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Israel and Palestine:

Diverging Perceptions of the Middle East Conflict since the Beginning of the Second Intifada and their Influence on the Peace Process.

By Monika Izydorczyk

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Security vs. Justice

Israel and Palestine:

Diverging Perceptions of the Middle East Conflict
since the Beginning of the Second Intifada
and their Influence on the Peace Process**.**

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Editorial Date: Mai 2005

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction

2. Actors and Interests

2.1 Israel

2.1.1 Position

2.1.2 The Two Camps

2.1.3 Other Actors

2.2 The Palestinians

2.2.1 Position

2.2.2 Division Lines in the Nationalist Camp

2.2.3 Hamas and Militant Islamism

2.2.4 Change of Power Balance Caused by the Second Intifada

2.3 International Involvement

2.3.1 Beginning of the Al-Aksa Intifada

2.3.2 From Taba Negotiations to the September 11th

2.3.3 The Impact of September 11th

2.3.4 Implementing the Road Map

2.4 Conclusion

3. Perceptions and Assumptions

3.1 Central Perceptions

3.1.1 Israel

3.1.2 The Palestinians

3.2 Common Perceptions

3.3 Threat Perceptions and the Use of Force

3.3.1 Israel

3.3.2 The Palestinians

3.4 Security vs. Justice

3.4.1 Israel

3.4.2 The Palestinians

3.5 Concepts of Peace and Victory

3.5.1 Israel

3.5.2 The Palestinians

3.6 International Community Perspective

3.7 Conclusion

4. <u>Road to Peace</u>

4.1 Taba Negotiations

4.1.1 Israel

4.1.2 Palestinians

4.2 Road Map to Peace

4.2.1 Israel

4.2.1.1 Internal Debate about the Road Map to Peace

4.2.1.2 The Disengagement Plan as a response to the Geneva Accord

4.2.2 The Palestinians

4.2.2.1 The Doves and Hawks in Fatah

4.2.2.2 The Fundamentalist's Camp

4.2.3 The International Community

4.3 Conclusion

1. INTRODUCTION

The following project focuses on the last four years of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, starting with the outbreak of the Palestinian *II Intifada* in September 2000. Its main purpose is to analyze different interests and perspectives of the parties directly involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as well as those of the international community. Israelis and Palestinians view their environment through different "lenses" and the key question that the international community should pose is not whether a party to the conflict is right or wrong about certain issues, but how do the parties perceive the issue at the time, whether their perceptions can be changed and can their perceptions be compatible with those of the other party. The main thesis of this project is: that different perceptions and misunderstood assumptions about the objectives, the central beliefs of the parties involved in the conflict, and their unwillingness to make concessions, were the main reasons for bringing the peace process to a standstill. Proposed solutions to this failure are also offered.

The first chapter attempts to define key interests and expectations of both parties to the conflict, as well as the international community (mainly the US, the EU, the Arab states and the UN). This part of the paper analyzes the political framework in which any peace plan or settlement proposal has to function. Due to limited space and the necessity to keep the paper brief, interests of international actors are dealt with collectively. The US, the EU and the Arab states play a very important role in shaping the peace process and the paper concentrates only on the main aspects of international involvement during the last four years. Also, between Israel and the Palestinian Authority the political differences are much deeper and complex than described here. The intention of this chapter is to give an essence of the main parties' goals and interests in relation to the peace process.

The second chapter focuses on the perceptions and assumptions held by both sides in relation to their history and the conflict. The framework of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process is marked by the traumas of the past and mistrust of the present. Different perceptions of the same historical facts shape today's political realm in the Middle East. They also influence Israeli and Palestinian interpretation of the other side's behavior and intentions, thus limiting policy options and making their stance on certain aspects of the peace process less flexible. The chapter's structure is constructed in such a way as to cover general concepts related to the peace process, the perception of threat and use of force and issues related to security and justice. Next it analyzes the perception of peace and victory and moves to the general perception of the international community on these issues. Since the main focus of the work concerns both sides of the conflict: Israel and Palestine. It does not analyze the international community's perception in detail but concentrates only on the main issues. This part does not focus on the perceptions of the conflict held by the Arab states, since it is assumed that however they may differ on specific issues, in general they are close to the ones held by the Palestinians.

The third and last chapter is composed of two parts. Each part focuses on different stages of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. First, it looks at the Taba negotiations as the concluding event of the Oslo Process framework and Camp David negotiations. Both sides were never closer to an agreement than at that time. Therefore, it is interesting to look at why and how the gap between the parties narrowed so much so that a compromise was within reach. Next, it moves to the Road Map to Peace, an internationally sponsored peace plan that as of today is the only legitimate,

internationally accepted peace proposal. It represents a certain vision of conflict resolution which takes the interests of both sides into account. The open question is whether it also considers the different perspectives and national narratives of the Palestinian and Israeli societies and political elites. While discussing the Road Map, significant attention is given to the Israeli Disengagement Plan. The latter has been accepted by the Israeli government and parliament as an option for the future and will have a profound influence on the dynamics of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The paper is based on a wide scope of literature – from documents, interviews, policy papers and analysis, newspaper and weekly magazine articles to Internet pages. The Middle East and Israeli-Palestinian conflict is an issue on which there has been written a lot. Therefore, the main criteria are the reliability of the source. Analysis relies upon mostly documents, interviews and official reports of different international institutions. Especially helpful in my work were positions published by the International Crisis Group, documents and interviews published by Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz* and as well as journals such as the Washington Quarterly, the Journal of Palestine Studies.

2. ACTORS AND INTERESTS

The objective of this chapter is to identify interests and positions of the parties involved in conflict and the differences in political and economic power, which significantly influence the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Key questions to answer in this part of the work are:

Who are the main actors and sub-actors in the conflict? What is the relationship between them? What goals and interests shape their position in the conflict and during peace negotiations*?*

The first part, *Israel*, will examine the Israeli position and domestic constraints posed by both political divisions and the presence of influential lobby groups. The next section, *The Palestinians,* will focus on the Palestinian approach and the change in the power balance between different Palestinian camps caused by the Second Intifada. Since the international community has been deeply involved in searching for a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the last part *International involvement* analyzes interests and goals of the main international actors with a special focus on the US as a mediator and guarantor of Israeli security and the EU as a main financial supporter to the Palestinian Authority.

2.1 Israel

2.1.1 Position

Israel is a Jewish state established by and for the Jewish people.[1] This idea shapes Israel's domestic and foreign policy, as well as Israeli interests and attitudes towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Though Israel's political, military and economic superiority in the region of the Middle East remains unchallenged, ensuring long-term survival, territorial integrity and sovereignty of the state are the main goals of each political and military administration in Israel.[2] The environment in which Israel finds itself is unique. Locked between the Mediterranean Sea and a sea of Arab population since its origins, Israel has had to confront real threats to its independence and survival. Moreover, the lack of strategic depth and natural resources puts significant pressure on the governing elites. Israel cannot afford to lose a single war; it also cannot afford to lose human and economic resources.[3]

In relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict this means reaching a settlement, but on one's own terms. Most of the Israeli leaders from Yitzhak Rabin to Benjamin Netanyahu, Shimon Peres and Ehud Barak agreed that settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict should ensure – for Israel – a regional power balance, in which the Jewish state would have a permanent military, economic advantage over a small Palestinian entity.[4] This is also the vision of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. At the same time there is a consensus within the Israeli society and government, that the

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1 The Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel, available at www.knesset.gov.il/docs/eng.

2 For more on this topic see: Basic Guidelines of the 30th Government of Israel, February 2003, available at www.knesset.gov.il/docs/eng or the Doctrine of the Israel Defense Forces, available at www.idf.il.

3 UNIDIR Research Paper, *National Threat Perceptions in the Middle East*, United Nations, New York and Geneva, September 1995, pp. 9-10.

4 This is seen as necessary to ensure Israel's security and ability to protect herself against any sign of Arab aggression. Ilan Pappe, *A History of Modern Palestine*, Cambridge University Press 2004, p. 255.

Palestinians should have their own political autonomy, since it is necessary for keeping Israel both Jewish and democratic.[5]

Currently the official position of the Israeli government towards the settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is based on three main concepts: unilateral withdrawal, separation, and the introduction of political change within the Palestinian realm. The first idea is reflected in Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's Disengagement Plan, which offers unilateral withdrawal of Israeli security forces and settlements from the Gaza Strip. The plan gained approval of the Israeli parliament on the October 26th 2004 and its implementation is to start in summer 2005. Parallel to the Disengagement Plan, Israel continues the construction of a security fence around Judea and Samaria territories. Described by the Israeli officials as a temporary security measure, the so-called "security fence" lays the groundwork for the future separation of Israel from Palestinian territories.[6] According to Israel these measures are not at variance with the Road Map to Peace, an internationally sponsored proposal for the settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The most important Israeli expectation regarding the Palestinian Authority is that it will introduce significant political change leading to more control over different types of security forces and more transparent, democratic, decision-making processes. The latter should prevent Palestinian extremists from carrying out their attacks against Israel and provide Israel with a minimum level of security.

2.1.2 The Two Camps

On the other hand, there are significant differences concerning the future shape of the Palestinian state and its borders, as well as the way it is to be established. These differences were deepened by the failure of the Camp David II negotiations and the second Palestinian Intifada. Overall, in contemporary Israel, one can distinguish two major political camps and agendas which dominate not only the discussion about the ways to settle the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but also the debate about the future identity of the State of Israel. These two camps can be seen as important

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5 The Zionists who established Israel believed that Israel should be a democratic and Jewish state, with secure and defensible borders. Arab-Israeli wars and the refusal of the Arab world to give legitimacy to the newly established state imposed the sense of permanent siege, which has shaped Israeli security doctrine and military practice, as well as domestic politics. (More: Clive Jones and Emma C. Murphy, *Challenges to Identity, Democracy and State,* London; New York: Routledge, 2002, pp. 91-97 and Raymond Hinnebusch, *The international politics of the Middle East*, Manchester University Press, Manchester and New York 2003, pp.158-164.) As in previous decades different Israeli leaders might have been reluctant to call the future Palestinian entity a "state", today, according to the former Prime Minister Ehud Barak, "the two-state solution in fact, it is the only possible one from the Zionist point of view. Between the Jordan and the Mediterranean there are 10 million human beings - 6.5 million Israelis and 3.5 million Palestinians. If Israel is the only political entity within this area, it will inevitably become either non-Jewish or non-democratic. If the Palestinian bloc can vote, we will have a binational system par excellence. If they cannot vote, it will become an apartheid system par excellence. Neither is the Zionist dream." Interview with former PM Ehud Barak, Q& A section, *Ha'aretz*, 19 July 2004.

6 The construction of the security fence started together with Operation Defensive Shield. About the fence see more at "Israel's Security Fence", www.seamzone.mod.gov.il or "Israel's Security Fence" www.jewishvirtual library.org/jsource/Peace/fencetoc.html. For the details of the Disengagement Plan see: Disengagement Plan of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon – Revised, available at www.knesset.gov.il/process/eng/eng_docs.asp.

sub-actors in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as their leaders and activists are responsible for working out certain strategies and proposals for settlement of the conflict.[7]

The Labor Party, Meretz, Shinui, as well as other political entities that place themselves on the left side of the Israeli political spectrum, represent the first camp. The view of the Israeli Left challenges the traditional realist security doctrine, which stresses the primacy of military power and territorial defense. However, the Labor Party stays committed to general national interests and the principles of Israeli policy towards the Palestinians, its approach is oriented more towards compromise, negotiation, and civil rights issues. This policy was reflected both at Camp David II, and right up to the negotiations in Taba, where the Labor Party under the Prime Minister Ehud Barak, aspired to achieve a settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on decolonization along with certain concessions on the refugee and Jerusalem issues.[8] Traditionally, the Labor Party supports a "land-for-peace" formula. Bearing in mind the demographic realities in the region, the Labor Party sees the continuing occupation of the Palestinian Territories as impossible to sustain.[9] Israeli Labor Party leaders share this view since the Oslo Accords, notwithstanding the fact that all of them have pursued a policy of expanding Jewish settlements.[10]

The pressure of the second Palestinian Intifada and disappointment with the failure of the Camp David negotiations forced earlier elections in Israel. These brought to power the second, right-wing camp. Political parties from this group have traditionally taken a more nationalistic, inflexible and force-oriented approach towards the settlement of Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The right-wing camp's viewpoint is that of a realist's approach. Its representatives believe that conventional military superiority can be translated into security and political ends. During the election campaign of 2000-2001, Ariel Sharon, leader of the Likud, the strongest right-wing party in Israel, promised first of all to ensure security for Israeli citizens and to an end to the second Palestinian Intifada. Furthermore, his policy during more than 3 years in power as Prime Minister has been based upon the following principles:

- Security comes first;
- No negotiations under fire;
- No negotiations with terrorists;
- Avoidance of internationalization of the conflict;[11]

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7 See: Ilan Peleg, "Israel Enters the 21st Century: Hegemonic Crisis in the Holy Land" in Robert O. Freedman (ed.) *The Middle East Enters the Twenty First Century*, University Press of Florida 2002, p.131. Israeli political scene is divided and there are more than only two views on the Israeli-Palestinian settlement. However, for the purpose of this article it is necessary to limit analysis only to the most important, influential actors and their strategies.

8 Ron Pundak, "From Oslo to Taba: What Went Wrong?", June 2001 available at http://www.gush-shalom.org/archives/pundak.doc. Also see "Israel according to Sharon", *Ha'aretz*, 2 February 2001.

9 See: Ari Shavit, "Israel according to Sharon", Ha'aretz 2 February 2001. The Jewish population within Israel proper is growing at a rate 1.9 percent per year and the Palestinian population is increasing slightly more than 3 percent. See: Thomas Naff, "Hazards to Middle East Stability in the 1990s" in Phebe Marr and William Lewis (ed.) *Riding the Tiger. The Middle East Challenge after the Cold War*, Westview Press, 1993 p. 150 and ICG Middle East Report No. 25, *Identity Crisis: Israel and its Arab Citizens*, 4 March 2004, p.5. Available at: www.crisisweb.org.

10 Neil Lochery, *Why Blame Israel? The Facts behind the Headlines*, United Kingdom: Icon Books Ltd. 2004, pp. 103-105.

11 During the first 2 years of the Palestinian Intifada Israel was ruled by a coalition government of the Likud and Labor Parties. This damaged the image of the Labor Party, which under the pressure of the Second Intifada, was

These principles implied certain political strategies and choices. During the first months of the Palestinian Intifada, Ehud Barak continued negotiations with the Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat until his last days in office. From the beginning, Ariel Sharon refused official contacts with the Palestinian Authority prior the end of the violence. Moreover, Ariel Sharon made clear that with the outbreak of the Palestinian Intifada, the whole Oslo Process, together with the Taba Agreements, have become irrelevant.[12] The strategic change in the international environment brought on by the terrorist attacks on America of September 11th 2001, made it possible for the Israeli government to legitimize its fight with the Palestinian Intifada as part of "a global fight against terrorism" and helped to overcome the international constraints on its freedom of military action against targets in Palestinian-ruled territories. While some aspects of Israel military actions still met with international criticism, there was much greater tolerance for the Israeli need to carry out offensive operations in self-defense against terrorism.[13]

2.1.3 Other Actors

Winning on the military track, Ariel Sharon stayed committed to a search for a political settlement to the conflict which would be optimal for Israel. Today, such an option seems to be Ariel's Sharon "Disengagement Plan". However, the Disengagement Plan, as well as any other peace settlement drawn in the past or in the future, has to take into consideration domestic constraints posed by two other major players on the Israeli political arena: the Israeli settlers and Arab Israeli minority.

Israeli settlers are the most influential and powerful lobby in Israel. Currently about 250,000 Jews live in the settlements in West Bank and nearly 7,000 Jews live in the Gaza Strip. These people, mostly extreme nationalists and religious fundamentalists, consider the proper boundaries of Israel as the ones of Biblical Eretz Israel, promised by God to the Jewish nation. Therefore, any withdrawal from the Occupied Territories is excluded by religious rationale. Among settlers there are also many recent immigrants form the former Soviet Union. They came to Israel in search of a better life and were assigned to the settlements in the Occupied Territories in accordance with official government policy. Some families don't want to leave the settlements for economic reasons; some are simply opposed to leaving what they perceive as their homeland. In the past each of the Israeli Prime Ministers starting from Yitzhak Rabin was taken hostage by the religious fundamentalism and extremism of this group. This was also the case with Ehud Barak, who while agreeing to certain concessions at the Camp David and Taba negotiations was

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caught between its strategy of the peace negotiations and the reality of the Palestinian suicide bombings. A coalition of right-wing parties became possible after the January 2003 elections, which brought major victory to the Likud party, and the lowest ever outcome for the Labor Party.

[12] During 2001campaign, Sharon pledged to continue to negotiate with the Palestinians but declared the Oslo Peace process "dead" because the Palestinians have not complied with the agreements signed. Ariel Sharon argued for a new approach to negotiations. Unlike Ehud Barak, he did not consider a final status agreement with the Palestinians realistic and opted for a "multi-staged" process with agreements similar to "non-belligerency" treaties. "The 2001 Israeli Elections: What Next? Sharon on the Peace Process", available at Anti-Defamation League, www.adl.org.

[13] See: Ephraim Inbar, "The Elusive Victory. An Israeli View in *"What is victory?"*, Bitterlemons.org, Edition 13, 19 April 2004. Available at www.bitterlemons.org. Since Operation Defensive Shield in the West Bank (March-April 2002), the potential of the Palestinian terrorists groups has been seriously limited. Israel conducted a similar operation in the Gaza Strip in September 2004 (Operation Days of Penitence). Generally Israel's record in preventing terrorist attacks stands at around 90 percent.

fully aware that even if the peace accord was to be signed, its implementation on the Israeli side could have been jeopardized by the settler lobby.[14]

After presentation of Ariel Sharon's Disengagement Plan, the settler lobby mounted widespread protests against the withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, despite the fact that government prepared and approved a compensation plan for all those who were to leave the Palestinian territories.[15] The protests have a mass character and tend to grow stronger. The settlers group attempts to target Israeli IDF officers in order to convince them to refuse the order to dismantle the settlements and withdraw from the territories. Despite Israel's firm stand and a general public opinion support for the Disengagement Plan, the settler lobby might jeopardize or delay the government plans for withdrawal.

Another group, which should be mentioned, is that of the Israeli-Arab citizen. Usually they are not present on the Israeli political agenda and their influence is incomparably lower than their potential. They compose 19.4 percent of 6.7 million inhabitants in Israel and according to some projections their numbers may, in a few decades, amount to 1/3 of Israeli citizens.[16] Their influence can be felt mainly at election time, since they constitute approximately 13% of the total electorate. Traditionally, this group used to vote for its own, Arab MP candidates, as well as for the Labor Party. Since the early 1990s Israeli-Arabs have started to be perceived as an important part of the electorate capable of determining the outcome of the elections.[17] Moreover, after the outbreak of the second Intifada, Israeli-Arabs engaged in mass demonstrations in support of the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. This made the Israeli political establishment afraid, that notwithstanding the problem with Palestinian nationalism in the areas of the Palestinian Authority, they might soon have to face a similar problem within Israel proper. [18] Nevertheless, while Israeli-Arabs are supportive of the Palestinian cause, they are not eager to engage militarily. The most important effect of the second Intifada on the Israeli Arabs was that they became more conscious of the discrimination they face domestically. They also became more determined to fight for their political rights in Israel. This in the future might prove to be a

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[14] Housing prices in the settlement areas are much lower, and the families who live in these areas are provided with substantial governmental subsidies. Since the outbreak of the Intifada and the emergence of suicide bombers, settlers are not merely defending an idea of "Greater Israel", they are defending, as they see it, their *home.* The settlers may pose a threat of civil war if their interests are not fully respected. See: Elon Amos, "Israelis and Palestinians. What Went Wrong?", *The New York Review of Books*, 19 December 2002, pp.8-10, available at www.nybooks.com/articles/15935. See also Neil Lochery, op. cit., pp. 102-103.

[15] There were also personal threats against Prime Minister Sharon that he will share the fate of Yitzhak Rabin, who was assassinated by a Jewish extremist. "Police investigate Sharon death threats", *Associated Press*, 14 September 2004. The government plan for compensation states that each settler family will receive up to $350,000 USD of compensation. See: "Israel Cabinet O.K.'s Settler's Compensation", *Associated Press*, 25 October 2004.

[16] ICG Middle East Report No. 25, op.cit. pp. 1-5.

[17] Ehud Barak won the 1999 elections mainly thanks to the voices of the Israeli Arab electorate. 95 percent of the Israeli Arabs backed Ehud Barak, who during his election campaign was promising reduction of inequalities between the Israeli and the Arab citizens and a "a state for all. The Israeli Arabs enjoy political rights unknown to many in the region, but nonetheless are subject to various forms of discrimination in terms of access to resources, civil rights and political representation.

[18] October 2000 clashes it was the first time Israeli police used force against and killed its own citizens. In order to investigate the clashes, a special commission (the Or Commission) was created. Some Israeli Arabs leaders were criticized for a "strategy of threatening violence". The problem of Israeli Arabs is not easily resolved because it goes to the heart of Israel's definition as both a Jewish and a democratic state. See more: ICG Middle East Report No 25, op. cit and Ilan Peleg, op. cit. pp. 114-119.

challenge for the Israeli democracy, which is perceived as a Jewish-oriented democracy, where Arab minorities have their rights limited.

2.2 The Palestinians

2.2.1 Position

There are nearly four million Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Moreover 3.7 million Palestinians live in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan.[19] Since the establishment of the State of Israel they have been fighting to have their own state. Currently the area in question includes the West Bank and Gaza Strip which were taken from Egypt and Jordan in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.[20] These territories are referred to by Palestinians as occupied territories. Israel claims their status as "disputed territories". Current law status of the West Bank and Gaza Strip is based upon the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement which also established Palestinian administration in most parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Permanent status of the occupied territories is to be determined through further negotiation.[21]

Israel Political Map *(Source: Perry-Castaneda Library Map Collection)* *http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps*

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[19] The 1948 Israeli-Arab war created a large number of Arab refugees. Estimates vary from about 520,000 (Israeli sources) to 726,000 (UN sources) to over 800,000 (Arab sources) refugees. This number has grown to 3.7 million persons currently registered as refugees with the UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees). Over a million Palestinians live in camps run by UNRWA. The refugee issue problem has been at the heart of peace negotiations ever since 1949. See: www.mideastweb.org.

[20] At the beginning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was an inseparable part of Arab-Israeli conflict and the Palestinians did not exist as an independent actor. An independent Palestinian national liberation movement started to form in the 1960s with the establishment of the Palestinian Liberation Organization in 1964 and led by Yasser Arafat. See more: Mohamed G. Selin, "The Survival of a Nonstate Actor. The Foreign Policy of the Palestine Liberation Organization" in Bahgat Korany and Ali E. Hillal Dessouki, *The Foreign Policies of Arab States. The Challenge of Change,* Westview press 1991, pp. 261-263.

[21] CIA - The World Factbook 2004, www.odci.gov/cia/publications/Factbook.

From the position of the Palestinian Authority, which is the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, any future agreement should include:

- The establishment of a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders (according to UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 338);
- East Jerusalem as a capital of Palestine;
- Haram al-Sharif under full Palestinian sovereignty;
- Implementation of full rights-of-return of refugees (UN resolution 194).[22]

Although the Palestinian national goal is to have their own state, there are divisions among the Palestinians over the future territorial borders of their state and the methods for winning independence. Two main ideologies and political camps can be distinguished. The mainstream, loyal to the Palestinian Authority and Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), is prepared to accept a two-state solution and supports the idea of negotiations with Israel. This camp's policy is shaped by secular nationalist ideology. On the other side there are radical Islamic groups which reject accommodation with Israel on religious grounds and aim to establish a Palestinian Islamic state.[23]

At present, among the Palestinians there is no consensus about the meaning of the Disengagement Plan for the future of their nation. One can distinguish three main positions:

1. The first, represented by President Mahmud Abbas and part of the PLO leadership, sees the Israeli Disengagement Plan as an opportunity to revive the political process and prove to the international community that on the Palestinian side there is a partner with whom one can negotiate. According to this view, unilateral withdrawal is only the first step towards the implementation of the Road Map to Peace. It is also based on the belief that the Palestinians must prove their ability to govern Gaza Strip and to ensure security. When they fulfill all the obligations under the first phase of the international Road Map to Peace, with the support of the international community they will be entitled to press Israel for more concessions and discussion on the final issues such as Jerusalem or refugees. The end goal of this political camp is to reach a definite end to the Second Intifada and come back to the negotiating table.
2. The second position was represented by Yasser Arafat and old guard of the PLO. This opinion is partially shared by the young militant members of Fatah, such as Marvan Barghouti. They see Israeli Disengagement Plan as a threat. In their opinion Israel is determined to avoid the political consequences of the initiative. The Disengagement Plan indicates the failure of the Oslo Process and Palestinian objective of achieving a viable Palestinian state within the Occupied Territories on a basis of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. Unilateral withdrawal would also mean that the refugee question stays unresolved and that the future borders of Palestinian state will not cover all territories occupied by Israel in 1967. This fraction agrees to a temporary halt of violence. However, they are more prone not to abstain from violence as one of the means of pressure.
3. The third political view on the Disengagement Plan is the one shared by Hamas and other more radical militant organizations. They see Israeli withdrawal as a certain success of the

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[22] David Eshel, "The Al-Aqsa Intifada: Tactics and Strategies." *Jane's Intelligence Review,* May 2001.

[23] Phebe Marr and William Lewis (ed.) *Riding the Tiger*, op. cit., p.101.

Intifada and proof that resistance yields positive results. Hamas perceives Israeli unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip as a repetition of the withdrawal from southern Lebanon, where the strategy of a guerilla war proved to be effective in forcing Israel to withdraw from occupied territories without an agreement. Even though Hamas and other extremist fractions are ready to accept a temporary cease-fire, they oppose compromise on the refugee, territory, and Jerusalem issues and call for the destruction of Israel.[24]

2.2.2 Division Lines in the Nationalist Camp

For many years the unquestionable Palestinian leader of the first, secular and nationalistic, camp was Yasser Arafat. He set the dominant trends and political strategies among different Palestinian political groups and parties, gathered under the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). [25] After Yasser Arafat's death, the leadership of the PLO was assumed by Mahmud Abbas, who was chosen as the head of the PLO and later won the Palestinian presidential elections. Unlike Palestinian Islamic organizations from the second camp, most of the PLO members recognize Israel's right to exist, as well as her rights to security and peace.

Political divisions are reflected in the PA security and military apparatus, which is formally under the control of the PA President. Overall, more than 12 different security forces have been established in the PA. Such was the result of a traditional approach of the PLO towards political activity and fighting for independence, applicable since the 1960s. Since then, each of the PLO member parties has its own guerilla force; most of them were small, self-sustained cells, equipped with light arms. When the Palestinian Authority was established, Yasser Arafat was not eager to unite these forces.[26] At present, Mahmud Abbas plans to reform the PA national security apparatus and place all these organizations under a leadership of the National Security Council. Uniting and reforming the Palestinian security apparatus is seen as a first step to implement the internationally sponsored Road Map to Peace and to end the Second Palestinian Intifada.

However, the scale of influence of different Palestinian fractions reflects the division lines within Palestinian politics and society. In contrast to the PA security forces, dominated by the PLO

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[24] See: Mouin Rabbani, "Gaza's Wars of Perception", *Middle East Report Online,* 14 October 2004, www.merip.org and ICG Middle East Briefing No. 16, *After Arafat? Changes and Prospects*, 23 December 2004. Available at: www.crisisweb.org.

[25] PLO has great influence on Palestinian politics and, since the signing of the Oslo Accords; it has provided the political and personal base for Palestinian National Authority structures. Recognized as representative of the Palestinian people by all Arab States at their Summit in 1974, the PLO was given observer status at the United Nations and became a full member of the League of Arab States in 1976. The Palestinian National Authority is composed of members of the Palestinian Legislative Council and officials who are not members of the Palestinian National Council (body of representatives to the PLO). This allows within the PNA an optimal representation of Palestinians from "within" and those from the Diaspora. See: www.mideastweb.org.

[26] Yasser Arafat's strategy was to "divide and rule". He found it easier to maintain control over few fractions, with particular interests, which could be played against each other. The best example for that is how he had been using Tanzim, the most influential and powerful Palestinian military force. It was set up in 1995 by Yasser Arafat and the Fatah leadership and stayed outside the PA security apparatus. Tanzim served a dual function within the Palestinian power structure. On the one hand, it was essentially loyal to Arafat and was used as a tool for violent confrontation without risking international condemnation for violating signed agreements. On the other hand, it served as an unofficial Fatah militia to rival the armed wings of the Islamic groups. The Tanzim also acted "as a safety valve for popular grievances against the corrupt, nepotistic and sometimes brutal elites that Arafat has encouraged to spring up around his leadership." "Fatah Tanzim" available at www.ict.org.il.

officials who returned from exile in Arab countries, Tanzim is the stronghold of the "insiders" - Palestinians born and raised in the occupied territories. The organization is seen as a popular, grass-roots movement representing the common Palestinian in the street. Tanzim members are the young generation of Palestinian independence fighters, "the children of the first Intifada". In contrast to the "old" political apparatus of the PA, they share a less compromising position on the Peace Process.[27]

President Mahmud Abbas is one of the "outside" fraction members. He was one of the closest [colleagues] of Yasser Arafat and came with him from Tunis after the launching of the Oslo Process, like the majority of the older generation of Palestinian politicians. In general, the "outsiders" are seen as more willing to compromise than the "inside" fractions. On the other hand, they have less popular support and were very often seen as corrupt and focused on their personal interests during the second Intifada. When Yasser Arafat was alive, he effectively maintained control over both fractions and balanced their influences. After his death, unquestionable leadership was taken over by older, "outside" generation of the Palestinian political leaders.[28]

Israel's harsh and determined response to the Intifada has deepened other political divisions, which run across geographic borders. The West Bank and the Gaza Strip have always been very different areas, since one historically was closer to Jordan and its administrative system, and the other one was under influence of Egypt. When the Palestinian Authority was established, its main institutions and Yasser Arafat's headquarters were placed in the West Bank, which has always been more at the center of Palestinian politics. The Gaza Strip received less financial help and PA attention; it is also the region where the influence of Islamic fundamentalist groups is relatively stronger. Palestinian policy makers from the Gaza Strip are currently more eager to compromise, and they are even ready to agree to Ariel Sharon's Disengagement Plan, since they see it as an opportunity to revive the political process interrupted by the Second Intifada. While leaders of the West Bank seem to be more interested in achieving a final settlement, which would take into consideration all Palestinian national goals, Gaza Strip leaders are ready to accept Israeli unilateral withdrawal and focus on ensuring political stability in the Gaza Strip.

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[27] The Tanzim represents Tanzim has been a strong advocate of a unilateral declaration of Palestinian statehood and criticized Arafat's stance during the Camp David and Taba negotiations, seeing it as willingness to make concessions to Israel. The organization also has a more radical view on the question of Palestinian refugees. See for example, a Bethlehem Fatah communiqué of December 2003: "If we must choose between the Palestinian state and the right of return, we will choose the latter." Sari Hanafi, „The broken boundaries of statehood and citizenship. A Palestinian View, *"What constitutes a viable Palestinian state?*", bitterlemons.org, Edition 10, 15 March 2004. Available at www.bitterlemons.org.

[28] However, today's external influence on PA politics should not be underestimated. Refugee camps in Lebanon provide background and support for different Palestinian political fractions which try to engage in Palestinian politics, often through providing support and a logistic basis for the militant, terrorist organizations. The presence of more than 1 million Palestinians in refugee camps has a direct influence on the Peace Process and puts certain constraints on PA negotiators when it comes to making concessions. Moreover, most of the Arab states in the region attempt to intervene in Palestinian internal affairs, sponsoring different Palestinian organizations and providing them with logistical and financial support. Due to space and time restrictions this issue will not be developed. For more information about engagement of the Arab states in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and their influence on the Palestinian political scene see Roger Owen, *State, Power and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East,* London and NY, Routledge 1992, or Bahgat Korany and Ali E. Dessouki, op. cit.

This, they hope, would then make them responsible partners for Israel and bring further advances in the Peace Process.

After the Palestinian presidential elections on the January 9th 2005 and the Israeli-Palestinian summit in Sharm el-Sheikh both parties to the conflict declared an end to the Second Intifada. At present, the Palestinian leadership of the secular camp is united their belief that the non-violent option should be tried first and that the unique opportunity for peace should not be wasted. After Yasser Arafat's death the influence of more "dovish" politicians within the Palestinian Authority grew. They aim to implement the first phase of the Road Map to Peace, with the help of international community and to provide security to Israel. In return they expect that Israel will implement its Disengagement Plan and start negotiations of the key issues of the conflict.[29]

2.2.3 Hamas and Militant Islamism

The other political movement, which strongly influences Palestinian views on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict settlement, is based on Islamic ideology. It is centered on Hamas and Islamic Jihad, which are the most influential and powerful of several different fundamentalist organizations. They oppose the Peace Process and necessary concessions, following a policy of "resistance to occupation until liberation". There are no official declarations on what those groups would consider as acceptable in terms of settlement. In its charter Hamas states that the goal of the independence struggle should be liberation of all the historic territory of Palestine, and therefore destruction of Israel. [30] The present idea of Israeli disengagement is supported, since it is seen only as a first step to total Israeli withdrawal. At the same time, Hamas declares that no party has the right to give up Palestinian land. This places the organization in direct opposition to the PLO and PA officials from the secular camp who are ready to engage in the negotiations with Israel.

After launching of the Oslo Process, Hamas had been isolated within Palestinian society due to its opposition to the Peace Process. It was also targeted by the Palestinian Authority leadership, which was ─ at that time ─ committed to cooperate with Israel and the US in order to fight terrorism and ensure security in the occupied territories. However, since the outbreak of the Al-Aksa Intifada, Hamas's recognition and popular legitimacy has risen steadily, contrary to the popularity of the fractions from the Palestinian PLO camp. After Yasser Arafat's death these trends reversed. Politicians supporting peaceful transformation and negotiations with Israel became more influential and the influence of Hamas diminished.[31]

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[29] For example see discussions at www.bitterlemons.org: *After Sharm al.-Sheikh*, Edition 6, February 14, 2005 or *Is the Roadmap still relevant?,* Edition 5, February 7, 2005 or earlier editions.

[30] Hamas Charter, available at www.palestinecenter.org/cpap/documents/charter.html.

[31] A public opinion poll conducted in the West Bank and Gaza two weeks before the assassination of Shaykh Ahmed Yassin showed that Hamas is the most popular movement in the occupied territories. This contrasted with the declining popularity of the Palestinian Authority. Khaled Hroub, "Hamas after Shaykh Yassin and Rantisi", *Journal of Palestine Studies* 33, No. 4, Summer 2004, p. 21. The reason behind Hamas's popularity is its long history of providing extensive welfare assistance and social services (schools, hospitals, cultural centers, charities) to all Palestinians without deference to religious belief or political affiliation. These services officially operate separately from military activities. However, military and charitable and social wings of Hamas stay under one political leadership. Therefore through welfare assistance and social services Hamas can provide important logistical support for the Palestinian resistance fight and ensure its human resources base. Israel tries to target Hamas charities by blocking their funds. More information about Hamas activities, structure

According to Hamas, the only measure to settle the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is to continue fighting the holy war, Jihad. Although the group denies moral and historical justification for the existence of Israel, it is possible that it could recognize its political reality. Hamas promotes the concept of temporary cease-fire, so-called *hudna*, which could be declared for 5, 10 or even 50 years. This allows Hamas to be more flexible, if negotiations between Israel and the PA bring the expected outcome of Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied in the 1967 war. The group desires to maintain its right to abandon the Peace Process at any convenient moment, when the process proves to be asymmetric and unjust.[32] The status of a secondary actor on the Palestinian political scene gives Hamas and other fundamentalist groups a convenient bargaining position. Since it takes no responsibility for governance and the Peace Process, it has more political space to maneuver.. Depending upon the situation, Hamas can either refrain from taking action or act to spoil the peace negotiations.[33]

2.2.4 Change of Power Balance Caused by the Second Intifada

The Palestinian Intifada that broke out in October 2000 significantly changed the power balance within political groups of the PLO and the governing Palestinian National Authority. Palestinian frustration with the outcome of the Oslo Peace Process, failure of the Camp David negotiations and disappointment with the ineffective and corrupt Palestinian Authority regime erupted into violence.[34] Rising numbers of dead and wounded on both sides of the conflict strained Israeli-Palestinian relations and also contributed to a significant increase in the number of militia and guerilla groups. Some of them formally remained outside the control of the PA security forces; however, many have been directly linked to Yasser Arafat and his people.[35]

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and history of the movement see: www.ict.org.il, ICG Middle East Report No 21, *Dealing With Hamas*, 26 January 2004, available at: www.crisisweb.org., Beverley Milton-Edwards and Alastair Crooke, "Elusive Ingredient: Hamas and the Peace Process", *Journal of Palestine Studies* 33, No. 4 Summer 2004, pp. 39-52 or Khaled Hroub, op. cit, pp. 21-38.

[32] See more: Beverley Milton-Edwards and Alastair Crooke, op. cit., pp. 44-45. The concept of hudna is treated by Hamas as an interim "exit option" from a formal position demanding the return of all historical Palestine. At the same time it is the reason why most politicians in Israel do not see any prospects for negotiations and any enduring agreement with Hamas.

[33] Israeli's policy of assassination of popular leaders damaged the Hamas movement by limiting its capacity to strike and conduct successful terrorist actions. Israel eliminated most of Hamas's political leadership in the Gaza Strip and West Bank. The most important was the assassination of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin. Two months later, in April 2004 Israel targeted Abd al-Aziz Rantisi, one of the youngest, most charismatic original founders of the movement. Israel has been following assassination policy regardless of the status of Palestinian-Israeli relations. For example, it targeted Hamas's leaders during the 3-month Palestinian hudna, which was declared in summer 2003, at the beginning of the implementation of the Road Map to Peace. As a consequence of Israeli actions political groups from "outside" (Syria, Lebanon) gained greater influence in Hamas's structures. For more information see: Khaled Hroub, op. cit., pp. 28-33.

[34] At first the Intifada had a spontaneous character. Within two months it had evolved into urban guerilla warfare, directed and politically exploited by the Palestinian Authority. The IDF forces have been preparing for the escalation of violence. IDF Chief of Staff General Shaul Mofaz had declared 2000 as the "year of preparedness" throughout all IDF combat and logistical units. David Eshel, op. cit. Nevertheless, the intensity and brutality of clashes came as a shock both for the Israelis and the international community. The level of Palestinian frustration with the Peace Process and hatred of Israel was reflected in the incident of lynching of two Israeli soldiers by a Palestinian mob at the police station in Ramallah.

[35] The best example of such a force is the Tanzim, an armed wing of Fatah, which had the status of an unofficial "Palestinian army". Yasser Arafat was personally involved in the selection of senior leaders in the organization.

According to the Jane's Intelligence Review, at the beginning the Palestinian Intifada had three main objectives:

- To cause so many casualties to Israeli soldiers and settlers in the fighting that Israeli public opinion would force the Israeli government to make more concessions than it was ready to at the second Camp David conference;
- Involve the Arab and Islamic worlds in a Jihad-like campaign, or at least let the violence spill over into the neighboring Arab countries, so that the Intifada would gain public support from Palestinians;
- Attract international intervention which would not only monitor any cease-fire and an Israeli withdrawal, but also create a situation under which the international community would impose a solution on Israel and take under consideration most, if not all, Palestinian aspirations.[36]

Analyzing the dynamics of the Intifada, it is clear than none of these objectives have been achieved. At some point when Israeli casualties' number rose very high, the decisive response of the Israeli military damaged the PA structures and made it impossible for Arafat and other PA leaders to exercise power. Even if at first Yasser Arafat had limited control over the dynamics of Palestinian violence, later fundamentalist groups and more radical organizations took the initiative. In the opinion of the Islamic fundamentalist groups, the Al Aksa Intifada has revitalized and legitimized the "resistance by all means" approach. Within the first months of the clashes, with the reapplication of the suicide attack methods, Hamas and other fundamentalist groups gained the position of leaders of the national resistance struggle. Competition between different militant groups and uncoordinated suicide attacks weakened the position of the PA's image as a responsible party in the peace negotiations. This led the Israeli government to introduce the unilateral disengagement plan and the pursuit of its own vision of a settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, despite international reconciliation efforts.

2.3. International Involvement

Since the outbreak of the second Intifada and intensification of the crisis, there were many international efforts to stop the violence and bring both sides of the conflict back to the negotiating table. Israeli-Palestinian relations were often debated in the UN Security Council and the General Assembly; they also met with close attention of the US, the EU, Russia and the Arab states. In general, one can distinguish three main principles, on the basis of which during the last four years the international community has tried to arbitrate the Israeli-Palestinian conflict:

- Acceptance by all neighboring states of Israel's right to live in peace and security;
- Creation of a Palestinian state, which would allow the two states to coexist within stable borders;

However, the individual members of the Tanzim received their orders from their local commanders. Therefore, although Arafat stayed in contact with the Tanzim commanders, financed the organization and used its members as a militia in confrontations with Israel, he could maintain that the organization remained outside his control. www.ict.org.il.

[36] David Eshel, 'Arafat's Intifada: political gamble or strategic folly?" *Jane's Intelligence Review*, December 2000, p. 6.

- Negotiations between the parties based on a "land for peace" formula.[37]

Particular interests of different international actors and their changing approaches towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have left their mark upon the Peace Process. The key influence is the US, which is seen by both parties to the conflict as the main mediator and broker in the negotiations. The US is vitally interested in stabilizing the situation on the ground and putting an end to violence, since ensuring the security of Israel is perceived in the US as an American national interest.[38] Another actor, strongly involved in mediation is the EU. In contrast to the US, the EU concentrates its efforts on supporting the creation of an environment that would make possible lasting peace in the region rather than contributing directly to a political solution between the conflicting parties.[39] Among the states of the region, Egypt and Jordan have the greatest influence on the Peace Process. In their capacity as the two Arab states which have signed peace treaties with Israel, they often serve as mediators between the Palestinians and Israelis; they also facilitate an internal dialogue between different Palestinian political and military fractions.[40]

In general, from the start of the second Palestinian Intifada, one can distinguish four different phases of international involvement:

1. The beginning of the Al-Aksa Intifada.
2. From Taba negotiations to the September 11th.
3. The impact of September 11th.
4. Implementing the Road Map.

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[37] ICG Middle East Report N°2, Middle East Endgame I: Getting To A Comprehensive Arab-Israeli Peace Settlement, 16 July 2002 or Middle East Endgame II: How A Comprehensive Arab-Israeli Peace Settlement Would Look, 16 July 2002. Available at www.crisisweb.org.

[38] The US has vital interests in the Middle East region, which are associated with ensuring access to sources of oil and ensuring the security of Israel. Israel is perceived as the most important and reliable ally in the region. The Israeli-American special relationship is based on shared democratic values, shared interests in combating radical Islamic terrorism and shared threats from the long-term development of the WMD by regimes that oppose US interests in the region. The existence of a strong, well-organized pro-Israeli lobby in the US decision-making circles also plays an important role in shaping US policy towards Israel. Arab states and the Palestinians are aware of the American bias towards Israel; still they perceive the US as the only party, which is able to influence Israel's policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict and force Israel to make any concessions. See: Phebe Marr and William Lewis, op. cit., pp. 219-233 and Leonore G. Martin, *Assessing the Impact of US-Israeli Relations on the Arab World*, Strategic Studies Institute, July 2003, pp. 2-7.

[39] The EU takes the position that genuine rapprochement and equal cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians is not possible as long as the asymmetrical, hierarchical relationship of occupier and occupied continues. During the Peace Process the EU traditionally supported the Palestinian Autonomy leadership and state, as well as institution-building in the Palestinian territories. The EU has provided substantial economic assistance to the Palestinian Autonomy. After Israeli-Palestinian relations deteriorated, the EU engaged in crisis management operations and humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian Autonomy. See: Martin Ortega (ed.), "The European Union and the Crisis in the Middle East", *Challiot Paper 62*, EU Institute for Security Studies, Paris July 2003, pp. 11-26.

[40] Egypt is more involved, especially since the Disengagement Plan was announced along with Israeli plans to withdraw from the Gaza Strip. Both Jordan and Egypt are afraid that deterioration in Israeli-Palestinian affairs can destabilize their internal political scene. Moreover, the influence of the other Arab states cannot be underestimated. They often provide help and support both for the Palestinian Autonomy and different Palestinian military/terrorist organizations. For example Hamas and Hezbollah have their headquarters in Damascus. Palestinian terrorist organizations conduct media and fundraising campaigns from Syrian territory; they also have their training camps on Syrian and Lebanese territory.

1. The first period, which lasted from October 2000 till January 2001 was characterized by intensive international involvement designed to end the violence and continue negotiations from the point at which they had left off at the Camp David Summit.[41] Even though Israeli-Palestinian tensions continued, the overall attitude was that the settlement based upon the Oslo Process framework and Camp David II agenda was possible. At the end of December 2000, just before ending his term in office, President Clinton proposed a peace plan, which suggested some major trade-offs, urging Israel to withdraw from 95 percent of the West Bank, while also compensating Palestinians with Israeli territory near Gaza. The plan recommended making East Jerusalem the capital of the new Palestinian state, dividing the Temple Mount/Haram area. Discussions over President Clinton's proposals continued after he left office, during Israeli-Palestinian negotiations in Taba.[42] Although compromise was not reached, in the opinion of the EU (which monitored the process) mutual agreement was within reach.

2. The new US administration supported the Israeli position that the offers made by Israel at Camp David and Taba were off the table once the new Israeli government was elected.[43] At the beginning of his term President George W. Bush avoided personal involvement in settling the conflict. The US expressed interest in facilitating negotiations but at the same time made clear that at the end it would be the parties in the region who will have to find the solution. However Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Syria urged the US administration to become actively involved in settling the conflict. Until the 11th of September 2001 the US opted for a policy of abstention.[44] Citing the Mitchell Report, the US expected that both sides to the conflict would first make an effort to stop the violence and restart security cooperation.

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41 At the summit in Sharm el-Sheikh, October 2000, the US president Bill Clinton proposed creation of an international investigatory commission, which was supposed to analyze the causes of the Al-Aksa Intifada. The Commission of Inquiry was headed by former US senator George Mitchell, who had been President Clinton's special envoy to the conflict in Northern Ireland. Other members of the commission were: Egypt's president Hosni Mubarak, Jordan's king Abdullah II, UN Secretary General. The report, released on 21 May 2001, described each side's reasons for blaming the other for the outbreak and continuation of the Intifada. It also proposed a series of steps Israelis and Palestinians should take in order to resume negotiations. Among them were: a. 100 percent effort to stop the violence, b. immediate resumption of security cooperation, c. exchange of confidence-building measures and d. quick return to serious negotiations. The Mitchell Report became fundamental for the next American presidential administration's approach towards the settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Robert O. Freedman, op.cit., p. 349. For more about the Mitchell Report see: www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Peace/Mitchellrep.html.

42 Clinton Plan and the details on the Taba negotiations: www.mideastweb.org/taba.htm and http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Peace/clintplan.html.

43 Right-wing Likud leader Ariel Sharon won the 7 February elections in Israel. He formed a national unity government and disavowed all peace efforts made by the previous, Labor Party, Prime Minister Ehud Barak. Therefore, at approximately the same time there was a change of the political establishment both in Israel and the US, where Republican President George Bush came to power. This factor had a significant influence on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

44 This policy was in contrast to the policy of President Bill Clinton who risked his personal prestige while trying to push both parties to settlement. President Bush entered office with limited political capital, due to the controversial outcome of the election. Considering the failure of Clinton's efforts to bring peace to the Middle East, the new administration was not eager to get involved with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which at that time was seen as a political mine field. The US official position was "to assist but not impose a peace agreement" and "facilitate not force the Peace Process". Robert O. Freedman, op.cit., p. 346-347.

At the same time the EU pushed for a more political perspective and tried to independently mediate between the parties.[45]

3. The third period was marked by a change caused by the events of September 11th and the launching by the US of a global war against terrorism. The war on terrorism brought closer the Republican administration of President George Bush and Israeli right-wing government lead by Ariel Sharon. Israel became the first and most important ally in combating radical Islamic terrorism. The US started to share the Israeli view, that Yasser Arafat's leadership is an obstacle to peace.[46] Although the US officially, for the first time in history, backed the idea of a Palestinian state, it was upon the condition of political reforms in the PA and the removal of Yasser Arafat from power.[47]

Even though the EU and Arab states still considered the PA leader as a partner in the Peace Process, it became difficult for them to engage the PA authorities in effective negotiations and to publicly criticize Israeli. Attempts to stabilize the situation were effectively jeopardized by Palestinian suicide bombings. Israeli retaliatory actions were explained as an "anti-terror campaign"[48]

4. In December 2002 the Middle East Quartet officially approved the "Road Map to Peace", an international proposal of Israeli-Palestinian conflict settlement.[49] As for today, it is the only internationally recognized proposal for establishing peace between Israel and Palestinians.[50] It refers to previous peace initiatives and UN Security Council resolutions; it also identifies a

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[45] The EU was convinced that American and Israeli "security first" approach would not work. It opted for presenting to both parties a more realistic political perspective and a clear timetable. Notwithstanding the EU ambition to play an independent role in the Peace Process, its efforts for most of the time did not prove to be successful, mainly because of the lack of trust on the Israeli side. Martin Ortega (ed.), op.cit., p.23.

[46] After the Karine A affair, when the Israelis discovered a shipment transport loaded with weapons, apparently organized and sponsored by the PA authorities, the US administration broke off all official contacts with the PA and Yasser Arafat. Contacts with the PA were reestablished with the implementation of the Road Map to Peace, which pressed for political changes in the PA. Robert O. Freedman, op. cit., p. 360.

[47] First time the issue of the political reforms in the Palestinian Authority was mentioned in President George Bush's speech at the UN in November 2001. Then later Colin Powell and other higher-level administration members referred to this idea, a groundbreaking speech was given by President Bush on 24 June 2002 at the United Nations.

[48] First months after the outbreak of the Second Intifada, international attempts to stabilize the situation were based on the works of the Mitchell Commission (the Mitchell Report) and the Tenet Plan. During autumn 2001-spring 2002 the US sent to the region a special envoy, former US general Anthony Zinni. Also the EU was involved in an intense shuttle diplomacy. An example of a failed attempt to break the cycle of violence was the Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Abdullah's peace plan. The plan offered a collective Arab commitment to normalizing relations with Israel, if a viable Palestinian state in the Occupied Territories were conceded. See more: Thomas Friedman's interview with the Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah bin Adularia al-Saudi, *The New York Times*, 17 February 2002.

[49] The Middle East Quartet consists of Russia, the UN, the US and the EU. It started to work on the Road Map to Peace after President Bush's speech of 24 June 2002. The peace plan was ready in November 2002 and was accepted at the 20 December 2002 Quartet meeting. The US delayed implementation of the plan, preferring to focus on preparations for intervention in Iraq. The Road Map to Peace finally got the green light by the US after the end of the first phase of the military campaign in Iraq.

[50] Another proposition for the solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's Disengagement Plan. According to the official Israeli and the US positions it remains within the framework of the Road Map. The Disengagement Plan aims to achieve Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and it is more a settlement proposal than a comprehensive peace solution. More about the Disengagement Plan: http://www.knesset.gov.il/process/docs/DisengageSharon_eng_revised.htm and http://www.israelpr.com/Sharonspeech1006.html.

detailed implementation and monitoring framework.[51] The Road Map was given new impetus after Yasser Arafat's death. Change of the Palestinian leadership and the election of President George W. Bush for the second term opened a new era for the peace process and at present, the expectation that the situation in the Middle East will stabilize is very high.

2.4 Conclusion

Within the Israeli society there is a wide consensus that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has to be dealt with and that "something must be done". However, there are many ways to deal with the conflict and one can distinguish two main trends: moderate (represented by the Labor party and Israeli left) and hard-line (grouped around Likud and Israeli right). At present the second, hard-line camp significantly influences Israeli policy on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. The Disengagement Plan, proposed by the Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in 2003 was a consequence of Israeli perception that peace negotiations with the Palestinians are impossible. So as long as Yasser Arafat stayed in power, there was no partner to talk to. In Israel's opinion the peace process can be renewed only when the PA successfully transitions to a democracy and renounces terrorism.

Similar internal divisions exist within Palestinian society, which is gathered around two camps: a number of secular political groups and a strong Muslim fundamentalist movement. The death of Yasser Arafat brought significant changes in the inter-Palestinian power balance. However the older generation of the Palestinian politicians managed to maintain power, within the next couple years Yasser Arafat's "old guard" of PA officials might have to give place to younger Palestinian activists, supported by Tanzim or Hamas.

The death of Yasser Arafat created a chance to end the Second Intifada. Mahmud Abbas and the PA officials are likely to stay as a partner in peace negotiations with Israel for a couple months, or even years. They are predictable, their views are well known and, from the Israeli perspective, they are easier to influence than other actors on the Palestinian political scene. Within the Palestinian society and political elites currently there is a wide consensus about the need for democratization, transformation and reaching a compromise with Israel. Notwithstanding any given options, political change within the Palestinian Authority has to be managed slowly and cautiously in order to avoid chaos and an outbreak of internal violence.

Israel's determination to implement the Disengagement Plan is hardly to be countered. Only after the implementation of the Disengagement Plan and Palestinian renouncement of violence and dismantling Palestinian terror organizations, Israel will proceed with next points of the Road Map to Peace. A significant obstacle to peace is the settler lobby, which opposes even Ariel Sharon's Disengagement Plan. Such strong influence of this group is the outcome of Israeli settlement policy that started after 1967 and was endorsed by every following Israeli government. Counterbalancing the settler lobby might prove very difficult and costly for the present Israeli government.

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[51] "The settlement will resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and end the occupation that began in 1967, based on foundations of the Madrid Conference, the principle of land for peace, UNSCRs 242, 338 and 1397, agreements previously reached by the parties, and the initiative of Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah – endorsed by the Beirut Arab League Summit – calling for an acceptance of Israel as a neighbor living in peace and security, in the context of a comprehensive settlement". Full text: "Road map to a permanent solution", The *Financial Times,* 13 January 2003.

This chapter attempts to analyze how parties involved in conflict perceive it and what the differences between Israeli and Palestinian visions of peace, security and justice are. The key questions to answer are:

What do both parties believe has happened (historical claims) and what do they believe is happening? What are their subjective opinions on conflict, peace, and security – how do the parties and international community see the conflict?

The first part, *Central Perceptions,* will focus on different, contemporary perceptions central to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: vision of history, question of guilt and legitimacy of the Israeli and the Palestinian case. The next part, *Threat perception and the use of force*, intends to examine the way both sides of the conflict see each other, as well as their attitude towards using force. Furthermore, in *Security vs. Justice*, the paper concentrates on the different subjective perspectives on the main issues of the conflict settlement agenda: refugees, separation and security barrier and land division. *Concept of peace and victory* will focus on the meaning of political victory for each party and will relate to perceptions and misperceptions of peace to be achieved and the scope of concessions both sides are ready to give and enforce due to their domestic political situation. The final part, *International involvement*, will analyze the international community (mainly the US and the EU) perception of those issues.

3.1 Central Perceptions

3.1.1 Israel

Israeli-Palestinian conflict is rooted deeply in Biblical mythology, history of expulsion and suffering, as well as in psychological trauma of the 20th century wars. For Israelis establishing their own state on the territory of the former Palestine mandate meant a coming back to their fatherland, after more than 2000 years of exile and the tragic experience of the Holocaust. Moreover, the idea of creation the state of Israel was a security concept. Israel was to provide home and safe ground for the whole Jewish Diaspora in the world, since the experience of the Nazi Holocaust, and other earlier ethnic cleansings in Central and Eastern Europe, a created trauma shared by the whole society.[52] It also gave rise to two central beliefs that nothing so horrible was to happen again, and that the Jews must always be prepared to; protect themselves and, they could not rely upon others to do it for them. Therefore, for the Israelis', self-sufficiency based on military might combined with economic and diplomatic skill is the only way to protect themselves. [53] This influences the stance of both left and right wing Israeli governments on the Peace Process. While international mediation is welcomed, no Israeli government will accept any kind of international direct involvement and mandatory solutions that would require giving away the issue of ensuring Israel's security in the hands of the other party.

Notwithstanding the fact that today Israel is the biggest military power in the Middle East region and that its position in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is far more advantageous, most Israelis

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[52] Holocaust is not the only tragic experience influencing today's Israeli politics. Certain influence has the memory of ethnic cleansings before, during and right after the World War II in Poland, Ukraine, Russia, as well as widespread opinion on not-all-uprooted anti-Semitism in Europe.

[53] Neil Lockney, op. cit., p.28.

identify themselves as oppressed, not oppressors. The traumas of the past are used to explain the Israeli "security first" approach in terms of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Although Israelis perceive peace as an important asset, the key priority is to provide security to the state and its citizens. Memory of the Holocaust combined with conclusions drawn from it builds into a perception that guilt scarcely ever lies with the Israeli side. The experience of the Holocaust serves as a historical, moral and emotional justification of not only Israeli claims in the peace process but also as an explanation for repressive actions taken by the Israeli Defense Forces against Palestinians. This belief influences Israeli perception of the international environment. In terms of both Palestinian violence and other issues---like proliferation of the weapons of mass destruction---Israel has often taken a very sharp position: "either you are with us, or you are against us".[54]

Feeling victimized also prevents the understanding of the Palestinian perspective. Traditionally the left wing governments are ready to accept some kind of historical responsibility for the Palestinian traumas and their disadvantaged position today. They are also more cautious and less hawkish when it comes to policies towards the Palestinians. The right wing governments tend to avoid discussing the guilt issue and totally renounce the Palestinian perspective of being victims of the Israeli military domination. However, there are different perspectives in Israel on the question to which extent Israelis are oppressed or oppressors in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, providing security for decisive majority of Israelis is seen as ensuring that "Holocaust will never happen again".

In this context, Palestinian terrorism is seen as a direct attempt to annihilate the Jewish nation and not as a form of resistance against occupation. Moreover, as it is seen by the far right-wing camp in Israel, recognition of "the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people" could shake the foundations of the Zionist narrative. This narrative states that God gave the land of Israel to the Jews and therefore the presence of any other nations on this territory was temporary, until the Jews came back to settle on it.[55] Therefore, this perspective denies Palestinians full rights to the disputed territory. Even though the land under question has been occupied by Israel since the war of 1967, Israeli officials tend to describe Gaza Strip and Western Bank not as "occupied territory", but as "disputed territory". Additionally, Israel's borders are legitimized by not only historical rights, but also outcomes of former Israeli-Arab encounters and aggression. The general Israeli opinion is that current borders of Israel were won in a "just war" and "the Palestinian rejection of the partition plan is the single biggest disaster in the history of the Palestinian people", since right after the World War II Palestinians "were offered as much as could they get".[56]

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[54] According to most of the Israelis only the Palestinians are the ones to be blamed for the violence, especially after the failure of the Camp David II negotiations in 2000. The argument used very often after the Independence War 1948 was that Arabs are "the prolongation of the Nazis". Israeli media and politicians pictured the Arabs as trying to annihilate the Jewish nation in a way of the Middle Eastern Holocaust. With the Oslo Process the situation has changed, when Israeli Labor Party government accepted the Palestinians lead by Yasser Arafat as a partner for peace negotiations. See more: Joseph Massad, "Palestinians and Jewish History: Recognition or Submission?", Journal of Palestine Studies 30, No.1 (Autumn 2000), pp.52-67 and Jeremy Pressman, "Visions in Collision, What Happened at Camp David and Taba?", International Security, Fall 2003, Vol. 28 Issue 2.

[55] John Wallach, "The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict" in John Darby, *The Effects of Violence On Peace Processes*, United States Institute of Peace Press, Washington DC 2001, pp. 87-93.

[56] In 1947 Israel accepted the partition plan. It was the Arab states and the local Palestinian population that rejected the concept of partition in any form and waged war against Israel. The fact of Arab aggression and

Even though there is a strong presence of the peace camp in Israel and part of the Israeli society would be ready to withdraw from the occupied territories, there is a general consensus that full withdrawal to the 1967 borders is not possible. According to the current Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, changed demographic and economic reality rule out full Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories. The most developed and the biggest Israeli settlements at the West Bank are not going to be dissolved and what eventually could be discussed is the land swap idea.

3.1.2 The Palestinians

The Palestinians also see themselves as victims. For the indigenous Arab the population growth of Israel meant deprival of living space and economic resources, as well as negation of their legitimate rights and their very existence.[57] The creation of the state of Israel itself is seen not as legitimate outcome of the international community decision and the first Arab-Israeli war, but as a historical injustice and a colonial anachronism. Moreover Israeli victory in the 1948 War of Independence for Palestinians equals al Nakba (the Catastrophe) - a Palestinian Holocaust. Therefore, Palestinians are far from acknowledging the Israeli argument that Israel's need for life and security space is legitimized by the tragedy of the Holocaust. They perceive themselves as victims of the Israeli unlawful aggression and don't want to be held responsible for the history of the Western anti-Semitism.

This influences Palestinian expectations within the peace process. When the Israelis yearn for security, the Palestinians yearn for justice. This issue has mainly a symbolic meaning, but it is vital in order to understand certain aspects of the Palestinian position in terms of the Oslo Peace Process, failures of the Camp David negotiations and the roots of the Palestinian Second Intifada. The Palestinians wish to receive from Israel, compensation. Not only for the land which was taken away from them, but also compensation for the suffering of their nation which, for more than fifty years, was deprived of its chance to establish itself as a sovereign state. The relative well-being of Israel, which is economically the strongest country in the Middle East, painfully contrasts with the failure of the Arab and Muslim world to meet economic and political challenges of the modern era.[58]

When it comes to the land issue, most Palestinians tend to think in terms of the Palestinian mandate. Even though leaders of the PLO and the PA officially recognize Israel's right to exist and agree to the 1967 borders, their perspective is that they are negotiating only 22% of their

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Israeli victory in, as it is perceived, a just war for independence, legitimizes today's Israeli borders. Neil Lockney, op. cit., p.32.

[57] According to the founding fathers of the Zionist movement, and the official position of the Israeli government during first decades after the 1948 war, indigenous Arab population was just an Arab population and "there was no such thing as Palestinians", as prime minister Golda Meir used to say. Until the creation of Palestinian Liberation Organization and taking over its leadership by Yasser Arafat, Palestinian national aspirations were looked upon within the context of the Arab-Israel conflict and interests of the Arab states. See: Amas Jamal, "The Palestinians in the Israeli Peace Discourse: A Conditional Partnership", Journal of Palestine Studies 30, No. 1 (Autumn 2000), p.36 and Rashid Khalidi, "The Formation of Palestinian Identity: The Critical Years, 1917-1923" in James Jankowski and Israel Gershoni (ed.), *Rethinking Nationalism in the Arab Middle East*, Columbia University Press 1997, pp. 172-174.

[58] "The view that the Palestinians and no doubt great deal of majority countries Arab have of Israel can be summed up in three words: injustice, humiliation, and pretext." See: Dominique Moisi, "Europe and the universality of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict", *Challiot Paper No 62*, op. cit., p. 29.

country – which is a significant concession itself.[59] Moreover, militant Islamism sees the whole Palestine as a holy endowment, rightful property of the Muslim people of Palestine. That argument is used by many Palestinians as a fundamental claim against the Israeli presence not only in the occupied territories, but also in general. Such attitudes put restraint on the number and scope of concessions which any secular PA government could agree for. On the other hand, according to the public opinion polls, more than 80% of the Palestinians support a cease fire and immediate return to negotiations and more than 50% support the internationally sponsored peace plan Road Map to Peace.[60]

While on the Palestinian side there is general consensus about dropping claims to the 1948 borders, the Israelis, too, are aware of the need for the territorial compromise and giving Palestinians some form of independence.[61] However, while the majority of the Palestinians seem to be consistent about the 1967 borders (eventually with very minor changes), the Israelis think: "1967 borders minus". The latter means Israeli would have to withdraw to the 1967 [borders] with significant modifications, which takes into consideration current Israeli settlements and security requirements (such as security zones, division of land according to the access to water resources). Moreover, what Palestinians expect from the peace process and any future agreement is moral recognition of more than 50 years of Palestinian suffering under Israeli [rule]. The current Israeli government is not ready to discuss this issue.[62]

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[59] Jeremy Pressman, op. cit., p. 35 or Yasser Arafat, "The Palestinian Vision of Peace" Ramallah, 3 February 2002 in: *Journal of Palestine Studies 31*, No. 3 (Spring 2002) pp.157-158. Agreeing to the 1967 borders for Palestinians means legitimizing the outcomes of Israeli aggression and public acknowledgment of their own weakness and humiliation. In exchange for independence, most of the Palestinians are ready for this step. Even Hamas acknowledges that withdrawal up to the 1967 borders would be welcomed as sufficient to suspend Palestinian military activities against the Israeli occupant.

[60] PSR - Survey Research Unit: Poll No. 14, *Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR),* 12 December 2004.

[61] Main reason for Israel to compromise is the question "What would have happened if we didn't compromise?" This logic is shown in Ariel Sharon's speech, marking Prime Minister Ben-Gurion's death: "Ben Gurion said, 'Let's assume that with military means we could conquer all of western Eretz Israel [the West Bank]. Then what? We'll be one state. But that state will want to be democratic. There will be general elections. And we'll be a minority. . . . When it was a question of all the land without a Jewish state or a Jewish state without all the land we chose a Jewish state without all the land." Philip C. Wilcox, "Sharon's Enduring Agenda: Consolidate Territorial Control, Manage the Conflict" in Report on Israeli Settlement in the Occupied Territories, Vol.14 No 1, Foundation for Middle East Peace; available at www.fmep.org.

[62] A lot of Israelis, especially supporters of Likud and other right-wing parties, denounce even the wrongdoings of the 1948 war, claiming that most of the Palestinian population left their homes on their own will, and was not forced to do so. Moreover, they are against any Israeli concessions to the Palestinians as long as terrorist activities of some Palestinian resistance groups continue.

3.2 Common Perceptions

	ISRAEL	PALESTINIANS
LEGITIMACY AND HISTORY	• It is Jewish land; they came back after 2000 years. • Israeli state legitimized by the tragedy of Holocaust and military gains of Arab-Israeli wars.	• It is Palestinian land. • Palestinians have the right to their state. What was Holocaust for the Jews is Nakba for Palestinians.
THREAT	• Demography.	• Dependence.
USE OF FORCE	• Security reasons. Self defense. Fight with terrorism.	• National resistance against occupation.
ENEMY	• Palestinians don't want peace. They are (Arafat was) not a partner for peace.	• Israelis want to prolong occupation. Sharon is not a partner for peace.
DOMINANT FEELING	• Fear.	• Humiliation.
LAND (occupied territories)	• Disputed territory.	• Land is theirs. Israel MUST give it back.
REFUGEES	• No right of return. It's an existential threat for Israel.	• Historical justice. Almost /if not as important as having own state.
SECURITY FENCE	• Security measure.	• Measure to deepen humiliation and take away the land.
SETTLEMENTS	• Security measure (need for strategic space + resources).	• Stealing the land.
CONCESSIONS	• Palestinians had the best offer at Camp David and they refused it. They also refused Taba.	• We made our most important concession at the beginning of the Oslo Process by agreeing to claim only the occupied territories, 22% of historical Palestine.
PEACE	• Settlement. Peace when Palestinians deserve it.	• No peace better than bad peace. Expected to be treated as partners.

3.3 Threat Perceptions and the Use of Force

3.3.1 Israel

Different historical perspectives, political power and status, economic reality and military options influence the threat perception of both sides. For Israel the biggest threat to her security is demography. The greatest nightmare of each Israeli government is that, given the demographic reality, sooner or later the whole idea of Zionism and "A Jewish state for Jewish nation" will become irrelevant. By the year of 2020 Jews will be a minority in the geographical area between the River Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea.[63] Israel is fully aware of this "demographical time bomb". It is an effect not only of occupation of the Gaza Strip and West Bank. Trends within Israel proper show that the number of Israeli-Arabs, compared with the number of Israeli Jewish citizens, constantly increases. Despite the active immigration policy of the Israeli government, the level of Arab population growth is much higher than the number of Jews coming to live in Israel. Considering the fact that Israel is a democracy, the Arab population, even if it does not constitute a majority, might gain enough influence to fundamentally change the political reality of Israel. Israeli citizens will be simply "outvoted" by the Arab population, which would under the legal framework of democracy ask for more political power and influence.[64]

Moreover, the Second Intifada resulted in a fundamental lack of trust regarding Palestinian intentions. It deepened the belief---shared by many Israelis---that "Palestinians are using diplomacy to gain time, territory, weapons, and people with which to wage the next round of war against the Jewish state."[65] Therefore most of the Israeli politicians, especially from right wing parties, are convinced that Israel should not simply give concessions in terms of peace agreement, but the Palestinians have to deserve them. What Israelis expect is a change of Palestinian attitudes, which address the Israelis' lack of trust and their fears about Palestinians not fully recognizing the legitimacy of Israel as a Jewish state. Notwithstanding political differences around the question of Palestinian readiness for peace, there is a general consensus in Israel that giving up the "security first approach", without any viable guarantees, would jeopardize Israel's national interests. The general perception is that Israel cannot afford to give into fear. Otherwise Israel would be seen as weak and unable to defend herself, which would produce a further escalation of violence on the Palestinian side.[66]

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63 See: ICG Middle East Report No 25, *Identity Crisis: Israel and its Arab Citizens,* op. cit., p.1.

64 However in Israel Arab population enjoys voting rights, it has been discriminated against. Until the mid 1990s Israeli Arabs have not been politically active and did not raise demands for the Israeli government to improve their life conditions. Arab Israeli support given for the Labor Ehud Barak in 1999 elections made aware that this group might influence the outcome of elections. Palestinian Intifada energized the Israeli Arab population, which started to criticize Israeli policy not only towards the occupied territories, but also towards its own citizens. Growing number of Israeli Arabs threatens that sooner or later they will demand more equal distribution of political and economic resources and according to the rules of democracy Israeli Jews will be force to give the latter to them. Therefore currently Israeli Arabs are perceived in Israel as a threat itself and "fifth column", given the bounds and assumed loyalty to the Palestinian cause. See: ICG Middle East Report No. 25, *Identity Crisis: Israel and its Arab Citizens,* op. cit. or Calvin Goldscheider, *Cultures in Conflict. The Arab-Israeli Conflict,* Greenwood Press, London 2002.

65 Yaakov Armidor, "Israel's Security: The Hard-Learned Lessons", Middle East Quarterly, Winter 2004, p.6.

66 See: Yaakov Armidor, op.cit., pp. 1-2. Violence and terror usually are perceived to exist mostly on the Palestinian side. According to the Palestinians "any resistance to Israeli policy and any attempt by Palestinians to protect their rights can be dismissed as terror" and Israel perceives that "the violence and terror is always Palestinian". Nevertheless, there are internal differences in Israel to which extent force should be used. The left

According to the Israeli narrative, Israeli force is used as a way to prevent Palestinian violence and terrorism. Though the Palestinian terrorism does not constitute a threat to Israel's' existence, it is perceived as such by many Israelis. Palestinian military aggression and terrorist violence trigger a flashback among Israelis to the Holocaust and earlier attempts to destroy their state.[67] This also combines with the image of Palestinians as enemies who will not give up attempts to physically destroy the Jewish nation. Israeli-Arab wars and the experiences of two Palestinian Intifadas posed a question if any honest dialog with the Palestinians is possible.

Israel is divided on this issue. The right-wing parties and the Likud government led by prime minister Ariel Sharon always had a tendency to perceive Palestinian demands and their attitude towards a peace settlement as unserious. According to many in the Israeli political establishment, the Palestinians "can't tolerate the existence of a Jewish state – not in 80 percent of the country and not in the 30 percent".[68] Even though now, with the new Palestinian leadership, the peace process is back on track, there is a deep mistrust side towards the true intentions of the majority of the Palestinian political echelon.

On the other hand, there is a large and dynamic movement of peace activists in Israel, who believe that peace and honest dialogue with the Palestinians is possible. The perception of this political camp is that Palestinian demands are justified and that Israel should end the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. In December 2003 the peace activists, lead by former Justice Minister and the Shahar movement leader Yossi Beilin, presented the Geneva Accord, an alternative peace plan for the Middle East according to which Israel would give up sovereignty over the Temple Mount/Haram Al-Sharif, and evacuate the Jewish settlements in the occupied territories (also the biggest ones) in exchange for the Palestinians giving up the right of return of Palestinian refugees.[69]

3.3.2 The Palestinians

Palestinian threat perception, similar to Israeli, is existential. Even though the Palestinians' national identity is firmly established and more than 6 million Palestinians live in the Middle East, the physical continuity of the nation is perceived as directly threatened by the Israeli policy of land acquisition. The Palestinians perceive the biggest threat as the possibility of losing the land of their ancestors. Settlement policy on the occupied territories, which started in 1967, is seen not as one of Israeli "security measures", but as continuance of a more than half-century-old process of Palestinians' expulsion from their fatherland. The feeling is enhanced by the perception that this process is going on "minute by minute, hour by hour, day after day".[70] What

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wing parties in Israel usually take a less hawkish approach. However they support the use of force in response for Palestinian terror attacks, they oppose the excessive use of violence. See: Amas Jamal, op. cit. pp.40-41.

67 Werner Weidenfeld, Josef Janning and Sven Behrendt, *Transformation in the Middle East and North Africa. Challenge and Potentials for Europe and its Partners,* Bertelsmann Foundation 1998, p.64.

68 Interview with Benny Morris, *Journal of Palestine Studies* 33, No.3 (Spring 2004), p.170.

69 In Israel there are a number of peace groups such as Givat Haviva, Peace Child Israel, The David Project, Gush Shalom and traditionally more peace-oriented, dovish political parties. Among the latter the most influential are the Labor Party and Meretz. See more: about different peace camps www.mideasweb.org, about political divisions in Israel: Jonathan Freedland, "The War Within", *The Guardian,* 28 January 2003.

70 Settlement policy also poses a significant security threat for Palestinians. Settler violence directly affects Palestinians, especially those living in the Jerusalem area. It is seen as a policy of Israel government to evict

Palestinians also perceive as a direct threat to their own security is Israel's policy of closures, blockades, assassinations and house demolitions. For them, these are not mere security measures, undertaken by Israeli in order to fight terrorism and violence, but actions directly threatening the livelihood of Palestinians and depriving them of any prospects for an economic and political future.

According to the Palestinian view, the use of force by Israel threatens not only their goal of achieving Palestinian independence, but also creates a deep sense of frustration and hostility towards the occupiers. Palestinians see Israel as the perpetrator of their [Palestinians] oppression. Moreover, human rights violations, which are described by the Israeli government as a necessary outcome of "security measures", are seen as an assault on people's dignity by the Palestinians. Some Palestinians even perceive the military and judicial regime introduced on the Occupied Territories as "a modern form of apartheid".[71] Ariel Sharon's Disengagement Plan and the "security fence", which Israel started to construct two years ago, enhance these uncertainties. What the Palestinians fear most, is that Israel might permanently turn back from the Oslo Process and decide to independently draw future borders of the Palestinian entity in a manner allowing considerable territory annexation.[72]

Continued lack of territorial integrity and division of the PA areas by Israeli roadblocks and checkpoints, generates frustration and deepens the sense of historical injustice. As a result, after the failure of Camp David II negotiations, many within the Palestinian society saw force as a necessary measure to apply pressure on Israel and win concessions.[73] According to most of the Palestinians, the use of force during the Second Intifada was legitimized by the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands. Terrorism and other assaults on Israeli military and civilian objects were seen as a form of national resistance. Moreover, some Palestinians regarded them as

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Palestinians from Jerusalem. Israeli settlers, who are forming paramilitary organizations, also are perceived as threatening Palestinian daily life. See: Ilan Pape, op. cit. pp.230-260.

[71] See: Said K. Aburish, *Cry Palestine: Inside the West Bank*, Westview Press 1993 or Edward Said, *The End of the Peace Process: Oslo and After*, Pantheon 2000. In the Palestinian opinion the concept of a "Jewish state for the Jews" is a racist concept. According to Abu Libdeh "Israel should raise the slogan that it is a state for all its citizens - Jews, Christians, Muslims, etc. If the Jews must have a "Jewish state", then they will have to deal with the immense problem of a growing minority that is basically stripped of its rights." Abu Libdeh, "Demography and the conflict", *Bitterlemons.org*, 12 January, Edition 2.

[72] "Of all the threats to the Palestinians' hopes for independence, the gravest is the "wall", a vast security barrier made up of concrete walls, fences, trenches and patrol roads that was begun in June 2002, and is built entirely on Palestinian land. If completed as mapped, the wall would swallow 17 per cent of the West Bank, further separating Palestinians from their fields, their towns and each other. It would, in effect, destroy all prospect of a viable Palestinian state." Usher Graham, "Who are the Palestinians?", New Statesman, 12 July 2004, p. 20. See also: Rashid Khalidi, Palestinian Identity. The construction of Modern National Consciousness, Columbia University Press, New York 1997, p. 203.

[73] After the outbreak of the second Intifada within the Palestinian society there was support for violence as the last resort to win the Palestinian cause. The strategy, taken by the PA leader Yasser Arafat, was based on a central assumption that the Israeli society would not tolerate being blown up on the buses and would force its leaders to return to the negotiating table and offer additional concessions. According to a public opinion poll, held 5-9 July 2001, 70 per cent of the Palestinians believed that armed confrontations have achieved Palestinian rights in ways that negotiations could not. However 63 per cent of respondents supported immediate return to Palestinian-Israeli negotiations, 46 per cent believed that the Peace Process was dead and 75 per cent expected the continuation of armed confrontations. See: *Public Opinion Poll # 2,* 5-9 July 2001, Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR), http://www.pcpsr.org/survey/index.html.

means to regain dignity, challenged by Israeli harsh policies in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.[74] This perception has been enhanced by Israeli settlement policy in the occupied territories. For their part, Palestinians felt that they could not afford to appear to be surrendering to force or to give themselves up to continued occupation and settlement construction, especially if there was no faith in the political process that would follow a cease fire.[75]

The situation changed after Yasser Arafat's death, which has awakened hope for progress in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Presidential elections in the PA, planned on the 9th of January 2005, were expected to constitute a new, more democratic Palestinian leadership which would have more legitimacy (both domestic and international) to conduct negotiations with the Israelis. At the same time the former Prime Minister Mahmud Abbas, who has been chosen as the Palestine Liberation Organization chairman and Arafat's temporary successor, took a stance against prolongation of the fighting and appealed for an end to violence. Together with him the concept of launching peace talks with Israel is supported by more than 560 prominent Palestinians, including senior Palestine Liberation Organization officials, cabinet ministers, lawmakers and intellectuals.[76] However Hamas and other Islamic organizations stay reluctant to the idea of peace with Israel, they do not oppose temporary ceasefire in order to make it possible for Israel to withdraw from the Gaza Strip and other territories mentioned in Ariel Sharon's Disengagement Plan.

Nevertheless, despite the fact that the majority of the Palestinians supports come back to the peace negotiations with Israel, they are determined not to compromise their long-held demands for a state in all of the West Bank and Gaza, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and a "fair solution" for Palestinian refugees.

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[74] For example, according to a PSR public opinion poll taken 19-24 December 2001, an overwhelming majority of the Palestinians, ranging between 81%-87%, did not view the following Palestinian violent acts as acts of terrorism: the assassination of the Israeli Minister Ze'evi by armed PFLP men, the shooting at Gilo in Jerusalem by armed Palestinians, the killing of 21 Israeli youths at the Dolphinarium club in Tel Aviv by a Palestinian suicide bomber, and the killing of 3 Israelis in Nahari in Israel at the hands of an Israeli Arab suicide bomber. See: *Public Opinion Poll #3*, 19-24 December, Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR), http://www.pcpsr.org/survey/index.html. Moreover, suicidal attacks and other forms of terrorism were used both by Palestinian resistance groups such as Hamas and by the forces related to Yasser Arafat. Interesting enough, those who decided to commit suicide bombing expressed not only the willingness to defend their land, but also to "avoid the repetition of the 1948 Nakba, that is, the "catastrophe" of the creation of the State of Israel. See: Assaf Moghadam, "Palestinian Suicide Terrorism in the Second Intifada: Motivations and Organizational Aspects", Studies in Conflict and Terrorism, p. 74.

[75] ICG Middle East Report N°2, *Middle East Endgame I: Getting to a Comprehensive Arab-Israeli Peace Settlement,* 16 July 2002, www.crisisweb.org, p.2.

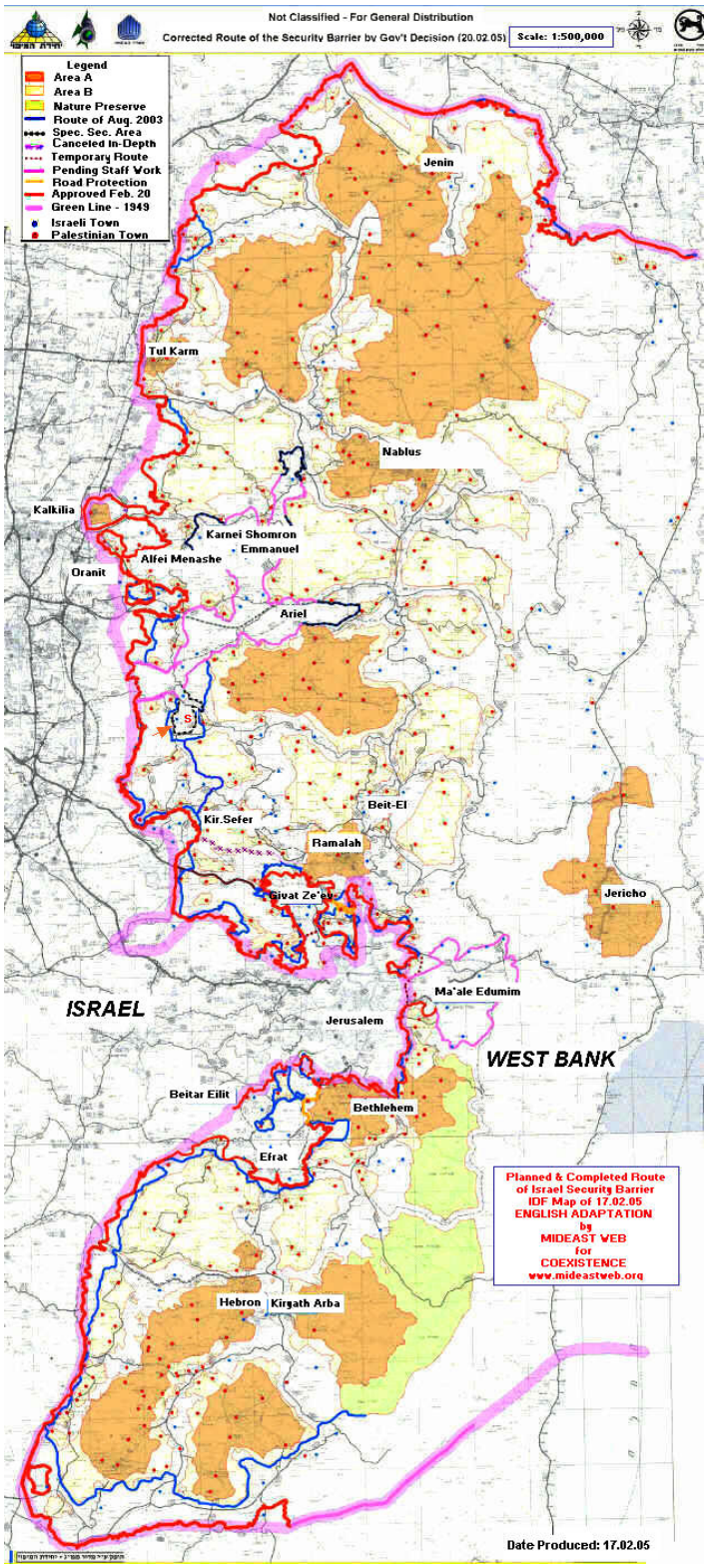
[76] On the 26th of December prominent Palestinian figures appealed for an end to violence, adding weight to bid to succeed Yasser Arafat and launch peace talks with Israel. Some urged an end to militant attacks and a push for democratic reform to advance the quest for a state. In a front-page advertisement in the Palestinian newspapers they stated the following "we reaffirm our legitimate right to confront occupation, but call for restoring the popular character of our Intifada and ceasing actions that reduce the range of (international) support for our cause and harm the credibility of our struggle," Gideon Alon, "Prominent Palestinians back Abbas' call for end to attacks", *Ha'aretz,* 26 December 2004.

3.4 Security vs. Justice

3.4.1 Israel

The key issue in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for the Israelis is security, while for the Palestinians it is to guarantee compensation for historical injustice. As Israel tends to perceive her environment through "security" lenses, the Palestinians perceive it through the lenses of "justice". Therefore, the two assumptions central to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are "security" and "justice". Moreover, divergent Palestinian and Israeli historical narratives and security concepts influence their perspectives on the specific issues of the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict agenda. These issues can be divided into three main groups: separation, land division and refugees.

Separation is meant to consolidate Israel's population on one part of the territory, and Palestinians on the other. For Israel it is explained by demographic challenges and the desire to ensure that Israel remains a Jewish state. The concept of separation is justified by the failure of the Palestinian leadership to convincingly acknowledge Israel as a legitimate Jewish state.[77]



Recent map of the Israeli security barrier, February 2005, available at www.mideastweb.org

[77] "Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and parts of the non-religious right, who have only recently adopted the idea of disengagement, appear to favor an Israeli withdrawal from all or most of the Gaza Strip and from a much smaller portion of the West Bank - possibly only a few settlements in the north. Their objective is not

However, in Israel there are different opinions concerning the scope of withdrawal and the shape of future territory given to the Palestinians. There is a consensus that the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which constitute 22% of original Palestine Mandate, are not to be fully included in the future Palestinian state.[78] For the right wing camp, territorial concessions should be dictated by "the needs of security and demography". This assumes that the major settlements in the areas of the West Bank should stay inside Israel's borders. Moreover, according to this perception, Israel needs buffer areas to give her strategic adequate depth to defend itself in case the Palestinians target Israeli infrastructure and settlements that are close to the border.[79] Another position is presented by the Israeli left, which basically agrees to the 1967 borders withdrawal with small percentage change in favor of the Israeli side.

At present, the concept for ensuring Israel's security is reflected in Ariel Sharon's Disengagement Plan, according to which Israel will forgo any claims to the territory designated for withdrawal, except the right to conduct actions necessary for Israeli security. These actions encompass preventive measures and the use of force against threats originating in the Gaza Strip. However, according to the plan "there will be no permanent Israeli military presence", Israel will preserve exclusive control of the Gaza airspace, will continue its military activity along the Gaza Strip's coastline and will "monitor and supervise the outer envelope on land".[80] The security concept of separation is supplemented by the concept of a security barrier. The latter has a dual function. For Israel it is a temporary security measure, justified by the right of Israel to defend itself from terrorism and the desire to save the lives of Israeli citizens. As the Israeli Ministry of

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clearly stated. Sharon refuses, at least publicly, to endorse the demographic rationale for separation, although some evidence suggests that this is his primary reason, and concentrates on the security context. He also appears to believe, without any foundation in reality, that the territory remaining under Palestinian rule can, by gerrymandering and creative construction of overpasses and bypasses, somehow be construed as "contiguous," and that it will, once abandoned by Israel, be seen by the world as a viable state. (…) At the other end of the Israeli disengagement spectrum are those, primarily on the left and center, for whom separation or disengagement means Israeli withdrawal from the entire Gaza Strip and most of the West Bank, with the exception of the Jordan Valley, the green line settlement blocs and East Jerusalem. They would signal the Palestine Liberation Organization that this is an interim measure, that those parts of the West Bank and East Jerusalem that remain under Israeli rule are being held temporarily, pending a renewal of negotiations, and that their status will not be altered in the interim. They want the fence to follow the green line and favor a Palestinian state with borders based on that line." Yossi Alpher, What should separation mean?, Bitterlemons.org, 8 March 2004, Edition 8. Available at www.bitterlemons.org.

78 *According to the Israeli Defense Forces, s*tage A of the security barrier, which runs from Salem to Elkana, and around Jerusalem (in the northern and southern sections), was completed by the end of July 2003. Stage B, running from Salem towards Bet- Shean, through the Jezreel Valley and the Gilboa mountains, approved in December 2002, was completed in 2004. The total length of the barrier is now given as 225 km. There are many rumors concerning the final shape of the security barrier. See: www.mideastweb.org/thefence.htm Israeli human rights organization B'tselem reports state that so far through settlement policy nearly 42% of the West Bank has been incorporated into Israel's jurisdictional boundaries. Gregory Halil, "Palestinian-Israeli crossfire. Has 242's come and gone?", *Bitterlemons.org,* 30 August 2004, Edition 32, Available at www.bitterlemons.org.

79 "When the time comes to demarcate the final border between Israel and the future state of Palestine, important security lessons from the Oslo experience need to be taken into consideration. Chief among these is the need for buffer areas to give Israel adequate depth to defend strategic roads and targets that are close to the border. (...) As Israel defines its territorial interests vis-à-vis separation, it needs to include within its control not only West Bank territory needed to accommodate consensus areas of Jewish settlement but also territory that is essential solely for security reasons." Armidor Yaakov, op. cit., pp. 3-6.

80 Completion of the four-stage Disengagement plan will negate any claims on Israel regarding its responsibility for the Palestinian population of the Gaza Strip. See: disengagement Pal – A General Outline, available at: http://www.pmo.gov.il/PMOEng/Communication/DisengagemePlan.

Defense states, "the fact that over 800 men, women and children have been killed in horrific suicide bombings and other terror attacks clearly justifies the attempt to place a physical barrier in the path of terrorists. It should be noted that terrorism has been defined throughout the international community as a crime against humanity. As such, the State of Israel not only has the right but also the obligation to do everything in its power to lessen the impact and scope of terrorism on the citizens of Israel."[81] Apart from that the security barrier enhances Israel's negotiation position and allows the Israeli government to meet political Palestinian demands with a more relaxed approach.[82]

Another key issue is the refugee question, which awakens very strong emotions both in Israel and in the Palestinian areas. Israel's perception of this problem is strongly marked by the past experiences of the Arab-Israeli wars and the prognosis of the future demographical balance in the Middle East region. According to most politicians in Israel, accepting even small part of current number 3.5 million Palestinian refugees would mean national suicide. This perception is shared both by the Israeli right-wing parties, as well as by the Israeli left. According to Israeli politicians, the question of return of the 1948 refugees is "really Palestinian code for the destruction of Israel". When Palestinians mention the right of return, Israelis think right away of the intended destruction of Israel through demographic means and Palestinian rejection of any viable two-state solution. Moreover, the Palestinian demand for the right of return is seen as an attempt to throw Israelis out of their houses.[83] A very strong argument against recognizing the Palestinian right of return is that "were Israel to recognize the right of return of those refugees to its sovereign territory, even "in principle" as Palestinian moderates insist, it would be implicitly acknowledging that in 1947 a Jewish state was born in sin, and implicitly agreeing that there be one and a half Palestinian states and only half a Jewish state."[84] Therefore Israel rejects compromise on this issue, although the Israeli government states that there might be some form of accepting the right of return in a very limited form.[85]

3.4.2 The Palestinians

According to the public opinion polls, most of the Palestinians would have supported the concept of separation on the condition that Israel dismantles all settlements in the occupied territories and cease all interferences into Palestinian daily life.[86] Nevertheless, there are differences among the

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81 "Israel's Security Fence", *Israeli Ministry of Defense*, available at: www.seamzone.mod.gov.il.

82 The barrier is meant to satisfy Israel's security without the need of cooperation with the Palestinians on the security issues. In these terms, it gives Israel time and political space for the peace negotiations, since the pressure of the Palestinian terrorism should be taken away from the Israeli government by the effectiveness of the barrier.

83 Neil Lochery, op. cit. p.37.The refugee question has always been one of the most difficult issues in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. While at Camp David there were many disagreements around the issues of Jerusalem or land division, the refugee question, because of diverging positions of both sides, was not approached. See: Jeremy Pressman, "Visions in Collision", op. cit.

84 Yossi Alpher, 181 means no right of return, Bitterlemons.org, 13 September 2004, Edition 34, available at www.bitterlemons.org.

85 These would include accepting limited amount of refugees in terms of family reunion programs, resettling some to different countries and financial compensation not paid by the international community.

86 This conclusion is made on the basis of the outcome of the PSR Public Opinion Poll 10#, according to which "from among the seven components read to respondents, support is given to two only: the one dealing with the deployment of a multinational force (58%) and the one dealing with the Israeli withdrawal based on the 1967

Palestinian political camps. The Palestinian groups within the Islamic camp oppose any negotiations and demand the full return of Palestinian lands. Even when Hamas or Jihad, the two biggest Muslim Palestinian resistance movement organizations, agree to the ceasefire, they do not attempt to change their official "end-goal" of destroying Israel's existence. On the other hand, the Palestinian Authority and political forces gathered around the secular camp of the PLO, since the Oslo Process, accepted that the Palestinians will never regain their full territory. Therefore, the leaders of the PA when negotiating with the Israeli side refer to the 1967 borders and not the borders defined by the original 181 UN SCR on the partition of Palestine.[87]

Despite the internal differences around the final shape of the Palestinian state, current borders set by the security barrier and the Disengagement Plan raise grave protests on the Palestinian side. For the Palestinians, the Israeli security fence is a desperate attempt "to put them out of picture" and preserve large part of territory captured by Israeli in 1967 war and it is seen as an "attempt to rearrange the occupation in a manner that is more comfortable for the occupier and more difficult to resist". [88] The separation wall awakens additional grievances and frustration, since its borders are designed in such a way that they bring about physical displacement, further division and fragmentation of Palestinian land and entrapment of large parts Palestinians' population in the areas outside the Palestinian side of the fence. The latter is against another Palestinian demand – that of a contiguous and integrated Palestinian territory. At the beginning of the Oslo Process, the PA leaders hoped that negotiations would eventually lead to the creation of an independent, viable Palestinian state. The expectation was that Israel not only withdraw to the 1967 borders, but also agree to a contiguous territory, since without it, a future Palestinian state would have no real sovereignty and always be dependent on its Israeli neighbor. [89] The question of integrity of the borders is important for both sides of the conflict. However, Palestinians, as the weaker part[ner] were unable to resist unilateral Israeli solutions, which enhanced Israeli direct control over the land and the control over the access to it.

At present, Palestinian frustration is deepened by the perceived Israeli attempts to limit Palestinian presence in Jerusalem, not only through the settlement policy but also the planned route of security fence. Division of land around Jerusalem and division of the city itself is a very sensitive issue, since Jerusalem is thought to be the front line of the Israeli-Arab conflict. Both for Israeli and Palestinians it represents the centerpiece of their nationalist aspirations. Control

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borders with an equal territorial exchange (57%). Two components received the biggest opposition: the one dealing with refugees, opposed by 72%, and the one dealing with limitations on Palestinian sovereignty, opposed by 76%. Support for the other three components varies with Jerusalem receiving 46%, end of conflict 42%, and the de-militarization of the Palestinian state 36%." See: *Public Opinion Poll # 10,* 4-9 December 2003, Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR), http://www.pcpsr.org/survey/index.html.

87 Palestinian territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were occupied in Israel after the Six-day Arab-Israeli war. It was a third Arab-Israeli war since 1947, when the 181 Security Council resolution dividing the Israeli and Palestinian land was accepted. At present an accepted basis for division of land between the Israelis and the Palestinians is the 242 UN SC resolution, which calls for "withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict". However Israeli and Palestinian interpretation of the text of resolution differs. For the text of the 181 and 242 UN SC resolutions see: www.mideastweb.org.

88 Ghassan Khatib, "Code for domination.", Bitterlemons.org, 8 March 2004, Edition 8.

89 The reality turned out to be different. According to Palestinians "Israel has stepped up its conquest of Palestinian territory, erecting a wall to both shield its illegal colonies and stake out more territory. (...) The remaining 58% of the 21% of historic Palestine more closely resembles the scattered shards of a broken vase than any state-in-the-making." Gregory Khalil, "Has 242's come and gone?", Bitterlemons.org, 30 August 2004, Edition 32, www.bitterlemons.org.

over the city has a symbolic meaning. Jerusalem with its more than 2000 years history is a symbol of strength related to ancient myths, religious rituals, and symbols of the whole Middle East region. For Palestinians, without Jerusalem as a main capital, the project of an independent state becomes irrelevant. Israel wants to limit Palestinian presence in Jerusalem and would not like to share sovereignty over the city because it would mean accepting Palestinian legitimization rights to the land and imply certain interdependencies of both parties as well as the necessity of their every day coexistence and cooperation. [90]

In terms of the refugee question, for the Palestinians it has been an important political issue, often defined as the Palestinians' "best bargaining chip". The problem has been nationalized and cuts across social, political and geographical barriers. What matters for Palestinians is solving not only the practical dimension of the refugees' future status, but also acquiring from Israel moral compensation for expulsion and years of historical injustice. Therefore, the question of how to resolve refugee issue stays largely independent of refugee status.[91] When it comes to peace negotiations on this issue, Palestinian leadership is constrained by, and dependent upon, Palestinian public opinion. Any concessions at the cost of Palestinian refugees are perceived as "selling out" and sacrificing the Palestinian refugee case for the sake of well being of those living in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. For most Palestinians, it is unacceptable not only because of national solidarity feelings, but also because of the symbolic meaning of this issue. What Palestinians expect from the peace settlement is compensation and justice, which places the case of refugees at the forefront of the national fight for independence.[92]

3.5 Concepts of Peace and Victory

3.5.1 Israel

There is a wide consensus in Israel that the Palestinians should have their own state. However, security requirements that condition Israeli agreement and co-operation on establishing a

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[90] However, in general Israeli government would be ready to some form of concessions; there are significant differences between both parties to the conflict when it comes to delimiting exact border lines in Jerusalem's holy places. There is also a question of differences between the Labor Party and Likud Party in Israel. The Likud Party, which has been holding power during the last 3 years, is lees eager to compromise and pursues and active settlement policy aimed at limiting Palestinian's presence in Jerusalem. On the other had the Labor Party takes a more moderate approach. Neil Lochery, op. cit. p. 215.

[91] ICG ME Report No 22, "Palestinian Refugees and the Politics of Peacemaking", op. cit. p. ii.

[92] The problem of the Palestinian refugees is fundamental to any solution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. "There are five reasons for this: First, as long as the Israelis do not take into consideration the expulsion of the indigenous population from 78 percent of the land of historic Palestine, they will keep bargaining about the remaining 22 percent. There is no solution to the land issue without coupling it to the refugee issue. (...) Secondly, resolving the refugee issue is not just a technical matter of absorption nor is it a matter of reciting international law like reciting the Koran. Rather, it is to deconstruct the whole Palestinian-Israeli conflict to its very premises, to understand how its causes led to a certain kind of colonial practice, and to recognize the need for a debate, not just to understand, but to acknowledge and accept historic responsibility. This is the very precondition for any true reconciliation and mutual forgiveness, as suggested by Edward Said. Third, irrespective of whether the final resolution of the conflict takes the form of a two-state or a bi-national state solution, the refugee issue cannot be considered secondary. The current Intifada has revealed the importance of the refugees; they are the social and political actors most unable to bear the impasse in the Oslo process." An interview with Gassner Jaradat, „An issue of conflicting rights", Bitterlemons.org, 27 September 2004, Edition 36, www.bitterlemons.org.

Palestinian state lever the concept of Palestinian sovereignty and independence.[93] According to the Israeli perception, any future peace deal should guarantee that Israeli would be able to exercise the right to her security in order to fight Palestinian terrorism and aggression. Solutions to the conflict offered by Israel and those that she is ready to negotiate place the necessity of Palestinian understanding and commitment to Israeli security first. This is perceived as a preliminary condition to discuss the scope and form of Israel's concessions. Therefore, no peace settlement or peace proposal not fully addressing security needs will gain acceptance by Israeli society and government.

The priority for the Israeli right wing government and Israeli defense forces is to "bring about situations wherein the political echelon is free to make decisions without terror-induced constraints." And only if the pressure of Palestinian violence disappears, might Israel consider making some concessions.[94] Therefore, as long as the Palestinian violence exists, Israel is more interested in confronting Palestinian terror organizations, than in negotiating a peace deal. Such attitudes are also an outcome of the disappointment caused by the failure of the Oslo Peace Process. The outbreak of the Second Intifada proved, according to the Israeli perception, that Palestinians are not serious about peace and used the time given by the Oslo Process to regroup, rearm and prepare for the next round of the Israeli-Palestinian war.[95] This impression was reinforced by the Israeli perception of the Palestinian leadership, especially the Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat who failed to deliver stability and fight terrorism.[96] Therefore, until Yasser Arafat's death, Israel perceived reaching peace with the Palestinians as impossible, since there was "no partner for it.

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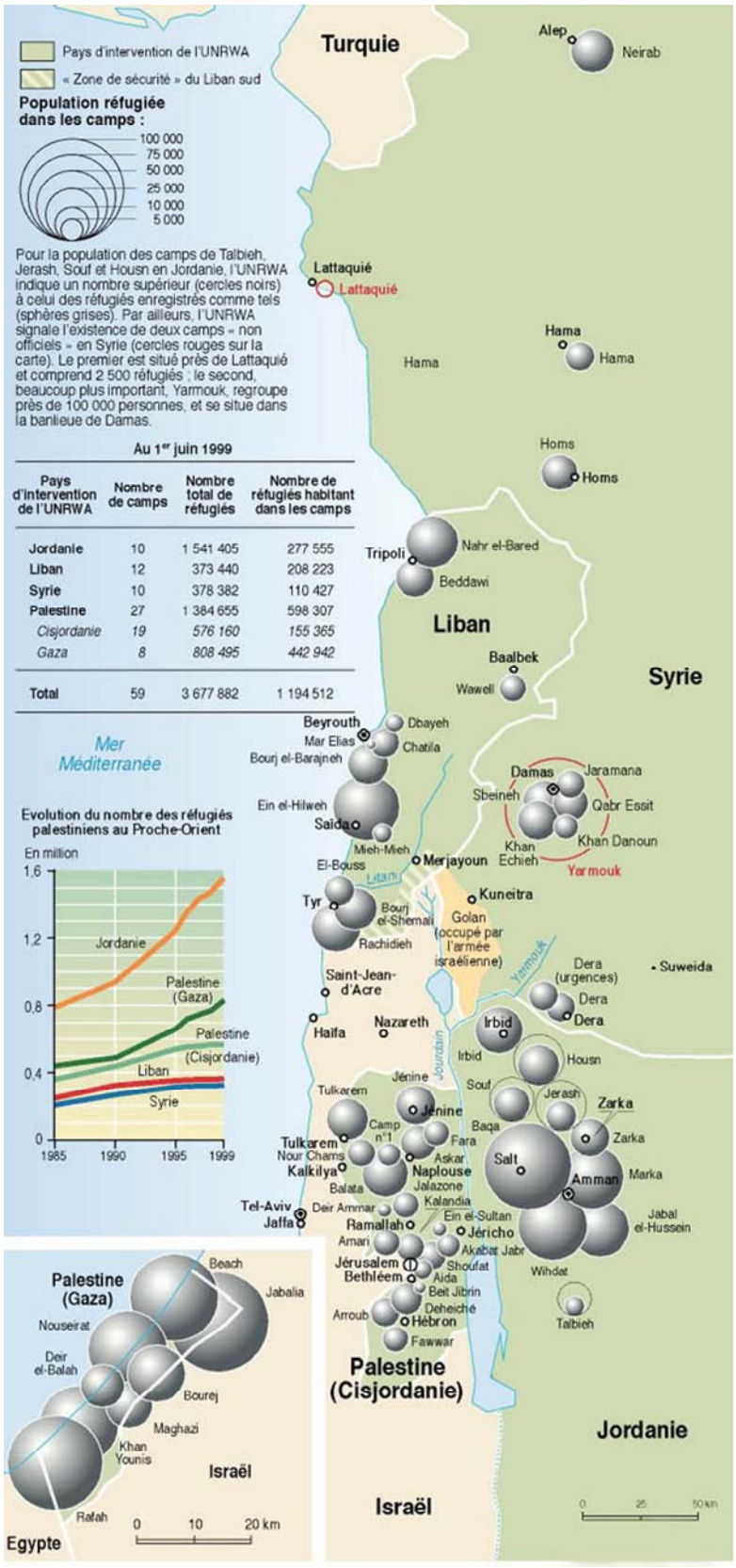
[93] Israel insists on the control of the borders and air space over the Palestinian territory. It demands that Palestine would be a fully demilitarized state and that Israel will have the right to control the flow of arms to the Palestinian territory. According to Israeli perception, control over the territory gives an essential advantage in fighting terror. See more: Yaakov Armidor, op. cit. pp. 3-7.

[94] Yossi Alpher, "Tactical victory and strategic victory", Bitterlemons.org, 19 April 2004, Edition 13, available at www.bitterlemons.org.

[95] According to some politicians and military leaders in Israel after the failure of Camp David II Palestinians opted to replace negotiations with war. The Oslo security concept deprived Israel of ability to combat terror actively and it would be a grave risk to cede territorial control to the Palestinians in any future agreement. However Labor Party camp thinks differently. In the opinion of the so called "peace camp" in Israel there is no military solution to the conflict and there can be no strategic military "victory" against a popular insurrection provoked by occupation. Therefore, one cannot "win" the Israeli-Palestinian war unless the peace is won as well. See more: Yaakov Armidor, op. cit, pp.1-3 and Yossi Alpher, "Tactical victory and strategic victory", op. cit.

[96] As Israeli Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami states, he "proved to be incapable of delivering". During the Oslo negotiations Israel saw Palestinian politicians gathered around Yasser Arafat as more forthcoming, accommodating and moderate than the Palestinians from the territories. The choice to negotiate with Yasser Arafat was dictated by the lack of other option: Israel could talk either with the secular camp of the PLO leaders abroad or the first Intifada radical young leaders from the occupied territories. Later on, according to the Israeli perception Yasser Arafat proved to be incapable of delivering. "He persisted in his refusal to respect his own signature and discipline the terrorists. Nor was his predicament that simple admittedly. He rightly gathered that clamping down on Hamas and Jihad would portray him, in the eyes of his people, as a collaborator with the Israelis who, in order to curb the upsurge of terrorist groups, launched a preemptive policy of mass arrests, curfews and closures." Shlomo Ben Ami, "The Rise and Fall of the Oslo process", speech at the Utah Museum of Fine Arts, 2 March 2004, available at: www.hum.utah.edu/mec/Lectures/2004 lecture pages/ben-ami.html.



Map:
Millions of Palestinian Refugees in the Middle East.

Source:
"Millions of Palestinian Refugees in the Middle East",
Philippe Rekacewicz,
Le Monde Diplomatique,
February 2000.[97]

[97] Available at: http://mondediplo.com/maps/refugeespalestiniandpl2000.

- **Israel:** The right of return is "really Palestinian code for the destruction of Israel". Were Israel to recognize the right of return, even "in principle", as Palestinian moderates insist, it would be implicitly acknowledging that in 1947 a Jewish state was born in sin.
- **Palestinians:** What matters is not only the practical dimension of the refugees' future status, but also moral compensation for expulsion and years of historical injustice. Any concession at the cost of Palestinian refugees equals "selling out" Palestinian refugee cause for the sake of those living in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

The focus on security issues and "security first" approach makes it easier to shift the peace process from the questions of historical rights and legitimacy to more political issues.[98] The Disengagement Plan appears to be a perfect option addressing Israelis' security dilemmas. While it does not require any concessions from Israel on the very sensitive topics such as refugees, Jerusalem's final status, withdrawal from the Gaza Strip; some Jewish settlements, and it strengthens the Israeli negotiating position. It puts more pressure on the Palestinian side to end the violence and to effectively govern part of the occupied territories after the Israeli withdrawal. Democratic reforms and transformation within the PA, which began after Yasser Arafat's death are seen by the international community and most of the Israeli leaders as a preliminary step to the creation of the Palestinian state and further progress of the peace negotiations.

3.5.2 The Palestinians

The majority of Palestinians are not ready to accept just any political deal. Therefore, the Palestinians are likely to denounce a peace treaty that does not address their fundamental claims for justice.[99] According to the Palestinian perception, any resolution to the conflict considered as acceptable, would have to include withdrawal of Israeli forces to the 1967 borders, removing of the Jewish settlements and greater freedom of movement combined with greater territorial integrity of the Palestinian land.[100] On the other hand, within Palestinian society there is no consensus around the scope of Israeli concessions. Even though majority of the Palestinians support the idea of Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 borders, members of Hamas and other groups within the Islamic camp demand the full return of historical Palestinian territory.
Most Palestinians oppose any settlement providing Israel with security at the expense of Palestinian rights, as well as Palestinian security.[101] The Palestinian society expects an equal exchange of security for justice. As it is perceived, without the final deal addressing the most

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98 Amal Jamal, op. cit. p. 44.

99 "What many Americans and Israelis do not seem to understand – there is good peace and bad peace, for many Arabs no peace is better than unjust peace, a bad peace. Peace cannot exist if Israeli security comes at the expense of Arab security. The Arab parties do not buy into the peace process in the same way as Americans." Ismael Tareq (ed.), International Relations of the Middle East in the 21st Century: Patterns of Continuity and Change, Ashgate 2000, p. 314.

100 ICG ME Report No.2, Middle East Endgame I, op. cit., p.4.

101 As Abdel Aziz Rantisi said, in terms of former peace agreements: "Some might say that the Palestinians have missed many opportunities, but the fact is that they rejected defeat. Or we might say that they were and are still seeking victory. It is obvious that Palestinians still want and insist on regaining their comprehensive and complete rights. They have consciously refused any solution that detracts from their national and legitimate rights" Interview with Abdel Aziz Rantisi, "Ridding ourselves of slavery", Bitterlemons.org, 19 April 2004, Edition 13, available at www.bitterlemons.org.

vital Palestinian claims for justice, all past sacrifices of the whole Palestinian nation would lose their meaning. Agreeing to a temporary settlement proposed by Israel, and on Israeli terms, for most Palestinians would equate with accepting Israeli domination. Therefore it cannot be done (or could be done only as a temporary, tactical measure) and the international mediation on this issue is greatly expected.

Even though the Palestinians tend to think that armed confrontations have helped them achieve their national rights in ways that negotiations could not, more than 80 per cent of Palestinians support mutual cessation of violence. Moreover, despite the widespread support for armed attacks against Israelis, only 48 per cent see them as effective in confronting Israeli settlement expansion and 49 per cent support nonviolent steps (such as a cease-fire and a return to negotiations) instead. According to a public opinion poll conducted in September 2004, before Yasser Arafat's death, if a peace agreement was to be signed by the two sides, three quarters would support reconciliation between the Palestinian and Israeli peoples.[102] At present the PA leadership opposes the use of violence. Presidential elections, conducted on the 9th of January 2005, were meant to test Palestinian commitment to the ideas of democracy and self-governance. They also give cause for new hope regarding the renewal of the peace process.

Nevertheless, the death of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and political changes within the PA do not influence the negative perception of Israeli leadership as unwilling to compromise. Traditionally Israeli right-wing governments were more difficult partners for Palestinians. Israeli government under the leadership of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon was viewed with a special mistrust and hatred. Palestinians do not believe in any peace agreement with Ariel Sharon, since "in the minds of the people on the street in the Arab world [Ariel Sharon is seen] as the man who has been the spearhead of the Israelis who committed atrocities against the Arabs".[103] The government led by Ariel Sharon encouraged more Palestinian extremism and made it more difficult for any political leadership to agree to any concessions.[104]

3.6 International Community Perspective

Israel by the most of Western community is viewed as a victim of Holocaust. This argument awakens sense of guilt and obligation, especially in the US, for not preventing the tragedy of genocide and for denying the Jews their place in Europe.[105] However, awareness of the tragedy of genocide makes the international community sensitive to Israeli arguments; Palestinian arguments about *Nakba* are perceived differently. Since the tragedy of Nakba was a consequence of the Arab aggression against Israel, the Palestinian argument does not have the same leverage.

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[102] See: *Public Opinion Poll # 13*, 23-26 September 2004, Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR), http://www.pcpsr.org/survey/index.html.

[103] Ariel Sharon is held responsible by the Palestinians and the rest of the Arab world for the massacres in the Sabra and Cha-tila refugee camps in Lebanon in 1982. Neil MacFarquhar, "With Dread and delight, the Arab World Braces for a Shar Victory", *International Herald Tribune*, 1 February 2001.

[104] However recent changes in the Israeli political scene again resulted in creation of the coalition government, Ariel Sharon continues to lead the government. The idea behind the Disengagement Plan is that Palestinian concessions would not be necessary anyway, since the settlement of the conflict is to be achieved by unilateral Israeli policy actions.

[105] In case of the US sense of guilt is caused by the denial immigration rights to Jewish refugees of Nazism. The issue of Holocaust has less influence in shaping the EU policy. The EU, mainly Germany, has liberated itself from the feeling of guilt largely by a difficult process of acknowledging responsibility for Holocaust.

On the contrary, in the American eyes it is the Israelis that are viewed the victims of Palestinian aggression. This opinion is enhanced by the US perception of Israel as the only true democracy in the region (with the exception of Turkey) and by the psychological consequences of the 11th of September. The latter made terrorism the most denounced form of violence and the US tends to perceive Israel as the most important partner in the global war against it.

On the other hand, Europeans tend to see Israel as the source of terrorism, not a front line of war against it.[106] Criticism of Israel in Europe is based on the perception of Palestinians as victims of Israeli occupation and unlawful aggression, explained by security needs. Moreover, Israeli treatment of Palestinians and denial of their right of return on grounds that they are not Jewish is seen in Europe as a sign of racism.[107] In its own opinion, the EU attempts to stay neutral, basing its judgment on the international law and the need to reach "a comprehensive, just and lasting peace", which would take under consideration needs and opinions of both sides.

In general, the US tends to sympathize with the Israeli perceptions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and proves to be understanding of Israel's security needs. Especially president's Bush administration proved to be very sensitive to Israeli arguments and accepts security measures such as the security fence, border requirements and the need to fight terrorism by any means. Such attitude brings forth European and Arab accusations of the US being biased against Palestinians and not fulfilling its role as an "honest broker". For its part, the EU acknowledges Israel's need for security and Israeli right to protect its citizens – in accordance with international law.[108] The EU sees Israel as an unconstrained actor that abuses its power in the Middle East and thus prevents a just solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. EU policy towards the conflict takes a very human-rights oriented approach and tries to turn the power balance in favor of Palestinians through providing them economic, political, humanitarian support.

Both sides of the conflict are aware of those perspectives and are trying to win over the differences between the US and EU, as well as to increase the role of being a favored party in the conflict resolution process. Therefore, as Israel welcomes American peace efforts, it is very reluctant to European involvement and very often deliberately blocks European diplomatic initiatives. In general, Israel strives to avoid any international involvement in the conflict due to fear that it would limit its policy options and put constraints on introducing special security measures in the Palestinian territories. On the other hand, Palestinians welcome European, as well as other international efforts. For them internationalizing the conflict would change the power equation in their favor and provide certain protection against Israel's unwelcome policies.

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106 Neil Lochery, op. cit., pp. 67-68.

107 In 2003 the European Commission conducted a survey asking which countries pose the biggest threat to peace in the world. The country that was placed highest as a threat to world peace was Israel, which was named by 59 per cent of respondents. Criticism in Europe is caused by Israeli settlement policy and treatment of Palestinians, which is viewed by many Europeans as barbaric. European Poll: Israel "Biggest threat to world peace", National Observer, Winter 2003, pp. 10-12.

108 http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/mepp/index.htm.

3.7 Conclusion

The difficulty of achieving a settlement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the disparity in power between the parties and their psychological attitude, marked by feelings of mistrust, fear and denial. Both sides of the conflict cannot afford to prolong it. In Israel it is demography, in Palestine economy and the disastrous conditions of every-day life that press for finding a mutually acceptable solution. However despite any rational reasons, peace might be an even worse alternative for Israelis and Palestinians since compromise would mean renouncing perspectives fundamental to both sides' national goals.

Different perceptions of the same historical facts have fundamental influence upon today's Israeli-Palestinian relations and their response to any kind of conflict settlement proposal. Both sides see themselves as victims. The Jews tend to make the Holocaust a focus point and the Palestinians the 1948 Nakba. Those perceptions are also combined with the enemy image and negative stereotypes, which makes it difficult not only to understand the other's side point of view, but also to correctly predict and evaluate behavior. The feeling of insecurity and perception of the threat as existential…enhance the tendency of both sides to use violence and makes them inflexible in terms of any settlement proposal.

Another perception, held mainly by the US and partially by the EU, is that Israel has agreed to a Palestinian state. This would mean giving Palestinians sovereignty and full control over certain parts of their territory. Given Israeli security concerns, it is hardly possible that any Israeli government would agree to such a concession. The Palestinians can get some form of autonomy, but not full independence. The trauma of the Holocaust, deepened by Arab-Israeli violence will never allow Israelis to feel secure, unless they provide and ensure security for themselves.

Moreover, the Second Intifada triggered within Israeli society a mechanism recalling the Holocaust. While the core Palestinian perception was that violent attacks and suicide bombings will force Israel to make concessions, the Second Intifada deepened Israeli mistrust in the peace process and mobilized popular support for the hard-liners. However, for Palestinians, force has been used as an instrument to fight the occupier and escape humiliation, for Israel and the US, suicide attacks place the Palestinians next to Al-Kaida and Osama bin Laden.

At present, the endpoint that most Israelis and Palestinians are trying to reach is different. Israeli government aspires to reach a long-term settlement of the conflict. The Palestinians demand a comprehensive resolution. Common perceptions held mainly by Israel and the US is that Palestinians are ready to accept an imposed solution and they will agree to concessions when forced to do so. This, according to Israel and the US would be rational. However, the Palestinian rationale is different. They are ready for peace based on just conditions which would mean a fair share of land, its contiguity, sovereignty, and solving the refugee problem without shattering their dignity. Overall, as Israelis prefer security to peace, Palestinians prefer justice to peace.

4. ROAD TO PEACE

The last chapter intends to examine the selected peace and settlement initiatives undertaken by the international community in terms of the purpose of the initiative, their comprehensiveness, their relation to the expectations of the both sides and the question whether they covered all aspects of conflict which needed to be solved. It will also focus on the scope of concessions each party was ready to give, and how this was perceived by the other party and the international community. In relation to the first three chapters, this part will focus on evaluation of the peace initiatives in order to answer the following questions:

Who expected what from the different stages of the peace process? What real choices did the parties have – how far could they go, what kinds of concessions were they ready to offer? Where the expectations of the parties understood and met? If yes – which ones, and in what way they were approached.

The first part will focus on the Taba Agreements, which marked the last effort to achieve peace by the liberal camp in Israel and the US administration under President Clinton. Next, it will move to the Road Map to Peace, an internationally sponsored peace plan proposing a comprehensive solution to the conflict. Finally, the paper analyzes the Disengagement Plan, an Israeli idea for conflict settlement and its possible consequences for the Middle East peace process.

4.1 Taba Negotiations

The Taba negotiations mark an end of an era based on the Oslo principles and the logic of a peace process based on an assumption that slow and gradual concessions would finally lead to a mutually acceptable compromise. When constructing the Oslo framework Israelis and Palestinians had different perceptions of how the conflict should be solved. Nevertheless, they agreed on two things: it should be negotiated in a peaceful way and the final issues should be addressed at the end. The Taba negotiations, which were conducted a few months after the break-up of the Second Intifada, made it possible for the two sides to directly address the key issues of the conflict and come close to a historical compromise.

On the other hand, the Oslo framework proved to be "not good enough" to survive mutual mistrust and political changes on the both sides of the conflict. Palestinian frustration and weariness with the peace process resulted in the second Intifada, which backfired. It strengthened the hard-liner camp in Israel and brought about significant change in Israel's policies. Even though the Taba talks proved that compromise was within reach, both parties to the conflict failed to reach it due to domestic constraints. And even if the agreement had been signed, it was hardly possible that both the Israelis and the Palestinians would be able to deliver it, due to their own domestic constraints.

4.1.1 Israel

The history of the Camp David negotiations and violence of the Second Intifada left a significant mark upon both sides' approach toward the peace process. The difference between Camp David and Taba negotiations was that, pressed by time and political situation, the sides to the conflict stepped aside for a moment from mutual accusations and started to discuss concrete numbers and the scope of the compromise to be achieved. Given the Israeli perception of the reasons for Camp David failure, Ehud Barak had little faith in the success of negotiations and he was not convinced that Israel had a true partner for peace in the Palestinians. [109] The Israeli left wing government was not sure about the intentions of the Palestinian leadership: whether Yasser Arafat treated the peace agreement as a strategic and final decision or as a next, tactical stage in the Israeli-Palestinian war of attrition. Nevertheless, Ehud Barak's options were very limited and his expectations on the peace process were highly related to Israel's domestic political situation. Early elections were scheduled for the beginning of February 2001 and completing the historical peace deal with the Palestinians was seen as the only way the Prime Minister could regain his lost credibility and change the outcome of elections in Israel. The refusal of the Clinton plan and keeping the Israeli position firm would mean political suicide, even before elections, without taking the last chance to sign a deal with the Palestinians.[110]

However, the compromise Israel was ready for at Camp David was presented as final and groundbreaking, the Israeli Labor Party government decided to go one step further and discuss the Clinton Plan, proposed by the US Administration at the end of the year 2000.[111] The latter became the basis for the Taba talks, which were presented by both sides of the conflict as a last chance to sign a peace agreement. Even though the final compromise was not reached, the Taba negotiations brought further progress.[112] The most significant Israeli concession came on the question of refugees. Although earlier Israel accepted a small number of refugees under a family reunification program, at Taba Israeli negotiators agreed to the return of 40,000 refugees within

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[109] Ehud Barak and President Bill Clinton tried to put all blame for the Camp David summit's failure on Palestinians. Their opinion was that Palestinians rejected a generous Israeli offer without putting forth a counterproposal. After Camp David Ehud Barak fell under strong criticism from the Israeli right. The Labor Party government was criticized for readiness to make a wide scope of concessions at the time when Palestinians proved to be no partner for peace. Violence of the Second Intifada deepened Israeli frustration with Palestinian demands on the Peace Process and caused public opinion's shift to the right. Jeremy Pressman, op. cit., pp. 5-11.

[110] "The truth is that Ehud (...) didn't want to go to Taba. He didn't see any point or purpose in it. But at this stage there was a pistol on the table. The elections were a month away and there was a minister who told Ehud that if he didn't go to Taba, they would denounce him in public for evading his duty to make peace. He had no choice but to go to a meeting for something he himself no longer believed in." An interview with Shlomo Ben-Ami, *Journal of Palestine Studies 31*, No. 3 (Spring 2002), p.158.

[111] After the failure of negotiations the Israeli government presented its position as "crossing the red lines" and endangering Israel's existential needs and strongly advocated this stance to the US government engaged in mediation. Dennis Ross, *"The Missing Peace. The Inside Story of the Fight for Middle East Peace"*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York 2004, pp. 650-711, 726-727, 751-755.

[112] Israel declared that she is ready to retain 8 per cent of the West Bank (not 4-6 per cent, as proposed by President Clinton). In case of Jerusalem, the Israeli approach came closer to compromise – not only was Jerusalem to be the capital of two states, but also Israel was ready to accept, with some reservations, Palestinian sovereignty over Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount. Israel the Gaza Strip was not discussed, as both sides agreed it would stay under total Palestinian sovereignty. Such a decision for Prime Minister Ehud Barak was a very difficult one, since he knew it would meet with strong protests from the settler lobby and would be used by the right-wing camp as a political argument against the peace deal.

certain period of time.[113] Considering the sensitiveness of the issue for Israel, such number was a very high one. Moreover, in exchange for Palestinians agreeing on the limits on the right of return, Israel was ready to accept "at least partial responsibility" for the origins of the 1948 refugees. Considering Israeli diverging perceptions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, acceptance of such responsibility would initiate a domestic political confrontation between the peace camp and its opponents on the right side. For Israel admitting responsibility for the refugee problem is as controversial and difficult decision as it is renouncing the right of return for Palestinians, since for Israelis it would be equal with challenging the Israeli historical narrative built upon the story of Israeli innocence and victimization contrasted with Arab aggression and hostility.

4.1.2 The Palestinians

While for Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak negotiations were marked by a significant pressure of time, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat had a different approach. Palestinians treated negotiation both at Camp David and Taba as a *process* leading to a final solution. The Taba talks were seen as a next step on the road to peace. Contrary to the Israeli side, Palestinians didn't perceive talks as "now or never option" and when pressed to the wall, they preferred to hold back rather than make a decision. Ehud Barak's perspective was the one of an election cycle in Israel. Arafat's perspective was that of more than 50 years of Palestinian oppression and need for its compensation. Moreover, when going to Taba, the Palestinians didn't see in Ehud Barak a credible partner.[114] The fact that Israeli elections were scheduled only a week after the Taba talks not only raised the question of what the Israeli Labor government wanted, but also if it could deliver peace after the agreement had been concluded.

The Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat perceived the Camp David offer as not generous. It missed several elements essential to any peace treaty acceptable for the Palestinians: contiguity of the Palestinian land, full Arab sovereignty over East Jerusalem and compromise solution of the refugee question. During negotiations at the Camp David summit, the Palestinians made clear that on their side the greatest compromise has already been made: the acceptance of the state of Israel on 78 per cent of the historical mandate. What PA leaders expected to get was the remaining 22 per cent. Moreover, what Palestinians regarded as an unprecedented compromise: their approval, in principal, of some settlement blocks and the Israeli annexation of part of the 1967 territories. The fact that some settlements selected to stay on the Israeli's side were in East Jerusalem only increased the perception of the Palestinian side that it proved itself to be flexible and willing to compromise.

In Taba the significant sign of progress was that for the first time Palestinians presented their map of the future borders, which allowed Israel to keep approximately 2.3 per cent of the

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[113] Jeremy Pressman, op. cit., pp. .31-32.

[114] Israeli government under Ehud Barak refused to fulfill its obligation according to signed agreements to complete third phase of the withdrawal, which was supposed to encompass the entire West Bank with the exception of the specific military locations. Moreover, throughout the negotiations Barak expanded the settlements and bypass roads. Just before the Camp David summit Israeli government issued 5 no's statement: no return to the 1967 borders, no division of Jerusalem, no total abandonment of settlements, no foreign army west of the Jordan River, no right of return for Palestinian refugees.

occupied territories.[115] However, the most far-reaching concession---similar to the Israeli side--Palestinians made was on the refugee issue. For Yasser Arafat agreeing to relinquish the historical claim of the right of return was a fundamental decision, which challenged not only his domestic power, but also the Palestinian historical narrative. Under the condition that Israel accepts the principle of the right of return, Palestinians agreed to discuss concrete numbers of refugees allowed to come back. Most of the refugees were to be placed outside Israel, either on the territory of the new Palestinian state or on third countries territory.[116] While Israelis eventually talked about 40,000, Palestinian side at first demanded return to Israel proper 150,000 per year for ten years and then limited its claims to 200,000 refugees to be accepted altogether.[117] Given the emotional aspect of the right of return issue, it is not sure that Palestinian community would support the decision made by Palestinian leaders. Both during the Camp David summit and Taba negotiations within Palestinian Autonomy there were many voices criticizing Yasser Arafat for "selling out" the refugee case in exchange for the Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza Strip areas. If the Taba negotiations were to be concluded with an agreement, it is certain that Yasser Arafat would have to face Palestinian extremism back home, which, after the outbreak of the Second Intifada, grew consistently more influential.

4.2 Road Map to Peace

The Road Map to Peace has been a product of intense negotiations between the U.S and other members of the Quartet and a multilateral effort to reach a compromise over the question how to stabilize current situation in the Middle East.[118] According to most members of the international community, it is the principles of the document and the political will to implement them, which had been crucial. Such main principles had been: a two-state solution, a permanent and peacefully negotiated agreement and end to violence and terrorism. The document, even though it aspires to outline "clear phases, timelines and target dates", has been very general in its scope.

Lack of clear definitions and the failure to address final status issues (refugees, Jerusalem, final borders) caused all actors of the peace process to interpret the Road Map it in a different way. Both the Palestinians and the Israelis essentially approved the plan. However, at the same time they have many objections. Also within the international community, even though there is a

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[115] The most difficult aspect of dividing the land was that Israelis and Palestinians had a different definition of the West Bank area. Palestinians use total area 5.854 square kilometers, Israel omits the area known as No Man's Land (50 sq. km near Laturn, post-1967 East Jerusalem 71 sq. km and territorial waters of Dead Sea 195 sq. km). Therefore Israeli offer of Camp David - 91 percent of the West Bank - translates into only 86 percent form Palestinian perspective and the definition of the West bank area differs by 5 per cent. Jeremy Pressman, op. cit., pp. 16-17.

[116] JPS p.162, + IGC Report.

[117] P.162 JPS 200 000 is unofficial, that Palestinians did not state that officially but during Taba signaled that could be their final compromise.

[118] It is based on a number of different peace initiatives of previous years: the Mitchell Report, the Tenet Plan, the Saudi Arabia initiative and, regarded as the most important, President Bush's speech given on the 24th of June 2002. Created in a spirit of the Oslo Process, it aims at reaching a comprehensive settlement, and not a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. "The destination is a final and comprehensive settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by 2005, as presented in President's Bush speech of 24 June and welcomed by the EU, Russia and the UN, in the 16 July and 17 September Quartet Ministerial statements." "Full text: Road map to a permanent solution", The Financial Times, 13 January 2003.

general consensus that this document is a "road map to peace", the vision of what peace will look like differs very much.[119]

4.2.1 Israel

In Israel the Road Map fueled a lot of controversy. The plan was introduced after two years of Intifada and many in Israeli society were skeptical about the chances of its implementation. According to the public opinion polls, only about 20 per cent of Israelis supported the roadmap and the creation of a Palestinian state and 25 per cent preferred alternative solutions which would maintain Jewish sovereignty over at least part of the occupied territories.[120] However, during the last months, the views on the Road Map and its feasibility have been changing. After Yasser Arafat's death, the support for the Road Map rose, and support currently fluctuates around 40 per cent. Although the majority of the Israeli society supports the renewal of the peace negotiations with the Palestinians, the most popular basis for these negotiations is Ariel Sharon's Disengagement Plan.[121] The division lines run through the two main Israeli camps – the left-wing, "peace" camp and the right wing camp.

4.2.1.1 Internal Debate about the Road Map to Peace

Supporters of the peace process in general welcomed the initiative.[122] They perceive the Road Map as an important step forward, since for the first time the creation of a Palestinian state has been mentioned in an official, internationally sponsored document. Moreover, the Road Map considers a separate Palestinian state (a two-state solution) as an imperative for the settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Another important step forward is the flexibility of the document and its performance-based approach. The implementation of next phases of the peace plan is conditioned upon progress in reciprocal steps that both sides should make in political, security,

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[119] The Road Map talks about the "final and comprehensive settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by 2005", but does not specify terms of this settlement. Similarly unconditional cessation of the Palestinian violence is supposed to be accompanied by supportive measures undertaken by Israel. But neither the term of Israeli "supportive measures" nor the Palestinian "visible efforts" to cease the violence, as well as the general conditions upon which to proceed to the next phase of the Road Map are specified. "Full text: Road map to a permanent solution", op. cit.

[120] Etgar Lefkovits, "Poll: Israeli support for road map declines", The Jerusalem Post, October 14 2003.

[121] According to the Israeli public opinion polls from December 2004, published at the Internet site of Jewish Virtual Library, 84 per cent of Israelis want renewal peace negotiations with the Palestinians and 59 per cent believe there is a reasonable chance of reaching an agreement with the new Palestinian leadership. On the other hand, 46 per cent do not trust the new Palestinian president Abu Mazen and 66 per cent do not believe that the new Palestinian leadership will fight terror. It is also interesting to note that while the majority supports Ariel Sharon's Disengagement Plan, 21 per cent of Israeli Jews are unfamiliar with that initiative. http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Politics/ispopal.html.

[122] "Israel's peace movement is comprised of civic leaders, activists, academics, students, soldiers, teachers, doctors, lawyers and even government officials and of groups ranging from B'Tselem, the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories to the Israeli Committee Against Home Demolitions (ICAHD) to Rabbis for Human Rights to Gush Shalom, The Israeli Peace Bloc to Ta'ayush, the Arab-Jewish Partnership. This movement has led to and is supported by over 1,000 Israeli reservists refusing to defend their government's discriminatory violation of Palestinian rights. These individuals and groups have worked against the odds for a better future for the people of Israel, Palestine and the entire Middle East. American Association for Palestinian Equal Rights (AAPER)". See: http://www.americansforpalestine.org.

economic, humanitarian and institution-building fields. Therefore, as the peace camp argues, Israel's security is not endangered. At the same time, the Road Map is perceived as justified as it calls for Israel to make significant concessions. Israel, according to the Israeli left, should withdraw from the occupied territories anyway. Maintaining military and administrative control over the territories, as well as Israeli settlements, draws out Israeli resources and prolongs the conflict. The international community involvement is welcomed, as long as Israeli's vital interests are preserved. According to the Israeli peace camp the role of the Quartet is especially important not only in mediating the settlement between the parties, but in supporting reforms in the Palestinian Authority through financial, technical and educational help.[123]

On the other hand, what is most important for the future implementation of the Road Map are the opinions of the Israeli right. The peace camp, although very active, does not have much influence when it comes to shaping government's policy towards the peace process.[124] And the government of prime minister Ariel Sharon is not likely to implement the Road Map in its current form. However the Israeli officials have endorsed the Road Map and declared commitment "to its full implementation", in their opinion this peace plan raises many concerns and questions. Even though the Israeli government narrowly accepted the plan (on May 25 2003), it attached fourteen reservations as conditions to its approval.[125] The most serious argument against the Road Map is that it does not condition political progress upon decisive Palestinian steps to end the violence. The Israeli government believes that, before undertaking any steps on its own, Palestinian leadership must prove its commitment to fight violence and terrorism. The transition from one phase of the peace plan to another should be a function of Palestinian performance and their fulfillment of Israeli security requirements. Moreover, according to the Israeli officials, agreement on the establishment of a Palestinian state should be dependent upon an unconditional abandonment of the Palestinian "right of return" and the Palestinian recognition of "the Jewish people's right to a homeland and the existence of an independent Jewish state in the homeland of the Jewish people".[126]

According to the Israeli far right, the peace plan is unacceptable since it does not mention of any of the conditions essential for Israeli existential security: Palestinian recognition of Israel's right

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123 Even within the Israeli peace camp the majority does not question the US mediation, while the EU and the UN, two other members of the Quartet tend to be viewed at with a greater dose of suspicion. The involvement of the fourth member, Russia, is generally viewed as neutral. However Russian government often takes position supportive of Palestinian claims, it also understands Israeli need to fight terrorism due to own problems in Chechnya. Russia is perceived by Israel as an important partner of security and economic cooperation; moreover many immigrants from the former Soviet Union constitute a significant political power in Israel.

124 The peace camp does not have the support of the majority of the Israeli society. After the failure of Camp David negotiations in 2000, the Labor Party, as well as other left-wing parties, failed to deliver a visible and acceptable platform, which would be convincing enough to rebuild trust in the peace process and create a shift in the public opinion towards the left side. The January 2003 Israeli elections brought a significant defeat to the peace camp and once more confirmed Israeli support for the Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. At present the Labor Party entered the government and forms coalition with the right-wing Likud Party. Nevertheless, almost half of Israelis were against the Labor Party entering the government. See more: http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Politics/ispopal.html. To read more about the change within the Israeli public opinion see Alon Ben-Meir, "Why the Road Map is doomed to failure", United Press International, May 9, 2003. Available at: www.alonben-meir.com/articls/roadmap_doomed-to-fail.htm.

125 For the full list of reservations see: "Israel's Road Map Reservations", Ha'aretz, May 27 2003.

126 International Crisis Group, "A Middle East Road Map to Where?" 2 May 2003 and interview with foreign minister Silvan Shalom, October 14 2004, Haaretz.

to exist, an end to the anti-Jewish incitement in the Palestinian school system and Palestinian relinquishment of their demand for the refugees to return to Israel. The Road Map can be perceived as a victory for the Palestinian terror. As described by Uzi Landau, Minister of Public Security in the Israeli government, "in its wake the Palestinians will not only achieve their strategic goals, but will reach a clear conclusion: terror pays. They will get all the concessions we shower on them, organize themselves with money they get from the world and us, rebuild their terror units and attack us at the moment convenient for them. Our experience from the Oslo agreement teaches us that for us, the map bodes a future in which terror is much, much worse."[127] What strengthens this argument is the memory of the Oslo's failure. The Oslo peace process did not define final borders and did not promise a Palestinian state at the end. Even though it was based on Israeli recognition of the Palestinian Authority in exchange for commitment to fight violence, the Israeli right argues that "the Palestinians never took seriously their agreements". Therefore, there is no reason to believe that they will take seriously the commitments imposed by the Road Map.

Even after Yasser Arafat's death and positive political changes in the Palestinian Authority, most Israeli Jews are convinced that terror attacks will not cease. However there is hope for peace and as many as 84 per cent of the Israelis support return to the peace negotiations with the Palestinians, at the same time there is a deep mistrust of Palestinian intentions.[128] Voices on the far right, arguing that supporting the establishment of the Palestinian state would be equal with accepting a Nazi entity, are not to be ignored. Of course such argumentation is very pointed. Nevertheless, there is a wide consensus among the Israelis, that Palestinian violence is not just a means to end the occupation but it aims at Israel's destruction. The Israeli Jews fear that the Palestinian strategy is to destroy Israel in stages. Therefore the Palestinian state would not put an end to the Palestinian independence fight, but be a part in a total war for Israel's destruction.[129]

On the other hand, there is a broad consensus in Israel that the Palestinian state must be established, if Israel is to stay a democratic state and if the population question is to be solved. The majority of the Israeli Jews wants one state for the Palestinians and one for the Israel; additionally the Middle East borders are to be shaped in such a way that will take into account Israeli security and their historical claims to the holy sites. This is the reason why the majority supports the Disengagement Plan, introduced by the Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and the current peace process, launched at the Sharm el-Sheik summit.

4.2.1.2 The Disengagement Plan as a response to the Geneva Accord

The Disengagement Plan itself is perceived as a response to the Geneva Peace Accord, a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict formulated in late 2003 by a group of peace activists. The

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127 Uzi Landau, "A map to national disaster", 8 April 2003, Haaretz. Also, as Steven Plaut writes: "The Roadmap is a nonstarter: nothing but a reward for Palestinian violence. It grants them a prize for NOT doing anything at all to move in the direction of peace. (...) It is very simple. Two generations after the Holocaust under no circumstances will we acquiesce to the creation of a Nazi power smack in the center of our country. A Palestinian state will be nothing other than a modern twenty-first century expression of Nazism. It will be as devoted to random murder of Jews as it has been in its present pre-state form. Steven Plaut, "The Swastika at the End of the Road Map", www.think-israel.org, March 13 2003.

128 http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Politics/ispopal.html.

129 Alon Ben-Meir, op. cit.

Geneva Peace Accord, released after the introduction of the Road Map to Peace was a joint Israeli and Palestinian initiative, the furthest reaching one in terms of concessions that each side needed to make. It created a "model solution" that encompassed most points of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict agenda. Some propositions included in the peace plan seemed very far going, but they also provided a picture of what both sides would have to give up, in order to reach an ideal compromise. More important, the Geneva Accord changed the atmosphere in the media, by drawing attention to other third party peace efforts and different alternatives.[130]
The basic idea behind the Disengagement Plan is a unilateral withdrawal, in order "not to wait for the Palestinians indefinitely" However there can be no peace before the eradication of terrorism, the unilateral steps which Israeli government decided to take, means to maximize the level of security for the Israeli citizens. Redeployment and withdrawal from some parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip since the announcement of the Disengagement Plan are being presented as a part of the Road Map, actually – as an effort to "speed up its implementation". Unilateral withdrawal in the framework of the Disengagement Plan opts to create new security lines, which will reduce---as much as possible---the number of Israelis living among the Palestinian population centers. According to the Prime Minister Sharon and the current Israeli government, the Disengagement Plan is actually a part of the Road Map.[131]

Official endorsement of the Disengagement Plan by the Israeli government and parliament does not mean an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The plan itself is a security concept, and not a comprehensive peace agreement. Despite the death of Yasser Arafat and the declared end to the Second Intifada, many in Israel see the Disengagement Plan as a way to halt the peace process indefinitely. Such opinions and perceptions were enhanced when one of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's senior advisors admitted that the significance of the Disengagement Plan is to freeze the peace process and prevent the establishment of the Palestinian state, as well as the discussion on the refugees, Jerusalem, and other hot points on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict agenda.[132] Therefore some critics of the plan fear that the withdrawal will be the end of the peace process and Israel will give no more concessions.[133]

But it is difficult to predict the future of the Disengagement Plan. The Disengagement Plan is presented as a part of the Road Map and, according to the Israeli government; its implementation will be conducted with full cooperation with the international community. This also means

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130 The document is very detailed. Most controversy over centers on a few major issues: right of return of the refugees, recognition of a two state solution, territorial concessions, allowing supervision by an international force or body and Israeli cession of the temple mount to the Palestinians. It is not a 'real' final status document. The Geneva Accord was prepared by a group of peace activists led by Yossi Beilin and Yasser Abd-Rabbo. After releasing it, the document faced opposition in Israel from the right-wing camp and also from some Labor party leaders (at the same time they incorporated some points of the accord for their own platform). For full text of the document see: For more about the Geneva Accord background and history see: http://www.mideastweb.org/log/archives/00000130.htm.

131 The concept of withdrawal was announced by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in his address to the Fourth Herzliya Conference, on December 18, 2003. On June 6, 2004, Israeli government approved the plan to withdraw from the Gaza Strip and some parts of the West Bank. Israeli parliament, Knesset, accepted the plan on October 25, 2004. Its implementation is to start in June 2005. For full text of prime Minister's Herzliya speech and other documents related to the Disengagement Plan see: www.mfa.gov.il.

132 See: Ha'aretz interview with Dov Weissglass, interview conducted October 6, 2004 published October 8, 2004and also ICG Middle East Report No. 36, *Disengagement and After: where next for Sharon and the Likud?,* 1 March 2005,5. Available at: www.crisisweb.org.

133 Daniel Levy, "Minister for re-engagement", Haaretz December 10, 2004.

acceptance of international supervision. The latter would address the obligations that the Israeli side has to take upon itself under the current requirements of the peace process: withdrawal from the designated Palestinian territories, release of the Palestinian prisoners and coordination with the Palestinian authorities in order to ensure a halt to violence.[134] Moreover, since its introduction in December 2003, it has been, to a certain extent, an evolving concept. At first the withdrawal was to encompass only the Gaza Strip, with possible withdrawal also from some Jewish settlements on the West Bank. At present the plans for withdrawal include not only Gaza, but also a significant amount of the West Bank. Also the route of the security fence changed, leaving more land on the Palestinian side and eventually enclosing 7% of the West Bank on the Israeli side.[135] This shows a slow change of the Israeli's government policy, perhaps caused by the death of Yasser Arafat and the popular mood of optimism and faith in the renewed chances for peace.

The most interesting and significant change in the Israeli policy, is acceptance of the idea of multilateral involvement in the solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The whole philosophy of the Road Map peace process is based on multilateralism and international efforts to reach an agreement. However, so far each Israeli government tended to avoid internationalization of the conflict and limit any, other that the US, international pressure. The general perception was that an internationally mediated solution could impose restraints on Israel and force her to make concessions perceived as endangering her security. Moreover, remembering the experience of the Holocaust and the persecutions of the earlier centuries, traditionally Israelis (Israeli Jews) doubt whether the international community is able to guarantee their security. Both on the Israeli right and left there is a deep feeling on mistrust towards the idea that the future of the Jewish nation could be decided by "the other". Therefore, the fact that according to the Road Map, it is the Quartet members which would decide if the Palestinians are doing enough to end terror, on the right of return and influence the future territorial and administrational shape of the Palestinian State, made the Road Map to Peace in the eyes of many Israeli irrelevant.

After Yasser Arafat's death and a political spring in the Palestinian Authority, the situation changed. But even now Israeli society, after experiencing four years of Palestinian suicide bombings and violence, is unlikely to accept any multilateral process limiting Israel's sovereignty.[136] The Disengagement Plan, even though [created in] consultation with the Palestinians, stays a unilateral initiative and Israel preserves the right to change it according to its independent decision. The Israeli government emphasizes the need for the US and the EU

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[134] Such obligations were taken by Israel at the Sharm el-Sheik summit, February 8, 2005. At the summit Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Palestinian Authority President Mahmud Abbas declared an end to the Second Intifada and discussed measures to revitalize the Peace process. For current information about the progress in the peace process see: www.mfa.gov.il and www.pna.gov.ps.

[135] For information about the changes of the security barrier route see www.mideast.web.org/thefence.htm.

[136] A good explanation of this perception gives Uzi Landau in his article "A Road map to national disaster": In the first year of the previous, unity government, Israel was careful not to use all that was necessary to defeat the terrorist organizations in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip (...) We did so to prevent the internationalization of the conflict by the entry of foreign observers and international conferences, that would, in effect, take out of our hands the sovereignty over management of the conflict and harm our ability to defend ourselves effectively. That's exactly what the road map does. Internationalization under Quartet orchestration: It convenes two international conferences meant to establish the Palestinian state and lead to a permanent agreement, accompany the process, establish a supervisory mechanism for the implementation, judge the disputes between the PA and Israel, set a "realistic timetable" for progress and become involved in the negotiations "when necessary." Uzi Landau, op. cit.

involvement, and even possible invitation of the international troops to monitor the security situation on the Israeli-Palestinian border. But, on the other hand, the EU is seen mainly as a sponsor for the economic development of the Palestinian entity. With the US the case is different. Although some Israeli politicians are perturbed with President Bush administration's enthusiasm over the new Palestinian leadership, the specifics of the Israeli-American ties and good personal relationship between Ariel Sharon and George W. Bush ensure that the US policy will take into consideration Israeli stance on the peace process.

4.2.2 The Palestinians

When the Road Map was introduced, it was presented by the US and other members of the Quartet as a new window of opportunity to resolve the Middle East conflict and as a first initiative ever that set as its goal the establishment of a viable Palestinian state.[137] Moreover, at the time the Road Map was introduced there was a great support for ending the Second Intifada. But desire for normal life and stabilization mixed with a very high support for violence. Even though a majority of the Palestinians supported the document, there was a widespread perception that the Road Map meant nothing significant. The majority of the Palestinians simply did not believe the US and other Quartet members would put great pressure on Israel and the Palestinian Authority to accept and implement the Road Map. For that reason, paradoxically, suicide attacks on Israeli citizens and soldiers were as popular as the idea of a mutual cessation of fire.[138]

This situation prevailed until Yasser Arafat's death. However at present, the Palestinian leadership appears to be united around the goal of the successful transition towards democracy and a ceasefire with Israel, one can still identify three main approaches towards the Road Map to Peace and the idea of peace negotiations with Israel. They are related to the general position and division lines within the Palestinian society, mentioned in the First Chapter.

4.2.2.1 The Doves and Hawks in Fatah

The first popular perception is represented by president Mahmud Abbas who was also the first Palestinian leader who tried to implement the Road Map. Since his appointment as Prime Minister in 2003 Abbas's stance on this issue stayed unchanged and he maintained it after he left office.[139] Putting an end to armed uprising, enforcing the rule of law and concentrating on the construction of the Palestinian institutions is seen as a first step towards peace. According to Mahmud Abbas and his supporters within Fatah, there must be a halt to an armed confrontation

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[137] The use of the term "viable" was crucial, since for the Palestinians it raised hopes that the international community will not allow Israel to create "facts on the ground" and ensure withdrawal most of the Jewish settlements from the occupied territories. The specific timeline and the performance-based, mutual nature of the process were also promising. The fact that the progress was supposed to be monitored by the Quartet rather than by the Americans exclusively, and the terms of reference included UN resolutions, raised additional hopes.

[138] During the last two years of the Intifada the support for the cessation of violence maintained a stable level of around 70-80%. In April 2003 the roadmap received the support of 55% and the opposition of 39% of the Palestinians. 46% did not believe and 45% believed that the Road Map will be implemented. *Public Opinion Poll # 7 and #9,* Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR), http://www.pcpsr.org/survey/index.html.

[139] See for example „Mahmud Abbas's call for a halt to the militarization of the uprising", Journal of Palestine Studies XXX: II (Winter 2003), pp.74-78.

and acceptance for all US and Israeli security requirements. Continued violence could only lead to a further consolidation of Israeli control over the occupied territories and weaken Palestinians' bargaining position. After Yasser Arafat's death the Palestinian leadership is united to do everything necessary on their part for implementing the peace plan. The lead items on the Road Map's agenda are democracy and terrorism. The new Palestinian leadership strives to ensure a stable transition towards democracy. It is also determined to fight terrorism and put an end to terrorist activities. Then the Palestinians expect to see progress on the Israeli side. As one of the Fatah leaders explains it "our primary goal is (...) to convince the world that the obstacles to peace are not within our society. We understand Sharon won't give us anything but don't want to be the pretext for the lack of political progress".[140]
Therefore, the current prevailing Palestinian perception towards the implementation of the Road Map is that to begin with, there must be a ceasefire and commitment to fight violence on the Palestinian side. In exchange the Palestinians expect the US to pressure Israel for concessions on the final status issues and improvement of their living conditions. On the key Israeli-Palestinian conflict issues, Mahmud Abbas is not going to have an opinion different from the one of Yasser Arafat's. His idea of peace is very close to the idea held by most of Palestinians: a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem as a capital and Israeli recognition of the right of return of Palestinian refugees and their descendants. However he might be more flexible on the question of the borders of the future Palestinian state, Mahmud Abbas will not be able to make greater concessions on the main issues, especially on the issue of the Palestinian refugees.[141]

Another approach towards the Road Map is represented by the Fatah hardliners, which used to take an active part in the Second Intifada, alongside extremist organizations like Hamas or Islamic Jihad. They are gathered under the leadership of Marvan Barghouti. This fraction is more prone to continuing the Intifada, until the final status issues are solved. Citing the Oslo Process as an example---in which the hardliners do not believe--- they will not bow to the Road Map's requirements and believe that the current positive trends in the region are just temporary. The hardliners believe that the Palestinians should agree to a ceasefire, but that readiness for confrontation should be maintained. Considering the desire for normalcy and results of Palestinian elections, which gave legitimacy to Mahmud Abbas, the opinion and, to a certain extent, the influences of the hardliners became marginalized.

4.2.2.2 The Fundamentalist's Camp

When introduced, the Road Map met with a sharp opposition from Hamas and other groups from the fundamentalist's camp. They declared that the peace plan did not reflect Palestinian aspirations and it was a "disaster for the Palestinian people". Since Israel failed to fulfill her promises during the Oslo Process, there was no reason to trust in a just another version of gradual approach, as the Road Map was perceived.[142] However, changes in the Palestinian

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[140] "After Arafat? Challenges and prospects." Middle East Briefing N 16, 23 December 2004, p.11.

[141] "Abbas: I won't give up demand for right of return of refugees", Ha'aretz November 24, 2004.

[142] They caution that Israel's acceptance of the Road Map is deceptive, since Ariel Sharon continues to deny the Palestinians their basic rights, refusing to accept Palestinian rights to Jerusalem and the right of return for the refugees. "Hamas and the Road Map", Meir Litvak, Tel Aviv Notes, June 8, 2003. Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern & African Studies, available at: http://www.tau.ac.il/jcss/tanotes/TAUnotes79.doc.

Authority and the Israeli preparation to withdraw from parts of the Palestinian territories created a new political reality in the region. The fact that violence is at present *passé* and lost popular support among the Palestinians has to be accepted by Hamas and other extremist movements, if they are to keep their political influence.

Hamas eventually accepted a temporary truce with Israel. Current strategy of the movement is to maximize its political influence in the Palestinian Authority and to take part in its political transformation, as well as the general parliamentary elections.[143] At the same time Hamas will stay radical, trying to mobilize public support against any perceived concessions by the Palestinian negotiators. It is doubtful whether this organization will agree to hand in its weapons to the PA or tone down its vicious anti-Jewish incitement, as required by the Road Map. Hamas or other fundamentalist groups may even try to resume terrorist activity when a crisis in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations occurs. At the present stage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict violence is likely to be used as pressure to make Israel speed up not only the withdrawal form Gaza Strip and parts of West Bank, but also to speed up the resolution of the final status issues.

The first months of the Road's Map implementation under the new Palestinian leadership have many chances to prove successful. For most of the Palestinians the priority problems are at present: unemployment, corruption, and state/security reforms in order to ease Israel's military control over the occupied territories. This, according to the Palestinian leadership, is the goal of the first phase of the Road Map. The peace plan is also seen as the best alternative for the Palestinian nation and the only way to halt the implementation of the Disengagement Plan.[144] The latter is perceived as a collapse of the idea of the Palestinian state. The majority of Palestinians fear that the Disengagement Plan is Israel's final offer. After finishing construction of the security fence and stopping Palestinian terror, there will be no more negotiations. Israel will refuse to withdraw from more land and to discuss the refugee issue.

Therefore, for the Palestinians the Road Map gives hope for a final resolution of the conflict. It also brings a promise that this resolution would be just, under the supervision of the international community. What adds to these hopes is recent US support for the new Palestinian leadership and commitment to finalize a Palestinian state by 2009, the end of President Bush's second term. Therefore, as long as the Road Map offers hope, there will be little discussion of alternative scenarios on the Palestinian side. If the Road Map process fails, then probably the hard line and extreme fractions take over.

4.2.3 The International Community

The Middle East Road Map is regarded by most members of the international community as the most comprehensive, multilateral and progressive effort to put and end to the Israeli-Palestinian confrontations and to reinvigorate the Oslo political process, interrupted by the Second Intifada. It is described as a well-crafted and balanced set of recommendations to both parties of the conflict. The main purpose of the document was to fill a diplomatic vacuum, created by the

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[143] The elections are scheduled for the July 17, 2005. The group did not participate in the last parliamentary elections in 1996, refusing to recognize the interim peace deal that lead to the establishment of the Palestinian Authority. In the July parliamentary election Hamas could challenge Mahmud Abbas and the Fatah, which is trying to consolidate forces following Yasser Arafat's death.

[144] „Palestinian demands for its leaders" Haaretz, January 9, 2005.

failure of the Oslo process. However the philosophy of the Road Map is different. It aspires to change the attitude towards the peacemaking mechanism. Contrary to the Oslo Process, it is not the two arguing parties which are expected to reach an agreement in bilateral negotiations. Any peace settlement, according to the Road Map, should be a multilateral effort of the international community and parties to the conflict. The role of the international mediation is supposed to be significant, if not decisive, in overcoming major differences or obstacles in implementing the plan.[145]

In practice, until Yasser Arafat's death the role of the third parties, except the EU, was limited. The Arab states have been given a limited role in negotiating truce agreements (a three-month hudna in summer 2003) or facilitating negotiations between Israeli and Palestinian security services. But neither the Arab states, nor the EU had greater influence on the peace process. Israeli policy of isolating Yasser Arafat closed many diplomatic doors, reducing especially the EU's involvement. Even though periodically there were calls for Europe to develop a separate peace plan, or at least a more active policy towards the Middle East, it was widely understood that any European initiative lacking American support would be stillborn.[146] Therefore both Europe and the Arab states placed their hopes for the progress on the peace process in the Road Map's multilateral approach.

But, even though the Road Map was perceived as a multilateral effort, it has been shaped mainly by the influence of the US.[147] It came from President G.W. Bush's speech of June 24, 2002, which envisioned a Palestinian state with new Palestinian leaders, new institutions and new security agreements with their neighbors. Even if it was not expressed explicitly; reference to changing the Palestinian leadership was an allusion to the PNA Chairman Yasser Arafat. The political, wider purpose of the speech was to gain support of the Arab world for the US policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Recognition of Palestinian suffering, support for the Palestinian state and an end to Israeli occupation were meant to limit objections within the Arab world against the US war on terrorism and the planned intervention in Iraq. Nevertheless, the perception of the US administration was that the Palestinians are the side which must prove their commitment to fight terrorism in order for the peace process to move forward. According to the president Bush, Israel was a country that had taken a premature risk for peace and had been rewarded with violence. This perception made the US diplomacy very sensitive to the Israeli security concerns.[148] Even though the US declared to press Israel for substantial withdrawal from

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[145] The international community, according to the Road Map is supposed to assist and facilitate implementation of the plan. Moreover, moving to the next phase of the peace plan is dependent upon the evaluation of the parties' performance, done by the Quartet. The peace plan envisages a formal monitoring mechanism, which is supposed to be established after consultations with both parties. See more: "Road Map to permanent Solution", January 13, 2003, *Financial Times*. More about the Road Map also in: Journal of Palestine Studies XXX2, Number 4, Summer 2003, p.83-99, interview with Silvan Shalom.

[146] Since the Israelis could reject it without consequences. Steven Everts, "How Europe can help the Middle East Peace Process", Centre for European Reform, CER bulletin, February/March 2003 - Issue 28.

[147] Initially a leading role in composing the draft of the peace plan was given to the EU. Such draft was prepared in September 2002, but it was never released and official approval was given to the US draft, formally named "elements of a Performance-Based Road Map to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict". This version of the peace plan was presented to the Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon on the 16th of October 2002. One day later it was presented to the Quartet members and the Palestinians.

[148] The G.W. Bush administration proved to be much more sensitive to the Israeli concerns that any former US government. During his first term, President Bush's approach was that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict depended on three pillars: the US recognition of Israel's right to respond to terrorism; the US commitment to the creation

the occupied territories, a form of shared sovereignty over Jerusalem and the final settlement similar to the one negotiated at Taba, at the same time it assured Israel that its security concerns will be addressed. The US administration many times underlined that it will not pressure Israel to undertake any steps which could be perceived as going against its interests.[149]
According to the president Bush, realities on the ground dictate that Israel should be able to keep some settlements in any future peace agreement. Therefore, a return to 1967 borders is not possible. Neither is it possible to admit to the Palestinians' the "right of return", understood as the right of return of all Palestinians and their descendants which were forced to leave Israel when the Jewish state was founded in 1948. Palestinian refugees can be allowed to return, but only to the territories under current Palestinian administration.[150] Open statements issued by President Bush on this matter gave wave to sharp Palestinian criticism, supported by the disapproval of the UN and the EU.[151] However, the position of current US administration is not really different from the opinion held by the former one. President Bill Clinton, while introducing so called "Clinton Parameters" (which eventually lead to the Taba negotiations) and even earlier at Camp David, was convinced that the full return to the 1967 borders and implementation of the "right of return" was not possible.[152]

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of a democratic Palestinian state alongside Israel and the US refusal to truck with Palestinian leaders "compromised by terror". Robert Satloff, "Getting Gaza Right", *Weekly Standard*, November 27, 2004.

149 Such approach influenced for example the US position on the separation fence and the Israeli Disengagement Plan. While the construction of the separation fence (also known as the security fence) was deemed by the International Court of Justice illegal, and both the EU and UN urged Israel to remove it from occupied territories, the US had taken a different approach. It pointed out effectiveness of the barrier, which managed to reduce infiltration by terrorists. Moreover, according to the US the UN's turning to the International Court of Justice was inappropriate and the court's ruling on the legality of the fence was not binding anyway. The European Commission said that the court appeared to have confirmed the European Union's view that the fence is illegal and urged the Israelis. Javier Solana, the foreign and security chief of the European Union, said: "Israel has a legitimate right to self defense against terrorist attacks. At the same time, we have stressed that the construction of the wall is no reason for confiscating Palestinian land, humanitarian suffering and economic losses, and it may also endanger future negotiations between the two sides and raise obstacles in achieving a just political solution to the conflict." About the International Court of Justice ruling see more: Shlomo Shamir and Sharon Sadeh, "Friends unwavering in Israel's support, foes praise ICJ's verdict" and "International Court of Justice advisory opinion on the West Bank separation fence", "Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Advisory Opinion", 11 July 2004, Haaretz.

150 "It seems clear that an agreed, just, fair and realistic framework for a solution to the Palestinian refugee issue as part of any final status agreement will need to be found through the establishment of a Palestinian state and the settling of Palestinian refugees there, rather than Israel". Statement by the President G.W. Bush, 14 April 2004, available at: http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/04/20040414-2.html.

151 The 14 April 2004 President Bush's statement was interpreted as guarantees to Israel that affect the final status issues. This was perceived by the EU, the UN and the Palestinians as unacceptable and in violation with the spirit of the Oslo process, where none of the final status issues could be predetermined by any of the party, as well as the third party.

152 President Clinton announced his parameters in a speech to the Israel Policy Forum on 7 January 2001 and in a letter to Ehud Barak and Yasser Arafat shortly before he left office. These explicitly included "the incorporation into Israel of settlement blocks, with the goal of maximizing the number of settlers in Israel while minimizing the land annex." President Clinton did not mention removal of any settlements and suggested incorporation as many of the settlements as possible into Israel. On the right of return, Clinton declared, "We cannot expect Israel to make a decision that would threaten the very foundations of the state of Israel, and would undermine the whole logic of peace. And it shouldn't be done." Ali Abunimah, "Why all the fuss about the Bush-Sharon meeting?" *The Electronic Intifada,* 14 April 2004. available at: http://electronicintifada.net/v2/article2577.shtml

A practical obstacle to the implementation of the Road Map is a demand of achieving a real, comprehensive settlement freeze. Freezing settlements is not the Roadmap's only requirement to Israelis. But it is as difficult to fulfill as it is for the Palestinians to dismantle all terror infrastructures, including Hamas or Islamic Jihad. As the International Crisis Group Report states "the settlement enterprise has, by now, become an integral part of Israel's political, economic, social and legal system." And therefore, "the informal system by which settlers and officials have entrenched the settlement project is harder to quantify; it also may be harder to undo". The Road Map requires Israel to dismantle the settlements both in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The difficulty to achieve this goal can be measured by the scale of current protests against dismantling a few settlements in Gaza.[153]

Nevertheless, the sole idea of the two state solution, reflected in the Road Map, is unquestioned. All members of the Quartet, as well as Israel and the Palestinians agree that stability in the Middle East has to be achieved through the process of the creation of the Palestinian state. Nevertheless, while the EU and the UN would prefer to see a permanent solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, or at least such a settlement which could lead to it. The US is interested mostly in a gradual approach. Even though the Road Map uses terms such as "permanent solution", "comprehensive settlement", the US administration of President George Bush tends to focus more on the implementation of the chosen parts of the Road Map. A matter of priority is the successful political transformation within the Palestinian Authority, including the effective fight against terrorism. From Israel, the US expects withdrawal from the occupied territories and a settlement freeze. However, unlike envisaged in the Road Map, the US does not expect Israel to withdraw from all of the occupied territories simultaneously. Washington accepts Ariel Sharon's Disengagement Plan, which anticipates dismantling settlements and withdrawing only from the Gaza Strip. This process, if successful, can open the way to further withdrawal form the West Bank. Once the disengagement form the Gaza Strip is completed and the Palestinian administration proves its commitment to fight terrorism, there can be another agreement in the West Bank.

4.3 Conclusion

The success of Palestinian presidential elections and Israeli-Palestinian agreements from the Sharm el-Sheik summit marked the end of the Second Palestinian Intifada. In 2005, neither side wanted or intended to resort to violence, even the extremist groups on the Palestinian side at that time seemed to be convinced that armistice should have been maintained. There was a common perception, mainly within the international community, that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is on its end road. Among Israelis and Palestinians feelings were more mixed, although many of them admitted that the peace process was back on its track. In 2005 the hopes for the region's stabilization had never been greater.

Previous experience from the Taba negotiations showed that the solution to the fundamental issues of the conflict (refugees, Jerusalem, borders) is within reach and that there are many reasonable options for compromise. Yet, until today most of them exist only on paper and both the Israelis and the Palestinians have very different perceptions on how the final settlement

[153] International Crisis Group, The Israeli-Palestinian Roadmap: What a Settlement Freeze Means and Why it Matters, The Middle East Report N°16 25 July 2003, p.4.

should look like and how should it be implemented. The Oslo process and the Taba negotiations proved that reaching an agreement is not the hardest part. The most difficult is the ability to deliver it.
Given the political circumstances in 2005, achieving a comprehensive peace solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict proved impossible. What appeared to be within reach was a temporary peace settlement, agreed to by both parties according to the steps recommended by the internationally sponsored Road Map to Peace. It was expected that the Disengagement Plan would improve the situation on the ground and that the reforms within the Palestinian Authority would proceed in a positive direction. However, the success of the Road Map to Peace depended on the way it was interpreted by both sides of the conflict and by the international community. Neither Israelis nor Palestinians strictly complied with Road Map's recommendations. The implementation of the Disengagement Plan by the Israeli government meant withdrawal only from part of the Palestinian territories. Some settlements were disbanded, yet at the same time some were expanded in order to resettle the population from the territories designed to stay under the Palestinian administration. Similarly, the Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas did not dismantle terrorist organizations (as required by the Road Map) but attempted to incorporate Hamas and other extremist Palestinian fractions into the political process, which later turned out to have quite complex consequences.

The most constructive and realistic option for today still lays with the principles of the Road Map to Peace, which try to harmonize the European "wider political perspective" with the Israeli/American "security first approach. Given the demographic trends of the region (also within Israel proper), the complex situation in the Middle East and the challenges of rising Muslim fundamentalism, reaching a long-lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a priority for the Israelis, the Palestinians and the international community. Reaching stability in the Middle East is the key to national security of the US and the EU, since any developments in the Middle East may have an unpredictable spillover effect on the security of both.

However, at the time, a final solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict might not be possible – given diverging perceptions, high emotions and diametrically opposite visions of the region's future. On the other hand, the Disengagement Plan and shifts in the Palestinian political scene awakened hopes for an effective settlement, which could ensure a more or less enduring armistice and initiate confidence-building process, necessary as a pre-condition for a future peace agreement. Unfortunately, after 2005, internal political dynamics in both Israel and Palestinian Authority and in their respective societies proved to be the greatest impediments to the peace process, ruining hopes not only for a peace agreement, but also for an effective peace settlement.

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