

American foreign policy and peace in the Middle East

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The purpose of this study is to answer the following question: ‘Does US foreign policy undermine peace efforts in the Occupied Palestinian Territories?’ Careful observations of US foreign policy during the Oslo Process reveal that the United States has indeed undermined peace efforts in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The American position substantially departed from United Nations Resolutions 242 and 338, which the Palestinians were promised would serve as the basis for negotiations. Although the American–Israeli alliance underwent periodic adjustments, American foreign policy has, over the last decade, helped to create a framework in the Middle East wherein only Israeli needs have legitimacy. During the Oslo Process, the United States and Israel have tried to impose Israel’s plans on the Palestinians, ignoring United Nations resolutions and the international community. The evidence reveals that US foreign policy was based on double standards and unfair terms. Further, the seeming link between the aid provided by the United States to Israel and the latter’s aggressive policies toward the Palestinians makes it appear as though Washington is ‘rewarding’ such policies, that is, as if Washington is enabling Israel to deny Palestinians’ legitimate rights, violate United Nations resolutions and principles of international law, keep its military occupation forces, and expand Jewish settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Keywords: US foreign policy; the Middle East peace process; Israel/Palestine; conflict resolutions

Introduction

The research question of this paper is: Does US foreign policy undermine peace efforts in the Occupied Palestinian Territories? Thus, the research concern is to assess US foreign policy toward peace efforts in the Occupied Palestinian Territories during the period from the Madrid Conference until the Oslo Process. The ultimate aim is to draw useful lessons from the so-called Middle East peace process and provide readers in the West, and policy- and decision-makers involved in Middle East peace efforts, with insights into how the United States should modify its foreign policy to achieve a viable peaceful solution.

The immense importance of this paper stems from the terrible effects of the Israeli–Arab conflict on (1) the Palestinian and Israeli peoples, (2) on the stability of the region of the Middle East, and (3) on the American people, especially in light of the 11 September 2001 attacks on US targets, as questions have been raised, and continue to be raised, about the popular anger of the Arab street directed at US foreign policy. Much research has shown that not only has US foreign policy in the Middle East been

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conducted at the expense of the oppressed Palestinian people living under Israeli occupation, but also it has hurt American interests in the Middle East, as well as American taxpayers.¹ Since 28 September 2000, the violence between Israelis and Palestinians has left 3808 Palestinians² and 999 Israelis³ dead, torpedoed the peace process, and turned the streets of the West Bank and Gaza Strip into battlefields.

Approach

Considering the nature of the research question, a quantitative analysis does not appear appropriate. The aim of this research is to examine US foreign policy toward the Occupied Palestinian Territories and probe as deeply as possible in analysing American policies regarding Middle East peace efforts in order to determine whether these policies undermine (or enhance) such efforts. Therefore, the nature of this research already suggests a qualitative approach that will take into account the complex relationship between ideas, interests, and institutions. Certainly, some quantitative indicators like, for instance, the amounts of annual American foreign aid to Israel, will be considered, but the main focus will be on qualitative analysis.

The choice of a qualitative approach implies using comparative analysis. Comparative analysis is suitable for the purposes of this paper since I seek to compare the respective behaviours of three US administrations since 1991 and to compare US foreign policies in the Middle East with US policies in other regions of the world. Moreover, some domestic factors (such as the role played by the US Jewish lobby in promoting Israeli interests) and cognitive approaches (the significance of foreign policy-makers' images and beliefs) will be used to examine certain aspects of US foreign policy. The question of this paper also suggests descriptive and analytical analyses since the fundamental aim is to determine whether US foreign policy is bringing about or undermining peace in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Descriptive analysis implies a synthesis that attempts to describe what is occurring, i.e. pulling knowledge together and interpreting its logically reasonable connections, while analytical analysis attempts to identify why the phenomenon under study is the way it is or how it came to be. That is, this research approach seeks to identify US policies toward the Palestinian issue, and why such policies led to the present outcomes. The unit of analysis is nation-state behaviour. More specifically, the research will focus upon determining US policies that might undermine or support peace in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The data will be collected from primary sources such as official artefacts, documents, foreign affairs departments' statements, ministries' and non-governmental organizations' statements and reports. In addition, data will be obtained from secondary sources such as academic studies that relate to this research topic.

After a concise review of previous assessments of US foreign policy toward peace efforts during the Oslo Process, I intend to present briefly the legal status of the Occupied Palestinian Territories and to identify those rights of the Palestinian people that are based in international law. Doing so is essential because such legal status and rights are assumed to be the bases of the negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis. Next, I will assess US foreign policy toward peace efforts in the Occupied Palestinian Territories during the period from the Madrid Conference until the end of the Oslo Process. The main concern is to examine the American position toward peace efforts in the region during the Oslo Process (1991–2000). The last part will involve concluding remarks and general lessons that can be drawn from the Middle East peace process.

Previous assessments of American foreign policy toward peace efforts in the Palestinian territories

Over the last few years, much research has been done in order to assess the Oslo Process in the Middle East and American foreign policy toward the Palestinian issue. Most studies have been devoted to highlighting drawbacks of the Oslo Process and blaming Israel and the United States for its failure. Others blame the Palestinian Authority.

In 'Why peace failed: an Oslo autopsy', Sara Roy, a research associate at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard University, examines the Oslo Process and ends with the following:

The ongoing crisis among Israelis and Palestinians is not primarily the result of a failed summit, poor implementation, or Netanyahu's intransigence; it is instead the result of a 'peace' process that by design altered the political, economic, and physical landscape of the Palestinian territories in a manner that intensified rather than mitigated Palestinian dispossession, deprivation, and oppression, and so precluded a fair and workable settlement of the Palestinian–Israeli conflict. (Roy 2002, p. 4)

Augustus Richard Norton, Professor of Political Science at Boston University, adopts a similar view, i.e. *Al-Aqsa Intifada* is not merely a popular rejection of Israeli occupation, but of the whole structure of the Oslo Process (Norton 2001, p. 5).

In *Tinderbox: U.S. Middle East Policy and the Roots of Terrorism* (2003), Stephen Zunes, Associate Professor at the University of San Francisco and Middle East Editor for *Foreign Policy In Focus*, argues that both the Bill Clinton and George W. Bush administrations, and leading members of Congress of both parties, have intentionally misrepresented what is going on in the peace process before, during, and after Camp David (2000), as well as what has transpired since the outbreak of the *Al-Aqsa Intifada* in late September 2000. Zunes reveals in detail how the Camp David summit failed and how Clinton naively thought that he could pressure Yasir Arafat to accept Israeli plans at the expense of Palestinian rights.⁴ Zunes further argues that the Palestinians share some responsibility for the failure of the peace process, yet he affirms that the 'primary fault for the failure of the peace process and subsequent violence lies squarely with the occupying power – Israel – and its patron – the United States' (Zunes 2002).

Edward Said, a Palestinian–American professor at Columbia University, has totally opposed the Oslo Process since its beginning. According to Said, the Oslo agreement and its aftermath have led to increasing Palestinian poverty and unemployment, intensifying land expropriation, and expanding Jewish settlements. Said lays:

the blame for this on the United States, which exploits the injustices and inequities of the process; on Israel, which exploits Palestinian weakness to prolong its military occupation and settlement practices by other means; on the Palestinian Authority, which has legalized the illegal, not to say preposterous, aspects of the 'peace process' (Said 2000, pp. 3–4)

Noam Chomsky also argues that the root of the problem is the United States, which has steadily backed Israel's rejection of a political settlement (Chomsky 2002).

Jewish scholar Jerome Slater, at the State University of New York at Buffalo, blames both Israel and the United States for the failure of the Oslo Process. He affirms that 'contrary 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' (Slater 2001, p. 171). Slater argues that US economic, military, and diplomatic support for Israel has enabled Israel to disregard the legitimate interests and demands of the Palestinians. According to Slater's assessment, the United States lacks but needs 'a compelling moral motivation' to 'counterbalance unconstrained Israeli power'. Slater adds that the Clinton administration failed to do so because Clinton deviated from the political path set by previous administrations since 1967. Moreover, because of his nearly unconditional support for Ehud Barak's policies, Clinton triggered a wave of anti-American feelings in the region that has had serious consequences for American diplomacy in the Bush II administration (Slater 2001, pp. 197–198).

Regarding the course of negotiations that led to the Hebron protocol, Lamis Andoni, an analyst of Middle Eastern affairs, concludes that 'the Hebron protocol and the accompanying American-authored documents make Israel's security and the 'principle of reciprocity' the primary terms of reference of the peace process, giving Israel near total control over the future of negotiations and final status' (Andoni 1997, p. 18). The result, Andoni argues, is that the protocol 'precludes UN Resolution 242 and all the international laws that de-legitimized the demographic changes imposed by three decades of Israeli occupation and dispossession of the West Bank and the Palestinians' (p. 30).

William B. Quandt, a former US government official and one of the most prominent US specialists on the Arab–Israeli conflict, assesses Clinton's legacy in the second term and compares the effectiveness of Richard Nixon's and Jimmy Carter's carrot-and-stick policies to Clinton's ineffectiveness. He points out that Nixon and Henry Kissinger, Carter and Cyrus Vance, and George Bush Sr and James Baker asserted an American interest and pressed reluctant parties to move forward (Quandt 2001b, p. 39). Contrary to Quandt's assertion, Kathleen Christian, a former Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) political analyst, highlights how US foreign policy toward the conflict was made in accordance with Israeli interests. She argues that since the era of Woodrow Wilson, 'American public opinion on the Palestinian–Israeli conflict has been formed and policy has been made from a restricted, generally Israeli-centered vantage point. This frame of reference has excluded the Palestinian perspective ...' (Christian 1997, p. 46).

I: Legal status of the Occupied Palestinian Territories and rights of the Palestinian people

Once Israel occupied the West Bank, East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights, and the Sinai Peninsula on 5 June 1967, it started confiscating the occupied land and building Jewish settlements.⁵ Israel then formally annexed Jerusalem in 1980 and the Golan Heights in 1981. As a consequence, problems related to occupation, refugees, settlements, and the East Jerusalem issue surfaced in the Middle East conflict.

Legal status of the Occupied Palestinian Territories

Different international conventions and agreements govern the legal status of the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The United Nations (UN) has over the years built a corpus of rules that are supposed to act as the legal framework for any negotiation

process.⁶ On this basis, UN organs have asserted the Palestinian absolute right of self-determination on several occasions, including their right to statehood and the right of return. Several UN resolutions called for Israel to end its occupation and cease its aggressive policies toward peoples under occupation. Further, over the past 50 years, many UN resolutions have condemned excessive Israeli use of force against Palestinians, the deportations of civilians, and the prevailing and systematic policies and practices of Israel that violate human rights and humanitarian law.⁷ The most important resolutions are as follows:⁸

- General Assembly Resolution 181 (1947), which divides Palestine into two states and announces the internationalization of Jerusalem.
- General Assembly Resolution 194 (1948), which asserts that ‘refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return ...’.⁹
- Security Council Resolution 242 (1967), which calls on Israel to relinquish control of territories occupied in the war of 1967.
- General Assembly Resolution 3236 (1974), which affirms ‘the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people in Palestine ... to self-determination without external interference’ and ‘to national independence and sovereignty’.
- Security Council Resolution 446 (1979), which determines ‘that the policy and practices of Israel in establishing settlements in the Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied since 1967 have no legal validity and constitute a serious obstruction to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East’.
- General Assembly Resolution 2851 (1971) and Security Council Resolution 465 (1980), which state that all measures taken by Israel to change the physical character, demographic composition, institutional structure or status of Palestinian or other Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, have no legal validity. They also assert that Israel’s policies and practices of settling parts of its population and new immigrants in those territories constitute a flagrant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention and are completely null and void.
- Security Council Resolution 338 (1973), which calls on all parties to abide by Resolution 242.
- Security Council Resolution 252 (1968), which declares that the Israeli acts to unify Jerusalem as Jewish capital are invalid.
- Security Council Resolution 1397 (2002), which affirms ‘a vision of a region where two states, Israel and Palestine, live side by side within secure and recognized borders’.

According to these resolutions, acquisition of territory by force is unacceptable and settlements in occupied territories are illegal. These resolutions have further called for the application of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the withdrawal of Israel from the occupied territories. The settlements in the occupied territories violate two main conventions of international law: the Hague Convention on the Laws and Customs of War on Land, and its attached Regulations (1907); and the Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to Civilian Persons in Time of War (1949). Principles of humanitarian law, and of the Hague Regulations in particular, assert the temporary nature of military occupation (Amnesty International 2000). This temporary nature of occupation determines

the limitations on the occupier in creating permanent facts in the occupied territory (Lein and Weizman 2002, pp. 22–23). The Fourth Geneva Convention,¹⁰ which in part is intended to protect civilians living under occupation, bans any individual or mass forcible transfers or settlement activities in occupied territories (Article 49). Further, Article 40 of the Fourth Geneva Convention asserts that it is illegal for an occupying power to transfer its civilian population onto territory seized by military force. In addition, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)¹¹ gives the right to return a solid foundation in international law. Article 13(2) of the UDHR states ‘everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country’. Similar rights were reasserted in a Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees.¹²

Rights of the Palestinian people

Given the previous assessment of the legal status of the Occupied Palestinian Territories, the international community recognizes: (1) the Palestinians’ right to end the Israeli occupation, (2) the Palestinians’ right of self-determination and statehood, (3) the Palestinians’ right of refugees to return to their homes, (4) the Palestinians’ right to have international protection from human rights abuses by Israeli military forces and paramilitary Jewish settlers, and (5) the Palestinians’ right to obtain compensation from the occupying state.

The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), in the early years of its formation, insisted on the complete liberation of all of Palestine, meaning the destruction of Israel. Yet, the PLO’s position evolved to recognize the existence of the state of Israel and to accept the two-state solution in an attempt to put an end to its struggle with Israel.¹³ The PLO’s view of the Palestinian state was based on international law and UN resolutions, which implied that a Palestinian state would be in the West Bank and Gaza, with East Jerusalem as its capital. The PLO announced that it would agree to make the future Palestinian state demilitarized, accept the stationing of international peacekeeping forces along its borders with Israel, end ‘terrorism’ and all forms of attack on Israel from its territory, refrain from alliances with Arab ‘rejectionist’ states, and agreed to a settlement of the refugee problem on the basis of international law, combined with large-scale international economic compensation for the refugees and their resettlement in the Arab world.¹⁴ Therefore, based on UN resolutions and the evolved PLO position, Palestinians have perceived any negotiations with Israel as a way to attain their legitimate rights. The following part will examine US foreign policy towards peace efforts between Palestinians and Israelis.

II: American foreign policy toward peace efforts in the Occupied Palestinian Territories

American foreign policy in the Middle East: an overview

American foreign policy interests in the Middle East involve oil interests, regime stability – especially those countries that have about two-thirds of the known reserves of oil in the world – and the special American commitment to Israel (Quandt 2001a, pp. 11–14). Further, the containment of Soviet influence in the region has been replaced – especially after the 11 September events – by the war on terrorism. As will be examined, the American–Israeli alliance has a prominent impact on US foreign policy in the Middle East.

The core pillars of American policy toward Israel have remained constant since the creation of the state of Israel. The United States assumes the role of Israel's main diplomatic supporter, financial sponsor and military provider. Those pillars have not been changed during the administrations of liberal US politicians like Harry Truman, John Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, Jimmy Carter, and Bill Clinton, as well as conservative US politicians such as Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan (Aruri 2003, p. 4). The strong American commitment in favour of Israel stems from many factors, the most influential of which is the American Jewish community and its powerful lobbies. The American Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) is one of the most powerful and successful 'ethnic' lobbies in Washington, DC.

There are many interest groups that are active in attempting to influence American foreign policy, such as business, labour, ethnic, think tanks, foreign governments, and corporate interest groups. They rely on three elements to achieve their interests: the threat of switching allegiances at election time, a strong and effective lobbying apparatus, and the ability to build their case around traditional American symbols and ideas (Hastedt 2003, p. 146). AIPAC possesses the most effective combination of these elements and hence has a strong influence on Congress in many issues. In 1984, Senator Rudy Boschwitz, who headed the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on the Middle East, received more than one-third of the US\$4.25 million that the pro-Israeli Public Accounts Committee's (PAC) gave to congressional candidates (Hastedt 2003).¹⁵ The *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* reports that pro-Israel PAC contributions to 2000 congressional candidates during the 1999–2000 election cycle was US\$2,044,606.¹⁶ Journalist Mitchell Kaidy estimates the AIPAC's annual budget at US\$13 million–15 million (Kaidy 1997, p. 42), a budget that exceeds any other 'ethnic' lobby's budget in Washington, DC.

The issue of Jerusalem is an example of how powerful the Jewish lobby is in shaping American foreign policy toward the Middle East. Before 1967, American policy regarded Jerusalem as an international city. After 1967, the policy changed to a formula whereby the holy places were to be under international protection and the future of the city should be left up to negotiations between Israelis and Arabs. Under the Clinton administration, the United States started giving funds to make Jewish housing plans in an expanded area called Greater Jerusalem (Neff 2002, pp. 129–149). In 1990, under the pressure of AIPAC, the US Congress¹⁷ opposed the administration's position and passed resolutions admitting that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel and should not be a divided city (passed in the House on 24 April 1990, and in the Senate on 22 March 1990) (Aruri 2003, p. 133). On 8 November 1995, Congress passed Public Law (P.L.) 104–45, which confirmed that the US Embassy should be moved from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. The law provides a presidential waiver if maintaining the embassy in Tel Aviv is in the US national interest. On 27 July 2000, President Clinton told an Israeli interviewer that he favoured moving the US Embassy to Jerusalem, but signed waivers to keep the embassy in Tel Aviv.

Under the current administration, section 214 of P.L. 107–228, the Foreign Relations Authorization Act for fiscal year 2003, states that Congress maintains its commitment to moving the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, bars funds appropriated in the act from being used to support the US Consulate in Jerusalem (unless the US Ambassador to Israel has authority over the consulate), declares that publications financed under the Act must list Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, and states that any US citizen born in Jerusalem may request that their birthplace be listed as Israel (Mark 2002a, p. 8). On 30 September 2002, President Bush II considered the

section as advisory (i.e., not binding), meaning that US policy toward Jerusalem remains unchanged, i.e. the future of Jerusalem must be negotiated and not be decided unilaterally. Yet, on 3 December 2002, for the first time the US joined Israel and three other countries (Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, and Costa Rica) in voting against a United Nations General Assembly resolution calling on Israel to repeal its Jerusalem Law.

However, one should not exaggerate this factor. Jewish Americans, who make up less than 4% of the US population, are hardly monolithic on the peace process in the Middle East. In the late 1990s, while President Clinton was trying to put pressure on the Palestinians, polls showed that over 80% of American Jews believed that the United States should be willing to put pressure on both Israelis and Palestinians to help bring about peace in the Middle East (Zunes 2003, p. 159). Further, one should not overstate the role played by ethnic interest groups in general. Zunes points out that some of the most outspoken congressional supporters of Israel are from some of the safest districts and need no support from pro-Israel PACs to be re-elected. Further, no ethnic group played a role in convincing the United States to support Indonesia during its brutal occupation of East Timor or to support Moroccan policies in Western Sahara (Zunes 2003, pp. 159–160).

The sentimental attachment many Americans have for Israel – especially liberals of the post-Second World War generation – is another explanation of American bias (Zunes 2003, p. 157). Many liberals have an ideal image of Israel and view its democratic and progressive social intuitions in the light of centuries in the ‘Diaspora’ and under ‘anti-Semitism’. As Zunes (2003) argues, they identify ‘Zionism as a reflection of their own historical experience in North America as immigrants and pioneers’ (p. 157). Further, the Christian Right, with millions of followers and as a significant base of support for the Republican Party, is another factor that influences American policy (Zunes 2003, p. 157). Based on a messianic theology that regards the gathering of Jews to the Holy Land as a precursor for the second coming of Christ, the American–Israeli alliance is seen as key. The arms industry – which donates more than twice as much money to congressional campaigns as does the AIPAC – plays a large part in supporting arms shipments to Middle Eastern allies of the United States. In addition, most mainstream peace and human rights groups avoid the issue of American–Israeli relations because they do not want to alienate many of their Jewish and other liberal supporters of Israel. They also fear that their criticisms of Israeli governments might be regarded as anti-Semitic, or that they could even encourage anti-Semitism (Zunes 2003, p. 158). Accordingly, most liberal and conservative members of Congress have no incentives to pressure against American bias in favour of Israel.

Paradoxically, the US support does not contribute to Israel’s security. International relations theorists assert that the most stable military relations between adversaries is strategic parity that leads to an efficient deterrent for both parties against any pre-emptive attack that one party might launch. In the Israeli case, US assistance does not equalize total Israeli and Arab military power, but maintains for Israel a qualitative military superiority. As many scholars – such as Chomsky, Zunes, the Egyptian scholar Abdelwahab Elmessiri¹⁸ and others – assert, the main reason for the strong American support for Israel is the strategic role Israel plays for the United States in the Middle East. Israel, in this sense, is a strategic asset or a ‘functional state’ – in Elmessiri’s terms – that deters any radical nationalist or Islamist threat to American interests in the region, i.e. American control of oil and other strategic interests. Elmessiri (1999) asserts that:

[t]he dividends the functional state yields, from the Western standpoint, are strategic, not economic: the functional state is an advanced fortress for the defence of Western interests, and a cheap one at that. The US, as the Economist points out, pays some \$30 billion to foot the bill for NATO; \$4 billion in annual aid to Israel is a pittance in comparison.

The Israeli role in transferring American arms to countries and movements unpopular in the United States for openly granting direct military aid proves Elmessiri's concept of the 'functional state'. Such countries and movements include South Africa under the Apartheid regime, Iran, Guatemala rightist military juntas, the Salvadoran junta, and the Nicaraguan Contras (Zunes 2003, p. 161). Zunes refers to an additional explanation: frequent Israeli wars have allowed for battlefield testing of American arms as well as Israel's own arms industry (p. 161).

Finally, the events of 11 September have shown how US policy in the Middle East could harm American interests. The anti-American sentiment in the Arab region was instigated as a result of inconsistent and unbalanced American policies toward the region (Zunes 2003, p. 217).

Nevertheless, this policy underwent periodic adjustments or reassessments, which were perceived by Arabs as manifestations of normal disagreements between the two close allies over tactical differences (Aruri 2003, p. 5). Gerald Ford's call for a 'reassessment', Carter's disagreement with Menachem Begin in 1977, Baker's ordeals with Yitzhak Shamir and Bush I's delay of loan guarantees in 1990 are instances of those periodic adjustments (Aruri 2003, p. 5).

Although Israel had a privileged status as US ally during the Cold War, this status changed as a result of two significant international events: the end of the Cold War and the demise of the Soviet Union; and the 1990/91 Gulf War. The collapse of the Soviet Union caused significant disadvantages to Moscow's Arab allies – Syria, Iraq, Libya, Yemen, and the Palestinians. Thus, the Middle East ceased to be an arena for superpower conflict and American–Soviet enmity was replaced by American–Soviet cooperation (Shlaim 1994, pp. 104–105). Further, the Gulf War had powerful impacts on US–Israeli relations. During the Gulf War it was obvious that the United States had no intention of risking the war's outcome just to favour Israel. Thus, the United States rejected Israeli participation in the international coalition and opposed any unilateral Israeli action against Iraq. Nevertheless, Israel obtained the Patriot missile system as a shelter against Iraqi Scud missiles (Hanson 2001, p. 172, Shlaim 1994, p. 106). President Bush I refused Saddam Hussein's attempt to link the invasion of Kuwait to the Palestinian cause, but in October 1990, Bush I declared that though the two issues should not be linked, the problem of Palestine would soon be addressed. Bush's speech expedited Arab participation in the international coalition against Iraq. Shortly after the end of the Gulf War, the United States launched what was a peace process in the Middle East to 'close the gap between Israel and the Arab states and between Israelis and Palestinians', as President Bush I told Congress in March 1991 (Hanson 2001, p. 165). Reaching a settlement of the Arab–Israel conflict became a renewed US interest at that time.

In spite of the Israeli-American alliance, the United States rejected some of Israel's objections and procedural demands during the first phase of the Madrid negotiations and pushed all parties, Israel and Arab states alike, to start peace talks. Secretary of State Baker declared that the United States was able to put Israel in its place when it was becoming too troublesome and publicly presented Israeli leaders his telephone number and asked them to call him at the White House when they felt able

to talk more reasonably (Hanson 2001, p. 172). Soon after the beginning of the peace talks and to deal with Israeli hesitation, the United States postponed its loan guarantees to Israel for many months (Aruri 2003, pp. 44–45). Further, the United States denounced Israel at the UN Security Council for killing Palestinians in the *al-Haram al-Sharif* incident in October 1990.

The Oslo Process (1993–2000)

The Oslo Accords

As noted above, Resolutions 242 of 1967 and 338 of 1973 specify that Israel must withdraw completely from the occupied territories. Yet, from the beginning of the negotiations, Israel and the PLO perceived the process very differently. Based on international law and UN resolutions, the Palestinians saw the Oslo Accords (which were a result of Israeli-Palestinian talks, negotiated in secret under the leadership of a Norwegian diplomat) as a means to end the Israeli occupation and establish a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In contrast, Israel saw the Oslo Process as a way of maintaining its occupation of major parts of the Occupied Palestinian Territories, delegating to the Palestinian Authority the administration of the main Palestinian population centres in return for the Palestinian Authority's cooperation in protecting Israel's security and Jewish settlers in the remainder of the occupied territories (Zunes 2002).

Based on the United States' new initiative for peace and the Madrid principles, the Israeli strategy toward Palestinians was changed to a 'land-for-peace' formula, i.e. territorial concessions in exchange for comprehensive peace. Yet, careful observations of the peace process in the Middle East reveal that the Oslo Accords, as well as the interim agreements, have several drawbacks. The Oslo Accords included, first, two letters of 'mutual recognition' exchanged between Israel and the PLO and, second, a Declaration of Principles (DOP) that laid out the interim agreements for 'redeployment' rather than withdrawal of Israeli military forces (Said 2000, p. xiv). According to the Israel–PLO mutual recognition letters of 10 September 1993, the PLO accepted the right of the state of Israel to exist, re-acknowledged UN Resolutions 242 and 338, renounced the use of terrorism and other acts of violence, and affirmed that those articles of the Palestinian Covenant that are inconsistent with the commitments mutually agreed to in those letters are no longer valid. Israel declared simply 'in light of the PLO commitments, the Government of Israel has decided to recognize the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people'. Significantly, Israel has not recognized the Palestinian people. The DOP recognized the 'mutual legitimate and political right' of Israel and the PLO, but not the 'national' rights of Palestinians or the rights that the UN resolutions ensure (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1993a). Regarding Israeli forces, Article XIII of the DOP, entitled 'Redeployment of Israeli Forces', conditioned Israeli troop movement on the following:

- (1) After the entry into force of this Declaration of Principles, and not later than the eve of elections for the Council, a redeployment of Israeli military forces in the West Bank and Gaza Strip will take place, in addition to withdrawal of Israeli forces carried out in accordance with Article XIV. (2) In redeploying its military forces, Israel will be guided by the principle that its military forces should be redeployed outside populated areas. (3) Further redeployments to specified locations will be gradually implemented commensurate with the assumption of responsibility for public order and internal security by the

Palestinian police force pursuant to Article VIII above. (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1993b)

Moreover, the Oslo Accords divided the West Bank into four areas.¹⁹ In short, the Declaration of Principles, various interim agreements, and the Hebron Protocol negate UN Resolution 242 and the international laws that made the demographic changes imposed by three decades of Israeli occupation and dispossession of the West Bank and the Palestinians illegal.

In addition, Israeli-Palestinian agreements weakened the UN resolutions by fragmenting the negotiating process and keeping the Israeli settlements, which remain as colonies within Occupied Palestinian Territories. Heavily armed soldiers as well as paramilitary settlers guard those colonies, and Palestinians are expressly forbidden from entering them.²⁰ On 10 June 1994, Michael Janson wrote, 'Palestinians living in Gaza and Jericho are worse off than were the blacks of South Africa confined to homelands' (Findley 1995, p. xiii). In other words, the most dangerous aspect of the DOP and subsequent Israeli-Palestinian agreements is the division of the peace process into two stages and the virtual absence of terms of reference for the crucial interim phase, during which a gradual and limited Israeli transfer of territorial and administrative jurisdiction to the Palestinians was to occur. Although the DOP stated that a permanent solution would be based upon UN Resolution 242, the interim phase was free of reference to any of the international legal resolutions that define the West Bank and Gaza Strip as 'occupied'. Therefore, after nearly a half-century, the Palestinian people would cease to enjoy the legal authority of the international community and would have to engage in face-to-face negotiations with Israelis to decide their fate.

Certainly, Israel, with US backing, succeeded in creating a new term in its conflict with Arabs, i.e. the Palestinian occupied land became a merely '*disputed*' land. Historically, American policy with regard to Israeli borders changed from accepting a Jewish state within an area of about 55% of Palestine, as defined in the partition plan of 1947, to an area of around 77%, reflecting the area Israeli military forces seized after the 1948 war. American acceptance of UN Resolution 242 meant that the United States rejected Israel's conquests. Nevertheless, during Clinton's administration, the United States started referring to the Occupied Palestinian Territories as '*disputed*' territories.²¹

The unenforceability of international law and Resolution 242 in the interim phase simply relegated the legal status of these territories during the interim negotiations to 'disputed' territories, thereby giving Israel equal rights in its territorial claims. Thus, Israel, benefiting from this major defect in the DOP, successfully attained arrangements on the ground that legitimized the settlements.

Historically, the US policy toward Israel's settlements changed over the last three decades. US envoys to the United Nations (George Bush on 25 September 1971 and William Scranton on 26 May 1976), as well as Secretary of State Cyrus Vance on 21 March 1980, all affirmed that the settlements were illegal. However, under the Clinton administration, Jewish settlements were neither illegal nor were they obstacles. Rather, they became 'complicating factors'. President George Bush II said on 4 April 2002 that Israeli settlement activity in the occupied territories must stop (Neff 2002, pp. 151–166).

While no single member of the UN Security Council has the authority to nullify a ratified UN Security Council resolution, the US State Department's move, under the

Clinton administration, to refer to the Occupied Palestinian Territories as ‘disputed’ territories is just such an attempt. It is worth mentioning that declaring UN resolutions no longer relevant in the Israeli-Palestinian talks is a unilateral act that violates international law and UN procedures. The lack of reference to UN resolutions in the interim phase meant that the Palestinians had no clear legal basis for exerting pressure to regain legitimate rights. In the case of Hebron, as Lamis Andoni says, ‘having agreed to keep the Israeli settlements intact during the interim phase, the Palestinians could not press for the removal of Israeli enclaves from the old city or bring them under Palestinian jurisdiction’ (Andoni 1997, p. 24). By signing the protocol, Arafat conceded UN Resolution 242 since the protocol gave Israel the right to determine from which of the Palestinian territories it would depart and from which it would not (Roy 2002, p. 10). Conversely, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan asserted that UN resolutions are still in effect, and no bilateral agreement can replace a UN Security Council resolution, particularly if one party – in this case the Palestinians – insists that the resolutions are still valid (Zunes 2002).

Israeli plans

Israel has officially and publicly announced plans that contrast with UN Resolutions 242 and 338. Two years after the Oslo Accords were signed; Yitzhak Rabin announced an Israeli plan for a permanent arrangement with the Palestinians. The plan included the following:

- No return to the pre-1967 borders.
- A united Jerusalem, including the Jewish settlements in East Jerusalem, which would remain under exclusive Israeli sovereignty.
- Most of the settlements in the West Bank and Gaza would remain under Israeli sovereignty.
- Free access to, and military control over, the settlements would be assured by a series of new roads to be built throughout the territories.
- Israel’s security border, in the broadest meaning of that term, could be the Jordan River, which means that Israel would retain settlements and military bases in the Jordan River valley, i.e. inside Occupied Palestinian Territory.
- The Palestinians would get an entity that would be the home to most of the Palestinian residents living in the Gaza Strip and West Bank. This entity would be something less than a state.²²

Under the Rabin-led government, Israel started implementing these plans, under which the Palestinians would have only a series of isolated enclaves on less than 50% of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, cut off from each other by the so-called ‘bypass roads’, and surrounded by Israeli settlers and military bases. Furthermore, the building of new Jewish settlements in the occupied territories and Jerusalem has continued, including in the Arab areas. In addition, the massive bypass roads project (an approximately US\$600 million highway project in the occupied territories) was begun, often requiring the confiscation of Palestinian land and the destruction of Palestinian homes and orchards. The new highways enable settlers to bypass Palestinian cities, villages, and Jerusalem, strengthening the status of settlements as an integral part of Israel. Most importantly, the new highways form barriers, which make travel even more difficult for Palestinians since Israel forbids non-Jewish people from using those roads.

Consequently, creation of the Jewish settlements and the establishment of highways have divided the Palestinian people and land into isolated parts (Findley 1995, p. xviii). Even the most radical Israeli settlements, often located in the heart of heavily Palestinian areas and presumably to be removed in a permanent agreement, were maintained. Following the 25 February 1994 massacre by a Jewish extremist of 27 Palestinians praying in the Ibrahimi Mosque, Rabin refused to remove the small settlement in the Palestinian city of Hebron. Thus, under Rabin's government, growth of the Jewish settlements was greater than it had been under the previous 'hard-line' Likud government of Yitzhak Shamir.²³

Under Benjamin Netanyahu's government, after one further small Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories, the Oslo Process effectively came to an end. By May 1999, when the transition process was supposed to have been completed, the Israeli occupation forces over most of the West Bank and Gaza were still operating. At the same time, the settlement process was broadening, the highway network was expanding, and economic closures and curfews of the Palestinian territories had become more brutal and more frequent (Slater 2001, p. 178). Netanyahu publicly refused to enter into the Oslo-required negotiations for a permanent settlement (Slater 2001, pp. 178–179).²⁴ In addition, as a result of American backing of Israel's demands for additional security measures in Hebron,²⁵ the Hebron Protocol and the accompanying documents expressed what Netanyahu termed Israeli interests and, therefore, make Israeli security and the Netanyahu-made idea of 'reciprocity' the main principles at work in the peace process (Andoni 1997, p. 17).²⁶

Under the Barak-led government, not only did Israel's policies negate the Oslo Accords, but also they also seriously destabilized Arafat's position as a leader among the Palestinians (Slater 2001, p. 179). Although Barak signed, on 4 September 1999, the Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum on Implementation Timeline of Outstanding Commitments of Agreements Signed and the Resumption of Permanent Status Negotiations, on several occasions Barak expressed his ideological stances regarding peace in the Middle East. He admitted that he felt like a 'right-winger' (Slater 2001, p. 179). Barak had opposed the Oslo agreements, and throughout the 1990s his notions of negotiations with the Palestinians differed in no fundamental way from Netanyahu's or Ariel Sharon's (Slater 2001, p. 179). He believes that:

if a Palestinian state became unavoidable, it would be allowed only in Gaza and about half the West Bank, with Israel continuing to exercise sovereignty and military control over the remainder, including the settlements, the Jordan Valley, all of Jerusalem, and most or all of the water aquifers. (p. 179)

Barak repeatedly referred to the West Bank as Judea and Samaria and talked about the struggle of the State of Israel to rule over 'Greater Israel' in contrast with the Israeli left's orientations (Slater 2001, p. 179).

Accordingly, Barak refused to carry out the phased withdrawals of Israeli forces from several Arab villages neighbouring Jerusalem, as required by the Oslo Accords and subsequent agreements. In addition, Barak imposed repeated closures and economic hardships on the Palestinians, kept building bypass roads, and expanded the settlement process in both East Jerusalem and elsewhere on the West Bank at the greatest rate since 1992, exceeding even that of Netanyahu's government. The outcome was that throughout Barak's tenure (18 months), the number of settlers grew by 12% (see Appendices A and B) (*The New York Times* 1999).

Moreover, when Barak met with Arafat at Camp David in 2000, he was preparing a new Israeli government budget for 2001 that included increased subsidies of various kinds to persuade Israelis to move into East Jerusalem and the West Bank settlements (*The New York Times* 1999) (See Appendices A and B). B'Tselem – the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories – summarizes in *Land Grab: Israel's Settlement Policy in the West Bank*, by Yehezkel Lein and Eyal Weizman, the Israeli settlement activities during the Oslo Process, saying that ‘Overall, contrary to the expectations raised by the Oslo Process, the Israeli governments have implemented a policy leading to the dramatic growth of the settlements ...’ (Lein and Weizman 2002, p. 12).²⁷

The Camp David Summit (2000)

During the 2000 Camp David summit as well as its aftermath, Israelis and Americans claimed that Barak made a tremendously generous proposal to the Palestinians. As some scholars and politicians argue, the reality is quite different. Those scholars and politicians developed a more balanced perspective of what happened in Camp David and provided an in-depth analysis of the summit negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians and why the talks failed.²⁸ Following Zunes, Hussein Agha, Robert Malley,²⁹ and Edward Said, the Israeli plan in the Camp David summit, which was not reported properly in the American media, will be assessed in the following paragraphs.³⁰

As Zunes (2002) argues, Clinton conveyed to Arafat that Barak would transfer three occupied Palestinian villages on the outskirts of Jerusalem to Palestinian control, which Arafat then announced to the Palestinians. When Barak reneged on the promise, Clinton refused to pressure him to honour his pledge. This issue became part of the growing distrust that Palestinians were feeling toward the United States and Israel. In addition, Barak refused to withdraw Israeli forces from certain Palestinian lands as part of the third phase of withdrawals previously agreed upon by Netanyahu, and he refused to open the four safe passages between Palestinian areas as Barak himself had promised.

More specifically, the Israeli government consistently refused to withdraw from all the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which comprised just 22% of historic Palestine. In the 1993 Oslo agreement, the Palestinians recognized Israeli control over 78% of Palestine; this was a major concession from the longstanding demand for the return of all of Palestine or even the 43% foreseen under the 1947 UN partition plan. Nevertheless, as Zunes (2003, p. 122) notes, Israel and the United States have asserted that the Palestinian demand for that 22% was too much and that the Palestinians should give up more. Zunes (2002) argues that:

[e]ven if Israel had agreed to withdraw from all of the Israeli-occupied parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, including East Jerusalem, and had recognized the right of return of Palestinian refugees, such conduct could not be fairly presented as great acts of generosity or even enormous concessions, since Israel is already required to do so. It should not be considered a noble act.

As noted above, the officially occupied 22% of Palestinian territories has a legal status as occupied land according to the UN Security Council Resolution 242.

The Western media reported that Barak was willing to return 95% of the West Bank territories to the Palestinians, yet Israel did not present maps to validate this

claim. Moreover, Israel excluded greater East Jerusalem, some rural areas in the West Bank, parts of the Jordan Valley, the Dead Sea coast, and parts of the Judean Desert. Considering these excluded areas, Israel offered only about 80% of the West Bank (Zunes 2002). Yet, most importantly, the plan insisted on retaining 69 Jewish settlements in the West Bank, where 85% of the settlers live, and offered to evacuate only 15% of the settlers. This plan ignored UN Security Council Resolutions 446 and 465 – based upon the Fourth Geneva Convention – that prohibit a country from transferring its civilian population onto territory seized by military force. Thus, creating a contiguous Palestinian state with these settlements is unfeasible.

Furthermore, the issue of Jerusalem remains non-negotiable, except for giving Palestinians authority over a few sacred places in the old city and allowing the area of Abu Dis to become their ‘new’ Jerusalem (Said 2000, p. xv). In addition, the plan would give Israel supervision of the Palestinian borders, airspace, seacoast, and aquifers. The plan would also deny the right of return to their former homes (now Israel) to those Palestinian refugees who were expelled from them by the Israelis during the 1948 war.

Malley, one of Clinton’s aids, confirmed these facts. Malley acknowledged that Israel, assured of US support, stuck to positions clearly unacceptable to the Palestinians and that there was an obvious American bias favouring the Israeli position. Thus, the US position diverged significantly from UN Resolutions 242 and 338, which, the Palestinians had been promised, would serve as the basis for negotiations.³¹

In late December 2000, shortly before he left office and slightly ahead of general elections in Israel, President Clinton presented a new plan aimed at resolving the conflict. The main pillar of this plan was Clinton’s assumption that Israeli territorial contiguity (which incorporated illegal settlement blocs) was important, whereas Palestinian territorial contiguity was not (Zunes 2003, p. 127). The plan involved incorporation into Israel of unspecified parts of occupied East Jerusalem as well as large settlement blocs elsewhere in the West Bank. There is no reference in the plan to Jerusalem being an open city for all, as the Palestinians demanded. Moreover, while the proposal reconfirmed the Palestinians’ central demand for sovereignty, it did not give details about the territorial dimensions or the powers that a Palestinian state would be allowed to wield.

In addition, there is nothing about greater occupied East Jerusalem, the security zones in the Jordan Valley, or sovereignty issues for the Palestinian state regarding water, borders, airspace, and self-passage routes. The plan divided the Palestinian state into three disjointed cantons separated by Jewish-only roads and connected by Arab-only roads. Palestinian Jerusalem was to be divided into a number of unconnected islands separated from each other and from the rest of the Palestinian territory. The proposal also insisted that there was to be no obligation on the part of Israel to readmit Palestinian refugees expelled during the 1948 war from what is now Israel. In addition, there was no map to clarify this plan. The plan allowed Israel emergency deployment rights in Palestine, continued military presence in the Jordan Valley and parts of the southern extremes of the West Bank, and two military posts in the most densely populated areas in the central part of the territory. In addition, although this plan was offered as a ‘permanent’ agreement, it allowed three years for the Israelis to carry out the requirement to evacuate their isolated settlements and military forces from what would have become part of an independent Palestine.³²

Accordingly, Sharon’s government has received two important legacies. First, Barak’s legacy: as the Israeli press reported as the transition was taking place, the

highest number of housing starts in the territories since Ariel Sharon was Minister of Construction and Settlement in 1992 – before the Oslo agreements (incidentally, these settlements were funded by the American taxpayer, as Chomsky (2002) said). The second legacy was Clinton’s legacy: matchless American support for Israel.

Israel’s aim, backed by American support, was to maintain the occupation, advance Jewish settlements, and use the Palestinian Authority to protect the security of Israeli military forces and Jewish settlements in the occupied territories. Therefore, for the first time in recent history, a liberation organization – the PLO in this case – has been perverted into an administrative tool to protect the occupying forces and colonial settlements. The Israeli plan for ‘peace’ with Palestinians gave Israel time to promote its colonial settlements and advance the dismemberment of Palestinian demands and people. Israeli historian Ilan Pappé argues that, for Israel, the Oslo Process meant to move from ‘direct forms of control of the economic resources of the occupied territories’ to a ‘neo-colonial’ form. Pappé asserts that such a solution is an apartheid solution in which greater economic integration is combined with demographic and political separation.³³

Shortly before joining the Barak-led Israeli government, historian Shlomo Ben-Ami wrote, ‘the Oslo agreements were founded on a *neo-colonialist basis*, on a life of dependence of one on the other *forever*’ (Chomsky 2002; emphasis added). Yet, during the Camp David talks in 2000, he became an architect of the US–Israel proposals.

In sum, Clinton – along with his advisors – had thought that he could pressure Arafat to jump to final-status issues without either the implementation of previous Israeli obligations such as a freeze on new settlements or the fulfilment of previous Israeli promises of withdrawal. It is reasonable to expect that the previously agreed-upon withdrawals needed to be implemented before the more difficult issues, such as the right of return and the status of Jerusalem, could be addressed. It is risky, as Alexander George argues, for policy-makers to see only what they expect or want to see (the role of expectation or ‘mind-sets’). That is, it is dangerous for policy-makers to assimilate incoming information into their existing images, hypotheses, and theories. George argues that policy-makers often work with inadequate knowledge or erroneous assumptions, or both; therefore, policy-makers need to have a sophisticated, insightful understanding of each of the state-actors with whom they deal. They also need to know the uses and limitations of each strategy they plan to use (George 1993, pp. xvii–xviii).

In the case under study, incorrect images of the opponent and/or listening only to what the US policy-makers want to know, distort American assessments of what really is taking place in the Middle East. In fact, based on an inaccurate assessment of the nature of the conflict, cursory American stances, which insisted on solving all final-status problems at the expense of Palestinian rights, have brought about dangerous results. One of these outcomes was the failure of the peace efforts in the region, not to mention the catastrophic effects on both the Palestinians and the Israelis.

American support for Israel

The UN organs and human rights organizations over the past five decades have consistently condemned the treatment of the Palestinian population in the occupied territories. According to several international, including Israeli, human rights organizations,³⁴ as well as a number of reports issued by the US State Department, Israel has violated several international conventions and UN resolutions.

An important fact is that UN organs have classified the practices of Israel in relation to the Occupied Palestinian Territories in exactly the same terms as they did aggressors in the cases of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, East Timor, Rwanda, Kuwait, and Iraq (Negotiations Affairs Department, Palestinian Liberation Organization 2002). While the United States supported UN resolutions in all these cases, it did not support UN resolutions when it came to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. On this issue, the United States did not sanction Israel for its violations of international law and kept supporting Israel in different ways. That is, the United States rarely criticized Israel for its aggressive policies against the Palestinians, and not only provided diplomatic protection in the UN organs, especially within the Security Council (40 American vetoes since 1972), but also increased its economic and military aid to Israel.

In addition, since the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, the United States has maintained solid relationships with it. The United States has expressed its commitment to Israel's security, well-being, and qualitative advantage over its Arab neighbours. The United States has devoted a considerable share of its worldwide diplomatic, economic and military assistance to Israel (Clarke 1995, pp. 92–94). Historically, American arms policy toward Israel changed from a total embargo on selling weapons to Israel as well as to Arab countries between 1947 and 1961 to a total sponsorship of Israeli military needs. The new policy aims to assure that Israel has a 'qualitative edge' over all its Arab neighbours. In addition, despite the American opposition to the proliferation of nuclear weapons, it has overlooked the Israeli nuclear arsenal.³⁵ Israel is economically a dependent state. As Clyde R. Mark asserts in a Congressional Research Service (CRS) Issue Brief for Congress, 'Israel is not economically self-sufficient, and relies on foreign assistance and borrowing to maintain its economy' (Mark, 2002b).

The official US aid to Israel, rarely addressed in the mainstream American media, was US\$2.5 billion per year between 1973 and 1983, and it has increased to US\$3 billion per year since 1984, making Israel the largest recipient of US aid and the largest cumulative recipient since the Second World War. Of the annual total aid, about US\$1.8 billion per year is given as foreign military assistance, and about US\$1.2 billion per year as economic assistance (Mark 2002b). In addition to the above-mentioned numbers, the United States provides loan guarantees of US\$10 billion over five years, plus the interest (about US\$500 million per year). The United States must pay on money borrowed to pay for the grants to Israel. According to Israeli and American pro-Israeli sources,³⁶ the total aid from 1948 to 1985 was US\$10 billion in economic assistance and US\$21 billion in military assistance, 60% of which was in the form of grants. And between 1993 and 1997, the total aid was around US\$6.3 billion per year, or over US\$17 million per day. According to the US Arms Transfers Database (Federation of American Scientists (FAS) n.d.),³⁷ the total amount of US arms deliveries to Israel between 1990 and 2000 was US\$7,274,568,000, while the total US arms licenses and agreements with Israel for 1990–2001 is US\$18,354,554,365. Furthermore, in fiscal year 2000, the United States provided Israel with an additional US\$1.2 billion to fund the Wye agreement (Mark 2004). In 2008, Shirl McArthur estimated that the total aid between 1949 and 2008 was US\$14,992.47 million (McArthur 2008, pp. 10–11). According to the 2009 CRS Report (Sharp 2009, p. 21), the amount was US\$14,991.9 billion.³⁸

Former President Carter wrote that American aid to Israel is approximately US\$10 million per day (Carter 2002).³⁹ It is worth mentioning that according to the United States Agency for International Development (2002), the total US official

development assistance to the whole world (of 6 billion people) is US\$9.9 billion. Therefore, the 1/1000th of the world population living in Israel – with a life expectancy higher than that of the United States⁴⁰ – gets fully one-third of US aid. Thomas Stauffer, a consulting economist in Washington, DC, estimates that ‘Since 1973, Israel has cost the United States about \$1.6 trillion. If divided by today’s population, that is more than \$5,700 per person.’⁴¹ In 2003, Stauffer wrote:

An estimate of the total cost to the U.S. alone of instability and conflict in the region – which emanates from the core, Israeli-Palestinian conflict – amounts to close to \$3 trillion, measured in 2002 dollars. This is an amount almost four times greater than the cost of the Vietnam war, also reckoned in 2002 dollars. (Stauffer 2003, p. 20)

Taking into account –chronologically – what Israel was receiving as special aid packages, on the one hand, and aggressive Israeli policies toward Palestinians and other Arab countries, on the other hand, one might regard such special packages as ‘incentives’ or ‘rewards’. The US ‘rewarding’ policy is not new; it started after the 1967 war. The first ‘rewarding’ step in US foreign policy was in June 1967, when Israel launched an aggressive war against four Arab countries and occupied the West Bank, East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights, and the Sinai Peninsula. The American reaction was different from that in 1990/1991 regarding the Iraqi-Kuwaiti issue; the United States became Israel’s main supplier of weapons and economic aid. In January 1968, President Lyndon Johnson promised officially to maintain ‘Israel’s military defense capacity under active and sympathetic examination’, and in October, he announced his approval of the sale to Israel of fifty F-4 Phantom fighter jets (Mansour 1994, p. 92, Quandt 2001a, pp. 67–72, Rubenberg 1986, pp. 95–96).⁴²

In addition, on 14 October 1982 – a few months after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon – Israel requested US\$3.2 billion for the 1984 fiscal year, approximately US\$1 billion more than it was receiving in 1983. The administration asked Congress for aid to Israel of US\$2.5 billion, which included US\$1.7 billion in military credits, of which US\$500 million would not have to be repaid and US\$800 million was economic non-repayable grants. Congress approved more than the administration requested, i.e. the credits were increased to US\$850 million and US\$125 million was added to the US\$800 million in economic aid (Rubenberg 1986, p. 311). Cheryl A. Rubenberg rightly said, ‘It is striking that both the administration and Congress chose, in effect, to “reward” Israel (with more aid at better terms) for its aggression in Lebanon and its absolute rejection of the Reagan plan’ (p. 311). Further, in 1985, despite Israeli aggressions in Lebanon and against the PLO headquarters in Tunisia, a special assistance package was given to Israel following its harsh economic crisis. In fact, the invasion of Lebanon is what led to the economic crisis in Israel and sent inflation rates soaring as high as 445% in 1984 (Mark 2002b, p. 1). The American response was to send ‘rewards’ or ‘incentives’, i.e. US\$1.5 billion in emergency assistance disbursed in two instalments in 1985 and 1986.⁴³

Moreover, since 1990, Israel has promoted its colonial policies in occupied territories by encouraging Jewish immigration from the Soviet Union and Ethiopia. The United States responded to this increased immigration of Soviet and Ethiopian Jews by providing US\$400 million in housing loan guarantees.⁴⁴ In 1996, another extraordinary package was approved to help Israel fight Palestinian resistance. Israel received a total of US\$100 million, divided equally between fiscal years 1996 and 1997 (Bard n.d.).

In addition, after the collapse of the peace process in the Middle East in 2000, despite international, Israeli and State Department reports regarding Israeli violations of human rights in the Palestinian territories during the *Al-Aqsa Intifada* (e.g. US Department of State 2001, p. 199), the American reaction was to reward Israel. As noted above, the Clinton administration responded to Israeli aggression by arranging the largest purchase of military helicopters by the Israeli Air Force in a decade along with spare parts for Apache attack helicopters. Moreover, the United States announced (*The Arms Sales Monitor* 2000) plans to export to Israel eight AH-64D Apache Longbow attack helicopters, thirty-five UH-60L Black Hawk helicopters, and 14 Beechcraft light patrol aircraft. As always, the US government stated that these arms sales would ‘contribute to the foreign policy and national security’ of the United States by helping a country that ‘continues to be an important force for political stability ... in the Middle East’ (Chomsky 2002). The Arms Sales Monitoring Project of the Federation of American Scientists (FAS) has reported this fact, stating: ‘Since the outbreak of renewed violence, the U.S. government has authorized the sale of an additional 52 F-16I fighter jets, 9 AH-64D Apache Longbow attack helicopters, 23 AH-1F attack helicopters, and 59 UH-60L Black Hawk utility helicopters.’⁴⁵ *The Arms Sales Monitor* (2000) observed:

It is unclear how one of the most pressing U.S. foreign policy goals, ending the bloodshed in the Middle East and resuming the shattered peace talks, will be aided by this sale. Nor is it apparent these days whether Israel can be counted on to use the arms in a manner that promotes regional stability.⁴⁶

Conclusion

Careful observations of Israeli-American relations disclose the fact that American backing of Israel, i.e. unconditional American political and diplomatic protection, and economic and military assistance of Israel, have enabled Israel to deny the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, violate UN resolutions and even American laws,⁴⁷ and continue its aggressive policies towards Palestinians. However, the Clinton and Bush II administrations, the majority of both Democratic and Republic parties in Congress, and – most importantly – the mainstream American media have tried to convince the American people otherwise. This paper has revealed, in contradistinction to the widespread view in the Western media, that the occupying power – Israel – and its supporter – the United States – bear the greater share of the responsibility for the failure of peace efforts in the Middle East. One of the basic reasons for the failure of the peace process is that the US policy reflects the interests of Israel and the powerful Jewish lobby in Washington, DC, instead of enhancing the announced objectives of the peace process and America’s own national interests. As Jewish scholar Jerome Slater observed, Israel and the United States are responsible ‘not only for the latest collapse of the peace process but for the whole course of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since 1948’ (Slater 2001, p. 171).

The present paper presents three facts that show that the US foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict undermined peace efforts in the Occupied Palestinian Territories during the Oslo Process. First, over the last decade, the United States and Israel have insisted on imposing Israel’s plans on the Palestinians, ignoring UN resolutions as well as Palestinian interests. Second, the United States foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is based on double standards and unfair terms.

Despite Israeli brutality towards Palestinians, Israel has full American sponsorship that protects it diplomatically, economically, militarily, and strategically. Third, by linking the special packages that Israel has received from the United States with aggressive Israeli policies, it appears as though the United States is 'rewarding' Israeli aggression.

The failure of the Oslo Process has revealed many lessons. American support for Israel has not brought stability in the region, nor security to Israel itself. Rather, American policies have brought about two things. First, the United States has helped militarize the region, which could lead to further conflict. The United States created a nuclear state that became the world's fifth-largest importer of major weapons in 1999. Israel is also the region's largest and the world's sixth-largest exporter of arms and military technology, with billions of dollars of sales to 61 different states, including the United States and China. Second, US foreign policy led to the rise of anti-American sentiment across the Arab and Muslim world and the resurgence of several violent anti-American groups in the region. Further, since the September 2001 events, there have been several other attacks against American and Israeli interests in Jordan, Lebanon, Kuwait, Indonesia, Kenya, Yemen, Morocco, and Saudi Arabia. And since these events, the United States is warning Americans of an 'imminent' terrorist attack against US interests inside the United States and elsewhere. Therefore, American foreign policy-makers should learn that the 11 September 2001 attack, as well as other attacks, was, in essence, a reaction to US foreign policy. That is, the more injustice abroad, the more insecurity at home.

Finally, it appears that three significant issues, with regard to American foreign policy in the Middle East, should be examined further in subsequent research. The first and most important issue is whether US policies in the Middle East – which have favoured Israel since its creation – accord with American national interests. Furthermore, since the influential Jewish lobby in Washington, DC, exerts significant influence on the American decision-making process toward the Middle East, the linkage between domestic elements and foreign policy needs to be carefully studied. Finally, research should be done to examine how US foreign policy could be more balanced toward both Israelis and Arabs.

Notes

1. Over the last few years, many American authors have begun to write about the cost of American support for Israel, for instance Reese (2000), Francis (2002), and Jensen (2002).
2. Figures inclusive to 14 February 2005 (Palestine Red Crescent Society n.d.).
3. Figures inclusive to 1 May 2006 (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs n.d.).
4. For more details, see Zunes (2003), pp. 120–128.
5. Regarding the Occupied Palestinian Territories, B'Tselem's – The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, Jerusalem – report on Israel's settlements policy points out: 'Since 1967, each Israeli government has invested significant resources in establishing and expanding the settlements in the occupied territories, both in terms of the area of land they occupy and in term of population.' Accordingly, there are approximately 380,000 Jewish settlers now living in the settlements on the West Bank including those established in East Jerusalem. For more in-depth information about Jewish settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, see Lein and Weizman (2002). Further, there are about 7000 Israeli settlers in the Gaza Strip (Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) 2003).
6. As will be noted, there are many UN resolutions related to the Occupied Palestinian Territories, such as Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338.
7. Among these resolutions are the following from the Security Council: 106, 111, 127, 162, 171, 228, 237, 248, 250–252, 256, 259, 262, 265, 267, 270, 271, 279, 280, 285, 298, 313, 316, 317, 332, 337, 347, 425, 427, 444, 446, 450, 452, 465–469, 471, 476,

- 478, 484, 487, 497, 498, 501, 509, 515, 517, 518, 520, 573, 587, 592, 605, 607, 608, 636, 641, 672, 673, 681, 694, 726, 799, 1073, 1322, 1397, 1402, 1403, 1405, and 1435. All these resolutions are accessible at the United Nations Documentation Center (see <http://www.un.org/documents/>).
8. All are available from the United Nations Documentation Center.
 9. According to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), today there are more than 3,737,494 million Palestinian refugees living in refugee camps throughout the Middle East, and many more worldwide. Their right of return gives them a claim to citizenship, financial settlement, and, in some cases, return to former homes in what is today Israel (Commissioner-General for UNRWA 2000).
 10. See http://www.us-israel.org/jsource/History/Human_Rights/geneva1.html/.
 11. See <http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html/>.
 12. See http://www.unhcr.ch/html/menu3/b/o_p_ref.htm/.
 13. In November 1988, the PLO officially accepted the existence of the state of Israel and the two-state solution.
 14. For more details, see Palestinian Declaration of Independence (15 November 1988) at: <http://www.mideastweb.org/plc1988.htm/>.
 15. It is worth mentioning that in order to reform political campaign fundraising, Congress authorized the establishment of Political Action Committees (PACs). These are a legitimate medium through which people can direct their contributions to support candidates who represent their opinions on issues of concern to them. There are thousands of PACs functioning in the United States that represent a diversity of views on different issues. For instance, there are pro-labour PACs, pro-environment PACs, and many pro-Israel PACs.
 16. The total 1978–2000 Funds to Congressional Candidates is US\$34,607,182; the total number of recipient candidates between 1978 and 2000 was 1732 (*Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, n.d.).
 17. There are many resources in the AIPAC's website (see <http://www.aipac.org/>), which include bill text and status and background material on the issues the AIPAC cares about.
 18. The well-known Egyptian scholar Abdelwahab Elmessiri proposes a new concept for understanding Jews, Israel, and Zionism: 'the functional group' concept. According to Elmessiri, the 'functional group' is a minority, imported from outside or separated from society, which performs functions that members of a 'traditional' or pre-modern society cannot perform due to social mores. Such jobs include prostitution, medicine, and money lending. The functional group is isolated from the host society, either in a physical ghetto, or a symbolic one, and it is envied by the poor and depends for protection on the ruling classes, which utilize them to exploit the masses. Elmessiri applies his 'functional group' concept to the state of Israel, which he calls a 'functional state'. By creating Israel, the West achieved two main goals: getting rid of the Jewish problem and the Oriental problem at the same time. The Zionist state is a functional state with a utilitarian relationship with the Western powers – Britain and France and, after 1945, the United States – and in exchange for financial support Israel serves the West's strategic interests. For more details on this concept, see Elmessiri (1998), vol. 7. For more articles in English by Elmessiri, see <http://www.elmessiri.com/>.
 19. The agreement gave the Palestinian Authority full civilian and security control over 'Area A', meaning that the Palestinian Authority controls both the day-to-day civil administration and the police in these enclaves. However, Israeli security forces continue to control the borders of Area A territories, making economic activity and travel between the territories virtually impossible. The Palestinian Authority has civilian control over Area B, but the Israeli government administers security. In Area C, the Israeli government has full control over the Palestinian population, controlling both administration and police (*Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip* 1995).
 20. For more details, see Andoni (1997, p. 30).
 21. For a broad assessment of the American stance regarding the borders of Israel, see Neff (2002), pp. 83–106.
 22. See Rabin's addresses to the Israeli Parliament on 27 October 1994 and 29 May 1995 at: <http://www.israel-mfa.gov.il/mfa/go.asp?MFAH0c800> and <http://www.israel-mfa.gov.il/mfa/go.asp?MFAH0c8d0/>.
 23. As Findley (1995) argues, Israel did that by 'working cleverly and without complaint from his chief financier, the U.S. government ...' (p. xvii).

24. For more details about the Israeli-American relationship during Netanyahu's government, see Lochery (1999), pp. 214–223.
25. There are about 450 Jewish settlers in five tiny enclaves scattered around the city's historical and commercial core. About 98% of the population are Palestinians.
26. Netanyahu invented this concept. He declared, 'We established the principle of precocity – in an official document – as a basic principle for the continuation of the permanent status negotiations. This is now an integral part of the agreement' (Andoni 1997, p. 26).
27. For more details about the Israeli settlements, see The Palestine Monitor (n.d.).
28. Among these articles are Agha and Malley (2001) and Zunes (2003).
29. Robert Malley was a special assistant to President Clinton for Arab–Israeli affairs and Director of Near East and South Asian Affairs at the National Security Council.
30. Agha and Malley (2001) and Zunes (2002) report some other details about the summit. They state that Arafat stressed that he needed more time, but Clinton pushed Arafat to come to the summit, promising, 'If it fails, I will not blame you.' Yet, Clinton did not follow through with that promise and blamed Arafat and the Palestinians for the collapse of the talks.
31. Agha and Malley (2001) and Telhami (2001) rightly ask why President Clinton was so frustrated with Arafat. Telhami argues that 'though both Arafat and Barak made remarkable concessions at Camp David, yet the public discourse in the United States following Camp David placed the blame for failure solely on Yasir Arafat' (p. 11).
32. For Clinton's plan, see *The New York Times* (2001), *The Guardian* (2000), and *The Washington Post* (2001).
33. For Pappé's interview with Graham Usher, see Usher (1999), pp. 11, 34–41.
34. Among these organizations are Human Rights Watch, B'Tselem – The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, Amnesty International, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), The Association for Human Rights in Israel, and International Federation of Red Cross & Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).
35. For more details on the American arms policy, see Neff (2002), pp. 167–181.
36. Most American aid numbers in this section were acquired from The American–Israeli Cooperative Enterprise (<http://www.us-israel.org/jsource/ustoc.html>).
37. See <http://www.fas.org/asmp/profiles/worldfms.html#FAS/>.
38. According to the US State Department, the proposed US military aid to Israel for fiscal years 2009–2018 was as follows: 2009, US\$2.55 billion; 2010, US\$2.70 billion; 2011, US\$2.85 billion; 2012, US\$3.00 billion; and 2013–2018, US\$3.15 billion a year (Sharp 2009, p. 3).
39. On 21 April 2002, former President Jimmy Carter argued that the US government could persuade Israel to make a just peace by using the legal requirements of American weapons as well as American aid given to Israel. Carter wrote in *The New York Times*: 'There are two existing factors that offer success to United States persuasion. One is the legal requirement that American weapons are to be used by Israel only for defensive purposes, a premise certainly being violated in the recent destruction of Jenin and other villages. Richard Nixon imposed this requirement to stop Ariel Sharon and Israel's military advance into Egypt in the 1973 war, and I used the same demand to deter Israeli attacks on Lebanon in 1979. (A full invasion was launched by Ariel Sharon after I left office.) The other persuasive factor is approximately \$10 million daily in American aid to Israel. President George Bush Sr. threatened this assistance in 1992 to prevent the building of Israeli settlements between Jerusalem and Bethlehem' (Carter 2002).
40. According CIA (2003), life expectancy at birth in Israel is 78.86 years, while in the United States it is 77.4 years.
41. Stauffer gave this estimate in a lecture on the total costs of US Middle East policy, commissioned by the US Army War College (Francis 2002).
42. In addition, after the signing of the Egypt–Israel peace treaty and Israel's withdrawal from the Sinai, Israel received the 'cost' of the redeployment of Israeli forces and the rebuilding of air bases in the Negev (US\$5 billion) as well as another US\$3 billion partially to compensate for what Israelis and Americans call 'sacrifice'. Such a special aid package could be regarded as compensation, not a reward.
43. The emergency assistance number was derived from Bard (n.d.).
44. For parts of the speech of the former majority leader Democratic Senator Robert Byrd of West Virginia in early 1992, see Findley (1995), pp. 111–112.

45. See <http://www.fas.org/asmp/profiles/IsraelTroublesome.html/>.
46. *The Arms Sales Monitor* (2000). Yackley and Zunes (2005) rightly conclude that a careful review of the US military assistance programme reveals that 'this program has actually hindered the resolution of the Arab–Israeli conflict, made the Middle East more volatile, and undermined U.S. regional interests'.
47. For in-depth details on how Israel violates American laws, see Mark (2002b), Cohen *et al.* (1998), and Shichor (1998).

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Appendix A

Table A1. Population of settlements in East Jerusalem during the Oslo Process.

| Year | Number of residents (thousands) |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1992 | 141 |
| 1993 | 146.8 |
| 1994 | 152.7 |
| 1995 | 155 |
| 1996 | 160.4 |
| 1997 | 158.8 |
| 1998 | 162.9 |
| 1999 | 170.4 |
| 2000 ^a | 173.4 |
| 2001 ^a | 176.9 |

Note: ^aEstimation based on the percentage growth of the population throughout Jerusalem.
Source: Lein and Weizman (2002), p. 13.

Appendix BTable B1. Settlements and settlers in the West Bank, 1967–2001^a.

| Year | Number of settlements ^b | Population (thousands) | Year | Number of settlements ^b | Population (thousands) |
|------|------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1967 | 1 | Unknown | 1985 | 105 | 44.2 |
| 1968 | 3 | Unknown | 1986 | 110 | 51.1 |
| 1969 | 8 | Unknown | 1987 | 110 | 57.9 |
| 1970 | 10 | Unknown | 1988 | 110 | 63.6 |
| 1971 | 12 | Unknown | 1989 | 115 | 69.8 |
| 1972 | 14 | Unknown | 1990 | 118 | 78.6 |
| 1973 | 14 | Unknown | 1991 | 119 | 90.3 |
| 1974 | 14 | Unknown | 1992 | 120 | 100.5 |
| 1975 | 19 | Unknown | 1993 | 120 | 110.9 |
| 1976 | 20 | 3.2 | 1994 | 120 | 122.7 |
| 1977 | 31 | 4.4 | 1995 | 120 | 127.9 |
| 1978 | 39 | 7.4 | 1996 | 121 | 141.5 |
| 1979 | 43 | 10 | 1997 | 122 | 154.4 |
| 1980 | 53 | 12.5 | 1998 | 123 | 166.1 |
| 1981 | 68 | 16.2 | 1999 | 123 | 177.5 |
| 1982 | 73 | 21 | 2000 | 123 | 191.6 |
| 1983 | 76 | 22.8 | 2001 ^c | 123 | 198 |
| 1984 | 102 | 35.3 | | | |

Notes: ^aNot including East Jerusalem.

^bThese figures relate to the number of settlements recognized by the Ministry of the Interior.

^cAs of 31 September 2001 (provisional data).

Source: Lein and Weizman (2002), pp. 13–14.