CHAPTER-V

THE GEORGE W. BUSH ADMINISTRATION IN THE PEACEMAKING
CHAPTER- V

THE GEORGE W. BUSH ADMINISTRATION IN THE PEACEMAKING

George W. Bush, the forty-third President of the US assumed office in January 2001. His administration looked at the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through different lens and shifted direction drastically. It preferred to outline broad goals and approaches for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict without envisioning realistic steps and addressing specific impediments. Whereas intensive involvement characterised the Clinton administration’s West Asia policy, the Bush administration made the decision to disengage. The administration virtually disdained practical involvement in moving the peace process forward but desired Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA) to ascertain compromises between themselves. George W. Bush’s election to the presidency and the formation of his administration, combined with the collapse of the peace process, the outbreak of the al-Aqsa intifada, and Ariel Sharon’s election in February 2001, all these changed the landscape of Israeli-Palestinian relations dramatically. Five major efforts were made to reach a cease-fire or an agreement between 2001 and 2003:

2) Tenet Ceasefire Plan, 10 June 2001.
4) Roadmap, 30 April 2003.

5.1. Bush Administration Approach to the Conflict

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict remained peripheral for the Bush administration, as the war in Iraq constantly persisted to be its foremost concern in West Asia. The clear implications of the US new approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict were to:

1) Calm the situation.
2) Press Israel to take steps on holding cease-fire talks.
3) Pressure the Palestinian Authority to undertake reforms and halt violence.
4) Stabilise the situation on the ground so that it could move on with its plans to overthrow the Saddam Hussein regime.\footnote{Martin Indyk (2003), “A Trusteeship for Palestine?” \textit{Foreign Affairs}, 82 (3): pp. 51-66. Martin S. Indyk - Director of ‘The Saban Center for Middle East Policy in the Foreign Policy Studies Program’ at ‘The Brooking Institute’. He served as special assistant to US President Bill Clinton and as senior director of Near East and South Asian Affairs at the United States National Security Council. While at the NSC, he served as principal adviser to the President and the National Security Advisor on Arab-Israeli issues, Iraq, Iran, and South Asia). He served two stints as United States Ambassador to Israel from April 1995 to September 1997 and from January 2000 to July 2001 and was the first and so far, the only, foreign-born US Ambassador to Israel. See Brookings Institution, [Online: web] Accessed 12 October 2006, URL: http://www.brookings.edu/experts/i/indykm.aspx.}

Several critical assumptions possibly guided this new approach:

2) The American interests in the region were threatened much more by Iraq than by Israeli-Palestinian troubles.

3) The Clinton administration excessively involved in wanting peace more than the parties, Yasser Arafat was pampered too much.

4) The newly elected Ariel Sharon-led government in Israel meant little would be possible diplomatically.

5) The Bush administration assumed that ‘nothing could be accomplished to end the conflict and therefore the United States should make no effort.’

Having considered these hypotheses and the hesitancy to get involved, the Bush administration missed two early opportunities for containing the intifada and restoring a peacemaking path. The first was the release of the ‘Mitchell Report,’ and the second was the ‘Tenet Work Plan’.\footnote{Dennis Ross (2004), \textit{The Missing Peace}, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, pp. 783-784.}


The Mitchell Commission was a US led effort to find a formula for cease-fire and resumption of the negotiations. In Sharm al-Shaykh, Israel and the Palestinian Authority agreed to the appointment of a commission under the aegis of the US in consultation with Israel, the Palestinian National Authority, and the UN to look into the causes of the al-Aqsa intifada. The fact-finding commission was named after its chairman former US Senator George Mitchell. It assessed the causes of the intifada and made a series of recommendations for transforming the situation.
The findings were privately conveyed to the administration on 30 April 2001, and released to the public on 21 May 2001.3

1) The report declined to hold either side entirely responsible for the breakdown of the peace process or the violence.4

2) The commission specified steps that both Palestinians and Israelis needed to take including:
   i. Immediately resuming security cooperation.
   ii. Resuming their efforts to identify, condemn, and discourage incitements of all forms.
   iii. Taking specific actions against militant groups responsible for terror.
   iv. Restoring normal life for the Palestinians including the removal of barriers to movements of people and goods, and freeze settlement activities.5

3) The report recognised that the violence was not exclusively the result of Sharon’s provocative visit to the Islamic holy site in the Occupied East Jerusalem the previous autumn nor was it part of a preconceived plan by the Palestinians to launch a violent struggle.

4) It simply ascribed the root of the uprising in Palestinian frustrations over the peace process which was stirred by violent reactions by both sides.

5) It failed to call on Israel’s withdrawal from the Occupied Territories, and from its illegal settlements as required under UN Security Council Resolutions 242, 338, 446, and 465 respectively.6

Despite these gaps, neither Sharon nor Arafat opposed the Mitchell Report. Sharon declared on 22 May 2001 that the IDF would refrain from all initiated pre-emptive operations against Palestinians except in cases of extreme danger. He urged the PA to reciprocate and to desist from further violence. This created a way for creative

---


6 Zunes (2003), n. 4, p. 138.
diplomacy. But the United States failed to take tangible steps on implementing the recommendations as it was serious about the report. Consequently, there was fresh round of violence within few weeks. A Hamas suicide bomber blew himself up outside the Dolphinarium nightclub in Tel Aviv on 1 June 2001, 21 Israelis were killed and more than 100 injured. Consequently, Israel immediately sealed the territories and Sharon closed all contact with Arafat. Powell warned Arafat that the US would sever all relations with the PLO if he did not declare a cease-fire and immediately round up the Hamas and Islamic Jihad members. Thus, the Bush administration pressed Arafat to act vigorously to suppress the violence. In June 2001 Bush sent CIA Director George Tenet to the region in an effort to bring a cease-fire between Israel and the Palestinian Authority and to lay the groundwork for the resumption of peace talks. 7

5.1.2. Tenet Cease-Fire Plan (10 June 2001)

George Tenet, the CIA Director, travelled to West Asia in an effort to solidify a cease-fire between Israel and the Palestinian Authority and lay groundwork for the resumption of peace talks. The plan was aimed at making an agreement between the two parties. Israel accepted the plan with some reservations, while the Palestinians gave a conditional approval. 8 The operational premises of George Tenet cease-fire plan was that the two sides would be committed to a mutual and comprehensive cease-fire, shun all violent activity, in accordance with the public declaration of both leaders. The Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority would:

1) Immediately resume co-operation in security measures including eventual joint patrols.

2) Israel would halt attacks on Arafat’s offices and other Palestinian establishments.

3) Both sides provide information on terrorist threats to each other and to the US and undertake operations to prevent attacks.

4) Prevent persons from using areas ‘under their respective control to carry out acts of violence’.

The plan called for a complete cessation of violence for one week followed by a six-week cooling off period where Israeli forces would withdraw to positions they held before 28 September 2000. The Tenet plan neither insisted Israel stop from planting more settlement, nor did it include any international monitors or verifiers for a cease-fire settlement. Instead, the US essentially permitted Israel to serve as the monitor and verifier and the decision-maker regarding its implementation and subsequent steps.

Following the agreement, Israel launched its assassination squads into Palestinian Authority areas, killing several Palestinian leaders, claiming that the killings were not in cease-fire violations but acts of self-defence against ‘terrorists’. According to Stephen Zunes, the US brokered cease-fire that could have provided the ground for ending the uprising by the Palestinians was never fully materialised. This left the situation with no substantial change.  

5.2. 9/11 and its Impact

Under growing pressure from Arab leaders, especially Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, the Bush administration decided to re-engage West Asia diplomacy in August of 2001. But the events of 9/11 interrupted the advent of a new diplomacy. Dennis Ross, who was the US envoy to West Asia and the chief peace negotiator in the presidential administrations of George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton, said:

The shock of the attack on the World Trade Centre necessarily focused the administration on fashioning a strategy and a response against those who killed more Americans in a single day than any previous enemy. Waging war against Osama Bin Laden and the Taliban in Afghanistan became our priority. Given the administration’s understandable preoccupation with the war in Afghanistan, a new effort on Israeli-Palestinian diplomacy was put on the back burner.  

After the news of the incidents spread, the PA and Hamas joined with Arab leaders, with the exception of the Saddam Hussein government, condemning the attacks. The Palestinians held candlelight vigils for the 9/11 victims, while Arafat and scores of Palestinians groups in the territories and abroad sent letters of condolence.  

However, Israel rushed to equate the 9/11 attacks with Palestinian violence and Arafat with Bin Laden justifying harsher military action against the PA and the Palestinians. Former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called for an

---

9 Zunes (2003), n. 4, p. 138.
10 Ross (2004), n. 2, p. 787.
“international front” to “destroy terrorist regimes starting with the Palestinian Authority.” Ariel Sharon in his address to the Knesset on the 11 September attacks stated that, ‘terrorist actions against Israeli citizens were no different from Bin Laden’s terrorism against American citizens. The international coalition against terrorism created by George W. Bush must fight against all terrorist organisations, including Tanzim and Fatah, the Islamic Jihad, Hamas and Hizbollah’ who according to Sharon were the partners to Arafat’s coalition of terrorists.12

5.2.1. The US Foreign Policy Predicament since 9/11

George Bush’s attitude made it clear that the United States’ main concern was not to bring the two parties back to the path of dialogue or to consolidate and go beyond the gains of the Camp David negotiations (July 2000), Clinton proposal (December 2000) and the Taba negotiations (January 2001). Instead, the main concern was to contain the Israeli-Palestinian confrontation so as to keep it from spilling over at the regional level and negatively affecting American policy toward Iraq.13 Until 9/11, the policy of the Bush administration towards the Israeli-Palestinian confrontation rested on:

1. Violence should stop before the US could get involved again.
3. Support for Sharon in his definition of the violence and the cease-fire.
4. Ask Sharon not to react disproportionately to Palestinian actions.
5. Insist Arafat make “100 percent effort” to end Palestinian “terrorism”.
6. Lukewarm support for the recommendations of the Mitchell Committee.

The 9/11 attacks prompted a global ‘war on terror’ in which the US was determined to root out the al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups within global reach. Consequently, Washington reshaped its strategic policy towards war on terror, which had far-reaching consequences on the international politics, especially in the West Asian region. Above and beyond the events of 9/11 altered US perception regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with following as a consequence:

1. Bush directed the US Department of State to include Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine to the US list of terrorist organisations.

2. During the al-Aqsa intifada confrontation the US alleged that Palestinian organisations were engaged in an organised, systematic, and deliberate campaign of terror, aimed at inflicting casualties upon the Israeli population.

3. It demanded the PNA to dismantle terrorist infrastructures and threatened to cut off aid to the Palestinians. The Bush administration began to plan a military campaign in Afghanistan, and the planning process raised numerous tactical questions. The US sought the cooperation of states such as Iran, Syria and of the Palestinian Authority- all seen by Israel as intimately linked to terrorist networks and activities. The Bush administration was neither interested in Israel as a partner in the campaign, nor did it wish to have an Israeli association in the attack on Muslim country.

1. Bush’s “war on terror” required at least tacit support from the Arab and Muslim states,

2. Arab states viewed Israeli actions against the Palestinians as state terrorism,

3. Arabs states were reluctant to legitimise the US military action against Bin Laden and Taliban unless the US made efforts to restrain Israel.

4. It was hard for the US to get Israel restraint when US actions in Afghanistan was paralleled Israel’s actions toward the Palestinians.

5. Arab states were critical of the US disproportionate and reactionary responses, and its military might versus comparatively weak adversaries, selective application of the rule of law, moreover US call for ‘with-us-or-against-us’ demand for support.

6. America has been accused of adopting a double standard throughout West Asia.

The message from -even the most pro-American Arab states was ‘if America wanted Arab support in its fight against Bin Laden’s terrorism it first had to put an end to the state terrorism of its accountability’. From the Bush administration’s point of view, at that stage, everything was subordinate to the success of the anticipated military campaign. The administration arguably drew a distinction between “local terrorism”

---

and “terrorism with a global reach.” In other words, a suicide bombing in the Israeli town of Netanya was a “local” event, while an attack on New York or Washington was “global” matter. Consequently, US attitude towards peacemaking had been indifferent. Although the US and the European Union (EU) kept up constant pressure on Israel and the Palestinian Authority, especially after 9/11, to adhere to a cease-fire and resume peace talks, the following occurred:

1) No new initiatives were offered and no progress was made towards a cease-fire or resumption of peace talks.
2) US urged both sides to halt violence and implement the Tenet and Mitchell recommendations but no action followed.
3) No rigorous measure was undertaken except when an escalation of violence threatened to jeopardise other American policy interests for immediate domestic political standing and coalition building for the war in Afghanistan.

Thus even after 9/11, the US appears to take action on the Israeli-Palestinian situation only when necessary to protect other policy goals. According to Camille Mansour a West Asia analyst, the anger, the alienation, and the hopelessness have been a breeding ground for Bin Ladenism that made the US a prime target. These considerations explain the administration’s renewed pressure for a cease-fire and for the resumption of Israeli-Palestinian contacts.15

5.2.2. Lukewarm American Engagement

In early November 2001, George W. Bush outlined the US policy on West Asia in a speech to the UN General Assembly in New York, proposing that he favoured the coexistence of “two states, Israel and Palestine,” each enjoying secure and recognised borders, as called for by the Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338.16 Bush’s vision for West Asia was reiterated by the US Secretary of State Collin Powell, on 19 November 2001, who expanded upon Bush’s words with a long-anticipated policy speech. He promised “active American engagement” and reaffirmed plans to send Assistant Secretary of State, William Burns and special envoy Anthony Zinni to the region to broker a cease-fire. Although stating that Israel’s occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem ‘must end,’ Powell made it clear that the first stage in

15 Mansour 2002), n.13, p.14, also see in Ross (2004), n. 2, p.782.
achieving this goal would necessarily be an end to violence in Israel and the Occupied Territories. 17

5.2.2.1. Anthony Zinni Diplomacy

To follow up on the Tenet Plan, President Bush dispatched General Anthony Zinni as new US envoy to the region in November 2001, to broker a cease-fire. His mission was deliberately limited to security issues but not to explore any political questions. 18 Both Zinni and the Government of Israel demanded that Arafat should end the intifada, collect illegal weapons from militants, and arrest Palestinians wanted by Israel for ‘terrorist’ activities.

Zinni convened a joint Israeli-Palestinian security committee on 20 and 21 March 2002, but both the meetings ended without agreement on the terms of cease-fire. 19 The US mediation attempts however, had been overshadowed by the escalating violence between the two. Zinni realised that there was no point in continuing his efforts to broker a ceasefire between Israel and the Palestinians. With violence escalating in the region and Israel refusing to deal with the Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, Zinni ended his 19-day fruitless mission to the region. 20


Following the failure of Zinni’s mission and the subsequent IDF’s sweep of the West Bank cities, the Bush administration came under increased pressure to do something. The result was the speech of President Bush on 24 June 2002 outlining his vision for peacemaking. 21 The Bush administration deliberated the US position on his policy speech immediately after the Palestinian consecutive attacks from 18-21 June 2002, arguing that any proposal based on forming a Palestinian state would be “rewarding terrorism.” They also debated whether the deteriorating situation would make the

18 Zunes (2003), n. 4, p. 140.
19 Europa (2005), n. 7, p. 944.
21 Ross (2005), n. 2, p. 786.
speech more necessary than before or push the chance of failure beyond the tolerable limit. 22

In his speech on 24 June 2002, Bush outlined his policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The plan called for Israel to take certain measures to facilitate the creation of a Palestinian state, but only after the Palestinians replaced Yasser Arafat as their leader, reformed their institutions, and ended terrorism.

The policy statement included:

1) Two states, living side-by-side, in peace and security.
2) To achieve peace all parties must fight terror.
3) Provisional Palestinian statehood.
4) Palestinians to dismantle terrorists' infrastructures.
5) Solution based on the UN Resolutions 242 and 338.

**Palestinian Responsibilities:**

1) Build a practicing democracy based on tolerance and liberty.
2) Elect new leaders not compromised by terror.
3) Set up free market economic system.
4) Create a new constitution that separated the powers of government.
5) Set up a just legal system for punishing criminals, including terrorists.
6) Work with Israel to address the core issues that divided them.
7) Come to terms with Israel, Egypt, and Jordan on practical issues, such as security.

**Israeli Responsibilities:**

1) Support the emergence of a viable and credible Palestinian state.
2) Fully withdraw to positions held before 28 September 2000 after progress toward security.
3) Stop settlement activity in the West Bank and Gaza strip in accordance with Mitchell recommendations.
4) Allow freedom of movement of innocent Palestinians as the violence subsides.
5) Release frozen revenues into honest, accountable hands.
6) Work with the Palestinians to address the core issues that divide them.

---

7) Israeli occupation that began in 1967 would end through a settlement negotiated between the parties, based on the UN Resolutions 242 and 338, with Israeli withdrawal to secure and recognised borders.

**Responsibilities of Arab States:**

1) Syria to close terrorist camps and expel terrorist organisations from its land.

2) All Arab states must build closer ties of diplomacy and commerce with Israel, leading to full normalisation between Israel and her neighbours.

**Responsibilities of International Community:**

1) Help the Palestinians create a new constitutional framework and a working democracy.

2) Increase humanitarian assistance to the Palestinians.

3) Stop the flow of money, equipment, and recruits to terrorist groups seeking to destroy Israel. These include: Islamic Jihad, Hamas, and Hezbollah.

4) Stop the shipment of Iranian supplies to terrorist groups and oppose regimes that support terror like Iraq.

5) Resolve questions concerning Jerusalem, the plight and future of the Palestinian refugees, and a final peace between Israel and Lebanon, and Israel and Syria. 23

5.3.1. Critical Appraisal

President Bush articulated earlier his vision of a two-state solution to the conflict in November 2001, when he called for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state living in peace beside a secure Israel. He elaborated on the idea in June 2002, when he added that such a state had to be democratic. 24 In his speech Bush instructed the Palestinians to elect new leaders not compromised by terror and warned that the US would not support the creation of a Palestinian state until “the Palestinian people have new leaders, new institutions, and new security arrangements.” He further stated Israel should halt settlement constructions but said this should be done “consistent with the recommendations of the Mitchell Committee.” With regard to borders and certain aspects of its sovereignty, he said the Palestinian state would be provisional until resolved as a final settlement. Crucially, the speech offered no guidelines for

---


24 Indyk (2003), n. 1, pp. 51-66.
achieving the aims set forth, but Bush said that the final status agreement could be reached within three years.

The president’s long awaited policy statement was enthusiastically welcomed by Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon as well as by the majorities of the Israeli and Palestinian publics. Bush publicly called for a two-state solution to the conflict but emphasised a performance-based approach to peace, and told the Palestinians that they must reform themselves, build credible institutions, end corruption, fight terrorists, and create an alternative leadership untainted by terror. He called on Israel to accept Palestinian statehood and “end the occupation that began in 1967 provided the Palestinians comply with the above conditions.” However Palestinians protested the dubious concepts of provisional statehood and “how the Palestinians could be expected to carry out elections or reform themselves while in a total lockdown by the Israeli military.” The Israeli government demanded to sideline Arafat in the reform, but it was not inclined to relax its grip on the territories if the result of doing so would be fresh terror attacks on Israel.

As the al-Aqsa intifada entered its second year, Israel and the US were refusing to deal with Yasser Arafat, sticking to their demands of PA reforms as a prerequisite to Israeli withdrawal to September 2000 positions and resumption of talks. Despite at reshuffle of the Palestinian cabinet, Arafat remained under pressure from Europe and the US to carry out wide-ranging ‘reform’ of his government. Bush proposals called on the Palestinians to elect a ‘new and different Palestinian leadership’ and to adopt a new constitution with a fully empowered parliament. Colin Powell blamed Arafat for the failures of US peace efforts. In an interview on 30 June 2002 Powell said they were not getting the right kind of leadership among the Palestinian Authority. “I am trying to find ways to meet other leaders within the


26 Ross (2005), n. 2, p. 787.

27 Squeezed between internal demands for reform and the Quartet’s insistence that the creation of the post of Palestinian Prime Minister was the sine qua non for the viability of the peace process, the PLO Central Council approved the appointment of Mahmud Abbas to the new position. As one of the founder members of Fatah, Abbas had been a long term deputy to Arafat. He lacked an independent power base among Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, but was regarded by the US and Israel as an acceptable candidate. Mahmud Abbas’ early tenure as PM proved to be a troubled one; his urging on the importance of reaching a cease-fire was undermined by Israel’s daily military operations, and elicited an equally negative response. The PM also faced a battle of political wills with Yasser Arafat over the composition of the new cabinet.
Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian community who are willing to move in a positive direction.  

Canada, the EU and its member states, Russia, and the UN took extreme issue with Bush’s speech, especially the contradictory demands for the Palestinian free and fare elections and the instruction that “new leaders” be elected. At the G-8 meeting Bush continued to press his view that Arafat must go, adding that the US would cut off aid to Palestinians if they failed to reform their leadership. The other G-8 leaders insisted that Palestinians must choose their own leaders, concerned that new elections could easily elevate a more radical Palestinian leadership, and recalled that Arafat was elected in 1996, taking 88 percent of the vote in balloting deemed free and fair by international monitors, including the US clarifying its position. The US considered that Arafat could not be capable of leading a transition reform process until new leaders take over.  

Emergence of the Quartet Group: This broad international support was translated into practical terms in mid-July 2002 at a conference of the Quartet (the United States, Russia, the European Union (EU) and the UN), which had been created to formulate a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian crisis. It was decided that an adoption the Bush vision as the basis for a phased programme to stop the cycle of violence and terror and settle the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by peaceful means and thus the roadmap was launched. At the Foreign Minister level of Quartet meeting, hosted by Powell in New York on 16 June 2002, the EU, Russia and UN stressed the need for humanitarian and political steps as well as PA reforms. In the summer of 2002, as the preparation for the war against Iraq was gearing up, the Bush administration, in cooperation with its partners in the Quartet, turned its attention to reviving the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.  

5.4. The Roadmap 2003  
The roadmap was jointly prepared by the Quartet during the second half of 2002. It reflected the most comprehensive under multilateral effort to put an end to the Israeli-
Palestinian confrontation that had began in September 2000. Their backgrounds were varied: the Mitchell Report, the Tenet work plan, and perhaps most important of all, President Bush's 24 June 2002 speech. The roadmap was a product of intense negotiations between the US and the three other members of the Quartet. The roadmap for the first time apparently had included a global commitment that had genuine third-party participation to provide verification and accountability.

The Bush administration came up efforts within the framework of its Quartet partners on the aspects of the roadmap. Drafted and revised by the Quartet group over the previous nine months, it was formally presented to the Israeli and Palestinian Prime Ministers on 30 April 2003. The concept of the performance-based roadmap to a permanent two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict included:

1) The roadmap required the Palestinian Authority to make democratic reforms and abandon the use of terrorism in exchange for statehood.
2) Israel, in turn was required to end settlement activity of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.
3) The roadmap was more accurately described as a set of vital, well-crafted and balanced exhortations to the parties:
   a. to end the violence;
   b. halt settlement activities;
   c. reform Palestinian institutions;
   d. accept Israel's right to exist;
   e. establish a viable sovereign Palestinian state;
   f. reach a final settlement on all issues by 2005.

Process of the Roadmap: The road map comprised three goal-driven phases with the ultimate goal of ending the conflict as early as 2005. Phase I (as early as May 2003): During the first phase, both Israelis and Palestinians were supposed to meet a long list of obligations:

1. End Palestinian violence;
2. Palestinian political reform;
3. Israeli withdrawal of its forces to pre-intifada positions and halt its military operations.
4. Freeze on Israeli settlement expansion and
5. Palestinian election.
Phase II (as early as June-Dec 2003-transition): It was to start after Palestinian elections for the institutions of its government. An international conference to support Palestinian economic recovery was to be held, launching a process leading to:

1) Explore the possibility of "creating an independent Palestinian state with provisional borders and attributes of sovereignty."
2) Revival of "multilateral talks" on issues such as regional concerns for water, environment, economic development, refugee and arms control.
3) Approval of a new constitution for a democratic, independent Palestinian state by the newly elected Palestinian Legislative Council.
4) Arab states restore pre-intifada links to Israel (trade, offices, etc.).

Phase III (as early as 2004-2005-statehood): The progress into the third stage was supposed to base on the judgment of the Quartet, taking into account the actions of all the parties.

1) Second international conference;
2) Permanent status agreement and end of conflict.
3) Agreement on final borders, clarification of the highly controversial question of the fate of Jerusalem, refugees, and settlements.
4) Arab states to agree peace deals with Israel.

5.4.1. Palestinian Response

Privately, the Palestinian leadership expressed serious reservations over the new proposal. Objections centred on the vagueness of the language and the emphasis on conditionality. Palestinians feared that the Israeli government would once again manipulate the inherent ambiguities in the text, to ensure that negotiations would be subject to confusion and delay. In the meantime, the Israelis would continue to create the 'facts on the ground' which would skew final outcomes.32

Despite their expressed apprehension about the prospect of an indefinite interim phase particularly with regard to the concept of a transitional state without final borders, the PA judged that the roadmap was an opportunity in the prevailing geo-political climate and they thought the roadmap was the only available game in the town to awaken the waning peace process. The Palestinians viewed the roadmap as an

32 Europa (2005), n.7, pp. 39.
improvement over Oslo, which consisted only of an agreement to negotiate, while the roadmap explicitly identified the end of occupation and an independent Palestinian state as an objective. On 11 May, Abbas told Colin Powell that the PA accepted "the roadmap as it is." But the Israeli PM declared that his government could not accept the roadmap as it currently stood.

5.4.2. Israeli Response

The Israeli government had voiced serious concerns about the plan that grew out of them. In a statement issued by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sharon outlined 14 Israeli reservations on the roadmap, stating that it was inconsistent with President Bush's vision, or incompatible with Israel's vital interests. In criticising the roadmap and drawing distinctions between it and the Bush's speech, Israeli officials raised a number of issues, among them including:

1) Security: 'Without the PA disarming and uprooting the Palestinian militias, the Israeli government would not be prepared to engage with the process, including the demands for a settlement freeze'. Israel insisted the precondition for any political progress was decisive Palestinian steps against violence, incitement and leadership change, complaining about the roadmap's lack of clarity in this regard. Israel feared that any relaxation on its part would give Palestinian militant organisations greater opportunity to regroup and strike with greater vigour. Israel was also worried about being forced to take steps inconsistent with its security requirements.

2) The Palestinian Right of Return: 'Israelis would not extend recognition of a Palestinian state until Palestinians had renounced their 'right of return.' Israelis perceived the "right of return" as a serious threat to their most stable consensus political value- the existence of Israel as a demographically Jewish state. The peace index 2003 polls indicated that, 68 percent of Israelis were opposed to allowing any refugees whatsoever into Israel, while a further 16 percent were only prepared to let in

---

a few thousands. They viewed that the refugee problem would not be solved through this entity and Palestinian Arabs' demand for the right of return would continue to threaten Israel's existence. The poll survey demonstrated widespread Palestinian opposition to giving up on the 'right of return' for refugees and their families to Israel.

3) Sovereign Attributes of the Palestinian State: With regard to the limitation on the sovereign attributes of the Palestinian state, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon demanded: complete demilitarisation, Israeli control over exit and entry points and over the airspace, and a ban on Palestinian alliances with "enemies" of Israel. It wanted the US, not the Quartet, to judge whether the parties have complied with their obligations.

Sharon was invited to address the Israeli reservations with President Bush in Washington and the US administration issued a statement in May 2003 saying it would 'fully and seriously address the Israeli reservations.' And the United States would implement of the roadmap to fulfil the president's vision of 24 June 2002.

The US had given in to Israeli demands to avoid a deadlock and hence the US accepted all but two demands that 'Palestinians immediately waive the refugees' right of return' and that 'the plan remove all reference to Saudi initiative calling for peace with Israel in exchange for a full withdrawal to the 1967 borders.' Subsequently, the statement of Sharon's acceptance was issued immediately after the Powell-Rice statement which read as; "In view of the recent statement of the United States regarding the Israeli comments on the road map... we are prepared to accept the steps

---

set out in the roadmap, I intend to submit this acceptance to the Government of
Israel's approval."\textsuperscript{41}

5.4.3. Critical Appraisal
The following section will endeavour to examine flaws that were seen as impractical
toward implementation of the principles envisaged in the roadmap. As a
performance-based plan, progress was required and depended upon the good faith
efforts of the parties and their compliance with each of the obligations. Rapid
performance to their obligations by the parties was expected to result in early progress
within and through the phases in the plan. But non-compliance with obligations
would impede progress. The settlement was to resolve the Israel-Palestinian conflict,
and end the occupation that began in 1967, based on the foundations of the Madrid
Conference, the principle of land for peace, and UNSCRs 242, 338 and 1397. The
Quartet was to meet regularly at senior levels to evaluate the parties' performance on
implementation of the plan.\textsuperscript{42}

1) Agreement with Parties that had no Responsibility: The roadmap
reflected agreement with parties that had no responsibility for carrying out even one
of the steps they were calling for. Conversely, the roadmap was presented to the
parties that would have to implement these steps after the Quartet had already agreed
to it. They were each offered the opportunity to make comments, but not to engage in
a negotiation about its content or how it might actually be implemented. The fatal
flaw to such approach was that the roadmap could never be brought to life since it was
based only on the understandings of outsiders.\textsuperscript{43}

2) Replicating Oslo's Graveyard: The roadmap deferred permanent-status
issues to the final phase.\textsuperscript{44} The roadmap failed to rectify Oslo's mistakes. The real
problem with Oslo was the step-by-step process. The lack of a clear resolution to
permanent status issues left absolutely open to violations at every step. The Oslo
process mandated an interim agreement before the sides knew the shape of the final
status agreement. This made it politically difficult for either side to take actions that

\textsuperscript{41} Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2003), Government of Israel, "Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon,
Statement Accepting the Road Map", Jerusalem, 23 May 2003,
\textsuperscript{42} U.S. Department of States (2003), Press Statement, n. 31.
\textsuperscript{43} Ross (2005), n. 2, p. 788.
\textsuperscript{44} Meital (2006), n. 30, p.164, for detail analyses see Cheryl A Rubenberg (2003), \textit{The Palestinians: In
would built trust and support for the process, such as a major settlement freeze by Israel and an effective crackdown against the terrorist infrastructure by the Palestinian Authority. Thus, the roadmap which was structured akin to the failed Oslo agreement ultimately encountered the same fate.45

3) **Content and Language:** The plan was described as “a performance-based and goal-driven roadmap, with phases, duties, time-lines, target dates and benchmarks aiming at progress through reciprocal steps by the two parties whose destination was a final and comprehensive settlement by 2005”.

i. The language was so vague and non-constraining on Israel that its duties would not begin until the Palestinians declared and established a unilateral “cease-fire.”

ii. In exchange for ending the Palestinian resistance, Israel was expected to normalise life for the Palestinians. It was difficult for the Palestinians to conduct elections in enclaves separated from each other by checkpoints and roads rendered unusable by Israeli authorities.

4) **Nature of the Palestinian State and its Borders:** Phase II was supposed to start with Palestinian elections and to end with the possible creation of an independent Palestinian state with “provisional borders and attributes of sovereignty” by the end of 2003.” The Palestinian leadership was obligated to act “decisively against terror” and demonstrate a willingness and ability to “build a practising democracy”.

The problem with this provision was that a viable state could not be established without contiguity of its areas. The West bank was fragmented into some 60-70 enclaves separated by Israeli settlements, separation walls, and checkpoints. According to Naseer H. Aruri, the phrase “provisional borders” is not a recognised concept in international law. A state which does not have borders or control over them would virtually be controlled dependent state. The new phrase “attributes of sovereignty” was a new diplomatic manoeuvre, an extension of earlier tricks such as “shared sovereignty” and “dual sovereignty”.46

---

5.4.3.1. The Road Close

The ideas outlined in the document portrayed inspiration from the Mitchell and Tenet programmes initiated in the wake of the al-Aqsa intifada. Nevertheless, the roadmap intended to renew the security bargain made between Israel and the PLO in September 1993, offering Israel once again the promise of a Palestinian commitment to defeat the militants while holding out the attainment of sovereignty over perhaps half of the West Bank (excluding East Jerusalem) and all of Gaza as an interim measure.

The Quartet missed an opportunity to address the territorial contest at the core of the dispute. The scores of new ‘outpost’ settlements established before Sharon's tenure, not to mention the almost 200 settlements where 400,000 Israelis reside, were implicitly blessed by the roadmap. From the Palestinian perspective, the Americans could only see the violence of Palestinians and were blind to either Israel’s violence or the fact that the violence occurred in the context of the illegal military occupation.47

i) Fourteen Israeli Road Blocks: The roadmap, practically speaking, had been dead since the Israeli government posed its fourteen points reservations, of which the US administration had accepted twelve. There were, however, certain references of the ‘Sharon plan’ that prepared the death of the roadmap with the fact that there would be no negotiations with Palestinians unless there was a change in leadership; the Palestinians must dismantle the terrorist infrastructures and its organisations; “no progress would be possible with Arafat as the chairman of the Palestinian Authority. “This man is not – and never will be- a partner to peace.”48

ii) Palestinian Predicament: The Palestinians perceived that conceding to Sharon’s demands would mean a surrender and humiliation which would lead to civil a war, ‘a war that they were not willing to take risk for based on the kind of illusive promises they found in the roadmap’. There was no credible Palestinian institution capable of constraining the terrorist organisations and armed militias responsible for the violence and without such an institution it was unrealistic to expect the IDF to withdraw from and stay out of the Palestinian cities and towns they had reoccupied in order to stop the terrorists. There was no credible Palestinian partner for any political

48 Sharon (2002), n. 38.
initiative. Although the appointment of Mahmoud Abbas, (Abu Mazin) as Prime Minister was a positive development, the continued presence of Arafat at the heart of the PA was a hindrance to Israel and the US.\textsuperscript{49}

**iii) Structural Flaw:** The roadmap lacked primary guiding principles and did not spell out the details of the end game. The structural weakness gave room for doubt about its practicality to change the situation on the ground. A principal fear was that (as was the case with Oslo), neither side would take the most crucial steps as part of a gradual process so long as the outcome remained in doubt. This led to mistrust between the parties. Consequently, the Palestinians failed to seriously crack down on militant groups, while Israel continued its settlement activities. This approach was imminent to meet the same fate as all previous failed attempts that stipulated Israelis and Palestinians to take reciprocal steps. One of the weaknesses of the Oslo peace process, after all, was that it deliberately left the most difficult issues - Jerusalem, refugees, borders - until last, in the mistaken belief that this would make them easier to resolve.

**iv) Indifferent Approach of Bush:** According to Martin Indyk, Bush lacked an effective mechanism for translating his vision into reality. Once the roadmap was launched, Bush did virtually nothing to ensure Israel’s compliance with the plan’s demand mainly because of his poor understanding of the issues involved; his reluctance to confront Sharon and intense domestic political pressure from supporters of Israel. Most of the administration’s pressure aimed at securing implementation of the plan was exerted on the Palestinians- choose a new leadership, control violence by militant Islamic organisations, but no effort was made to stop Israel’s expanding control over the occupied territories.

The account of the roadmap was again the story of an opportunity bypassed. It allowed Israel to continue colonising the Occupied Territories while prohibiting any Palestinian resistance. Eventually, the roadmap failed to deliver its desired results because its conception was flawed.\textsuperscript{50}

5.5. The Sharm Al-Shaykh and the Aqaba Summits (June 2003)

The invasion of Iraq by US and British forces in mid-March 2003 and the subsequent collapse of Saddam Hussein’s regime shifted the international spotlight onto the

\textsuperscript{49} Rynhold (2004), n. 45, pp. 55-76.
\textsuperscript{50} Indyk (2003), n. 1, pp. 51-66.
Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the long-awaited roadmap. Prior to the Iraq War British Prime Minister Tony Blair lobbied hard for a US commitment to revive the West Asia peace process. The UK was anxious to demonstrate to the Arab world the British government at least was sensitive to their concerns over Western policy in their region. The British Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Jack Straw, acknowledged ‘double standards’ in relation to the implementation of the UN resolutions pertaining to Iraq and Israel and the Palestinian territories. He also alluded to the profound sense of injustice felt by the Palestinians.\(^5\)

The Sharm al-Shaykh summit was called by Washington on 3 June 2003, to ‘discuss issues of common interests’, including Iraq, the international effort to combat terrorism, and economic cooperation in addition to the peace process. It was attended by President Bush, President Mubarak, PA Prime Minister Mahmud Abbas, Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince Abdullah, Bahrain’s King Hamad and Jordan’s King Abdullah II. During the summit, the US requested to the Arab participants to normalise their relations with Israel and make a clear statement excluding Arafat from the peace process. But the Arab leaders insisted Israel openly commit itself to Bush’s 24 June 2002 vision of a two-state solution.

In Aqaba on 4 June 2003, Bush held a quadrilateral meeting with Abbas, Sharon, and King Abdullah of Jordan. The meeting was intended to “kick off implementation” of the roadmap which marked the US President’s major involvement in West Asia peace process. Although US had been the senior partner in the Quartet group that had drafted the peace plan, Bush had been slow to engage in this process. His administration had no serious dialogue with the Palestinians for more than a year. On 4 June 2003, the summit formally launched the roadmap.\(^5\) Bush held separate meetings with the summit’s host, King Abdullah, followed by discussions with Sharon and Abbas before the three-way summit. Separate statements were issued after the talks, since the Israelis and Palestinians failed to agree on a joint communiqué.

Both Sharon and Abbas delivered carefully worded statements. Abbas promised to end terrorism and the armed intifada and acknowledged Jewish suffering throughout history, but refused to recognise Israel as a Jewish state. Meanwhile, Sharon vowed to ease restrictions on Palestinians and begin dismantling unauthorised

\(^5\) Europa (2005), n. 7 p. 39.
\(^5\) Ibid., p. 950.
settlement outposts. He also endorsed the creation of a viable and democratic Palestinian state, but did not specify the nature of its independence.

None of the participants saw the 2-4 June meetings as ground breaking. Israel and the PA each declared dissatisfaction with the other's statements and the Palestinians across the political spectrum denounced Abbas for acknowledging Jewish sufferings without a parallel mention of Palestinian sufferings. Arafat complained that Israel had offered the Palestinians "nothing tangible." Hamas and Islamic Jihad declared that they would oppose further talks with Abbas until he rescinded his Aqaba statements. Meanwhile, Israeli officials announced that it would take no further steps to ease Palestinian sufferings until the PA began to crack down on Palestinian militant groups. Days after the summits Israel instantly resealed the West Bank and Gaza.

Following the Aqaba summit, Israeli-Palestinian violence escalated as Israel carried out its assassination policy targeting top Palestinian militants. In retaliation Palestinian engrossed up mortar and rocket attacks on Jewish settlements and IDF posts. Fighting continued at a relatively high level throughout the month of June 2003. With near daily Palestinian mortar attacks in Gaza, Israel re-imposed curfews, tightened checkpoints, conducted arrests, and raids, and continued house demolitions and building operations.

Bush however, did not invite the other Quartet members to the summit meetings. As a result, many observers, even among Israeli and Palestinian officials, saw the Quartet as effectively dead, with Israel and the PA having reverted to bilateral negotiations under the US auspices, and many aspects of the roadmap (simultaneity, timetables, international monitors, etc.,) having gone by the wayside. In his remarks, Bush for the first time declared commitment to Israel as a "vibrant Jewish state" and announced the appointment of Condoleezza Rice as his personal "representative" on the peace process.53

5.5.2. A Superficial Truce

Israel and the PA agreed to resume security coordination under pressure from Washington. Colin Powel stressed the need for Israel and the PA to agree on a partial

pullout from Gaza to move the peace process forward. In the press conference afterward, Powell stated Hamas was an “enemy of peace” and should not be allowed to participate in the Palestinian political system even if it dismantled its military wing. 54

On 29 June 2003, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Fatah (by direct order of Palestinian President Yasser Arafat) declared a temporary cease-fire (hudna) with Israel. During this period they obliged to suspend all attacks on Israeli targets within Israel and in the Occupied Territories. In return they demanded a halt on aggression against the Palestinian people; and release of Palestinians held in Israeli prisons. In response to this announcement, Israel agreed to withdraw its troops from the Gaza Strip and other cities. 55 The Palestinian cease-fire declaration and Israeli redeployment in Gaza appeared to mark the first real steps to roadmap implementation. The PA began a successful campaign to crack down on anti-Israel incitement. The Palestinian Preventive Force made limited attempts to arrest Palestinians for firing on Israeli targets. Israel conceded some of their demands by releasing a few administrative detainees as well as thirty four other prisoners. 56

However, the cease-fire collapsed on 12 August 2003 when Fatah and Hamas carried out suicide bombings in Rosh Ha'ayin, near the entrance to Ariel (a large settlement in the West Bank), killing two Israelis. Hamas claimed that the attacks had not been coordinated between the two militant groups and denied that they marked the end of the cease-fire.

Subsequently, on 19 August 2003 a suicide bombing on a crowded bus in Jerusalem killed 23 Israelis and injured more than 100. Hamas took responsibility for the attack, with a consequent declaration of war against Hamas by Israel. It began eliminating its leaders one by one, and debated whether to deport Arafat. On 22 March 2004 Hamas' founder and spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, was killed in an Israeli missile strike. According to Israeli authorities, Yassin had been responsible for 425 suicide attacks since October 2000 that killed 377 Israelis and injured 2,076.

56 Esposito (2003), n. 54, pp. 116-138.
Meanwhile Hamas vowed, "to open the gates to hell" in revenge. On 17 April 2004 Israel killed Yassin's successor, Abd al-Aziz Rantisi.57

5.5.2.1. Palestinian Leadership Standoff

The renewed Israeli attacks made it politically impossible for Abbas to proceed with a major crackdown on Hamas and Islamic Jihad. He attempted to take some steps against militant groups and secure greater control over the security forces from Arafat. As violence escalated, disagreement between Abbas and Arafat deepened. Abbas refused to allow Fatah to dictate his policies and resigned as Prime Minister on 6 September 2003. During his brief tenure as PM, Abbas had been locked in an often bitter struggle with the PA President. Control over the PA security services had been the focus of their dispute. Abbas' resignation had been a serious blow to the US-backed roadmap which apparently left Israel and the US without a Palestinian negotiating partner, at least temporarily. Both countries said they would not deal with Mr. Arafat, whom they accused of fomenting terrorism and considered an obstacle to peacemaking.

The US and Israel perceived his resignation as a clear evidence of Arafat's role in undermining the peace process.58

On 12 November 2003, Ahmad Quray (Abu Ala) became PA Prime Minister who insisted he would not risk a Palestinian civil war and preferred the path of dialogue. Israeli officials said that there could be no meeting with a new Palestinian administration so long as it refused to tackle the extremists. Meanwhile, violence continued to escalate and the stalemate continued.59

5.6. Sharon Disengagement Plan: A Peacemaking Deadlock

In his 'Herzliya speech' on 18 December 2003, the Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon presented the plan that Israel officially called as 'disengagement from the

59 Europa (2005), n. 7, p. 42.
Palestinians. 60 Despite earlier rejection by the Likud Party the “Gaza Disengagement Plan” was approved by the government and the evacuation began on 15 August 2005. 61

The State of Israel is committed to the peace process... The State of Israel has come to the conclusion that there is currently no reliable Palestinian partner with which it can make progress in a bilateral peace process. Accordingly, it has developed a plan of revised (unilateral) disengagement. 62

The implicit agenda in Sharon’s design was the consolidation of Israel’s rule over major settlement blocks on the West Bank. The Sharon plan envisaged:

1) Israel would ‘evacuate of all Jewish settlers’ from the Gaza Strip.
2) Gaza Strip would be demilitarised and devoid of weaponry.
3) Guarding and monitoring of the external land perimeter of the Gaza Strip, maintaining exclusive authority in Gaza air space, and continuing to exercise security activity in the sea off the coast of the Gaza Strip.
4) Few isolated settlements on the West Bank would be dismantled.
5) Reduce the number of internal checkpoints throughout the West Bank. Complete the construction of the so called ‘separation barrier’ or ‘security fence’.
6) Eventually redeploy the Israeli army to new lines. 63
7) The disengagement plan was the first Israeli proposal to evacuate settlements in the Occupied Territories since occupation started in 1967.
8) Remove settlers from areas of the Occupied Territories that were the most difficult to defend. 64


61 Tekla Szymanski (2006), n. 57.


63 Ibid.

5.6.1. Separation Fence

Following the outbreak of Palestinian violence in 2002, Israel began construction of a barrier that would separate most of the West Bank (Judea and Samaria) from areas inside Israel.

1) The barrier consisted primarily of a chain-link fence and in parts of prefabricated concrete wall.

2) The Israeli authority reaffirmed the purpose of the barrier was to prevent incursion of Palestinian extremists and to stop the wave of suicide bombings which took many lives in Israel.

3) Palestinians alleged that the barrier was an “Apartheid Wall.” They feared the plan would further encircle Palestinian areas in the West Bank with the security fence.

4) The barrier could represent the de facto annexation of about 10 percent of the West Bank.
   a. The parallel implications were the ‘Bantustanisation’ of the West Bank and any Palestinian state on about 50 percent of the territory;
   b. the fragmentation of the Palestinian society and economy;
   c. the expansion and consolidation of Israeli settlement;
   d. and the physical and ‘virtual’ transfer that loomed as its conclusion.

5) The project had threatened the idea of a two-state solution to the conflict which made the international mediations irrelevant.

However, the US officials opined that the evacuation of settlements would ‘reduce friction’ between Israelis and Palestinians.

The Ruling of the International Court of Justice (ICJ): In December 2003, the UN General Assembly approved a resolution asking the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in the Hague, to consider the legality of the controversial ‘separation barrier.’ On 9 July 2004, the ICJ gave only advisory ruling that ‘the Israel’s separation barrier in the West Bank contravened international law and, that it must be dismantled.

---

65 Interview with Yousif Meah, ‘Equality and Diversity, Birmingham City Council,’ UK, on 21 October 2007, in Boston, MA.
66 Bantustan- Former black South African homeland: A territory set aside for black inhabitants of Southern Africa as part of the policy of apartheid. In South Africa during the apartheid era from the 1950s until 1994, an area where black people lived with limited self-government.
and that compensation must be paid by Israel to the Palestinian owners of property confiscated for its construction.\textsuperscript{69} The ICJ branded Israel's vast 'concrete and steel barrier' through the West Bank as a political rather than security measure, which severely hindered the Palestinian right to self-determination, in breach of the Geneva Convention and international humanitarian law.

5.6.2. Bush's Endorsement: The US Policy Paradigm Shift

Sharon's unilateral disengagement plan was drawn up in consultation with the US in February 2004. This initiative represented an independent Israeli plan, which Israel claimed was not inconsistent with the roadmap. Bush endorsed the plan describing it as a bold and historic initiative, which could make an important contribution to peace. His letter to Sharon on 14 April 2004 formally constituted the official US acceptance of Israel's position on crucial issues such as Jerusalem, borders, settlements, and refugees. Bush also pledged to block any alternative peace initiatives.\textsuperscript{70}

Such intimate involvement and support of Sharon's unilateral disengagement plan marked a major shift from traditional US policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It reflected a dramatic departure from the formal policy positions of all previous administrations and from the UN Resolution 242. President Bush's letter of assurances to the Israeli leader effectively recognised Israeli retention of some of the settlement blocks in the West Bank and declared the US opposition to the right of Palestinian refugees to return to Israel.

Bush and Sharon portrayed the plan as a vehicle for implementing the US-drafted roadmap and to materialise Bush's June 2003 vision of a two-state solution. The plan in fact carried Bush's vision into line with Israel's interpretation of the roadmap as outlined in its reservations of 27 May 2003. Rosemary Hollis a West Asia analyst view was that George Bush did not help the cause of West Asia when he backed Ariel Sharon's unilateral initiative for 'disengagement' from the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank. The plan was intended to end the burden of occupation in the unruly Gaza Strip and the main Palestinian population centres in the West Bank,

\textsuperscript{69} International Court of Justice (2004), Ruling on "Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory 9 July 2004." General List No. 131, URL: http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Peace/icjruling.pdf.

but keep Jerusalem and the main Jewish settlement blocs and retain control in the Jordan valley.\textsuperscript{71}

5.7. George W. Bush and the Peacemaking: An Assessment

The following section endeavours to highlight certain underlying factors that were responsible to the failure in the US peacemaking efforts during George W. Bush’s administration. George W. Bush and his team did their utmost to disown Clinton’s legacy. The new administration made it clear that it had no intention for become immersed in Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking. The Bush administration believed America’s efforts in West Asia should be invested in the region’s eastern border, where the job had begun in Iraq in 1990 and had yet to be completed. They felt Iraq and Iran, should be denied access to weapons of mass destruction, and such a goal could be reached with regime change in both countries.

The US Secretary of State Colin Powell issued directive of the administration to his subordinates that they were no longer to use the term “peace process”- a term that was particularly current in the vocabulary of the Clinton administration. The post of ‘Special Middle East Coordinator’ was abolished, the term “peace process” was discarded, and the conduct of the State Department’s West Asia policy shifted back to the Bureau of ‘Near Eastern Affairs’.\textsuperscript{72}

1. Bush undermined the negotiating power of the Palestinians: In principle, Bush argued that the role of the US in Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking included final status negotiations between the parties. But in practice, however, Bush had constrained Palestinian options. He failed to realise that unless Palestinians were treated as an equal partner in the process by which a two-state formula could be reached there would be no deal.

Bush obstinately demanded from the Palestinians to change their leadership, reform their institutions, and ‘fight terror’ before they could even come to the negotiation table. There was considerable scepticism as to how the Palestinians could be expected to carry out elections or reform themselves while in a total lockdown by the Israeli military presence inside their territories. The above arguments suggest the US fundamentally had undermined the negotiating power of the Palestinians.

\textsuperscript{71} Rosemary Hollis (2004), “Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon left the White House clear Winner after receiving support for his Plan.” \textit{World Today}, 60 (50): pp. 5-6.

2. Misperception upon the true root of the conflict: The administration’s fixation on Arafat and its obsession with terrorism blinded it from comprehending the true root of the conflict. Its viewpoint was based on the simplistic notions that Palestinian violence was the source of all problems, and therefore the occupation and other outstanding issues would somehow resolve itself if violence ended. Palestinians’ grievances occurred principally from their own leadership rather than from Israeli policies. Under Bill Clinton, Arafat had been the foreign leader most frequently invited to the White House, but Bush shut him out entirely.

They failed to consider the possibility that an escalating Israeli-Palestinian conflict and continued oppression of Palestinians could have the effect on encouraging rather than discouraging further terrorism against both the United States and Israel. Bush and his team failed to foresee that selectively implemented peace plans could not possibly bring real peace between Palestinians and Israel.

3. Factors of influence: There were certain factors that influenced the Bush administration’s approach toward the conflict. Bush had apparent personal rapport with Ariel Sharon- Bush administration provided concession to Sharon on almost all major peace initiatives. He was connected to the party’s conservative right wing and fundamentalist Christians who were very supportive of Israel.73

4. 9/11 and the ‘US War against Terror’: The ensuing US campaign against terrorism brought renewed attention to the similarities between Israel and the US as facing very comparable situations, with many in the US expressing a greater sympathy for Israel’s plight. The “War on Terror” became not just a major but the defining issue on the administration’s agenda.

5. Apathy to the problem: Despite an array of formulas for peace put forth during his administration, President Bush and his policymaking team had been almost totally uninterested in involving any serious effort towards resolving the conflict. Besides, the team surprisingly had superficial understanding of the situation on the ground. The quick demise of all peace initiatives- each of which succumbed to the administration’s over obsession with terrorism rather than on Israel’s occupation as the root of the conflict was a clear indication of the Bush administration’s identification with Israel’s interests.

5.7.1. Contrasts between Bill Clinton Parameters and Bush Plan

President Bush's 14 April 2004, letter to Prime Minister Sharon represented a significant shift in the US policy, as compared to the Clinton parameters advanced by the former president after the failed Camp David summit of July 2000 and in the subsequent months.

1) In his plan, Clinton provided conditional approval of settlement blocs, but insisted that there needed to be "territorial swaps" of land from pre-1967 Israel in exchange for any West Bank land Israel would retain. Bush did not insist on any land swaps involving Israeli territory.

2) Clinton spoke of Palestinian refugees finding homes in other states including Israel, but Bush stated Palestinian refugees should be settled in a future Palestinian state "rather than in Israel." 74

3) The Clinton parameters dropped the idea of defensible borders and replaced them with "security guarantees" including a proposed "international presence" in the Jordan Valley. In contrast, Bush referred to "defensible borders" in the context of preserving and strengthening "Israel's capability to deter and defend by itself."

4) According to the Clinton parameters, Israel's need for security "should not come at the expense of Palestinian sovereignty or interfere with Palestinian territorial integrity." In contrast, Bush allowed Israel to continue controlling airspace, territorial waters, and land passages in the West Bank and Gaza Strip "pending agreements or other arrangements."

5) During the Clinton era, the signing of a peace treaty was supposed to produce security for Israelis. Under Bush, security must be achieved first, as a prerequisite for peace. Given the threats Israel faced from Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Yasser Arafat's own Fatah Tanzim, the approach taken in the Bush's letter represented a significant support towards Israel.

6) The Clinton parameters explicitly envisioned the re-division of sovereignty in Jerusalem according to a formula whereby "what is Arab should be Palestinian" and "what is Jewish should be Israeli." Bush's letter was silent on the issue of Jerusalem. While support for a unified Jerusalem under Israeli

---

sovereignty was missing, at least, there was no attempt to return to the Clinton formulations.\textsuperscript{75}

Both the Clinton parameters and the Bush letter were offered in the context of Israeli concessions: in Clinton's time, Barak proposed giving up almost all of the West Bank and Gaza (as well as dividing Jerusalem), while Bush's positions were in the context of an Israeli pull-out from Gaza alone. Thus, there was no question that the Bush letter to Sharon represented a major shift in US policy toward Israel. Part of this shift had been undoubtedly due to Bush's special relationship with Israel.

Undeniably, Bush's strong stand on terrorism which did not appear in the Clinton parameters could be traced since post-9/11 environment in the US. During the Clinton era, the signing of a peace treaty was supposed to produce security for Israelis. Under Bush, security must be achieved first, as a prerequisite for peace. Given the threats Israel faced from Palestinian extremists, the approach taken in the Bush policy was a significant support for Israel.

\textbf{Conclusion}

The Israeli-Palestinian peace remained as marginal concern to the George W. Bush administration West Asia policy. It became quite evident during the later half of 2002 and early 2003 that the Bush administration was determined to go to war against Iraq. It was therefore widely assumed that a serious effort to seek a political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would have to wait for the larger changes in the region that could be expected in the aftermath of the war.

A further deterrent for re-engagement in the peace process was the approach of the 2004 presidential elections. During the election campaign, Bush administration's policy priority was the US War in Iraq- with no mention of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The administration conceded to the Israeli unilateral disengagement plan- even counteracting to its own earlier peacemaking efforts in order to shield Israel. The US also declined to disclose a document (prepared by John Wolf who was the US West Asia envoy) showing how both Israel and the PA had failed to implement their roadmap requirements in order to avoid embarrassment.

The Bush administration adjusted its policy according to foreign and domestic pressures by increasing criticism of Israel and giving some consideration to

\textsuperscript{75} Bush Policy Speech (2002), n. 23.
Palestinian demands whenever the international community grew too critical. But whenever the Congress and the American Jewish community declared the administration was going too far in support of Arafat, the administration moved the opposite direction.