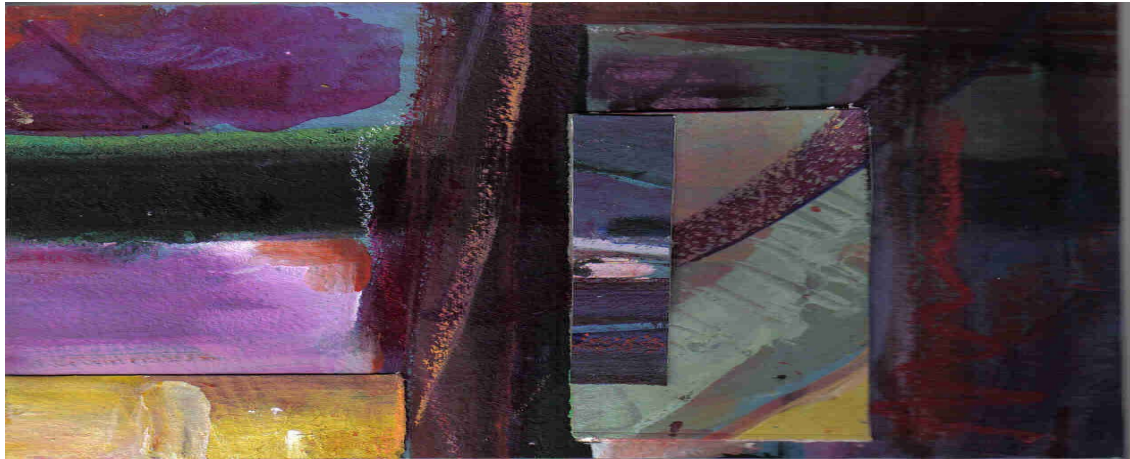

**ISRAEL-PALESTINE:
WHAT FUTURE FOR THE TWO PEOPLES?
Confronting the Obstacles to a Viable Peace**



Report on the Roundtable at Charney Manor, Oxford
20th-22nd April 2005

**Organised by the Middle East Policy Initiative Forum
and Oxford Research Group**

SUMMARY

In late April 2005, the Middle East Policy Initiative Forum and the Oxford Research Group convened a two-day roundtable of eminent Israelis, Palestinians and internationals at Charney Manor, Oxford. Participants included former negotiators, politicians, academics, journalists and civil society figures. They took a fresh look at the state of the conflict, analysed opportunities and obstacles, and shared ideas for making progress toward a viable peace. The meeting took place at a time of apparent optimism around Palestinian elections, prospects of Israeli disengagement and the fragile calm. But underlying realities revealed a different story.

The roundtable began by analysing trends, shocks and obstacles from the standpoint of the future rather than the past. Deep shifts in both societies and in the regional and international context are forming a new, post-Oslo picture. Many felt the logic of Israel disengagement goes well beyond short-term tactics. It is effectively driving present events, and drawing other actors in toward a longer-term worldview. Israel's present leadership may be prepared to permit Palestinian contiguity and statehood, and to give up the majority of territory on the West Bank. However, this will not satisfy fundamental Palestinian national aspirations.

In the absence of a compelling, well-marshalled and widely supported follow-up plan, the default will be an interim reality, the return of violence and growing divergence between the national goals of each side. Palestinians are conflicted over the possibility of a Palestinian state with provisional borders, which offers an

opportunity for drawing breath and institution-building but threatens to become a cage rather than a platform for their goals. This mini-state could prove to be one of the riskier scenarios from the point of view of a lasting peace, precisely because it promises to be more stable in the short term.

The Palestinians are distracted and divided by the process of political transition after Arafat. They lack a clear national strategy and a generally accepted representative who can go forth as interlocutor. They are challenged to re-forge both their institutions and their movement under conditions of occupation. The Islamic resistance movement Hamas aims to enter electoral politics and national institutions, opening possibilities for both reform and radicalisation, and presenting challenges for the international community. The more a comprehensive peace disappears over the vague, rosy horizon, the stronger extremism will become. Most agreed a third intifada is set to erupt, but its means and ends may not be fixed in stone.

Meanwhile, the international community has not taken up a leadership role aimed at making progress toward a peace agreement. Instead, its recent work has focused on consolidating the emerging reality of interim disengagement. The US is enhancing its engagement within conflict management parameters. The Quartet is assisting on economic issues. The more fundamental challenge they share with the Arab world and the broader international community is to formulate bold steps that can be taken after disengagement to clarify the final status horizon and drive progress toward a lasting peace deal between two viable states.

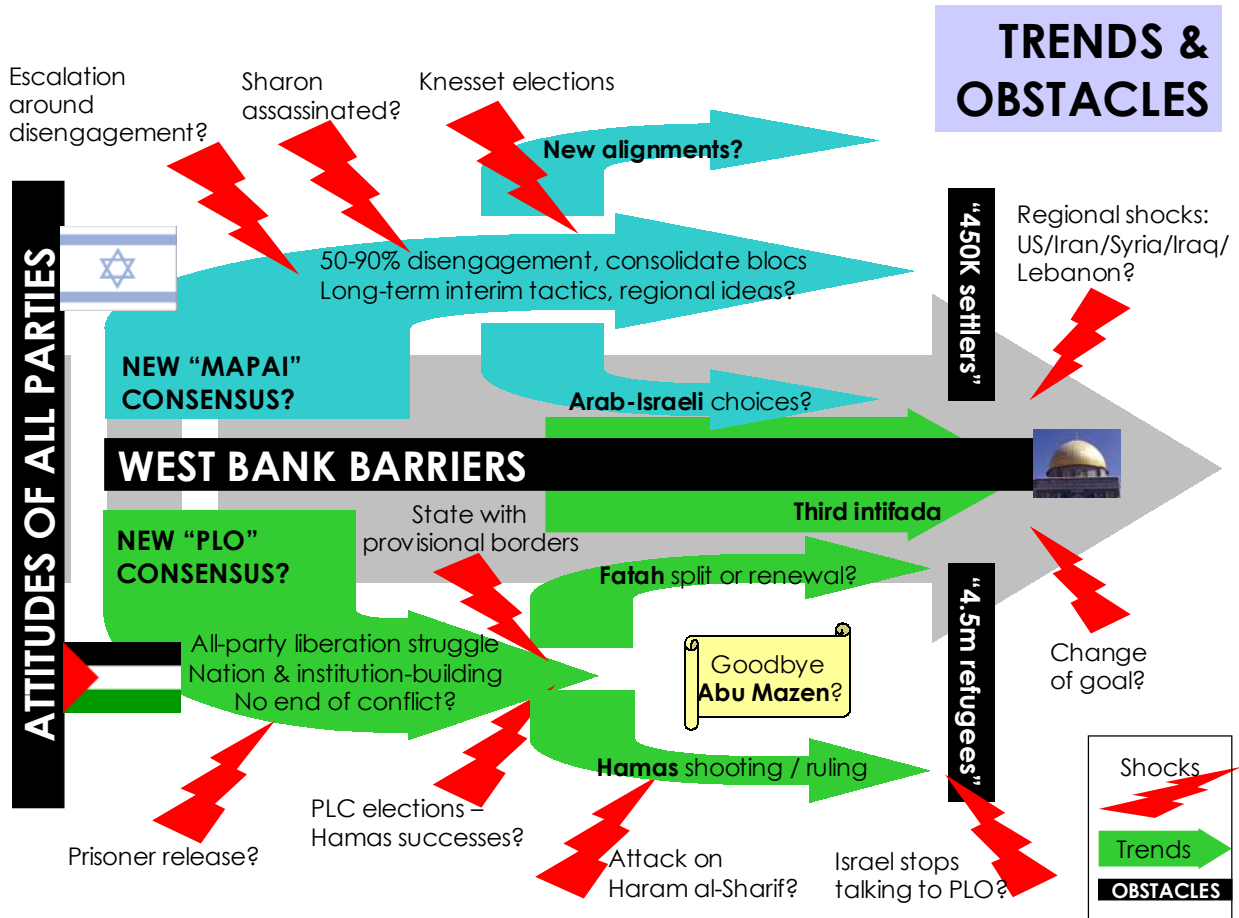
The roundtable did not seek to reach consensus, but to provide a creative forum for sharing perspectives. The aim was not only to improve understanding of present trends and dynamics, but to search out opportunities and explore where fresh ideas or political will could switch the conflict onto a track more likely to lead to a viable peace. Six particularly promising areas emerged, described at the end of this report:

- *Civil society* – potentially including large-scale coordinated non-violent action
- *Reframing permanent status issues* – creative approaches to citizenship, phased agreement, the extent of land swaps and broader regional dynamics
- *A fresh Palestinian national strategy* – gathering strength and taking ownership of their destiny, drawing in the scattered national constituencies, deciding on how to confront the logic of disengagement and reviewing means and ends
- *Developing Israeli alternatives* – post-disengagement conversations among Israeli leaders interested in making progress on a more comprehensive front
- *Fostering multi-party dialogue in the Palestinian territories* – both in the near-term around the monitoring of elections, and thereafter in a wider context
- *Campaigning international diplomacy* – preparing dramatic steps toward comprehensive peace to be taken by Arab, US, EU and other international and communal leaders after the first disengagement

OBSTACLES AND DYNAMICS

The official story of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict prevailing since 1993 is ceasing to be adequate to its realities, as the logic of disengagement takes hold on the ground and elections herald changes in the Palestinian body politic. The physical obstacle presented by the matrix of settlements and

bypass roads on the West Bank may be reconfigured, but the West Bank barrier and the closing of the Jerusalem envelope join other solid barriers to a lasting peace. Roundtable participants began by sharing questions about the future, which were brought together in this map of obstacles, trends and possibilities.



It is clear that the centres of gravity are shifting in each society, and new possibilities are emerging. The new Israeli consensus around disengagement and the post-Arafat Palestinian landscape suggest the worldviews of the parties may be diverging from the well-known principles of negotiated peace. In its present alignment, the “new deck of cards” above contains a gloomy picture in which a viable peace is nowhere to be seen. But creative thinking can

reveal fresh or long-ignored opportunities. The roundtable focused in particular on developments in Israeli and Palestinian politics and on the implications of a Palestinian state with provisional borders, before considering how a different dynamic could be generated.

NEW ISRAELI DOCTRINE?

The disengagement plan of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, together with other Israeli moves, is having a deep impact on the landscape of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. By seizing the initiative, the Israeli government has for the moment derailed or co-opted approaches designed to bring final status talks back onto the agenda.

Commentators have often painted Sharon as more of a tactician than a strategist. Some Palestinian and international leaders suggest that the disengagement plan is a short-term tactic, and that the new dynamics following will lead to a comprehensive peace. But this disengagement sits at the heart of a broader strategic framework around which a new Israeli consensus could be emerging, powerful enough to draw in other actors. Participants suggested this worldview is spreading across the Israeli political landscape and bedding itself down in the military and professional echelons. At its heart is a redefinition of Palestinian statehood that separates that aspiration from end of conflict, independence, Jerusalem and other national demands. A limited Palestinian state, de-linked from final status, is coming to be seen in certain quarters as an Israeli interest.

We are in a period of change and re-evaluation where many new possibilities have opened up, and this viewpoint may not yet have reached the level of doctrine. But alternatives will need to be well founded and powerfully championed if they are to challenge it. Through analysis and role-play, roundtable participants spent considerable time working through the implications of this thinking.

One of its premises is the historic right-wing assumption that in the foreseeable future, there will be no Palestinian partner for a comprehensive peace deal that is acceptable to Israel. The view is taken that the will of the Palestinian leadership to compromise is questionable, and that its capacity to do so – in terms of political institutions, security capabilities and public legitimacy – in any case lacking. That view is compounded by the lack of a single Palestinian interlocutor, given actual and latent divisions between the Palestinian president, elements of the cabinet, legislature and security services, the wider PLO leadership, the factions of Fatah, an increasingly powerful Hamas and other fractions. In the foreseeable future everything is viewed as interim, nothing is permanent.

This view is tacitly determined by the lack of political will on the part of the Israeli leadership to contemplate compromise on Jerusalem, refugee return and other basic Palestinian demands. Thanks to its own fragmentation, volatility, and reliance of executive on legislature, the Israeli political system may be institutionally constrained from delivering real compromise absent a fresh approach. It is not yet clear from what quarter leadership for renewal might come, despite forthcoming primaries and elections. Present opposition and civil society alignments appear to lack the requisite energy or momentum.

There is an intimate relationship between the state with provisional borders now on the agenda and the extended interim agreement long contemplated in Israel. Some participants proposed that all parties

accept the de-linking of Palestinian statehood from final status agreement, and that negotiations can then be pursued on a state-to-state basis, concluding separate chapters on the outstanding issues. Most Palestinian participants saw this phased approach as a recipe for stasis and further violence. Other Israeli participants expressed concerns that unless interim steps are reconnected to the horizon of a comprehensive agreement, the state of Israel and its social cohesion will continue a long descent.

During the Oslo years, the default posture was negotiations between the parties. The Israeli government preference today is to act unilaterally or in coordination with international actors such as the US and the World Bank. The strategy has internal weaknesses – it does not deliver international legitimacy or an end to conflict, and it will reinforce Palestinian radicals, giving the sense of a victory to violence. It will lead to pressure to negotiate again. Israeli and Palestinian public opinion were and remain united in their support for a peace deal. But presently polls show they are divided on how to get there: the Israeli public prefers a phased approach, while Palestinians still demand a comprehensive peace.

The extent of Palestinian control over the West Bank is a central bone of contention. For over two decades, figures of 42% to 52% have been attributed to the “Sharon Plan” (presented most recently in his Herzliya speeches). The expectation has been that contiguity will be severely curtailed by the remaining network of Israeli roads and settlements, as was Area A. However, a view emerged that Likud leaders are

contemplating considerably larger withdrawals from the West Bank over time, involving the evacuation of more isolated settlements and potentially extending to 80% or more of the territory, but excluding Jerusalem and the settlement blocs, where Israel is consolidating its control through the E1 corridor and other actions. The present route of the security barrier is compatible with this prospect. Dependent upon regional developments, even the Jordan Valley is clearly viewed as less essential.

The territories to be given up will not approach the deal already rejected by the Palestinians at Camp David, and under current concepts will not end the territorial conflict. However, such steps could significantly exceed Palestinian and international expectations, throwing other parties off balance for years, distracting from consolidation in the “seam-line” and Jerusalem, and maintaining Israeli control over the process. The larger the unilateral withdrawal, the more the diplomatic leverage of the Palestinians may shrink, and the more they may be drawn toward the pressing responsibilities of governing their territories. One participant suggested that Israel may stop talking to the PLO in favour of the “democratically elected leadership” of the Palestinian territories. This distinction may acquire a difference after Abu Mazen.

The prospect of further disengagement from the West Bank, even a series of unilateral steps stretched out over a long period of time, must therefore be taken seriously. Some participants thought a “second disengagement” will be part of the platform Sharon takes to early elections in spring 2006. Others suggested he may have an interest in

ensuring that each withdrawal is messy, traumatic and extended. Assembling a coalition in the Knesset for bold moves will in any case be no simple task.

Present US policy appears aligned with this phased Israeli approach. Under the roadmap timetable, the third phase of the roadmap was planned for 2005, with final status negotiations and a second international conference. President George Bush currently says he wants to see a Palestinian state by 2009: that need only mean the second phase of the roadmap, the Palestinian state with provisional borders.



A PALESTINIAN STATE WITH PROVISIONAL BORDERS?

In Hebrew the “roadmap” translates as a “map of roads”. Despite outlining a timetable straight through to a final status agreement, this diplomatic structure contains less hopeful paths. The Palestinian state with provisional borders (PSPB) outlined in the second phase of the roadmap looks set to come onto the horizon after disengagement. Though presented as an optional way station, it could become a mandatory cul-de-sac.

Some Palestinian participants argued strongly that the time has come for them to build their state and national institutions on territories from which

Israel withdraws, and that the priority is therefore to maximise the extent of that withdrawal, the attributes of sovereignty and independence, and the viability of this state. They emphasised in particular contiguity of territories and openness to the world through an airport, seaport and a border regime guaranteed by third parties, without which such a state is unlikely to be economically or politically viable. They stressed that Israel will share the provisionality of Palestine’s borders. They also viewed state-building as an opportunity to address the democratic shortcomings of the regime under occupation.

Others judged the PSPB on balance to be a poisoned pill, a limited mini-state that will separate statehood from core Palestinian national aspirations of independence, a capital in East Jerusalem, an end to the occupation of 1967 and an agreed solution to the problem of the refugees. They argued the PSPB will serve an Israeli strategy to contain these larger goals, to defuse international pressure by converting the Palestinian independence struggle into an extended border dispute between two states, and to drive a wedge between Palestinians inside and outside the territories. They warned that it could make a viable two-state deal harder, if not impossible, thereby also damaging Israel’s long-term interests.

It is on such grounds that President Mahmoud Abbas has sought pre-emptively to reject a PSPB – a stance that may however prove difficult to sustain, in particular if the US and Arab states such as Jordan, Egypt, Qatar or Morocco come behind it. One Palestinian participant, initially a strong advocate of a state with

provisional borders provided it reached a threshold of viability, became increasingly worried and began to re-evaluate its implications. Participants agreed that Palestinians face the pressing challenge to develop a positive national strategy that either reshapes the statehood dynamic to their own ends, or rejects it in favour of an alternative programme that is credible, carefully planned and marshals power effectively. Hope will not be enough.

Israeli government figures expect disengagement will relieve daily friction and international pressure. Close monitoring of developments in the territories can continue and strong military responses to acts of terror will be easier. They are considering the value of a recognised end of occupation over territories from which they withdraw, and of liberating themselves from the occupier's responsibilities. Some see that the more they concede, the more viable a PSPB will appear, and the less leverage the Palestinians will retain. Others hope Palestinians will look east and south, to regional "solutions" involving neighbouring Arab states.

But as one Palestinian participant asked, "Who is on the other side of Israel's wall?" The future political dynamics of Palestinian society have been insufficiently addressed, beyond the bogeyman of a " Hamas-stan " in Gaza.

DILEMMAS OF PALESTINIAN TRANSITION

The Palestinians find themselves on the horns of several dilemmas simultaneously. After Arafat's death and four years of intifada, their national institutions are in tatters.

They are looking for new leadership based more on collective systems than on any one individual. This year's elections and deals will determine the shape of those systems, and look set to bring Hamas and Tanzim leaders into national politics. But the ground rules and aims of future cooperation are yet to be formulated. Powerfully entrenched interests are resisting change. There is no consensus as to who really speaks for Palestine, no structure that gathers the range of constituencies and can claim a legitimate mandate. President Abbas must broker deal after multifaceted deal.

With limited freedom of action, Palestinians are challenged simultaneously to improve their strangled daily life, to fight for linkages to the outside world, to take responsibility for territories that will be vacated, re-establish public order and ensure that funds are put to good use. While in the throes of this internal transition, they have to formulate a response to disengagement without accepting its logic. The steadfast demand for swift negotiations on a permanent status agreement is in danger of being overtaken by events. Every source of opportunity – the roadmap, disengagement, statehood – also presents a threat. The appearance of paralysis is no accident.

Abu Mazen's internal strategy has two wings. On the one hand, he has negotiated a "calm", is consolidating control of the security services and reintegrating militants. On the other hand, he has rejected demands that he dismantle Hamas in favour of drawing the Islamists into a political process, hoping this will accelerate their pragmatic evolution and limit their growth. Meanwhile they may provide leverage over sclerotic elements in Fatah. Abu Mazen's wager is that "new dynamics" after disengagement will lead to changes in Israel and the US and unfreeze the political process. Yet there is as yet little sign of this, and principals have not begun the choreography that would make it possible. His declaration that a final status deal will be submitted to referendum provides a firm basis for legitimacy, and protects him from the suspicion of secret deals. But to survive more than a few months beyond the legislative elections, he needs to construct a broad coalition of support, to improve daily life and to lay new foundations for hope.

Hamas, like Islamists elsewhere in the region, has taken a strategic decision to convert its popularity into electoral support, securing the protections of political legitimacy and reaping its rewards. It aims to earn the respect of its enemy and combine paramilitary capacity with a political role. This shift challenges the international community to strike a balance between opening channels of engagement and setting conditions for recognition. Participants agreed it opens the possibility of further evolution. They expressed different views on whether Fatah or the Islamic factions will emerge with more legislators. This will depend substantially on what happens in the

interim, not least on Fatah renewing its candidate list; the ruling faction may split if it fails to hold primaries or its long-overdue conference. Should Fatah and the Islamists differ, independents may hold the balance.

Palestinian participants made it clear that an interim arrangement cannot end the conflict, and that under such circumstances a "third intifada" is inevitable. When it comes to its character, there are however several possibilities. Some argued the likelihood of renewed and intensified guerrilla and terrorist actions in the wake of disengagement, led by a chaotic constellation of militants. Others suggested that the next intifada may involve the Israeli Arab constituency, or even draw on the largely non-violent strategies of the Lebanese and Ukrainian uprisings and the work of local committees along the path of the security barrier. While focusing on inter-factional agreements, state-building and a horizon for negotiations, Abu Mazen has clearly failed thus far to develop an effective programme of actions that can engage the Palestinian street and draw adherents away from the path of violence. Keeping quiet is no alternative.

Indefinite postponement of elections would certainly lead to a collapse of the calm. A new Palestinian legislature will provide a vital anchor of legitimacy, requiring broader complements. "Who represents us and what are our borders?" are two basic questions. In the coming months, Palestinian society risks further fragmentation unless its leaders start to formulate a new consensus on national strategy and win concrete achievements. International parties

could help with diplomatic and practical assistance. Time is pressing, and not only because the calm is fragile. As facts on the ground are consolidated in the West Bank, the logic of disengagement may foreclose rather than foster a viable Palestinian state. The possibility grows that Palestinians will exchange the goal of two states for the dream of one – challenging Israel's Jewish and democratic foundations, and perhaps moving a peace settlement forever out of reach.



INTERNATIONAL CHALLENGES

Participants cast a pessimistic eye over the role of the international community in recent times. Third party involvement is presently limited to near-term conflict management and conducted on the level of declarations, tactics and palliatives. A co-ordinated strategy to help the parties move toward final status is notable by its absence. The roadmap remains a dead letter. The implications of a Palestinian mini-state have received insufficient attention from the international community.

The US continues to monopolise the lead, and according to some has begun to recognise the strategic importance of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the broader region. But that translates so

far only to declarations and a few extra management tools. The transformative effect on the wider regional challenge of a serious approach to resolving this conflict has not yet been recognised. Attempts to deliver a settlement freeze have themselves been frozen. Coordinating missions such as that of General Ward need to go beyond facilitating disengagement and adjusting Palestinian security structures to help drive progress after disengagement. Financial support is vital, but will have transitory impact without movement on the diplomatic front.

While the US holds this circumscribed lead, the Quartet is left on the sidelines, risking irrelevance. James Wolfensohn's mission is focused narrowly on the social and economic agenda, and while this includes vital issues such as borders (which could be run with international guarantees), it is precisely here that Israel is dragging its feet. Some participants even thought the Quartet should be dissolved, freeing the EU and others to take a more independent stance; others that it should be strengthened with a political role on the ground, gathering in the Ward and Wolfensohn missions.

Europe has many more tools at its disposal than it is currently using, and could use human rights and other conditionality in existing EU agreements as a lever with Israel. Multilateral frameworks, in particular closer association with and ultimately membership of NATO, could be offered as carrots. The EU could start unilaterally to deepen linkages with and support for the Palestinians. Likewise, there is very little in the way of strategic and sustained Palestinian-Arab coordination at present. Despite

concerns about street radicalisation, the Arab League could follow through on its Saudi Initiative with a bold public diplomacy campaign.

International involvement on “day after disengagement” issues, such as the clarification of parameters for final status, have been constrained partly by US concerns that disengagement would be derailed. But to regain the initiative after this interregnum, international parties need to develop packages of significant political and diplomatic steps to be implemented in a wave after disengagement, deciding where to accelerate unilateral steps, and where to enforce a return to diplomacy. The latter course might be pursued through an international conference, or by establishing final status parameters and inviting the peoples on both sides to decide.

CREATIVE IDEAS TOWARD VIABLE PEACE

Confronting these realities, “What can we do?” is the question every party should be asking themselves. The roundtable focused not on the narrow question of making disengagement work, but on making progress toward a viable peace. Given the immediate context, the best response to the parallel dynamics emerging may be a suite of distinct actions by Israelis, Palestinians, Arabs, the EU, the US and the wider international community, each contributing a positive shock to the system. Actions could be calibrated to lay the ground for one another, with a broader transformative effect. The roundtable did no more than begin to explore how they might coalesce. Participants agreed to develop ideas further, and to carry them into

dialogues with decision-makers and policy-shapers.

1 A fresh Palestinian national strategy

If the Palestinians are to make progress toward their national aspirations, they need to take the initiative with a bold strategy of their own – something which in recent years has seldom been apparent. Political re-alignments will shape its direction, and a national dialogue could help root it in society. It may throw up a need for new institutions, inside and outside the territories.

Palestinians are yet to explore the advantages they themselves could draw from unilateral actions or those coordinated with members of the international community (including the EU, the US, the Arab League and the UN General Assembly). Could they reframe the dynamics of the “state with provisional borders” concept in their own interest? A fresh declaration of independence, better coordinated with General Assembly allies and based on 1967 lines including East Jerusalem, was mooted as one possible approach. It may be that Fatah and Hamas could find consensus on a short to medium-term programme aimed at achieving the goal of the 1967 lines, and parameters for an end to this territorial dimension of the conflict. Another strategy might be to contain disengagement by defining it as just a “third Israeli redeployment”, or to coordinate to reject an unviable state just as the internal settlement in Rhodesia was rejected by the UN, and accelerate a comprehensive agreement. More radical options include reframing the national goals.

A review of means is now essential. To the old binary of shooting and/or negotiating, strategies of nation-building, non-violent conflict and public diplomacy must be added. The street and Palestinians at large will not go back to being quiet. Now is the time to construct practical alternatives to an armed third intifada.

2 Developing Israeli alternatives

Beyond old divisions between doves and hawks or left and right, Israelis who want to make more comprehensive progress beyond disengagement face a core dilemma and twin challenges of organisation and leadership. The dilemma is whether they should work to accelerate and maximise steps taken unilaterally, and what alternatives they might frame. Chairmanship primaries in the Labour party and disengagement may establish a context in which such conversations can be created in a way which relates more to the landscape of the future than that of the past. Arab and Palestinian public diplomacy could help provide openings, but this is first and foremost a task for Israelis. Questions were aired about involving Israeli Arabs more closely, opening channels to Hamas (about which the Israeli public remains largely uninformed, beyond its fear of terror acts), strengthening Palestinian authorities as partners, and tackling settlements in the West Bank.

3 Fostering multi-party dialogue

The period up to and beyond the Palestinian elections is likely to be volatile, a situation only made more tense by expected power shifts. In the apolitical context of election monitoring missions, international

parties could help facilitate multi-factional Palestinian dialogue to develop internal and external coordination, maintain security and establish common agreements.

Ideas were also exchanged about broadening the range and representativeness of Palestinians and Israelis participating in back-channel talks. This could in the longer term set a template for a more inclusive peace process, both at the level of Israeli and Palestinian civil society and between leaders of all the parties concerned.

4 Campaigning international diplomacy

Rather than remaining paralysed in the wake of any disengagement, international actors could take advantage of the moment to campaign for further steps. A “Mega-Sadat” strategy could involve several Arab leaders visiting Jerusalem and Ramallah simultaneously. Those concerned could reach out a hand of peace to the Israeli people and make a time-limited offer of a comprehensive peace, establishing costs for delay while making clear that the alternative is ongoing conflict. They could be reinforced by a US presidential visit or civilian diplomacy, and by signals that a Lebanese “Martyrs’ Square” strategy will pay dividends. The Quartet could convene an international conference moving onto final status issues, rather than a PSPB. Some participants talked about imposing parameters for a solution and demanding a referendum on each side. The EU and other parties could apply conditionality to demand further progress on the West Bank, as well as providing practical help to build Palestinian capacity and formulating a package of incentives including closer association with or

membership in multilateral institutions such as NATO.

A nuanced international response to the rise of Hamas is important. Incentives and norms (for instance around the charter and the use of violence) could be established around its turn to politics. Assisting the renewal of Fatah and other camps, for instance through support for primaries and grassroots leadership as well as for Abu Mazen, will be better than bolstering an exhausted system. It would help if many more Palestinian prisoners were to be released, in particular Marwan Barghouti and other Fatah cadres, and international pressure could give Israel an alibi for such a step. One participant suggested international policy could support Palestinian unity, rather than demanding internecine strife.

5 Civil society and public diplomacy

A range of ideas were shared in this area, from Palestinians speaking directly to the Israeli people on primetime television to a large-scale programme of non-violent civilian action on the part of Palestinians, Israelis and internationals, potentially focused around the security barrier, Jerusalem and the E1 corridor, the settlements and other “final status” flashpoints. A web of civil society networks might help mobilise such action, even send forth a thousand joint Israeli-Palestinian speaking teams.

6 Reframing permanent status issues

While most participants viewed the concepts developed up to and beyond Taba as the benchmark for a final status agreement, a number suggested that it may be time for permanent

status to be creatively reframed. They pointed to a variety of reasons: demographics, solidifying facts on the ground, public opinion and institutional capacity, and fresh ideas. It was observed that increasing the territory contemplated for land swaps might broaden the constituencies for a deal. One participant proposed that the Palestinian Authority openly invite settlers to remain behind with full rights as citizens under Palestinian law. Another suggested residency but not citizenship rights both for refugees (enabling many to return to Israel without threatening its Jewish majority) and for settlers in Palestine. Ideas of a phased process were controversial.



The most radical idea here was for the UN Security Council or the US to propose a settlement based on the 1967 lines with one-to-one swaps, enabling the end of the territorial dimension of the conflict to be recognised. It was suggested that a territorial settlement might help build broader regional dynamics, for instance through agreements on water or energy, making other issues easier to resolve. Questions remained about the conditions of viable peace, and whether a total end of conflict is possible or essential.

PARTICIPANTS

Ahmed Badawi was born 1967, Cairo, Egypt. Since 2001, Research Associate, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, within the project “Elite Change in the Arab World”, particular focus, elite change in Palestine. Project expired in April 2004, but Badawi continues to be hosted by SWP while writing his PhD thesis.

Naomi Chazan is professor of political science at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Head of the School of Society and Politics at the Academic College of Tel-Aviv-Yaffo. Served three terms as member of the Knesset (1992-2003). She was Deputy Speaker of the Knesset and a member of the Foreign Affairs and Defence committee of the Knesset.

Alistair Crooke is Director of Conflicts Forum; formerly adviser to European Union High Representative, Javier Solana. Staff member of the Mitchell fact finding committee; facilitated the various ceasefires in the Palestinian ambit 2001-3; mediator in the Church of Nativity negotiations leading to the ending of the siege; facilitated the “Hudna” of June 2003 declared by Hamas, Islamic Jihad and representatives of Marwan Barghouti.

Bassem Eid is currently Director of PHRMG. Previously, Senior Field Researcher at B’Tselem, the Israeli Information Centre for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories; Journalist with Kol Ha’ir, a Jerusalem weekly newspaper; and Consultant with Tira Social Aid Centre. Recent publications include, Intra’fada " The Chaos of the Weapons" in the Palestinian Autonomies Areas.

Gidi Grinstein is founder and President of The Re’ut Institute – a policy team working to provide real-time strategic insights to the Government of Israel. He served in the Office and then in the Bureau of PM Barak as the Secretary and coordinator of the Negotiation Team of the Government of Israel to the Permanent Status negotiations between Israel and the PLO (1999-2001).

Shawki Khatib is currently the Head of the National Committee for Arab Local Councils, and Head of High Committee for Arab Citizens in Israel. He is also Mayor of the Yafa Council since 1990. He practiced as a civil engineer from 1979 to 1990.

Shira Herzog is a writer and commentator on Middle East affairs with a particular emphasis on Israeli politics and society. She is a columnist with the Canadian national daily, *The Globe and Mail*, and an analyst on radio and television. She co-hosts the weekly television program, Israel Today. Shira is currently writing a book on civil-society-based relations among Israelis and Palestinians in the years 1994-2004.

Ahmad Samih Khalidi has written widely in English and Arabic on Mideast political and strategic developments over the last three decades, and has served as formal and informal advisor to the PA/PLO since the Madrid peace process. He is currently Senior Associate Member of St Antony's College, Oxford. His latest publication is *A Framework for a Palestinian National Security Doctrine* (Chatham House 2005) co-authored with Hussein Agha

Tony Klug is an international relations specialist and Middle East commentator for past 30 years. Has served as member of the ‘New Outlook’ Editorial Board, co-chair of the Council for Jewish-Palestinian Dialogue, trustee of the International Centre for Peace in the Middle East and Head of International Development at Amnesty International. Currently, is vice chair of the Arab-Jewish Forum (UK).

Stephanie Koury served as a legal adviser with the Negotiations Support Unit for the Palestinian negotiation team, where she was responsible for the files on settlements, the wall, and international humanitarian law. She also served as part of Palestine’s delegation to the ICJ on the

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legal consequences of Israel's construction of a wall in occupied territory. Her areas of focus include the role of third states and actors in the peace process and international humanitarian law.

Hanna Siniora was PNC Member nominated by the PLO in 1985 to represent Palestine, met George Schultz U.S. Secretary of State. The Process of Recognition of the PLO. Member of the Palestinian Delegation to the Madrid Conference. Peace Activist, Journalist by trade, at the moment Co-Director of Israel/Palestine Centre for Research and Information (IPCRI).

Jonathan Steele has worked on *The Guardian* for forty years. He was Washington Bureau Chief, Foreign News Editor, Chief Foreign Correspondent, and Moscow Bureau Chief at the height of *perestroika* and the collapse of the Soviet Union. He has covered wars and crises in Central America, southern Africa, Afghanistan, Iraq and the Middle East.

Nadim Shehadi is Director of the Centre for Lebanese Studies, an independent academic research institution affiliated to the Middle East Centre at St Antony's College, Oxford. He is also Acting Head of the Middle East Programme at the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House).

Paul Rogers is professor of Peace Studies since 1992; International Security Consultant to the Oxford Research Group since 2002; International Security correspondent for OpenDemocracy.net; author and editor of 19 books, including *Losing Control: Global Security in the 21st Century* (Pluto, 2002).

Avi Shlaim is a Fellow of St Antony's College and a Professor of International Relations at the University of Oxford. His books include *Collusion across the Jordan: King Abdullah, the Zionist Movement, and the Partition of Palestine* (1988); *The Politics of Partition* (1990 and 1998); *War and Peace in the Middle East: A Concise History* (1995); and *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* (2000).

Ofer Zalberg is the co-founder and co-chairman of the Young Israeli Forum for Cooperation, an Israeli NGO that promotes dialogue and understanding between Israelis and Palestinians. He also works as the Israeli representative of the American think-tank/lobby group the Jewish Peace Lobby. He was the editor of the historic academic journal *Hayo Haya*. He lives in Jerusalem

John Sloboda is Executive Director of Oxford Research Group. He is also Professor of Psychology at the University of Keele. He has been active in human security initiatives for two decades. He co-founded the website www.iraqbodycount.net which quickly became a key source of information about civilian casualties for the media and NGOs worldwide during the Iraq war and its aftermath.

Gabrielle Rifkind is the founder and Process Director of the Middle East Policy Initiative Forum (MEPIF), and the Human Security Consultant to Oxford Research Group. She has initiated and facilitated a number of Track II initiatives, including a recent Human Security meeting in Amman with Prince Hassan bin Talal, and is currently working with NATO on organizing a roundtable on links between the military and the human security agenda.

Paul Hilder is policy director of the Middle East Policy Initiative Forum, a project director at the Young Foundation and a campaign director with Waging Peace. A founding director of the global debate network openDemocracy.net, he edited *The Democratic Papers* (2004) and co-edited *Peace Fire* (2002).

Oxford Research Group (ORG) combines rigorous research into international security and nuclear decisions with an understanding of the people who make those decisions. Since ORG's foundation in 1982, we have contacted key decision-makers worldwide and developed a personal dialogue with them on global security issues. We bring together government officials, senior military officers and diplomats with nuclear physicists, independent defence analysts and non-governmental organisation representatives to debate steps towards building a more secure world.

The Middle East Policy Initiative Forum initially came together in June 2002 to discuss the deteriorating situation in the Middle East and the contribution third parties could offer. The Forum includes several prominent and highly respected figures, and a range of professional expertise: Middle East experts, conflict resolution specialists, strategic thinkers, policy experts, politicians, academics and those with psychological knowledge, all of whom have a special interest in the region. In early 2003, it promoted a proposal for an international administration – a “protectorate” based on Palestinian consent – for the West Bank and Gaza Strip. MEPIF advocates for more active and constructive international engagement to bring about a fair and viable peace.

Contact:
Gabrielle Rifkind
Tel: +44 (0) 207 794 4414
Email: gabriellerifkind@talk21.com

Paul Hilder
Tel: +44 (0) 787 942 4547
Email: paul.hilder@pobox.com