Paris when he insisted on receiving him. In return, the Saudis released Sabih al-Masri, the detained Palestinian billionaire who heads the Arab Bank, the most influential joint Palestinian/Jordanian banking institution.[136]

While there are certainly overlaps and continuities, Trump clearly diverges from previous presidents by completely disposing with the appearance of even-handedness. Trump, his vice-president (Mike Pence), his son-in-law (Jared Kushner), ambassador to Israel (David Friedman), 'peace' envoy, (Jason Greenblatt), and UN ambassador (Nikki Haley) are all aligned with the most extreme elements of Israel's political spectrum.[137]

Bias was, however, pre-inscribed by previous administrations and therefore appears as a structural feature of the Peace Process. Elgindy observes: 'U.S officials […] have been far less inclined to enact consequences on the Israeli side'. Various U.S. administrations have occasionally spoken out on Israeli excesses, for example, when it came to settlement construction or the use of excessive force by the Israeli army, but have rarely (if ever) been willing to impose a price.[138]

U.S. policy was therefore already biased towards Israel, but Trump has given 'bias' a whole new meaning and implication. Trump's Arab allies have sacrificed Palestinian politicians on the altar of the Iranian 'threat'. U.S. support is now provided on the condition that these countries deny established Palestinian rights. While the 'Deal' acknowledges a Palestinian state, it does so in terms that devoid the concept of substantive meaning (although previous administrations had also done this). Under the terms of the 'Deal', Israel would continue to control the Palestinian state's airspace and borders.[139]

The Plan proceeded through three steps. First, it proposed to reduce UNRWA's (budget by one-third (U.S.$125 million)), and this action followed on 31 August 2018. It also withheld U.S.$65 million in aid. This appeared to precede the dismantling of the entire agency, which has been a long-standing objective for Netanyahu, who views it as part of a wider project that seeks to deny the refugee issue and more specifically UN Resolution 194.[140] The dismantling of the agency would substantially impact Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and, of course, the oPt.[141]

Second, the Deal proposed to move the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, and this was achieved on 6 December 2017. The Trump administration then cut relations with the PA and has since only dispersed U.S.$50.5 million of a total of U.S.$251 million of aid. Trump also signed the Taylor Force Act, which will prevent the U.S. state department from transferring aid to the PA if it continues to provide social security support to the families of Palestinian political prisoners and Palestinian 'martyrs'. Trump also threatened to activate the 2015 U.S. act that imposed sanctions on the PA if it approached the ICC with the aim of initiating criminal proceedings against Israel.[142]

Third, it called for the PLO mission to Washington to be expelled (this action followed on 10 September 2018); and finally, it sought to alter the legal status of Israeli settlements in the West Bank by claiming they are not illegal (secretary of state Mike Pompeo announced this on 18 November 2019).[143]

The U.S. favors the annexation of 10 per cent of West Bank land while Netanyahu, in accordance with the Likud Party decision of 31 December 2017,[144] would prefer a figure closer to 15 per cent (both figures include the settlement blocs). This undignified bartering is quite clearly operates beyond the orbit of legality,[145] as further cases-in-point, the 'Deal' removes settlements, Jerusalem, and Palestinian refugees from the negotiating table.

Although these are long-established priorities for the Netanyahu government, the specific timing of their announcement raises the suspicion that they were intended to divert attention away from political scandals, and most notably the Ukraine controversy, when Trump was accused of abusing his office to extract information that could be used in his re-election campaign. The Plan is in any case an important part of his campaign, and this is confirmed by the fact that Sheldon Adelson, the Jewish businessman, was stood alongside Trump when he unveiled it.[146]

Trump has made limited concessions to Palestinians. For example, he spoke about the possibility of establishing the capital of the Palestinian state in Abu Dis, which is a dreary suburb of East Jerusalem. Trump also spoke of the refugee question in terms that fell well short of the Arab League's 'just and agreed solution' and instead called for refugees to be resettled in their current country of residence.[147]

Peace to Prosperity also raises the prospect of U.S.$50 billion of investment over a 10-year period. It envisages rapid economic growth and job creation will be accompanied by an opening up to regional and international markets. The reduction of regulatory barriers will also enable the Palestinian 'state' to integrate into the wider region. Billions of dollars of investment in the electricity, water, and telecommunications sectors will follow. Substantial private sector investment will be made into the agricultural, housing, manufacturing, and tourism sectors. Both education and healthcare provision will be transformed and targeted initiatives (including workforce development programs) will drive down unemployment and increase occupational mobility. Early-stage investment will remove constraints to growth and help to develop key projects that build momentum, generate jobs, and increase gross domestic product (GDP).[148] Palestinian institutions will also be reformed in order to improve their responsiveness and cultural initiatives, including investment in cultural institutions, will lead to quality-of-life improvements for Palestinians.[149]

Arab reaction divided between qualified support (Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and Morocco), opposition (Jordan, Palestine, Iraq, Tunisia, and Algeria), and silence (most of the Maghreb states). The most strongly opposed states are those aligned with Iran (Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Houthi-dominated parts of Yemen). Meanwhile, the most strongly states in favour fear the extension of Iranian influence in the region. The absence

of a coherent regional response reflected divisions within the region that followed the 2011 'Arab Spring'. The Palestinian issue has slid to the bottom of the agenda for most Arab leaders, who are more preoccupied with domestic challenges.

Ahmed Abul Gheit, the secretary-general of the Arab League and former Egyptian foreign minister, made it clear that a just and lasting peace could not be achieved through the will of one party. He said an initial reading suggested that legitimate Palestinian rights had been lost, but added that the League was 'studying the American vision carefully' and remained 'open to any serious effort made to achieve peace'.[150] The U.S., for its part, sought to further the impression it remained committed to these rights. Kushner said: '[E]conomic growth and prosperity for the Palestinian people are not possible without an enduring and fair political solution to the conflict – one that guarantees Israel's security and respects the dignity of the Palestinian people'.[151] However, on other occasions, he has argued precisely the opposite and suggested that Palestinians should effectively 'trade' their political aspirations for economic development.[152]

The PA seized on leaked details of the Deal and pre-empted its publication by asserting the U.S. no longer had a role to play in the Peace Process. Abbas accused the U.S. of hindering peace and denounced 'the slap of the century' as the final termination of the rights of the Palestinian people.[153] He responded with a 'thousand nos', promised Palestinians would not kneel nor surrender and vowed to resist the Deal through 'peaceful, popular means'. Khalil al-Hayya, a senior Hamas official, was similarly steadfast in promising, '[t]he (Israeli) occupation and the U.S. administration will bear the responsibility for what they did'.

Turkey strongly denounced the Deal as an annexation plan that would destroy the two-state solution[154] and also set Jerusalem as a 'red line'.[155] The EU reiterated that 'final status' issues could only be resolved through negotiations between the parties and expressed concern about the proposed annexation of the Jordan Valley and parts of the West Bank.

The 'Deal' was also unwelcomed in Jordan, where the 1994 peace agreement is increasingly unpopular.[156] Jordan fears that the deal will force it to accommodate more Palestinian refugees and this will further disturb its demographic balance and even eventually transform it into a Palestinian state. Jordan also fears that Israel may proceed with Trump's plan and annex the Jordan Valley and various settlements assigned under the plan, thereby severing the kingdom from the West Bank.[157]

King Abdullah said: 'Our position is perfectly well-known. We will not agree to proposals that come at our expense'. Marwan Muasher, the country's former minister of foreign affairs, said: 'Israel and the United States do not want a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, and Israel does not want the Palestinian majority to remain in the territories it controls'. … [T]he main intention of Israel is to create the necessary circumstances to displace the Palestinians from the West Bank and ask Jordan to manage those areas.

Mohammed Ali al-Houthi, a spokesperson for the Houthis (and also as Ansar Allah), a Zaidi Shia Muslim movement based in Yemen, criticised the deal as

an 'illusion that will not change the reality of Arab and Islamic awareness of the centrality of the Palestinian cause'.[158] The Egyptian government supported the Deal, although primarily as a way of opening up opportunities for dialogue, with a view to resuming negotiations. Its foreign minister therefore called on both sides to consider the proposals carefully. Nasser Bourita, Morocco's foreign minister, also called for 'constructive dialogue'.[159] Bahrain, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) sent their ambassador to the White House ceremony, which was significant because the Gulf States are expected to invest U.S.$50 billion in the future Palestinian state.[160] Yousef Al-Otaiba, the Emirati ambassador in Washington, said: 'This plan is a serious initiative that addresses many of the problems that have emerged over the past years'. Both Bahrain and Qatar also welcomed the U.S. efforts to achieve a comprehensive peace agreement, although the latter cautioned that any agreement should operate within the framework of international legitimacy and relevant UN resolutions.[161] In contrast to both Egypt and Saudi Arabia, Qatar called for the establishment of a Palestinian state within the 1967 'borders'. Its call for the implementation of the Right of Return within the borders of contemporary Israel also undermined key parts of the Deal.[162]

Meanwhile, Adel Al-Jubeir, Saudi Arabia's minister of state for foreign affairs, claimed the 'Deal' contained positive elements that could be negotiated.[163] Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman offered Abbas U.S.$10 billion if he accepted the 'Deal'.[164] In a meeting with Jewish organisations in New York, he haughtily informed the Palestinian leadership, who he accused of having missed opportunities for 40 years, that they needed to 'to shut up [and] stop complaining'.[165] The Saudis, in combination with the other Gulf States, will also fund the Deal.[166]

France reiterated its support for a two-state solution, although Macron struck a note of doubt by questioning if it could be achieved through engagement with a single party.[167] Germany was not critical, although its position may have been influenced by the fact that the Deal was announced one day after the International Day of the Holocaust (27 January). The German government is, however, generally reluctant to openly criticise Israel. Although De Linke, the German Leftist party, did openly criticise the Deal as an annexation project that undermines international law, this is very much a minority view within German society.[168]

In contrast to these international observers, Netanyahu quite clearly grasped the significance of the 'Deal'. In addressing Trump, he said: 'On this day, you became the first world leader to recognize Israel's sovereignty … in areas of Judea and Samaria that are vital to our security and central to our heritage'. Of course, he failed to acknowledge that he was personally invested in the Deal, by virtue of the corruption charges he currently faces. The Deal also catered to the voter base of both Netanyahu (Israel's Right) and Trump (Christian evangelicals).[169]

There is a clear and fundamental dishonesty in Trump's use of the word 'state' to describe what is, in actual fact, 'limited autonomy', although this is, it should be noted, entirely consistent with the practice of previous U.S. administrations. After all, no 'state' does not control its own airspace, borders, and territorial waters. The annexation of the Jordan Valley, which accounts for 30 per cent of the West Bank, would further detract from a 'territory' that is already divided into

isolated cantons. Given that the Israeli settlements already house 600,000 settlements, the proposition that settlement construction should be frozen for four years is effectively a calculated insult.

Under the terms of the 'Deal', Israel will obtain all of Jerusalem, most of the West Bank, and almost all Jewish colonies in the West Bank and will dominate the Palestinian inhabitants. Palestinians in Israel must refer to 'their' country as the 'nation state of the Jewish people', despite the fact they make up almost one-quarter (21 per cent) of the population. West Bank Palestinians, meanwhile, are expected to censor their own schoolbooks and continue to do Israel's 'dirty work' on its behalf. In return, they will receive a suburb of East Jerusalem and be permitted to call it a 'capital' of a non-existent state.[170]

Sympathetic observers in the U.S. and Israel have hailed the 'Deal' as a welcome 'reframing' of the conflict and a 'paradigm shift'. Some observers have even (perversely) compared it to the Balfour Declaration of 1917.[171] In doing so, they fail to acknowledge the extent to which the 'Deal' is a qualitative shift within the treatment of the conflict. It is, in other words, fundamentally mistaken to search for historical analogies when the Trump administration so clearly seeks to break with established practice and render it obsolete. In the words of Gideon Levy: 'Trump is creating not only a new Israel, but a new world. A world without international law, without honouring international resolutions, without even the appearance of justice'.[172]

This raises the question not just of how Joe Biden, the new U.S. president, should react but also of whether the Peace Process is even a viable proposition in this new world order. Here it should be remembered that Biden has committed himself to overturning Trump's legacy. Both the restoration of aid to the Palestinians and permitting the PLO mission in Washington to reopen will be the steps in this direction. However, his ability to chart a genuinely new approach to the Peace Process will be limited by its structural character and attributes.

Here it should also be remembered that Biden is a long-standing supporter of Israel. However, it is inconceivable that he will not have been influenced by Netanyahu's obstructionism in the most recent peace talks. His commitment to re-establish the 2015 nuclear agreement with Iran will also impose new pressures on U.S.–Israeli relations.[173]

It seems likely that Biden will revert to the pre-Trump consensus, which is of course hardly to be welcomed, as this involves substituting one failed framework for another. Indeed, he has reiterated the U.S. commitment to a two-state solution, which is, in his words, 'the only solution'.[174] Similarly, in the 11-day fighting between Israel and Hamas in May 2021, Biden was reluctant to directly intervene or to allow distance to emerge between him and Israel, an approach very much in keeping with his predecessors.[175]

Given the experience of the Obama administration, it is extremely unlikely that Biden will want to get too deeply engaged in the conflict or commit extensive resources, not least because the election of Naftali Bennett as Israel's prime minister increases the likelihood of failure still further. The collapse of the bipartisan consensus on the conflict also means that the political costs of pushing for an

agreement have increased. Either supporting or opposing Israel will come with clear costs, so it may be easier and more straightforward to limit direct intervention in the conflict.[176]

However, it remains open to question if Biden will be able to do this. Trump in many respects acknowledged a fundamentally altered reality rather than creating it, and to this extent the Peace Process had effectively ceased to exist. As noted, his main 'achievement' was to strip away the façade that concealed this inconvenient fact. As such, the restoration of the previous status quo remains an open question.

Conclusion

There are a number of misconceptions about the Oslo Accords, but perhaps the most pernicious one is the belief that the outcome could have been different if they had been implemented differently. This myth has become synonymous with Yitzhak Rabin's assassination and the belief that this 'dove' was sacrificed in the name of peace. This can best be described as the standard mythology of the Peace Process, in which a brave and audacious project was cruelly ended by an unholy alliance of Netanyahu, extremist settlers, and Hamas.

This mythology has become part of the established historiography of the Peace process. Its flaws are, however, so numerous that it is difficult to know where to begin: first, it personalises peace and gives Rabin attributes and attitudes he never possessed; second, it overlooks the fact that the process emerged in the first instance because of Israel's desire to subcontract the policing of the oPt and its associated costs – the 'securitisation' of the Peace Process was not a subsequent development and was instead foregrounded from the outset in the very rationale of the process. Third, Israeli negotiators were quite candid in admitting that the Accords were pursued as an alternative to the Madrid Conference when Palestinian representatives from the territories were too obstinate in insisting on Palestinian rights. Fourth, there has historically been no real distinction between Likud and Labor on security matters – intransigence, callousness, and inflexibility are products of the general 'security' mentality that pervades Israeli society and which can more accurately be described as an affliction than a political affiliation.

In retrospect, the Accords appear as a grubby deal between an Israeli security elite that was looking to wash its hands of unwanted responsibilities and a PLO leadership that was, in the context of both the Madrid Conference and the ongoing First *Intifada*, concerned about being outflanked and rendered irrelevant. The international donor community was happy to relieve Israel of the responsibilities established by the Geneva Convention, in full anticipation of the financial benefits that would accrue from an unreformed aid sector. Palestinians insofar as they figured at all in these calculations were, at best, an afterthought.

The divergence between representation and reality is not therefore accidental or unfortunate; rather, it is necessary to acknowledge the Peace Process in its true significance would strip it of any function or legitimacy. In other words, the sanctified concept of 'peace' is necessary to divert attention from the soiled practice.

It is not, as the conventional wisdom has it, that the two contradict each other; rather, one is the condition of the other, and vice versa.

Insofar as the process has prevented war, it has established the basis for other, more covert and insidious, forms of violence. Security coordination between the Palestinian Authority and Israel has, for example, come to closely resemble collaboration; and, in this context, the revelation that Abbas encouraged Israel to tighten its restrictions on the Gaza Strip came as no surprise. U.S. aid provided to Egypt has also been used for purposes of internal repression.

From my perspective, the issues with the Peace Process are systemic and cross over between administrations. Trump's main contribution to the process has been to strip away the veil of deceit and to reveal it for what it is. From the outset, the U.S. has consistently failed to hold Israel to account or to ensure that proposals uphold international law. Unilateral annexation has been on the agenda since the Allon Plan, which was outlined a year after Israel's occupation of the West Bank began. The retention of the settlement blocs was also envisaged under Israel's proposals in the Camp David negotiations. It is primarily the tone, rather than the content, of what is being proposed that is original.

As we have seen, the 'peace' process is almost entirely tone – it consists of symbols, images, and gestures and is, to all intents and purposes, essentially a public relations exercise. It is a performance, in which the respective actors recite their lines, in anticipation of the material benefits they will receive. The actual 'content' of the process is indistinguishable from the conventional practice of international relations, and its associated bargains and compromises. A residue of the former now remains, but it sounds surreal and detached from a reality that presents theft, dispossession, and institutionalised cruelty as precursors of a better future.

It is even more sobering and disconcerting to reflect that this is perhaps all that was ever on offer, and we have therefore travelled this far to come back to the same place. Israel and its U.S. patron have consistently refused to engage with Palestinians on the basis of equanimity and mutual respect. Palestinians have either been represented by others or engaged with on the understanding that they are subordinates who will gratefully accept what they have been given. The responses of Arab leaders to the proposed Plan show quite clearly that prominent voices within the Arab world (most notably bin Salman) now share this opinion.

From the Madrid Conference onwards, the Palestinians were subject to extensive diplomatic pressure. The Accords were therefore initially a product of compromise, as Palestinian negotiators in the 'secret channel' negotiations were more willing to make concessions to their Israeli negotiators. Arafat's willingness to accept the conditions on offer appears to have been due to his deeply compromised political position. When he rejected Israel's Camp David proposal, he was duly replaced by an even more obliging replacement in the form of Mahmoud Abbas, whose willingness to enter into 'peace' talks with Ariel Sharon and Benjamin Netanyahu further degraded any remaining Palestinian dignity.

This deeply unfortunate precedent brings to mind Hafez al-Assad's 'peace of the strong', as this is precisely what is not on offer. The surrender of their dignity is the price that Palestinians are expected to pay for peace. This is the implication of

security coordination that approximates to collaboration, Israel's repeated violation of the spirit, and letter of its commitments and the ritualised, systematic, and institutionalised humiliations that West Bank Palestinians must endure on a daily basis.

To ask Palestinians to negotiate under these terms is in itself sufficiently insulting, even before the terms of the 'Deal' are taken into account. However, this is what successive U.S. administration has asked Palestinians to do. Far from addressing this situation, the framework of the Accords has, in instituting the so-called 'neutrality' and 'even-handedness', further reinforced and exacerbated this inequality. This development should not occasion any great surprise, as it is the logical consequence of any arrangement that presumes to treat occupier and occupied on equal terms.

For a substantial part of the conflict's history, the question of whether the PLO should be recognised preoccupied international observers and Israel. When Israel recognised the organisation in 1993, this was heralded by many as a significant moment in the conflict's history. However, this overlooked the fact that this recognition was superficial insofar as it only recognised the PLO's right to speak on behalf of the Palestinian people. The years after the Madrid Conference made it clear that this recognition did not extend to the Palestinian people or their attendant rights. On the contrary, there was instead a sustained refusal and denial of these rights which, under the order of priorities instituted by the Accords, were subordinated to Israel's security demands.

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7 Conclusion

In considering the Peace Process and Middle Eastern Peace Process we encounter a number of propositions with such regularity that we virtually come to take them for granted and do not question them. The first is that the U.S. is genuinely committed to a meaningful peace. The second is that its interventions in the region are underpinned by ideals of justice and Liberal notions of progress, development, and democracy.[1] The third is that the main obstacle to peace is Palestinian rejectionism.[2] Finally, we view the struggle between Israelis and Palestinians as a 'conflict' – that is, as a situation in which both sides have equal responsibility for the ongoing situation and also for resolving it.[3] The U.S. is caught in the middle, pleading the cause of reason, and willing the adversaries to resolve a conflict that has dragged on for millennia.

However, none of these claims are true. In reality, the U.S. is committed to stability and views peace as a means through which this can be achieved. However, the version of 'peace' that it favours can more accurately be described as the absence of violent conflict or even as 'pacification'.[4] However, it reserves the right to inflict massive destruction in the name of preserving the status quo, and continues to reserve the right to shatter this peace if its interests are directly threatened.

Its interventions in the region have been strikingly illiberal, and it has repeatedly departed from democratic norms and principles of human rights, in addition to international law, in pursuing its interests in the region.[5] The historical record confirms that in situations where democracy or democratic leaders are viewed as an obstacle to U.S. interests, it will override and subvert them. Democracy has a certain 'soft' power and instrumental purpose, but it can be discarded when circumstances demand.[6]

The United Arab front against Israel fractured by as early as 1948, when Jordan annexed what is now the West Bank under a secret agreement with the Israelis.[7] By the mid-1970s, elements within the PLO had begun to move towards informal recognition of Israel (although formal recognition only followed in 1988).[8] Egypt signed a peace agreement with Israel in 1979 and Jordan followed in 1994. The Syrian government indicated its willingness to sign a peace agreement and entered into peace negotiations with Israel in the period 1992–1996. Furthermore, the PLO recognised Israel five years before Israel reciprocated. In signing the Abraham Accords, the UAE and Sudan have normalised relations with Israel.

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The Israeli–Palestinian 'conflict' is not a conflict but a colonial project of dispossession and expulsion that can trace its roots back to the late 19th century. Zionism is an exclusionary ideology that denies the very existence of the original inhabitants and seeks to instil a culture and mentality of militarism. Its adherents cooperated and colluded closely with the British colonial authorities and then achieved their political aims by establishing a Jewish state.[9] This historical record and gross disparities of power and military means reiterate that it is meaningless, and even offensive, to speak of a 'conflict'.

It would, in this context, seem less appropriate to speak of standard historiography of the Peace Process, and more appropriate to suggest standard mythology. These myths are not abstractions or rationalisations of what has already occurred but are directly implicated in the practice itself. 'Peace', it would seem, is a word whose meaning entirely depends on the context in which it is deployed and the purpose that its author has in mind.

In this concluding section, I would like to achieve three things. First, I would like to assess the broad outline of the U.S. Peace Processes against the so-called Liberal Peace. In doing so, I seek to demonstrate the extent to which U.S. practice diverges from an established model and template and to also demonstrate the extent to which it fails to acknowledge, let alone meet, minimum conditions for a meaningful peace.

Second, I would then like to return to the Critical literature on peacebuilding that was initially engaged in the first chapter. In doing so, I would like to demonstrate how these contributions can provide insight into the concrete practices of U.S. strategists and policymakers. In doing so, I hope to demonstrate how critiques of Liberal peacebuilding can also be applied to U.S. Peace Processes. This, I envisage, will make it possible to move beyond critiques that focus entirely on practical implementation. Finally, I bring matters to a close with some concluding observations.

The Relevance of Liberal Peacebuilding to U.S. Policy

In the initial chapter of this book, we engaged a number of core peacebuilding concepts and also referred to the comprehensive approach. This established a basis for conceptualising and theorising what might be termed as a 'best practice' of peacebuilding. In turn, this gave us a basis for evaluating U.S. interventions in the region under the aegis of the Middle East Peace Process. However, even from the outset, we noted that U.S. practice had diverged substantially from this general template.

First, it was asserted that 'peace' had been approached as a strategic imperative, which confirmed a number of critical insights offered by the Critical literature, which emphasise the disciplinary or regulatory implications of the 'Liberal Peace' and highlight how power is refracted and relayed through established power relations.[10] Liberal peacebuilding is, for Duffield, a coercive tool of political and social engineering that forcibly remakes the subaltern in the image of the reformer.

In functioning as an extension of U.S. foreign policy, the Middle Eastern Peace Process makes little provision for the engagement, let alone the participation of

local actors. It is to all intents and purposes an imposition on the region that is enabled and sustained by coercion and force.[11] The Oslo Accords, for example, made extremely limited provision for democratic participation and in the post-Oslo era this feature became even more pronounced as the PA drifted towards open authoritarianism. As in other respects, Edward Said had anticipated this development from the outset when he noted the political implications that derived from the marginalisation of the PNC and other nascent authoritarian tendencies within Arafat's highly personalised leadership.[12]

However, this was also a feature of the more general Peace Process. Highly militarised strategic agreements with authoritarian rulers left little room for the people of the region or their specific needs and requirements. 'Peace' was engaged and conceived at the level of the state and state interest and the publics of the region did not even appear as an afterthought.[13] The 'cold peace' that prevails between Israel and Jordan and Egypt is no unfortunate consequence and is instead the logical outcome of flawed design.

In the case of the Palestinian Peace Process, it was made quite clear to Arafat that the expectation of the international community was that he would act forcefully against any threat to Israel's security. The sub-contracting of Israeli repression required a willing enforcer, and Arafat needed no second invitation to consolidate his authority within the oPt.[14] Israel and the international community did not just tolerate his subsequent abuses of power but tacitly encouraged them. The same pattern was repeated in U.S.-supported Peace Processes across the region. Repression, including the extensive use of torture, was accepted and even implicitly condoned on the grounds that it would help to achieve 'security'.[15] Even when the U.S. briefly diverged from this script, as in the immediate aftermath of the 'Arab Spring', the force of political gravity snapped it back.

The terms of the U.S. Peace Process were therefore diametrically opposed to subsequent innovations in security theory, including the emergence of the concept of Human Security. It was also at odds with the so-called 'local turn' in peacebuilding theory, which effectively made 'local' engagement a precondition for successful peacebuilding.[16] Indeed, highly militarised and coercive interventions previously justified in the name of 'peace' were precisely what these innovations emerged in response to.

Again, however, it should be reiterated that the lack of public engagement was actually intended as a basis for negotiation. In part, this reflects an Orientalist reading which views Arab publics as implacably hostile and incapable of rational reason.[17] By implication, the only 'peace' that can be achieved is one negotiated with 'enlightened' leaders. In fact, it is worse than this – when Israeli leaders place such a strong emphasis on 'incitement'[18] they unconsciously betray their belief that Arabs are incapable of developing their own perspectives and viewpoints: the clear implication is that had they not been taught to 'hate' by their leaders, they would have remained undisturbed and 'pacified'.

However, the irredeemably bovine nature of the Arab hordes does have a partial compensation, in that it takes no great investment of labour to push them towards accepting the terms agreed by their leaders. This perhaps explains (the

otherwise entirely uncharacteristic) interest that Israeli leaders showed in public diplomacy during the Israel–Syria negotiations.[19] Leaders are to effectively become salespersons, tasked with 'selling' the agreements they have negotiated to recalcitrant publics. If they are unable or unwilling to perform the required task, then they can always be replaced by others.

This, then, is the deeply contingent place of democracy within U.S. strategy within the region. If it cannot be reconciled with U.S. ambitions and aspiration, then it may even become viewed as an obstacle. Even in the post-Cold War era, when the 'new world order' was supposed to have changed the established terms of reference within the region, the U.S. attitude towards democracy remained highly contradictory, instrumental, and unclear.[20]

The absence of a democratic dimension co-exists with the lack of a 'human' dimension or an acknowledgement of 'human security'. The comprehensive approach is predicated upon a clear equivalence that regards each of its three components (democracy, development, and security) as mutually reinforcing.[21] However, past U.S. interventions have been heavily securitised or have even approached security as a stand-alone objective. Similarly, Israeli positions in the Israeli–Palestinian Peace Process were underpinned by a very restrictive and conventional interpretation of 'security'.[22]

The Abraham Accords significantly diverged from this model as they focused almost entirely on technical and development cooperation between Israel and the other signatories. However, this could scarcely be said to resemble progress, as the Accords were significantly unbalanced and made limited provision for either democracy or security. Indeed, domestic opposition proved to be a complicating factor both at the time of their signing and subsequently.[23]

The 'unbalanced' nature of past U.S. interventions therefore strongly conflicts with the defining assumption of the comprehensive approach. Past interventions have been too focused on military and strategic objectives, have failed to acknowledge the need for broad-based political engagement, and have also broadly failed to address the link between sustainable development and peace. Broadly speaking, past U.S. interventions have been too focused on containing, rather than addressing, the region's deeply rooted and structural problems.[24]

The so-called 'War on Terrorism' did not therefore represent a substantial departure from the pre-established U.S. objective of achieving 'stability' in the region. This, and not democracy or even 'peace', is actually the foremost U.S. priority and has been since the U.S. began to expand its influence. Indeed, under certain circumstances both may even be viewed as threats to be counteracted, as was demonstrated by the 1953 coup that removed Mohammad Mossadegh from power and the unwillingness to meaningfully restrain Israel's repeated acts of military aggression.[25]

The U.S. commitment to 'peace' is therefore an outgrowth of its desire to achieve stability in a notoriously unstable part of the world. However, this securitising desire has in turn produced uncertainty and instability, and this is confirmed by the extent to which U.S. involvement has actually exacerbated the problem it was supposed to address. The 1991 Gulf War, the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq,

and the 2011 overthrow of Ghaddafi are clear cases-in-point. Aside from being significant in their own right, they are also significant divergences from the previously established U.S. preference to limit direct intervention and to instead work through local allies. The irony is of course that 'unbalanced' U.S. interventions have not made the U.S. or the wider region any more safe or secure; indeed, on the contrary they have instead increased instability and insecurity.[26]

When we consider regional international relations, the U.S. reluctance to apply a genuinely comprehensive approach becomes even more apparent. Indeed, the past history of Peace Processes in the region makes it clear that the U.S. preference is actually to negotiate peace agreements with individual states.[27] This positioned it in direct opposition to an Arab consensus which held that peace could only be negotiated on a common basis. Whereas the former is based on power and the associated understanding that states will be more likely to compromise in isolation, the latter is entirely consistent with the notion of a comprehensive peace agreement, and indeed this very imperative was actively invoked by Hafez Al-Assad before and during his country's participation in peace negotiations.

Historically, Arab countries were committed to the principle that 'peace' could only be achieved through a fair and just resolution of the Palestinian issue. However, as a result of U.S.-led diplomatic efforts, this consensus has gradually fragmented and fallen away. The Abraham Accords indicate the extent to which Arab solidarity with the Palestinians has gradually eroded. Ultimately, it is the U.S. vision that has prevailed.

Hafez Al-Assad's insistence on a 'comprehensive' peace was rooted in a belief that any settlement should ensure and uphold the dignity of all participants, and in this respect his vision was again consistent with peacebuilding theory, which makes this a condition of peacebuilding 'best practice'.[28] In contrast to established U.S. practice, a genuine peace cannot be coerced and nor can it be imposed; on the contrary, it should meet the essential needs of all parties and should be accepted by them on this basis. Peace is subtly cultivated, not imposed from without and above.

This understanding was quite transparently absent from the 2000 Camp David negotiations, when U.S. and Israeli officials sought to effectively force Arafat to accept the terms of a summit that he had been reluctant to attend in the first place. Indeed, the whole rationale was to 'call' Arafat's hand and to place him in a situation where he would be forced to make concessions and compromise. This was part of Ehud Barak's 'masterplan' for achieving a resolution of the conflict. Needless to say, this belief owed more to Barak's unsurpassed belief in his own political genius than a sound and complete analysis of the Peace Process.[29]

But the key point here is the U.S. and Israeli belief that a peace could be engineered. Through a combination of inducements and threats, it was believed that Arafat could be effectively coerced into signing an agreement, even against his own best judgement. When this 'take it or leave it' approach failed, Arafat was then blamed for the collapse of the Peace Process and for subsequent violence.[30] His unwillingness to accede to U.S.–Israeli demands then resulted in his replacement by Mahmoud Abbas. It was also no coincidence that King Hussein negotiated his country's 1994 peace agreement from a position of weakness.

The Madrid Peace Conference (1991) and the 2004 Roadmap were both significant in this regard, as they reflected an apparent U.S. belief that peace negotiations could be regarded as an acknowledgement of services rendered. In both cases, the U.S. acceptance of peace negotiations was a returned favour for regional states that had supported military action against Saddam Hussein. Here 'peace' was not the recognition of fundamental needs and ongoing injustices but was an enabler of military aggression.[31]

In addition to the acknowledgement of fundamental rights and injustices, peace theory also requires some recognition of historical responsibility. To some degree, this was forthcoming in Obama's 2009 speech at Cairo University, although here it should be remembered that this was far from the first, and by no means the last, case in which politicians were willing to apologise for the failings of their predecessors.

Obama only made fleeting to past U.S. interventions, and in any case most of the speech was aspirational and very limited consideration was actually given to the U.S. historical record in the region. This is quite clearly insufficient as any 'new beginning' must surely rest upon an acknowledgement of past wrongs. But Obama only made a fleeting reference to the use of Arab states as 'proxies' in the Cold War, which is clearly insufficient, not least because it tries (and fails) to partially justify these actions as a necessary evil. The much-heralded speech actually provides remarkably little insight into America's historical responsibility for past acts of aggression and, by implication, the absence of peace within the region.[32]

Donald Trump neatly highlighted the lack of historical context within the Peace Process when he presented it as a matter of achieving a 'Deal'. In doing so, he abruptly transformed a matter of historical injustice into a transaction between two barters. However, it was ultimately only his lack of candour that distinguished him from previous presidents: others before him had viewed it in precisely the same terms, and simply saw it as a matter of achieving a 'deal' rather than rectifying historical injustices and meeting basic human needs.[33] But this inserts the lowest common denominator negotiating in the place of genuine peacebuilding.

The concept of structural violence refers to the social structures or institutions that inflict harm by preventing people from meeting their essential needs. By implication, any peacebuilding process must not simply engage at the level of the state but should also engage at the level of society.[34] However, the highly state-centric character of U.S. interventions in the region has focused on interstate relations. Obama's 2009 Cairo speech was significant in this regard, as it appeared to anticipate a peace between civilisations or cultures. This oversight can be attributed to the fact that the U.S. has privileged international stability as its key strategic goal and aspiration. Indeed, one of the main features that distinguished the 2004 Roadmap was its insistence that any future Palestinian state must be democratic. The internal arrangements of Arab countries had previously been of little concern to U.S. strategists.[35]

The achievement of genuine peace does not simply mean achieving your objectives but rather coming to understand and fully grasp the perspective of the

'other'. It requires a shift of perspective and an acknowledgement of his/her way of seeing the world.[36] However, in the case of the Peace Process, this perceptual shift was quite clearly absent. This was perhaps most clearly demonstrated by Yitzhak Rabin, who won international acclaim as a 'dove', but who actually remained clearly beholden to the influence of the Israeli security establishment throughout the course of negotiations. After his death, much was made of Rabin's conversion to the cause of peace, but closer inspection revealed this owed more to popular misconception and public relations than reality.[37]

The same applied to Arafat. Although he won the Nobel Peace Prize, he could hardly be described as a genuine peacebuilder. His participation in the Peace Process came from a position of weakness and reflected his fear that he could be side-lined after the First *Intifada.* Indeed, this goes a substantial way towards explaining why he agreed to negotiate on such unfavourable terms. Like Rabin, he continued to think in terms of mutual gains, and primarily his Israeli counterpart as an opponent rather than as a partner for peace.[38] He showed no real grasp of the Israeli mentality and also misinterpreted how Palestinian suicide bomb attacks would impact Israeli public opinion by causing a dramatic shift to the Right.[39] Mutual misunderstanding was an important factor in this regard, as it weakened the ability of both protagonists to respond in ways that would not act to the detriment of the Peace Process.

We can therefore conclude that U.S. Peace Processes do not just depart from, but are actually diametrically opposed to, much of 'best practice' Liberal peacebuilding. This is the abrupt and conspicuous departure from established orthodoxies and core axioms. Indeed, this applies to such an extent that it may be legitimately questioned if the U.S. is even engaged in peacebuilding at all.

The lack of democratic participation and upholding other Liberal norms, the excessive militarisation, the complete oversight of historical responsibility, and questions of justice and the pronounced failure to appreciate the perspective of the 'other' all testify to this. The deeply coercive character of U.S. Peace Processes and their inability to extend beyond the state level further underline the extent to which peacebuilding theory is, in this context, effectively an irrelevance. The highly compartmentalised approach that the U.S. has adopted, including seeking separate peace agreements with individual states, also attest to the pronounced absence of a genuinely comprehensive approach. Instead, successive administrations have delinked 'security' from 'development' and 'democracy', while ascribing it with elevated importance and significance. This 'security first' approach confirms that it is stability, and not peace per se, that is the primary U.S. objective in the region. It is negative peace, or the absence of open violence, that is the primary U.S. objective in the region. It lacks the capacity, and more importantly the will, to work towards positive peace.

Finally, it is the lack of equality within U.S. Peace Processes that is arguably its most important and significant shortcoming. Here it should be remembered that peacebuilding theory strongly emphasises that all participants engage upon an equal basis; both their concerns and priorities will be given equal attention and will be given equal regard. This ensures that the process respects and upholds the dignity of all participants.[40]

However, this equal regard is quite transparently absent from the Peace Process. Indeed, it is even worse – inequality is enshrined within the Peace Process and is even a defining feature. If we compare the separate Peace Processes, it becomes apparent that each country was treated in accordance with its perceived military status and ability to threaten the interests or even existence of Israel.[41] We also see that Egypt and Syria were engaged on terms very different to those offered to the Palestinians. To put it more bluntly, Egypt was engaged as a worthy adversary whereas Palestinians were engaged as supplicants and were not just expected to take what was on offer from Israel but, even worse, be grateful for what they had received.[42]

Even if we accept the premise that the U.S. had little to gain from challenging Israel, and even if we accept the more contentious claim that its closeness to Israel would elicit compromises, we are nonetheless led to question if it was not a fundamental U.S. responsibility, as a mediator, to uphold the dignity and integrity of all participants. As a basic precondition of peacebuilding theory, we would expect this to be honoured and upheld. If any participant is left with the feeling that their own honour is the price that must be paid for peace, then quite clearly the process has already failed.

Sadat was able to negotiate from a position of strength on the back of his successes in the 1973 War, and was duly treated as an equal. Similarly, even though King Hussein was forced to negotiate from a position of weakness, he was treated as an equal, and the U.S. even intervened on his behalf to persuade a reluctant Israel.[43] Arafat, in contrast, was repeatedly bullied, belittled, and ultimately betrayed by his U.S. sponsors and their Israeli ally. The Syria 'track' was for example used as a means of exerting pressure on Arafat, and so was the Camp David (indeed, this was its very rationale). This reflected the one-sidedness of a Peace Process in which Israel was able to pocket concessions and continue to exert diplomatic pressure on the Palestinian leadership, in expectation of further compromise.[44]

Arafat was far from without blame for this, having acquiesced to a grossly distorted and one-sided Peace Process in the first place. But setting this aside, the U.S. still had a responsibility to ensure equality of treatment and regard among participants. And it also had a responsibility to ensure that power relations did not distort negotiations between the two sides. However, it did the opposite – it enshrined 'security' as the overarching priority and end purpose of negotiations and even endorsed the downgrading of international law. Under its supervision, the Accords essentially became an instrument of Israeli diplomacy.[45]

Throughout its engagements with the Peace Process, Israel has made it clear that it will not be bound by preconditions and that any peace agreement will be the product of negotiations. It adopts this position in the clear understanding that any agreement will actually be the product of power relations and will, by implication, reflect and uphold its interests.[46] When Rabin was acclaimed for his historical compromise, it was less frequently observed that he had actually made no compromise at all, and had merely committed to negotiate with the PLO. It was actually the Palestinians who had compromised, and who were expected to make further compromises in the name of peace. This set the tone for what would follow.[47]

Peace can only be achieved between equals and on the basis of mutual regard and respect. It cannot be the product of force, relations of power, or coercion. Peacebuilding theory is therefore clear that peaceful ends can only be through peaceful means. Counterparts should not be as adversaries but rather as partners for peace. Peace is not the consequence of strategy or of planning, but rather of compromise and altered perspectives. Peace is not therefore engineered.

Peacebuilding is inherently political and it requires participants to address and engaged the underlying roots of violent conflict. By definition, these cannot be worked around or treated as inconvenient objects. Although economic and technical interventions can support the peacebuilding process, they cannot replace it. In order to address structural violence, it is necessary to engage conflicts and injustices at the social level.

The Relevance of Critical Accounts of Peacebuilding to U.S. Policy

In my initial discussion of Liberal peacebuilding, I noted that it is ostensibly predicated upon the absenting of external control – indeed, the point when the 'reformed' state becomes fully sovereign and operates without external guidance or mediation is the point at which peacebuilders can depart.[48] However, Duffield makes it clear that this is something of a self-sanctifying myth. The 'sovereign frontier' is not the point at which external influence is denied, but is instead a conduit that enables external influence to circulate within the domestic context. The practice of post-conflict peacebuilding, in other words, effectively inverts the principle of sovereignty.[49]

Duffield's account suggests a development in which the domestic state becomes open to multiple regulatory interventions. However, as we have seen, U.S. penetration of the region has remained relatively superficial and has been limited to elite-level agreements. In the 1990s, this became something of a concern for U.S. planners, who viewed the region's resistance to economic globalisation as a matter of strategic concern.[50]

With the clear exception of Israel, the U.S. effectively exerts influence on the state, not from within it. The pronounced U.S. dependence on personal relationships clearly underlined and demonstrated this. In part this was a reflection of the extent of domestic opposition to the U.S. and the U.S. agenda, as Bahrain's domestic ratification of the Abraham Accords demonstrated. U.S. penetration of the region has therefore historically been relatively superficial. Given these limitations, it is clearly inappropriate to speak of a 'governmentality', not least because previous U.S. interventions have been relatively crude and unsophisticated. The U.S. reliance on the blunt instrument of force[51] is in itself telling and significant.

The highly militarised character of U.S. interventions in the region is therefore the main feature that distinguishes it from interventions grouped under the heading of post-conflict intervention. Such interventions usually more closely correspond to the comprehensive approach in that they work across different sectors and apply a range of tools. Although the U.S. has recently begun to consider

questions of internal governance (including democratic reform and women's rights), it has historically been disinterested in such matters. This shift began after the 2001 terror attacks in New York, when the link between internal governance and radicalisation in the Arab world was recognised by the U.S. and its international allies.

However, the U.S. ability to proactively support positive is limited by vestiges of Orientalism, and associated scepticism about the sustainability of democracy in the Arab world, along with its own strategic priorities. Although it is rhetorically committed to the promotion of democracy in the Arab world, it remains hesitant about the possible consequences, and the possibility that such reforms will play into the hands of extremists across the region. Events in post-Mubarak Egypt suggest that it will not be keen to engage in democratic experiments in the future and actually suggest the converse – namely that it will revert to its previous position of cautiously supporting authoritarian regimes.

But this establishes a clear contrast with one of the main critiques of liberal peacebuilding – namely that democratic reform is conceived and understood as a way of enhancing external control. This proposition, which may initially seem counter-intuitive, originates within the insight that external actors favour a particular version of democracy and also envisage a situation in which democracy is 'disciplined' by benign external oversight and mediation.[52]

The version of 'democracy' that is administered and applied by international administrators and bureaucrats therefore quite clearly does not define 'democracy' as unrestrained popular influence or control. On the contrary, precisely because Liberal peacebuilders view the domestic society as a site of incipient violent conflict, they are inclined to suggest that expressions of the democratic 'will' should be subject to tight restrictions and controls.[53] As a consequence, the version of peacebuilding that emerges from the designs of liberal peacebuilding is consciously and deliberately delimited and defined by its limitations and constraints.

The U.S. position on any form of democracy, in contrast, remains unclear and tentative. In pursuing its strategic objectives, it may well be preferable for it to advocate liberalisation without democratisation. Incidentally, precisely this approach is advocated by Roland Paris, a peacebuilding theorist and practitioner who argues that democratisation should be the final stage of a phased process.[54] However, the U.S. can only adopt this position for so long, as it will ultimately be forced to play its hand. If it fails to do this, then its ultimate commitment to democratic reform will be called into question.

In relation to democracy, critiques of liberal peacebuilding and U.S. policy are therefore very different. The former has been criticised on the grounds that it seeks to instil a form of 'democracy' that is an extension of the more general desire to 'discipline' or 'regulate' the post-conflict society. This 'disciplined' democracy is effectively a sophisticated means of control. In contrast, the critique of U.S. democracy relates to its commitment to democratic reform in the first instance. In the first example, democracy is a technique or instrument; in the second, it is an open question.

Critics of Liberal peacebuilding also focus on its apolitical character or tendency to 'work around' politics.[55] The rationale for this is that conflicts are inherently political and that political grievances can 'spill over' from the conflict to the post-conflict phase and undermine peacebuilding. Technical cooperation in a limited number of spheres can establish a basis for 'working across the divide', and this can then establish a basis for political engagement across a number of levels.[56] In addition, many aspects of the reconstruction process are broadly technical in character.

In many respects, liberal peacebuilding can be said to have a deeply rooted suspicion of politics and the political environment in the domestic state. Its own interventions are not justified in political terms. In precisely the same way as other state administrators, liberal peacebuilders will inevitably object to the proposition that they are engaged in politics. Their interventions are instead justified as removed, impartial and disinterested.[57] To put it more succinctly, they are deeply reluctant to acknowledge the political implications of their actions.

The Peace Process has no doubt contributed to this critique, and in many respects it perfectly exemplifies the problems associated with an apolitical framing of peacebuilding. In the first instance, it is highly questionable if this can even be described as peacebuilding, for the simple reason that it is inherently political. 'Peacebuilding' that does not address the roots of the conflict, or that in some cases does not even refer to the conflict at all cannot, by definition, be appropriately described as 'peacebuilding'.

During an interim period, The Oslo Accords sought to establish 'momentum', in the expectation this would establish a basis for the resolution of contentious political issues during 'final status' talks. It was, in key respects, entirely process-orientation, and this reflected the Israeli desire not to be 'hemmed in' by preconditions or commitments.[58]

Under the terms of the agreement, the West Bank was no longer described as 'occupied' but rather as 'disputed' territory. This was, however, a legalistic fiction which concealed the fact that conditions in the territories actually deteriorated during the interim period.[59] Far from establishing a sound basis for the final status negotiations, the interim period actually ensured that proceedings occurred within an atmosphere of mutual distrust.

The 2004 Roadmap was a hugely significant point in the development of apolitical peacebuilding in the territories. Donors entrusted the EU with building Palestinian state capacity, in anticipation of the formal establishment of a Palestinian state.[60] However, in order to assuage Israeli sensibilities, this was justified as an essentially apolitical matter of training and developing appropriate competencies and capacities. The most controversial aspect of this process proved to be the reform of the Palestinian security services which had, during the Arafat, become bloated and inefficient. Since the start of the Accords this had been a pre-eminent priority for international donors and for Israel in particular. Indeed, it was no coincidence that security cooperation was eventually left as the last component of the Oslo apparatus after all the other parts fell away.[61]

However, far from establishing the basis for a functioning Palestinian state, the state-building programme became part of the problem. It effectively relieved

Israel of its obligations as the occupier, thereby effectively subsidising the occupation, and arguably even helped to 'upgrade authoritarianism'. This delinking of state building from peacebuilding also meant that Israel had no need to make meaningful concessions at the negotiating table.[62]

Equally perniciously, the state-building programme also sought to work around the occupation, as if it was an inconvenient reality. International donors even increasingly refused to even the word, lest it offends Israeli sensibilities. This was a key factor in the process of becoming detached from reality, which was incidentally a long-established feature of the Accords.[63] This was, however, the logical outcome of treating an essentially political problem as a matter of technical reform. Of course, even treating it as a 'conflict' in the first place was a clear distortion, which required a conscious oversight of colonial dimensions and attributes.

Although U.S. Peace Processes have departed from the established theory and practice of peacebuilding, it is clear that Critical contributions to the peacebuilding literature can provide us with important insights, even when there is no direct parallel to be drawn.

First, the essential exteriority of U.S. interventions in the regions is highlighted, and this draws attention to the fact that the U.S. has focused on the state, and upon elite-level agreements. Unlike in other regions, a variety of constraints (cultural, economic, social) have limited the expansion of U.S. influence. For this reason, it is inaccurate to speak of U.S. hegemony in the region, as the U.S. is in effect reliant on the blunt instrument of overwhelming force. This clearly contrasts with the post-conflict state, where external influence is often pervasive, even after the formal establishment of independence.

Second is the role and significance of democracy. In common with sovereign, democracy in post-conflict societies is not the 'limiting point' of external influence but is instead one of the means through which it circulates and is reinforced. This contrasts with the role of democracy in U.S. interventions, where its significance is more open to question. This reflects the fact that the U.S. only developed an interest in the internal governance of Arab countries relatively recently.

Third, the comparison also raises the question of the role and significance of technical knowledge and expertise. While 'working around' the politics of conflict has an intuitive appeal, past experience, in particular in the oPt, shows the potential pitfalls and hurdles that emerge when we view conflict as a matter of technical reform. Here it should be remembered that violent conflict is deeply political, and so are its challenges and wider implications. While it is sometimes convenient for external actors to work this inconvenient fact, this has the clear potential to become an obstacle in its own right.

In conclusion, critiques of liberal peacebuilding serve to highlight the inherent of top-down and externalised approaches to peacebuilding that place a strong emphasis upon, and even privilege, external capacities and capabilities. They draw attention to the limitations of force and also highlight the contradictions that it can produce. They question the significance of democracy in post-conflict intervention, and thereby draw attention to a historical shortcoming of U.S. engagement.

And finally, they stress the importance and potential contribution of a 'political' approach that engages with the 'root' causes of the conflict.

Concluding Reflections

Two simple propositions have been reasserted in this book. First, the Peace Process is an extension of the interests and priorities of the hegemonic state; second, the concept of a 'process' suggests there will be a broad continuity across individual administrations and presidents. Both propositions therefore stress the structural and systemic character of the process, which is the exact opposite of media coverage and popular perception, which are both more likely to emphasise the role and contribution of individual presidents.

It has also suggested that the gap, or perhaps gulf, between the representation of peace and the practice is not a failure of practice; on the contrary, it is essential for them to remain separate in order for the process to be sustained. Previous administrations recognised this, and at least made a concerted effort to maintain the image or public relations of the Peace Process. Trump, in contrast, disdains any such pretence

The U.S. role in the region can essentially be traced back to the start of the Cold War. However, the influence of Communism in the region was always limited and it therefore appears that, as in other parts of the world, the Communist 'threat' provided a convenient pretext for the expansion of hegemonic power. In the post-Second World War era, control of oil was a strategic priority, although the U.S. oil interests in the region predated the Second World War.

Although the U.S. supported the establishment of Israel, there were also voices within the administration who expressed concerns about the implications for relations with Arab partners. Even before the establishment of Israel, Roosevelt acknowledged and recognised these objections. Up until the 1967 War, the U.S. sought to balance the interests of its Arab partners and the Israeli state.

The strategic U.S.–Israel relationship that subsequently emerged was rooted in cultural and historical antecedents. These affinities appear as the exact inverse of Orientalism, which predisposes observers to approach and engage the 'Orient' through a series of prejudices and misconceptions. Instead, Americans and Israelis share a common framework of reference that underpins and sustains political cooperation between the two countries. These cultural antecedents therefore have a clear political meaning and implication.

This relationship with Israel produces a number of clear strategic benefits for the U.S., but it also has a number of clear costs. The debate of these costs is, however, restricted by the role of pro-Israel interest in U.S. domestic politics and by ingrained tendencies and predispositions in U.S. foreign policy. Although mediation theory stresses that bias is not in itself a problem (and may even in some cases be a benefit), the preceding chapters have repeatedly highlighted it as a problem that acts to the detriment of 'peace'.

However, it seems somewhat counter-intuitive to claim that bias somehow acts to the detriment of the Peace Process, as the two have become so closely

intertwined as to be virtually indistinguishable. Bahrain and the UAE's recent recognitions of Israel are therefore consistent with an established U.S. practice that has pursued peace in the region with the aim of normalising relations between Israel and its neighbours. While this might be presumed to establish a clear link between the Arab–Israeli and Palestinian–Israeli conflicts, this has not always been the case. Whereas Arab states had always sought to make the resolution of the Palestinian–Israeli conflict a precondition for the resolution of the Arab–Israeli conflict, the consensus that sustained this position has steadily eroded over time.

Whereas the preference of the Arab states (most notably Syria) was historically to achieve a 'comprehensive' peace, the U.S. and Israel have sought agreements with individual states, such as Egypt and Jordan, presumably with the intention of extracting maximum concessions. The 2000 Camp David negotiations demonstrated this dishonesty most clearly, when the U.S. sought to use the 'Syria option' to extract maximum concessions from the Palestinian Authority.

This raises the question of what the U.S. role should be. The U.S. has historically been reluctant to play the mediator role and, on the occasions when it has, it has invariably had a negative impact. Although it was not directly involved in the negotiation of the Accords, it was responsible for overseeing their implementation. In this role, it repeatedly favoured Israel and failed to hold it to account for its repeated failure to honour the commitments it had made. In the absence of an effective arbitration method, it was incumbent on the U.S. to perform this role. However, it has generally been reluctant (although variations between administrations should be taken into account) to pressurise Israel.

Given its past record of bad faith, it is clearly surprising that both the PA and the Arab states made it clear that their preference is for the U.S. to take a more active role in the Peace Process. In the case of the PA, this shows a clear naiveté about U.S. intentions. The PA's reaction to the Plan was to claim that the U.S. could no longer be viewed as a credible mediator. However, this has been apparent to objective viewers for years and even decades. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that material incentives had prevented the PA from seeing this.

The PA's position appears to imply that another international actor should take the lead. The UN would appear to be the most obvious choice, but its past history of engagement and intervention is not positive. In addition, the Israelis have also repeatedly made it clear that they do not trust it.

The EU would then present itself as the other member of the Quartet that would be best-placed to support the Peace Process. However, its past history of colonialism, its technocratic and economistic mentality,[64] its past deference to the U.S.,[65] and ongoing problems within the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) are all clear problems.[66] The ties that it has built up as the main donor of the Peace Process and the perception that it is more neutral than the U.S. may, however, work to its advantage.[67] However, key member states (most notably Germany) would need to overcome residual European guilt about the Holocaust and show a clearer willingness to openly criticise and challenge Israel.[68] More positive antecedents can, however, be found in the French willingness to criticise

Israel,[69] European Political Cooperation (EPC), the Euro-Arab Dialogue (EAD), and the 1980 Venice Declaration.[70]

Mediation rests to a certain extent on a willingness to engage in good faith, and to this extent the incumbent Israeli government would test the capacities and patience of any mediator. Towards the end of the Obama administration, John Kerry, the U.S. secretary of state, appeared to realise this, and therefore blamed Israel for the collapse of the peace talks. During the Obama presidency, relations between the two countries were also frayed and sometimes stretched to breaking point. But the U.S. could hardly claim to be surprised by this turn of events: after all, Netanyahu has committed a considerable part of his political career to derailing the Peace Process.

The example of the Obama administration illustrates and reiterates why it is so problematic to focus on particular presidents. Each president is subject to structural and internal constraints that limit his/her ability to manoeuvre. He/she can only operate through these constraints and it is redundant to condemn him/her for failing to take specific actions without taking these wider inhibitions into account. This is precisely why individual deviations from the script will invariably be accompanied by 'self-correcting' actions. This is, after all, something of an established pattern: any acknowledgement of the Palestinian case is invariably accompanied by gratuitous displays of devotion to Israel.

External and internal pressures therefore impede the autonomy of any administration that seeks to engage with the Arab–Israeli and Palestinian–Israeli conflicts. This abrupt curtailment of manoeuvre goes some way towards explaining the 'powerless superpower' that has been so frequently referenced. History shows how the U.S. had a limited ability to engage with Arab nationalism and Islamism, and this looks likely to continue into the present period, despite the high-minded ideas that Obama espoused in his 2009 address at Cairo University.

From this perspective, the Peace Process appears as an extension of U.S. statecraft that seeks to reintegrate Israel into the region. Its object is the state and its framework of reference is statecraft: it is no coincidence that some of its most significant features were contributed by Henry Kissinger, the arch exponent of Realpolitik. By implication, the 'human material' of past conflicts in the region was disdained and disregarded as surplus humanity, at best a secondary consideration.

From this perspective, the Peace Process appears as a strategy, which is inherently top-down, and orientated by the imperatives and priorities of power. Insofar as it recognises the subaltern, it is inclined to induce and coerce. Although it gives lip to notions of 'empowerment' and 'participation', these are essentially Liberal technologies of government that seek to exert power and influence through the agency of the subaltern. The strategic intent remains intact but manifests in a different form.

The concept of 'peace' dignified the enterprise with a moral trapping and purpose it barely deserved. It would be entirely appropriate to describe the peace agreements with Egypt and Jordan as bribery, which conspicuously rewarded both governments for their acquiescence to agreements that degraded both themselves

and the quaint notion of Arab solidarity. The terms on which the PA acquiesced to the U.S.–Israel agenda were somehow more degrading and can be sympathetically described as a 'surrender' document.

So quite clearly few tears should be shed for the demise of this process or its dubious achievements. On the contrary, the unravelling of the 'Deal' has revealed just how little was ever on offer. Trump may have been the undertaker, but this was a death foretold by a whole host of illusions and deceits. The 'Deal' is undeniably gratuitously offensive, but it should be considered in the lineage of past U.S. policy in the region.

It should arouse no surprise that 'peace' has become discredited currency in the region, and is regarded with scepticism and even outright contempt. The 'cold' peace between Israel and Egypt clearly establishes a precedent that should be avoided and consciously diverged from. Indeed, it can be strongly argued that while this agreement has ended (at least for the foreseeable future) the possibility of conflict between the two states, it has precipitated and enabled various other forms of violence.

This raises the question of if peace can be detached from strategic and managerial intent. Peacebuilding actors have reiterated, *ad nauseam*, the axiom that peace cannot be imposed from without and that it is the responsibility of local actors to reach an agreement and accommodation. However, this is essentially a deceit, as U.S. power has played a formative role in establishing, structuring, and sustaining the Peace Process.

The PA has belatedly realised that the U.S. should not take the lead role in the process and has therefore recognised its long history of acting in bad faith and failing to uphold commitments. But the alternatives are no better: other members of the 'international community' are already engaged as members of the Quartet; the EU also lacks the ability to engage with the politics of the conflict, not least because it is too beholden to a technocratic mentality and approach. Key members of the Arab League, meanwhile, have effectively disqualified themselves by giving their unqualified support to the 'Deal'. In any case, all of these actors have been extensively engaged with the Peace Process and are therefore directly implicated in its past and present failures. The UN, meanwhile, has been effectively irrelevant for large parts of the Peace Process and is in any case distrusted by Israel.

Timing is another important factor. One of the most striking features of the Peace Process is that its schedule has reflected U.S. agendas. The 2000 Camp David summit, for example, was scheduled despite the fact that the interim period had quite clearly not established a sound basis for negotiations and had instead generated mutual suspicion and resentment. The 'Deal' could not have been published at a worse time.

Future peace initiatives need to be preceded by a clear change of mentality. Israel, for example, approaches negotiations in the belief that it has made 'concessions' that need to be recognised. Barak, for example, was celebrated for making 'concessions' that exceeded those made by any previous Israeli prime minister. However, this was not an act of charity and nor was it a confirmation of Barak's unique wisdom and insight; rather, it was instead a movement towards meeting

Israel's international obligations. The Palestinian leadership, meanwhile, have been too focused on what they can receive at the negotiating table. Now that the Peace Process has been exposed to its true significance, it is necessary to turn inwards and to seek to re-establish an internal consensus that is rooted in participation and accountability. The anti-democratic legacy of the Oslo and post-Oslo periods needs to be reconsidered, revaluated, and, if possible, reversed.

The effective collapse of the Peace Process therefore provides an opportunity to overhaul existing internal arrangements and restore some degree of accountability. These internal reforms can then be linked to diaspora and solidarity organisations. Precedents for these local-international linkages are provided by both the First *Intifada* and the Palestinian National Council, the Palestinian parliament that functioned in exile. The dissolution of the PA and the restoration of the PLO have both been raised as prospects by Palestinian observers.

In contrast, existing peace agreements with Egypt and Jordan are likely to remain in place despite the fact they lack popular support. The structural determinants of U.S.–Israel relations will also remain in place. After Bahrain's recognition of Israel, it is likely that other Arab states will follow. The willingness of Arab states to acquiesce to the U.S. agenda will therefore result in the separation of the Arab–Israeli and Israeli–Palestinian Peace Processes.

There is no need for a Peace Process when the U.S. has achieved virtually all of its regional political aims. Although the Arab states were formally committed to the destruction of Israel, this belied a reality of indirect recognition and, in the case of Jordan, informal cooperation. In the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, Syria indicated its willingness to enter into comprehensive peace negotiations. The current development, in which states across the region have reached varying degrees of accommodation with the U.S. and Israel, should not therefore come as a surprise.

The Peace Process was a means to an end for the U.S., which would help it achieve its regional interests. Now that the end has been achieved, there is no need for the means. It remains in vestigial form, without purpose or meaningful implication; a gutted façade is all that remains now that the farce has been pursued to its logical conclusion.

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