

# NATIONAL COUNCIL ON U.S.-ARAB RELATIONS

## 17<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL ARAB-U.S. POLICYMAKERS CONFERENCE

### ***“TRANSITIONING THE WHITE HOUSE: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ARAB-U.S. RELATIONS”***

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2008

RONALD REAGAN BUILDING & INTERNATIONAL TRADE CENTER  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

**11:00 a.m.-12:00 Noon: "GEO-POLITICAL DYNAMICS (II): ISRAEL AND PALESTINE"**

**Chair: Dr. Peter Gubser** – Immediate Past President, American Near East Refugee Aid, Inc [ANERA]; Member, Board of Directors, National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations.

**Speakers: Dr. Nadia Hijab** – Senior Fellow at the Washington, D.C.-based Institute for Palestine Studies. Author, *Womanpower: The Arab Debate on Women at Work* and co-author *Citizens Apart: A Portrait of Palestinians in Israel*. She was Editor-in-Chief of the London-based *Middle East* magazine before moving to New York in 1989 to join the United Nations. Since 1999, she has worked as an independent consultant for international organizations on human rights, human development, gender, and the media.

**Mr. Daniel Levy** – Senior Fellow and Director of the Middle East Initiative at the New America Foundation and a Senior Fellow and Director of the Prospects for Peace Initiative at The Century Foundation.

**Dr. Naseer Aruri** – Chancellor Professor (Emeritus) of Political Science, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth; author of numerous books and articles on the Arab-Israeli conflict; President of the Board, Trans-Arab Research Institute; Member, Executive Committee, Center for Policy Analysis on Palestine.

*Transcript by Ryan & Associates*

JOHN DUKE ANTHONY: He is a humanitarian who has provided basic developmental assistance and welfare for the Palestinian victims of the Israeli-Palestinian dynamic. And also with work in Lebanon and Jordan and Gaza and the West Bank. He has his PhD from Oxford, his Master of Arts in Arab/Middle Eastern studies from the American University in Beirut, and his Bachelor's in political science from Yale University. Dr. Gubser. He's also a member of the National Council's Board of Directors.

DR. PETER GUBSER: John, thank you very much. It's great to see all of you today. I especially want to congratulate John on this wonderful conference, it's really worked out well, better than we all expected. We expected greatness and this is super greatness. Congratulations, John.

In the interest of time, I am not going to say very much because I want to hear our three panelists. But I would really like to follow what Ambassador Mike [?] said. He talked about the new Administration, whichever it may be – McCain or Obama – and re-engaging on the Israel-Palestine conflict. And I would hope that our panelists will talk about doing that, what advice they would give to the new Administration, whichever one it is, and that we won't just be looking at process as we have too often in the last couple of decades. But in a resolution to this long, long conflict and looking forward to having a Palestinian state and an Israeli state living next to each other. And we'll work with them as they work out better relations and improve relations.

We have a great panel. Number one is Ms. Nadia Hijab. She is a senior fellow at the Washington, D.C. based institute for Palestine Studies. You have a lot more detail in your booklets about her. Also I should add that she was editor and chief of the London-based *Middle East* magazine, and she has written a number of books and articles. Secondly is a person I've met only over the last couple of years here in town, I'm not sure he was living here in Washington before, is Mr. Daniel Levy. He is a senior fellow and director of the Middle East Initiative at the New American Foundation and Senior Fellow and Director of Prospects for Peace and Issue at the New American Century Foundation. I've heard him speak a number of times, and he is very innovative. I'm looking forward to hearing him. An old friend is Dr. Nasir Aruri. He is the Chancellor and Professor Emeritus of Political Science at the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth. He too has written many, many books on the Middle East, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and on Palestine.

So as we don't lose time, I am going to turn it over to Nadia.

[DR. NADIA HIJAB] Thank you, Peter, and thank you, John, for organizing this terrific event. So I am going to talk about three things. First of all how far have we moved toward peace between the Palestinians and the Israelis? Secondly, why haven't we been able to achieve peace? And thirdly, what the next president can do about it?

This is a very well informed audience, so I am not going to take you back to the origins of this crisis. But it's just worth it to remember briefly how the Zionist dream in 1897 became the Palestinian nightmare in 1948 when Israel was established, and how Palestinians and Arabs resisted losing even more land in 1967, and how it took until 1988 -- we are talking 40 years

after the State of Israel was created -- to accept that there would tragically be no going back to Palestine as it was in 1948, and for the Palestinians to declare a two-state solution as their national goal.

So in fact, in spite of the many wars and this continuing, ongoing bloody conflict, we have traveled a long way toward ending the conflict between the reality of Palestine and the reality of Israel. So why haven't we been able to achieve peace? Put very simply, as the Palestinians move towards the center, the Israelis move toward the right. Israel believed it could keep almost all of the land and leave almost none for the Palestinians. Israeli colonization of Palestinian land, as well as Israeli controls of Palestinian movements, continued even during the best years of the peace process. We're talking the good years of the peace process from 1993 on to this day. Still it's important to note that there was a moment at Taba in January 2001 when an agreement was almost reached that could have been implemented. The Israeli-Palestinian joint statement of January 27, 2001 said that they had never been closer in reaching an agreement and had not only discussed but made substantial progress on core issues – refugees, security, borders and Jerusalem. Unfortunately, Ariel Sharon was elected Prime Minister, and as you know of all Israeli leaders, he's done most to settle the West Bank and to undermine the Palestinian national movement.

To understand the extent of the changes Israel made in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, I would encourage you all to go onto the website of the United Nations, at <http://www.ochaopt.org/> and take a look at the PowerPoint they've produced on the fragmentation of the West Bank. It is very short, and it superimposes very starkly every single aspect of Israel's occupation and infrastructure on a map of the West Bank. And at the end of that visual, after you have seen how the 149 settlements, the settlers close to now to 500,000, the closed military areas, the military bases, the nature reserves and the separation wall, you'll see how the Palestinian areas look like just slivers of flesh hanging off a skeleton. And that's why many Palestinians, including and this is important, including the most moderate Palestinian authority officials are beginning to call for reframing the struggle as one for equal rights within Israel and Palestine.

Today, Palestinians are arguably more powerless than ever before. But Israel is stuck, even though it controls the land and has one of the strongest militaries. And there are four reasons why it is stuck.

First of all the settlement movement has become almost too strong for the Israeli establishment to control. It's now well represented in the army. It's not only attacking Palestinians, the settler movement, but also attacking Israeli soldiers and recently begun to attack Israeli civilians who oppose the occupation.

Two, Israel's legal situation is untenable. And just how untenable was reaffirmed by the International Court of Justice in its 2004 advisory opinion on the wall. It said many things. I mean it affirmed that the occupation was illegal; that the wall is illegal. It affirmed that the occupation was illegal, that the wall was illegal. But it said Israel should cease and dismantle the wall and pay compensation and warned other states not to support this illegal regime of the wall, which has implications for the United States given its aid to Israel.

Third, Israel's moral situation is untenable. Many people, including former President Jimmy Carter and several Israelis, now using the term apartheid to apply to Israel's colonization. Israelis worry about this and have written about it and the especially dire situation in Gaza arouses moral outrage, considerable moral outrage.

Fourth, the Israelis have successfully weakened the Palestinian leadership, but this is actually very bad news for Israel because many analysts, among other things, many analysts believe that implementing a two-state solution will require a compromise on the Palestinian right of return.

So think about it. If it took the late Yasser Arafat decades to get his people to make a compromise on land, a very painful compromise on land, what will it take to get a compromise on the right of return? I believe that Yasser Arafat was perhaps the only leader who might have been able to persuade the Palestinians to do so. I don't think the current leadership, I think it has been weakened to the extent that it doesn't have the authority to take such a move.

So this is what the next US president faces. Can he afford to ignore the Arab-Israeli conflict? No. Many quarters, including the bipartisan Iraq Study Group and others, have warned that you can't solve any of the problems of the Middle East without tackling the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Plus, polls of Arabs and Muslims all over the world consistently show that the U.S. policy that they most dislike is unquestioning support for Israel, and this is bad for U.S. security.

So what should the U.S. president do, and what shouldn't he do? We are talking about the next president. First, he should delink, putting an end to Israel's occupation from negotiations about final status. Let's tackle ending the occupation immediately while we talk about final status. He will need to push Israel to take on the settlement movement and help it to do so and insist on a freeze and dismantlement of the settlements. He must stop weakening and start strengthening the Palestinian leadership, and there are several moves that need to be done to this effect. One is to bring in Hamas, which has made it very clear that it wants a two-state solution, and it has effectively upheld cease-fires that, by the way it has negotiated with Israel, on several occasions, including right now. Second, there must be an Israeli release of Palestinian prisoners if the Palestinian Authority is going to begin to regain its credibility. Third, there needs to be lifting of Israeli restrictions on Palestinian freedom of movement.

Another thing the U.S. president, the next president should do is to bring in Arab actors to enable compromise and offset the power balance between Palestinians and Israelis and to protect the Palestinian leadership if it decides to take risks, especially regarding the right of return. Finally, he should bring in international actors to offer protection to the Israelis if they decide to take risks and also to spread the burden on the U.S. of taking on the Israeli Zionist lobby here in the states.

What the U.S. president must not do is to start a new drawn out negotiating process or host fancy conferences and meetings – we've been there, we've done that for the last 15 years. So enough of all that.

If it's to be a two-state solution, everybody knows what it will look like. And by the way if it is going to be two-state, the only thing that will fly is a fully independent and sovereign Palestine alongside Israel. Most of all, the new president should not fall into the trap of supporting sequenced confidence-building steps. A major reason why the previous agreements were not implemented. We should start with a mutual comprehensive cease-fire so as to neutralize the security excuse, and then move very quickly to dismantle outposts and settlements, release prisoners and bring freedom of movement and access at the same time as discussions on final status.

Can the next president do so? Certainly as everybody knows, the U.S. has plenty of clout with Israel given its aid. But of course can he afford to do so politically given the power of the Zionist lobby and of the Christian Right. Here I think there are signs of hope because of changes in the U.S. political and economic map.

With the financial crisis, it's much harder to justify aid to Israel, who's GDP per capita is higher than Portugal's. Especially given its illegal and immoral actions in the West Bank. Peace would be a lot cheaper. Then there is the growing strength of the Jewish center and left and that will give the next president a lot more room to maneuver if he wants to take it. There's also a growing strength of a number of progressive groups throughout the United States, including the mainstream churches who are beginning to discuss divestment.

So to conclude my remarks, the next president's task will be a lot harder of course if Benjamin Netanyahu gets elected, given Netanyahu's strong ties to the Zionist and Christian Right in this country. But if the next president is not able to act, it will be the end of a two-state solution. We will see anarchy and violence that will again and again spill out beyond the borders of Israel and Palestine. And the longer Israel's occupation continues, the larger the number of Palestinians who will start to call for equal rights and thus they will push the question of how it is possible for Israel to be both Jewish and democratic to the center of the debate. And they will begin to undermine the very foundations on the basis of which Israel was created. Thank you.

[GUBSER] Nadia, thank you very much for a very good presentation. Daniel, can I invite you to the podium?

[MR. DANIEL LEVY] Well, thank you very much to the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations for inviting me to join you at this panel and to Peter for those introductory comments.

The reason you wouldn't have seen me here earlier than a couple of years ago, Peter, is very much related to something that Nadia referred to. In my previous capacity, and I am not ruling out a future one either, I was involved in the Israeli government, and I was actually at those Taba negotiations as an Israeli negotiator, working in the PM's office that Nadia referred to. And I would very much second what Nadia said about how close we were at Taba. And I very much come to this question from something else that you said Nadia because I agree with you – Israel is stuck. So for me, it's a burning issue, how for Israel one gets out of this predicament.

Let me start by saying that the paradigm we are operating in of the two-state solution, for 20 years since the PNC Declaration at Algiers in 1988 to the last 15 years, and it was the 15th

anniversary. I don't think we were celebrating it last month, the Oslo agreement. I think it's not too alarmist to say that that paradigm of a two-state solution may well pass its sell-by date during the term of the next U.S. president, especially if that's a two-term presidency. I really don't think that is excessively alarmist to make that claim partly because of the situation on the ground that you can see on the ground, you can see on that [<http://www.ochaopt.org/>] website that was referred to but also because of what's going on up here, as people lose more belief, more hope on both sides, but I think particularly on the Palestinian side, that there can be a two-state solution.

And Nadia referred to the increasing interest, intellectual and activist and otherwise, on the Palestinian side of a one-state solution. Some would say well is not so terrible. I have several reasons to thinking it rather is a terrible thing. Principally from an analyst's perspective, not from my own personal perspective, but from an analyst's perspective, I'm not sure there are alternatives out there. There is no traction for a one-state solution in Israel. I think there is very little traction for a Jordanian option in Jordan and I think that the idea that Israel would do a unilateral withdrawal that would fall short of the kind of dignity that a viable two-state solution needs to accord also doesn't offer us a way out.

For Israel, as Nadia said, this challenge goes to the heart of whether Israel in the future Israel can continue to be a state that is democratic and has a Jewish character.

For the Palestinians I'd argue, while I don't like to talk about hierarchies of suffering, I do think that in the absence of a two-state solution and nothing else emerging on the horizon that can be implemented, for the Palestinians, I think, that suggests a long time of further suffering, which is why I believe as you suggested, that Hamas is actually moving closer to accepting the reality of a potential two-state solution, and of course, it's the Fatah position. And even a.. I'd really recommend people to read this, even a group like the Palestine Study Group, which was an informal effort of academics from inside the territories – Palestinian Israelis and Palestinians from the Diaspora – who came together and set out a number of alternatives for a Palestinian strategy moving forward. Their end message was “don't force us to go down the one-state route; it's not going to be that great for us either; it was almost a *cri de coeur* to Israel to seize the two-state option while it still exists.

For the Arab world, if I may in this esteemed forum suggest, I think this is regionally destabilizing and embarrassing for the Arab states, especially those allied with the U.S. For many years, we were all told it's actually rather convenient for the Arab states because it is a nice excuse to not make domestic reforms. I'm not sure that was ever true to the extent it might have been, I don't think that's where we are today. I don't think it's comfortable to have Hassan Nasrallah and President Ahmedinijad of Iran speak above the heads of Arab rulers to the Arab street, saying, “Wait a minute, if you are so cozy with the Americans, why are they still facilitating what's going on with the Palestinians?” And I think Nadia more than effectively addressed why this is a U.S. interest, which is also rather important in this setting. It fuels anti-Americanism -- the unresolved conflict -- it undermines America's allies. It's a recruitment tool driving extremism. It saps American credibility and it's a political and PR gift to the Iranian regime.

So what to do? The outgoing Bush Administration engaged belatedly after seven years on the Israeli-Palestinian issue at Annapolis. Now we have a process, an Annapolis process, and the obvious thing for an incoming Administration would be to say, "Wow, that's great. We've got a process we can continue with. We can keep moving forward on this. We'll do it with more enthusiasm. We'll do it on day one, not year seven, unlike the other guys. We'll do it with energy. Maybe we will have a new envoy. We've got a process that we can continue with." I would strongly lend my voice to what Nadia said in urging caution against taking such an approach. This process is not working. Annapolis is repeating the failures of Oslo, and I would argue not because of the individuals concerned. These aren't shortcomings on the part necessarily of Secretary Rice, or Assistant Secretary Welch or the Security Envoy Daton or the Quartet. I think there are structural flaws in this process, and let me quickly point out three of them.

Number one – I very much doubt that resolving the outstanding Israeli-Palestinian issues can be done bilaterally. Both because we are down to the core questions and because of the natures of the leaderships on both sides at this stage.

Number two – I don't believe we can construct a stable two-state solution and a Palestinian state on the edifice of a divided Palestinian house. As Nadia said, a weakened Palestinian leadership, a divided Palestinian polity is actually a net negative for anyone who is seriously interested in having a two-state solution. You have a problematic address. You have problematic legitimacy and you have problematic carrying capacity. And that's not just an Israeli excuse. For some it is. But it is a reality, even if many of us did help create that reality.

Thirdly and perhaps most importantly, I would strongly argue that you cannot, it's a complicated sentence and I apologize in advance, you cannot incubate Palestinian statehood in the laboratory of a hostile foreign occupation, especially one that includes a civilian settler population that demands from its military, from the IDF, not only that it will continue to grow and expand but that it will have freedom of movement. Freedom of movement for the settlers directly contradicts the capacity to have freedom of movement for the Palestinian population of the West Bank because the IDF is duty-bound to protect them. The expectation that you can birth a beautifully formed Palestinian state under these conditions is a totally unrealistic expectation. And so our efforts are trying to do Palestinian economic development, trying to do PA institution building, trying to do PA security sector development – trying to do all those things under these conditions have failed and failed again and not because we're not smart in terms of how we tried to do it. It's because we are not smart in even attempting it because it can't be done would be my argument. That is the lesson.

There are some successes – we get excited about Jenin; on the security side, about Bethlehem; as an investors conference. It's not sustainable, and yes, you addressed the political conditions. And let me just say one sentence about one of those aspects. What many people to consider to be the most important, and for me as an Israeli, very much matters, which is security. You build a Palestinian security service, a force. The dilemma that that force very quickly faces under these conditions is, "Can we protect our own people against the IDF and against the settlers? Or are we essentially a subcontractor for the Israelis, and therefore we are condemned as illegitimate by our own people. You can manage that tension for a month, two months, three months, but not over

time. And eventually the American trained forces and the internationally funded weaponry will be turned against Israel and Israelis.

So let me suggest a different approach and to quickly sketch four elements. Some of them will dovetail what you have already heard. Four elements of this different approach.

Number one – go comprehensive and regional. The Arab peace initiative has been dramatically underutilized. It's almost shameful to the extent to which that wasn't used, either when it was issued in 2002 or reissued in 2007 and it's fascinating. You now have Israel's leadership from President Shimon Peres, Defense Minister Barak, Foreign Minister Livni all talking about the Arab peace initiative.

Now I am not saying we should turn this initiative around and say okay, first of all you front load. Let's have diplomatic relations; let's have lots of nice upfront things. No, I think you need the comprehensive solution in order for these other things to kick in. But let's begin to flesh them out. Let's begin to flesh out what it might look like, how tangible it could be. Which means we need greater Arab involvement. Which means you need an Israeli-Syrian track. When appropriate an Israeli-Lebanese track alongside an Israeli-Palestinian track. And a track with the Arab League to do the Arab peace initiative.

Secondly, the U.S. and perhaps the Quartet needs to be ready to make bridging proposals on the specifics of closing a deal and actively to promote those ideas, especially on the Israeli-Palestinian track and perhaps on the Syrian track.

Thirdly, do not veto but rather encourage Palestinian national reconciliation, and it should be an Arab mediation effort that is not exclusively Egyptian and that has Western support, especially if you have this comprehensive effort, Hamas will be operating within a new regional map. And one should make reasonable demands, not the three conditions, but reasonable demands that first and foremost begin with the violence issue of Hamas.

Fourthly and finally, we need to come up with an answer to this question – if Israel withdraws, what do you do about the governance and security vacuum? My argument is that you have to come up with an answer to that question that isn't predicated on Palestinian proof of performance while under Israeli occupation and I think that requires an international partnership with the Palestinians. That will probably require international security forces taking the place of the IDF. That will require international assistance with Palestinian governance in order to incubate Palestinian statehood in a more healthy environment.

Those would be my suggestions. Let me close by making two final comments.

First of all, Israeli elections which Nadia touched on. Right now in the polls, it is a dead tie. It seems Israelis will go to the polls on February 10. If you do get a Livni led, Kadima led government, I think all of the above applies, and that government will need sufficient assistance if it is going to be carried over the finishing line of a comprehensive peace. If Netanyahu is prime minister, what I would urge this forum to remember is that we've been there before. Netanyahu signed the Hebron and Wye agreements. They didn't get us very far, but they make the



internal tension of him managing his own government very difficult. And of course he had a back channel with Syria.

So do not give up on a Netanyahu premiership, a priori, but also don't pretend that the idea that you could do a flourishing Palestinian economy without touching the politics, which is what he is suggesting, is something that is really worth carrying forward.

And a final thing that I really feel I have to say today. I do just want to make one comment about the story that is developing and you may all have read about Rashid Khalidi and the event that took place five years ago and was reported in the LA Times and Senator Obama and a very bizarre comment made by Senator McCain that it would be like him meeting with a neo-Nazi.

Let me say this. I believe that American support for Israel is a very positive thing. I'm proud that that support exists. As an Israeli, I am very, very sympathetic and pleased that we have that support. It's a great achievement.

But that cannot become distorted to become the demonization of Palestinians and of decent people like Rashid Khalidi.

Let me tell you. It does Israel absolutely no favors. Israel has been talking to the PLO for 15 years for heaven's sake. Israel has a cease-fire with Hamas. A Palestinian friend of mine Mustafa Barghouti when he addresses Israeli and Jewish audiences likes to say that you don't only need to liberate the Palestinian people from Israeli occupation, but you need to liberate Israel from the occupation. Because only with that way will you be able to heal Israel. And after what's happened with Khalidi, I would say that that same liberation would apply to the discourse here in the United States. Thank you.

[GUBSER] Daniel, thank you very much. I also very much appreciate the note of optimism. Running an NGO for 30 years, you have to be optimistic, and you were. Thank you. Naseer, I invite you to the podium.

[DR. NASEER ARURI] Thank you Peter, and thank you John for having organized this conference, which I am delighted to be a part of. The topic that I am going to address this morning is politicicide and the impediments to a peaceful solution.

I would argue that the diplomatic paralysis and the crippling impasse in the Middle East are embedded in the so-called peace process itself. As long as ending the Israeli occupation is not on the active agenda, the longest occupation in history will continue unabated. Moreover, peace will not be at hand as long as 1948's Nakba is not recognized for what it is: a form of ethnic cleansing, a colonial enterprise which covets the land without the people. Peace will also remain elusive as long as the 1967 occupation remains entrenched as a form of politicicide.

Politicicide, genocide and as long as U.S. diplomacy is associated with both calamities. The late Israel sociologist Baruch Kimmerling who authored a book with the title "Politicicide" defined it as a process and I quote, "That has as its ultimate goal the dissolution of the Palestinian people's

existence as a legitimate, national, social or economic entity, which may also include partial or total ethnic cleansing.” This is the definition by Kimmerling.

Politicide rather than occupation is a process that covers a wide range of social, political, military and bureaucratic activities whose goal is to destroy the political and national existence of a whole community of people. And thus denied the possibility of self-determination. This is what Israel has been doing since 1948, destroying the very fabric of the Palestinian nation. It has intensified the destruction in 1967 and the process is ongoing. The national aspirations of the Palestinians for full independence have thus been thwarted, not only by military means, but also by diplomatic, bureaucratic and demographic policies – all of which are components of this politicide. The real function of the peace process therefore has been to shelter Israel from the threat of peace, to enable Israel to escape its obligations to the Palestinian people under international law. These obligations have been effectively replaced by Israeli decrees presented as American peace initiatives. Not only has the U.S. succeeded in regularizing the 1967 occupation, but it has also engaged in diplomatic outsourcing thus consigning part of the diplomatic façade to the Quartet. Indeed since the inception of this so-called peace process, Washington has been acting as peacemaker while at the same time it served as Israel’s chief weapons supplier, bankroller and diplomatic backer.

How did it manage to promote the Israeli agenda without being held to account? Most importantly at present, how did the so-called negotiations become Mahmoud Abbas’ sole strategic option, that is how he described it when these negotiations have never produced any progress – not at Camp David, not at Oslo, not at Sharm Al Sheik, not at Annapolis, and not in Jerusalem recently. During the past few decades, Israel and the US have pursued policies, which dealt a crippling blow to the two-state solution, which could have created an independent Palestinian state and terminated the Israeli occupation. This derailment was accomplished through futile but focused diplomatic efforts invested by presidents from Nixon to Bush II.

Forty-one years have elapsed since the 1967 occupation, 15 years since Oslo, eight years since the Mitchell Report, eight years after Taba, seven years since the Zinni mission, five years after the Roadmap, six years since the Saudi plan and one year since Annapolis. After all this, peace has remained hopelessly elusive. But nevertheless focused with the U.S. continuing to pretend that it is the chief, if not sometimes the sole peacemaker. Neither did earlier attempts to reactivate the peace process fare any better.

So since 1948, the question of Palestine has been the focus of numerous UN resolutions that uphold the right of Palestinians to return to their land and property, to establish their own independent state alongside Israel, to receive compensation and to gain restitution. Indeed a global consensus had prevailed throughout the 1970s and 1980s in support of a diplomatic settlement based on the international, legal framework. But all efforts toward an equitable settlement were sabotaged, ironically by none other than the managers of the peace process itself. A legacy of rejectionism on the part of Israel and the self-designated peacemaker has prevailed ever since the Rogers Plan of 1969. Israel has managed to reject a number of U.S. proposals even when some of these proposals did not include full withdrawal from occupied territories and/or Palestinian sovereignty.

The first casualty was the Rogers Plan, followed by Israel's frustration of Governor Scranton's mission on behalf of President Nixon in 1970, also the rejection of President Sadat's land for peace and mutual recognition proposal of 1971, the rejection of President Carter's call for a Geneva international conference in 1977, the Reagan Plan of 1982, the Schultz Plan of 1988, the Baker Point, because he did not want it to be called a plan of 1989, and the successful efforts to thwart President Bush senior's attempts to link long-term guarantees to the issues of Jewish settlements in and around Jerusalem in 1990.

Obviously, President Bush the son is keenly aware of his father's ordeal as he embarked on integrating his strategy into that of General Ariel Sharon. The PLO and the Arab states had associated themselves with this global consensus that I have been talking about and expressed in countless documents, including the 1971 Sadat offer. The Security Council resolution of 1976 calling for the implementation of Resolution 242 and the two-state solution, the European Venice Declaration in June of 1980 on behalf of the European Community, which used to be called the European Council at that time. That recognized the Palestinian right to self-determination. So it is really a global consensus that I am talking about here. Add to it the 1981 Fahd Plan, which is a Saudi Plan, and there is of course the 1988 PLO recognition of Israel, the 1998 European Union Declaration, all the way up to the new Saudi plan adopted by the Arab League in Beirut in March of 2002, offering full recognition of Israel in exchange for ending the occupation.

The theory and practice of the peace process, which was based on the assumption that peace in the Middle East can only emanate from Washington had in effect undermined all serious efforts to bring peace to the region. The history of US foreign policy in the region during the past four decades reveals that every single Administration since Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza had a Middle East plan named after a U.S. president and/or a secretary of state.

That same history reveals that, I'm sorry except for Baker who did not want it to be a plan, that same history reveals that each of these plans negated true Palestinian self-determination, raising the question of whether these plans had ever been meant for implementation. The common denominator of all of these U.S. plans was the nonrecognition of the original injustice done to the Palestinians in 1948 by the way, not one of them had acknowledged the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination or the unambiguous need to terminate the 1967 Israeli occupation or provide restitution to the Palestine victims. The Palestinians thus were denied all forms of international protection. The U.S. has used its Security Council veto nearly 50 times either to shelter Israel from international reproach for violating the human and international rights of the Palestinian people, or to deny the Palestinians international protection from an ongoing Israeli campaign of ethnic cleansing dispossession and Bantu-ization of the occupied territories. Thus Israel has been able to escape public and diplomatic scrutiny.

The U.S.-led campaign against multilateralism has been pursued so vociferously and actively that any mention of international law, the right of return for refugees and even UN resolutions has become to the US, to Israel and to some European allies, the equivalent of intransigent and anti-peace obstruction.

Why has peace been such a threat to Israeli leaders? And I will conclude with this. For Israel, the danger of a permanent peace emanates from a perceived demographic threat. Sometime

between 2005-2010, Palestinian Arabs living under Israeli-control were to become a majority between the Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea for the first time since 1948. At present, the number of Palestinians living between the river and sea under Israeli control is approximately 5.2 million, compared to 5.1 million Israelis. Short of giving Palestinians equal rights, in one state, Israel is left with three options.

Option number one is to acquiesce in the establishment of a separate, sovereign Palestinian state.

The second option is to expel much of the Palestinian population.

And the third option is keeping the Palestinian confined in apartheid style cantons, which in essence is Sharon's plan of 1981.

America's pretense for the role of honest broker is finished I think. It was conclusively finished when the U.S., Israel and the PA could not accept Hamas's electoral victory. The U.S., Abbas and Israel are determined to undo that victory first by the embargo and the attempts at starvation and now by abducting the top Hamas leadership and smashing its infrastructure. Abbas, Olmert and Bush have colluded to bar Hamas from assuming actual power thus causing a bloody war among certain sub factions of Fatah and Hamas. Despite the formation of a government of national unity and the Mecca agreement, neither the US nor Israel is now willing to revive a peace process and pursue negotiations in good faith. Thus diplomatic failure has been embedded, as I began with, I conclude with, in the peace process. That whole strategy contributed to the beginning of a new discourse about a single state based on the equal protection of the law.

In conclusion, what the new president should do, I think, he should convene a new working group of respected individuals known for their wide familiarity with the situation and for their integrity. This panel should study the numerous plans that I mentioned in my talk here of the past four decades, and determine why they did not succeed after 40 years. Thank you very much.

[GUBSER] Naseer, thank you very much. We have five minutes left before we have to break up so we can set the tables for lunch. I will take the prerogative of the chair. A couple of weeks ago, I was at a function where David Brooks, the *New York Times* columnist, spoke. He was asked that if he were advising the new president, be he McCain or Obama, would you advise him to engage in trying to get to a resolution of the Palestine-Israel conflict? And he answered no. He said there are too many other problems for America to be engaged in internationally like Iraq, Afghanistan, a resurgent Russia and domestically we have major problems we should be engaged on. Not his words, but basically he said the new president shouldn't burn political capital on a problem that is almost insolvable. I would ask each member of the panel, how would you respond to Mr. Brooks? What would you advise a president to do?

[HIJAB] Well, I have given my four points for the president and three do's and my three not-do's. Many people are coming up with this thing – why don't you give the Israeli-Palestinian problem a rest and solve all of the other problems of the world by bypassing this one?

I can't remember who said, "If you don't take care of the Middle East, the Middle East will take care of you." I think it will come to bite back if it is not solved. The situation on the ground is

worse than anything we could ever imagine. Anyone who lives and works in the Middle East knows that what they see on their televisions everyday is completely different from what people see here.

What's going on in Gaza, just last week in the West Bank three young men were killed. One was a new bridegroom, totally going about their business. People cannot continue to think that this can stand, without it spilling over again and again. I would definitely refute that.

[LEVY] Again, I don't want to repeat what I said before in terms of giving the recommendations. What I would say is one of the, just one, of the shortcomings of the outgoing Administration was either an unwillingness or an incapacity to connect the dots in terms of Middle East policymaking.

When you are trying to get Iraq's neighbors to be constructive in achieving stabilization and reconciliation inside Iraq, it matters whether you are talking to all of them. It also matters where you're positioning yourself on Israel-Palestine. If you are trying to gain leverage in a negotiation with Iran, and to take away a card that they can use in the rest of the region, it matters whether you are engaging with Israel-Palestine and also with Syria. When you are trying to push back against the version of radical extremism that is actually out to get you, not against what sometimes people see as this undifferentiated sea of greed and hostility, but when you are trying to do the former, it matters whether you are engaging and looking credible and actually solving problems on Israel-Palestine. If you think you can park this, kind of put a seal around it, and it won't spill over, try it. It will bite your bum. But you can try.

[ARURI] Well, I think that there is an assumption here that the solution to the Palestine-Israel question is somehow vested in the United States. This really hasn't been examined as to whether it is correct or not. I would venture to say that something is wrong when you spend 40 years trying to cure a sick person and that all the recipes, all the medical advice did not help. Then you would want to reexamine the whole process.

I have cited enough plans to bore you with them, but I had to mention them in the context. I would repeat simply that very, very briefly that I think it might be an idea to convene an assembly of people who can look at these plans and try to dissect them, and try to find out what really did not work.

One other thing very quickly is my own preference if that is possible, would be to hold an international peace conference and have the U.S. be part of it. But it cannot really be the sole diplomatic conciliator while it is also the backer of one of the antagonists.

[GUBSER] Nasir thank you. We have come to the end of our time. I would like to thank Nadia, Daniel and Naseer for their thoughtful, sometime provocative discussion.

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