

The Peace Process and the Palestinian Political Landscape*

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This article examines forces and events that have influenced the Palestinian political landscape over the past two decades, focusing, among other things, on the failure of the peace process and its effect on the changing relations among political elites and trends in the Palestinian occupied territories. While reflecting on the prospects for peacemaking between Israel and the Palestinians, from the start of the 1987 Intifada until the eruption of the second Intifada in 2000, this article will highlight factors that have contributed to the collapse of the Oslo Accords, the Camp David II Summit and the Road Map formula. The obstacles that have generally caused the failure of these peace plans include the continuation of Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories, the U.S.'s credibility problem in the region and the growing corruption attributed to the Palestinian Authority.

Keywords: *First and Second Intifada, Palestinian Factionalism, Israeli-Palestinian Relations, Peacemaking Efforts*

1. INTRODUCTION

As Palestinians and Israelis became engaged in bilateral and multilateral talks during the past two decades, they confronted several anticipated challenges that have halted their peace efforts. The unequal balance of power between Palestinian and Israeli negotiators, the continuation of Israel's military occupation of the Palestinian territories and the U.S.'s continued backing of Israel were, and remain, among the prime factors that have led to the collapse of almost all available peace plans intended to resolve the conflict. The escalation of violence between Israel and the Palestinians, during the second *Intifada* in 2000, essentially halted the peace process and intensified tensions between the incumbent and opposition elites within the Palestinian territories. The deterioration of Palestinian socioeconomic and living conditions during the Oslo process further enhanced the appeal of extremists among Palestinians. As the latest parliamentary elections revealed, the Palestinian Authority's (PA) continuous failure to meet and fulfill the basic needs and objectives of its people ultimately placed Islamists at the forefront of Palestinian politics.

Israel's disproportionate military offensive against the Palestinians, following the second *Intifada*, deepened Palestinians' rage and frustration with the status quo. The willingness of Islamists and young nationalists to utilize extreme militant tactics during the second *Intifada*, as opposed to the first one, has largely been attributed to the failure of the Oslo peace process. The Palestinians' realization that the Oslo process failed to pressure Israel into abandoning its control of the 1967 territories enticed many more to reject diplomacy in favor of militancy. Indifferent to their despair, Israel and the U.S. remained mostly concerned with satisfying Israel's security claims than with addressing the basic needs of the Palestinians. The U.S.'s wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, coupled with the rising resentment to its power in the region,

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further marginalized the Bush Administration's insufficient involvement in existing efforts aimed at advancing the Palestinian-Israeli peace process.

Since the PA's creation in 1994, President Yasir Arafat had utilized its institutions, rules and procedures to strengthen his grip on power, either by silencing his critics or by channeling the public's anger against Israel (Ghanem 2001: 104-135). The outbreak of the second *Intifada*, however, provided Islamists and militant nationalists with an excuse to pressure the PA's leadership into responding to Palestinians' public demands. Instead of negotiations, Islamists and young nationalists appeared determined to pressure Israel into abandoning the occupied territories, often through their emulation of Hizbullah's suicide missions that were carried out during its offensive campaign against Israel's military occupation of South Lebanon. After Arafat's death and the election of Mahmoud Abbas as the PA's new president, along with the completion of Israel's withdrawal from Gaza in 2005, the PA's senior elite had hoped to revive the peace process. However, although the quartette members of the U.S., U.N., E.U. and Russia have collectively expressed their backing for the Road Map vision, President Bush's pledge to support Israel's annexation of large West Bank settlements has obstructed the pursuit of the Road Map plan, thus limiting the PA's senior elite's ability to remain in power (Bennet 2004: A1). Hamas's success in the Palestinian Legislative Council's (PLC) elections in 2006 was then used to justify the failure of the peace process and to provide Israel with a new mandate to implement Ariel Sharon's "disengagement" plans without consulting the Palestinian leadership or assessing its effects on the residents of the occupied territories.

Contrasting the effects of the first and the second *Intifadas* on the peace process reveals, among other things, that the eruption of the first *Intifada* facilitated new conditions for peacemaking to emerge between Israel and the Palestinians. A decade later, however, the failure of the Oslo process, which was anticipated mainly due to its content and procedures, significantly contributed to the outbreak of a second *Intifada* that subsequently created more changes in, and challenges to, the current landscape of Palestinian factional politics.

2. THE PEACE PROCESS AND THE THE TWO *INTIFADAS*

Unlike the first uprising, the second *Intifada* of 2000 had notably strengthened the appeal of Islamist militants in the Palestinian territories. Whereas the Islamists' rising influence during the first *Intifada* gave the Palestine Liberation Organization's (PLO) senior elite in the diaspora a new opportunity to appear moderate and become engaged in peace talks with Israel, the weakening of the PA during the second *Intifada* gave Islamists a new chance to occupy a leading role in Palestinian politics. While the first *Intifada* created suitable conditions for the PLO to conduct talks with Israel, the second *Intifada* intensified the factional tensions among Palestinian elites in the occupied territories (Hanieh 2002). Despite Israel's adoption of an iron-fist policy to crack down on the Palestinians during the first *Intifada*, Israel's response to the type of violence launched during the second *Intifada* was far more severe and disproportionate (Elon 2002: 81-88).

The long-term motives that led to the eruption and escalation of both *Intifadas* remains largely the same. Israel's military occupation continues to represent the core root of Palestinians' rage. Unlike the first *Intifada*, however, which exposed the way in which the Israeli soldiers were engaged in breaking the arms of Palestinian teenagers (Shiplers 1988: 6), the media coverage of the second *Intifada*, notably in the U.S., depicted the Palestinians as

victimizers rather than victims. Regardless of the socioeconomic, ideological and psychological factors that may explain reasons behind the Palestinian use of suicide bombings against Israeli civilians, it is doubtful that a real credible justification can be made. For their part, however, Palestinians who have either been oppressed and deprived of their land, or have experienced the deterioration of their social and economic conditions and have been humiliated daily by Israel's military occupation policies often rationalize suicidal attacks as a means of seeking vengeance against Israel. Although they differ on strategies and goals, Palestinian militants and Lebanon's Hizbullah fighters have both considered their use of suicide bombings as "legitimate" tactics for confronting Israel's military superiority. Palestinian Islamists and young nationalists generally consider Hizbullah's reliance on suicide bombings against Israel's forces in Lebanon as a successful strategy that ought to be emulated by Palestinians in the occupied territories.

Although both *Intifadas* were aimed at emancipating the Palestinians from Israel's military occupation, the second *Intifada* was influenced more by the failure of the Oslo and Camp David's peace efforts (Baroud 2002: 19-22). The inability of the PA to serve its people also fueled Palestinians' frustration with their leaders. The reshuffling of failed Palestinian governments during the Oslo process only exposed the depth of the PA's dilemma in the territories. As such, the continuation of Israel's military occupation coupled with the incompetence of the PA enticed an increasing number of young Palestinian militants to utilize the second *Intifada* as their only remaining means for pursuing Palestinian goals.

In response to the 1987 *Intifada*, negotiations between the PLO and members of the Israeli Labor Party were secretly launched in 1992 and resulted in the signing of the Declaration of Principles in September 1993 and the launching of the Oslo process. Following the initial euphoria that followed the signing, the details of Oslo's contents and procedures revealed new challenges that hindered the pursuit of peace (Shehadeh 2002: A23). For example, the Oslo formula failed to meet the minimal claims of the Palestinians, including: (1) the failure to bring about an Israeli military withdrawal and the removal of Jewish settlements from the 1967 territories; (2) the failure to create a geographically continuous and economically viable independent Palestinian entity over the 1967 territories, including Arab East Jerusalem; and (3) the failure to find a just solution for the Palestinian refugee problem (Guyatt 1998). Although the Oslo process failed to satisfy Israel's security needs, its effect on the Palestinians was far more serious. The Oslo plan intended to offer the Palestinians no more than geographically isolated units encircled by checkpoints and highways to serve the 180,000 Jewish settlers residing in the West Bank and the 200,000 Jewish residents of East Jerusalem (Hammami 2005: 102-114). Consequently, the Oslo process appears to have aimed at dividing the Palestinian territories into separate cantons that would have failed to end Israel's interferences in Palestinian domestic and external affairs. Therefore, the Oslo's process, contents and procedures have largely supported the evident inequalities that have always existed between the Israeli and the Palestinian negotiators involved in peace talks.

Among the main immediate factors that caused the second *Intifada*'s eruption and led to its widespread was Ariel Sharon's provocative visit to the *al-Aqsa* mosque, escorted by a thousand Israeli officers expressing sovereignty over the shrine (Greenberg 2000: A1). Initially, senior PA leaders had benefited from the *Intifada*'s outbreak, utilizing it as a means to press Israel into accepting their demands while providing the PA with an exit strategy after the failure of Camp David (Schulze 2001: 215-233). Although spontaneous, those who led the first *Intifada* also became the leading activists in the second *Intifada*. Unable to co-opt

the leaders of the second *Intifada*, the PA's senior elite continued to defend the Oslo process by pointing to positive features that resulted in, among others, the return of 100,000 PLO affiliates from the diaspora to the Palestinian territories, the PA's control over 18 percent of historic Palestine, along with other marginal or symbolic gains made during the early phases of the Oslo process. (Watson 2000: 237-251).

Others, including the majority of the Palestinians, who opposed the Oslo plan, pointed more to the continuation of Israel's military occupation of the territories, the lack of improvements in Palestinians' living conditions and the expansion of Jewish settlements in the occupied territories. Israel also established additional roadblocks, checkpoints and bypass roads that linked Jewish settlements together and doubled the size of settlements from pre-Oslo's situation. Israel then erected a new separation wall that, along with isolating Israelis from Palestinians, divided Palestinian communities from each other (Hass 2003: 16). Although subsequent peace plans that followed the collapse of the Camp David II Summit, including the Road Map formula, have tried to re-engage the parties in peacemaking, such efforts failed. Given the failure of all official diplomatic routes, Palestinians and Israelis alike were urged to utilize non-official diplomatic tools as a means to establish confidence building with each other. Even though many on both sides have expressed interest in pursuing the path of "track-II diplomacy," they remain unable to change the stalemate surrounding their current relations (Agha 2003: 167-196).

3. THE PEACE PROCESS AND PALESTINIAN FACTIONALISM

Since its inception in 1964, the PLO has managed to alternate its position between militant and diplomatic strategies. Given the failure of its popular militant strategy of the 1960s and early 1970s, the PLO began, since 1974, shifting its position towards the use of diplomacy as a means to address its conflict with Israel. By entering into peace negotiations with Israel in the 1990s, the PLO expected the process to fulfill Palestinian basic political claims. With the failure of the Oslo process and the Camp David Summit, however, the senior leadership of the PA eventually lost much of its credibility and legitimacy in the Palestinian territories (Mohamad 2001: 46-76). For their part, however, Islamists succeeded in reviving support for militancy as a means to pressure Israel into withdrawing from their occupied territories. Hamas's ability to capture, in the latest elections, 74 seats out of the PLC's 132 seats serves as a prime example of the unintended results of Oslo's apparent failure to satisfy basic Palestinian objectives.

Although many within the PA's senior elite benefited from their reliance on diplomacy in the early 1990s, the majority of the Palestinians, however, continued to suffer from widespread poverty, exclusion and despair during the entire course of the Oslo process (Hass 2001: 9). In response, the PA's senior elite often utilized their institutions to launch patriotic maneuvers to channel Palestinians' public anger towards Israel (Samuels 2005: 60-91). Arafat also utilized the PA's institutions to silence his opponents and remain in power, while at the same time, giving the impression of the presence of semi-democratic procedures in the Palestinian territories (Abu Toameh 2002: 3). Under Arafat, the PLC failed to ease the supremacy of the executive authority in Palestinian politics. Although the PA's presidential and parliamentary elections were expected to institute the rule of law, accountability and transparency in the PA's institutions, the continuation of Israel's military occupation, the

disunity among Palestinians, the U.S.'s alliance with Israel and the PA's continued corruption, however, undermined the success of these procedures.

The PA's failure to carry out its anticipated duties contributed to the intensifying of factionalism among the Palestinian ranks along two generational divides: the young local elites and the senior PLO/PA's leaders. Tensions between the two ranks reflected their differences on matters ranging from the fate of the peace process, the PA's corruption and the use of militant and/or diplomatic tools to deal with Israel. Although most Palestinians have supported the PA's negotiations with Israel in the period that preceded the Camp David II Summit, most Islamists and young nationalists, however, continued to express interest in waging violence against Israel. As time went by, the relationship between the PLO/PA's incumbent senior elites continued to face an increasing challenge from the Islamist and young nationalist elites. These factional tensions, which surfaced after the eruption of the second *Intifada* differed considerably from the more easily managed relations experienced during the first *Intifada* between the PLO's diaspora elites (the outsiders) and the local elites (the insiders) from the West Bank and Gaza.

From the time of its restructuring and radicalization in 1968, the PLO's main focus was centered on the plight of the Palestinian refugees in the diaspora. However, the local elites of the West Bank and Gaza were far more concerned with the future of their occupied territories. Despite their differences, local activists in the West Bank and Gaza began forming their own political groups, which, while resisting Israel's military occupation, managed to provide allegiance to the PLO in the diaspora. The creation of the Palestine National Front (PNF) in 1973 in the West Bank, for instance, served as a means by which local leaders in the occupied territories could rally behind the PLO. These organizations enhanced the PLO's appeal at the expense of local Palestinian traditionalists and pro-Jordanian notables in the occupied territories (Ma'oz 1984).

In much of the 1970s and 1980s, the most forceful opposition to Israel in the Palestinian territories came from student groups that were made up of nationalists, Marxists and Islamists. The activities carried out by these groups had improved relations between the PLO and the people of the occupied territories. Student activists also enhanced the popularity of the PLO, which indirectly pressured Israel into invading Lebanon in 1982, in order to wipe out the PLO as a step towards eliminating the local resistance to Israel's occupation. The creation of the National Guidance Committee (NGC), formed by the local activists, also succeeded in channeling Palestinian efforts in support of the PLO. Furthermore, the emergence of several other international, regional and local changes, including the collapse of the U.S.S.R. and the end of the Cold War era since 1989, the initiation of the first Gulf War in 1990-91 and the launching of the first *Intifada* in 1987, also created riper conditions for peacemaking efforts to emerge in the region. Along with these changes, the founding of the Unified National Leadership (UNL) in the Palestinian territories in 1988 enabled local leaders to exert more influence on the PLO to become responsive to the public needs of Palestinians. The first *Intifada* thus, succeeded in unifying Palestinians and in rescuing the PLO from an expected demise. To avoid a power struggle, similar to the one experienced currently, leaders of the first *Intifada* emphasized symbols of partnership with the PLO. To continue dominating Palestinian politics, the PLO persuaded the UNL in the territories to accept a more subservient role.

During the second *Intifada*, however, local militants posed a serious defiance to the PA's senior leaders (Shikaki 2002: 89-105). In response, the PA's leadership continued to pressure its local opponents to accept an obedient role similar to that which they had accepted during

the first *Intifada*. Eventually, divisions among Palestinian elites broadened during the second *Intifada* along the same two generational divides. While the senior elites continued to forcefully support the peace process up until the Camp David Summit, Islamists and young nationalists rebelled further and adopted uncompromising positions towards Israel (Gerges 2002: 25). Indeed, the success of Hamas in the PLC's most current elections was, in part, caused by the organization's challenge to the PA's senior leaders. Consistent with its uncompromising stance on the peace process, Hamas initially advocated a strategy that called for eliminating the PA's corruption and nepotism, along with escalating its militant confrontation with Israel. But in the end, Hamas was pressured into expressing a more conciliatory tone in order to ease existing outside pressures that had largely antagonized the already crippled socioeconomic conditions in the territories (Amirav 2006:6-9).

Israel, on the other hand, under Sharon's leadership, became aware that it can no longer maintain the Palestinians under its indefinite military rule. Ariel Sharon as well as Ehud Olmert both expressed interest in withdrawing from the populated centers of the West Bank as a step towards implementing the "disengagement" plan to secure the future of Israel as a Jewish state. The "disengagement" plan, which was adopted by Israel's Kadema party leadership, also aimed at confining the Palestinians within manageable geographical limits, leading to the eventual establishment of a dependent Palestinian entity that lacks the resemblance of a genuine statehood. Indeed, Hamas's success in the PLC's elections accelerated Israel's pursuit of the "disengagement" plan and other unilateral steps as a means to further isolate Palestinians and Israelis from each other.

4. THE PEACE PROCESS IN THE POST-ARAFAT ERA

The U.S.'s mediation attempts between Israel and the Palestinians, which have constantly favored Israel's interests and downplayed Palestinian claims, is partly to blame for the failure of the Oslo formula and the Camp David peace plan. The pro-Israeli lobbyists, the neo-conservative trends in the Bush Administration and the Protestant Evangelical groups have also played a significant role in defining the U.S.'s approach in ways that favor Israel at all costs. In their approach to foreign policy towards the region, U.S. officials have historically relied on already established frames of references that have supported Israel's interests at the expense of the Palestinians, namely in the post-1967 war era (Mersheimer & Walt 2006: 22; Anderson 2005: 102-129).

Although new opportunities for advancing the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians have surfaced following Arafat's death, a real breakthrough remains unlikely to emerge, unless the essential claims of the Palestinians are addressed. These claims include, among others, recognition of Palestinians' right to national self-determination over the post-1967 territories, the removal of all Jewish settlements from these territories, the recognition of Arab East Jerusalem as their capital and finding a just solution to the problem of the refugees. To preserve Israel as a Jewish state, Sharon's and Olmert's governments continue to pursue unilateral policies of disengaging Israelis from Palestinians, often through the erection of a new wall that divides Palestinian families and communities from each other in the occupied territories (Leibowitz 2005: 59-62).

For its part, the U.S.-sponsored Road Map vision suffers from problems similar to those that previously led to the collapse of the Oslo process and the Camp David Summit. The general content of the Road Map expects Israeli and Palestinian negotiators to determine the

final fate of the 1967 Palestinian territories. This may entail the expectation of dividing these territories between Israel and the Palestinians. Israeli negotiators and U.S. mediators do indeed expect Palestinians to provide territorial concessions to satisfy Israel's "demographic threats," and other geopolitical concerns, along with providing compromises on the status of Jerusalem and on the future of the refugees. Based on past experiences in Palestinian-Israeli talks, notably during the Oslo process and the Camp David Summit, the Road Map formula is, therefore, destined to fail. Although in previous years Palestinian negotiators have never expressed a clear willingness to give up their internationally recognized claims, they were, at the Camp David talks, prepared to swap territories with Israel in order to address Israeli security and demographic concerns (Bennet 2002: A3). Given that most Palestinians believe they have already succumbed to Israel's control over 78 percent of historic Palestine, they will continue to resent making more territorial concessions on the remaining 22 percent of historic Palestine. For most Arabs and Palestinians, the success or failure of the Road Map depends largely on the U.S.'s willingness and ability to pressure Israel into arranging for a total withdrawal from the 1967 territories, which, among other things, entails the removal of Israeli settlements.

It was expected that Arafat's death and the election of Abbas would serve, at least temporarily, to end Israeli and U.S.'s rhetoric concerning the lack of a Palestinian partner to negotiate. With Hamas's control of the PA, however, Israel and the U.S. have raised the same arguments regarding the lack of a credible Palestinian peace partner. These claims have often been used as pretexts to redraw Israel's boundaries and decide the final status issues, while accusing the Palestinian side of not being sufficiently cooperative in negotiations. Given that the quartette members placed most of the pressures on the Palestinian side to begin implementing the Road Map, it is unlikely that its vision for peace will succeed.

The Road Map formula consists of three phases. In its first phase, the plan demands from the Palestinians the confiscation of weapons and the dismantling of the infrastructure of Palestinian militant factions. The completion of such a task is difficult to do unless the PA is given real assurances that a future political settlement would meet the basic demands of the Palestinians. Accomplishing this undertaking also entails the risk of creating a low-intensity level civil war that would hinder Palestinians' stability, which has already occurred in Gaza since the election of Hamas's new government. Furthermore, Israel's withdrawal from Gaza in 2005 had created a vacuum, which led, among other things, to the escalation of a power struggle between Hamas and Fatah. The restoration of stability in Gaza will depend on the ability of the Hamas-led government to negotiate seriously with Fatah in order to preserve its newly formed unity government that can alleviate, among other things, U.S. and Israeli challenges against it.

Based on the degree of progress on the ground, the Road Map's second phase requires Israel to recognize a provisional Palestinian state with provisional boundaries (Terje-Larsen 2003: 88-89). The fear among Palestinians is that such a state may remain provisional. The third phase is the most controversial, since it focuses on determining final status issues such as statehood, refugees, settlements, security, borders and Jerusalem. The main concern that may arise at this phase is a repeat of the collapse of the Camp David II negotiations. At this point, however, the Road Map formula has largely become obsolete, given the facts on the ground have already determined much of the final status issues. Israel's erection of a separation wall was one among many attempts made to define the content and scope of any future final status negotiations (Reese 2006: 20). Given these and other challenges to the Road Map plan, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues to test the U.S.'s credibility and

long-term interests in the region. The peace process could perhaps be advanced by enticing both parties to make use of steps that had already been prepared at Taba (Perssman 2003: 5-43) as well as the Geneva talks following the eruption of the second *Intifada* (Meital 2006). Israel, backed by the Bush Administration, has, however, rejected both the Taba and Geneva talks in favor of Sharon's unilateral "disengagement" plans. For its part, the ability of Hamas to deliver for the Palestinians continues to depend on its willingness to moderate its strategy and formulate a stable, lasting and more unified government that would adhere to the same democratic rules and procedures that brought about Hamas's electoral success in the PLC's election.

Consequently, the contents and procedures of existing peace plans and efforts to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, including the Oslo process, Camp David II and the Road Map formula, have, thus far, deprived Palestinians of much of their internationally recognized claims, while at the same time, assisting Israel in launching its "disengagement" plans. The absence of alternative peace models from the agendas of the parties involved in mediations have also threatened Palestinians' unity on the one hand, and escalated the Palestinian conflict with Israel on the other. Although official diplomatic measures have thus far failed, the majority of the Palestinian and Israeli public continue at the same time to believe the conflict can only be resolved on the basis of either a two sovereign state setting or within a single, unitary and democratic state setting (Mohamad 2007: 99-122). In rhetoric, the U.S. and Israel continue to support the notion of the two states solution. In reality, however, their policies aim at confining the Palestinians in isolated territories within a new manageable setting. Although the widespread corruption in the Palestinian territories continues to obstruct local efforts for development along with hindering any meaningful political reforms, the main threat to Palestinian unity and to their future survival continues to be rooted in Israel's military occupation of their territories.

As far as the future of Palestinian politics is concerned, it is often argued that given the Palestinians' historical experiences with autocratic Arab and Palestinian elites, along with their unrelenting suffering from Israel's military occupation, the Palestinians may support the notion of democracy promotion far more than others in the region (Quandt 1994). On the other hand, it is perhaps more feasible to argue that the constant corruption in the PA's institutions will eventually, like other Arab regimes, lead existing Palestinian elites to abandon democracy promotion in favor of authoritarianism as a more convenient route. As such, the internal dynamics of Palestinian politics, which are often ignored in favor of external factors, will perhaps determine the future destiny of Palestinian politics.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study reveals the following main themes: (1) the second *Intifada* differed strategically, ideologically and in terms of its organizational base and outcomes from the first *Intifada*; (2) the second Intifada, along with its harmful consequences on both Israelis and Palestinians alike, was the result of flaws in the Oslo peace process and the Camp David II Summit, Palestinian rage with Israel's polices as well as widespread frustrations with the Palestinian leadership; (3) although the majority of Israelis and Palestinians continue to favor a two-states solution for the conflict, an increasing number of Palestinians in the occupied territories are compelled to rely more on militancy as a means to resist Israel and manage local factional feuds between and among Palestinian elites; (4) the

U.S.'s continued backing of Israel at all levels, which in part led to the failure of the peace process, encourages Palestinians to continually resort to the use of violence, rather than pursue negotiations; and (5) the fulfillment of Palestinians' political aspirations in ending Israel's military occupation of the territories remains a key factor to the success of any future peace effort and/or in the prospect of democratizing Palestinian politics. The existing facts on the ground, i.e., the continuation of Jewish settlement building on Palestinian land, point to, on the other hand, Israel's unwillingness to accept a total withdrawal to the 1967 boundaries. As such, the single factor that may compel Israel to abide to UN Resolutions 242 and 338 is the U.S.'s insistence that Israel respects the rules of International Law and thus withdraws from the Palestinian territories. For its part, the PA must also be more willing and able to respond to Palestinian basic needs on the one hand, and to cooperate more effectively with the U.S. and Israel in order to bring an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. These steps might in the end make it possible to secure Palestinian basic goals without endangering Israel's security concerns. While the search for, and perhaps achievement of, peace remains particularly difficult for both sides, it is not unthinkable that the violence of the second *Intifada*, the latest war in Lebanon and the continued challenges to the U.S. in Iraq may have created conditions for the emergence of Palestinian/Arab and Israeli cooperation towards lasting coexistence (Golan 2006: 16-19; Galtung 2006: 99-103).

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