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The failed Palestinian–Israeli peace process 1993–2011: an Israeli perspective

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In memory of Gad Yaakobi

This article examines the major developments that have taken place since the signing of the Oslo accords in September 1993. It analyses the major mistakes made along the way by both sides, showing that brinkmanship is a very dangerous policy when one or both sides are willing to pay a high price in blood. Finally, it offers a blueprint for breaking the deadlock roughly based on the Clinton parameters of 2001 and the subsequent Israeli–Palestinian Geneva Accords.

Keywords: Israel; Palestine; peace; security; Oslo process; Camp David

On 13 September 1993 Israelis woke up to a new, dramatic reality in the form of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements (DOP), signed by their government and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) on the White House lawn. Better known as the Oslo Accords, after the Norwegian capital where they had been secretly negotiated, the DOP provided for Palestinian self-rule in the entire West Bank and the Gaza Strip for a transitional period not to exceed five years, during which Israel and the Palestinians would negotiate a permanent peace settlement.

During this interim period the territories would be administered by a Palestinian Council, to be freely and democratically elected after the withdrawal of Israeli military forces both from the Gaza Strip and from the populated areas of the West Bank.

By May 1994, Israel had completed its withdrawal from the Gaza Strip (apart from a small stretch of territory containing Israeli settlements) and the Jericho area of the West Bank, and by the end of 1995 Israeli forces had been withdrawn from the West Bank's populated areas with the exception of Hebron (where redeployment was completed in early 1997). On 20 January 1996, elections to the Palestinian Council were held and shortly afterwards both the Israeli civil administration and military government were dissolved. Yet this process failed to lead to the coveted peace, and in late September 2000, shortly after the failure of a US-brokered peace summit in the presidential retreat of Camp David, Arafat launched the 'al-Aqsa Intifada', the bloodiest encounter between Israelis and Palestinians since the 1948 war.

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What follows is an attempt to explain the breakdown of the Oslo process: the inherent problems in the search for peace; the bad design of the DOP and subsequent accords; the Israeli government's failure to mobilize domestic support; the asymmetric power relationship between the negotiating sides; the role of external actors; and the poor timing of the 2000 Camp David summit.

Failed implementation

The first follow-up agreement to the DOP, the Gaza–Jericho accord of 4 May 1994, outlined the main areas of the Palestinian Authority's (PA) responsibility, dissolving the Israeli civil administration in the Gaza Strip and the Jericho area and transferring its powers and responsibilities to the PA. Israel maintained control of the borders between the new autonomous areas and the outside world as well as of the Jewish settlements in the Strip and the roads leading from these settlements to Israel, which were to be patrolled by joint Israeli–Palestinian teams. Israel was also to assure safe passage through its sovereign territory for Palestinians between the Strip and the Jericho area. The PA's police force was to comprise some 9000 policemen, 7000 of whom could come from abroad.¹

On 28 September 1995, an interim agreement was signed between Israel and the PLO, dividing the West Bank into three zones:

- Zone A included some 4% of the West Bank's territory, consisting the largest cities and most of its residents. The PA had administrative and security control over this area.
- Area B included some 25% of the territory. In this area, the PA retained administrative authority, but left Israel with overriding responsibility for security, protecting Israelis and confronting the threat of terrorism. The Palestinian Police assumed responsibility for public order for Palestinians.
- Area C, the rest of the West Bank, remained under direct Israeli control.

The agreement stipulated that a Palestinian Council was to be inaugurated within 18 months, followed by three phased IDF redeployments at 6-month intervals. During the redeployment phases, powers and responsibilities related to territory would be transferred gradually to Palestinian jurisdiction covering the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, except for the issues that would be negotiated in the permanent status negotiations.² It was understood that at the end of the period, the PA would be in charge of about 75% of the West Bank and the entire Gaza Strip, leaving Israel in charge of its settlers and in control of roads leading to and from the settlements and military installations.³ In accordance with the DOP, the main bones of contention – Jerusalem, refugees, Temple Mount – were left to the final status negotiations.

Peace and security go hand in hand and one cannot be achieved without the other. Rather than enjoy a period of increased security due to the signing of the DOP, Israeli citizens experienced a steep rise in terror attacks, including the hitherto virtually unknown phenomenon of suicide bombings.⁴ The will for peace eroded correspondingly.

In every negotiation, each side needs to know that it has something to gain from the process, and – no less importantly – that it also has something to lose. PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat tried both ends against the middle, while Prime Minister Rabin and Foreign Minister Peres allowed him to continue his dangerous politics. In a summer 1995 meeting with Peres, for example, Arafat was warned by senior Israeli security officials that Israel would not be able to implement its side of the bargain if the PA continued to give Hamas a free rein to perpetrate murderous attacks. Once the officials left the room, Arafat continued negotiating with Peres as if nothing had happened (and the terrorist attacks continued unabated).⁵

On 4 November 1995 Rabin was murdered by a religious zealot and was succeeded by Peres, who sustained the erroneous approach of peace at all costs, seeing only the half-full part of the glass and ignoring the most troubling and repeated outbursts of violence and terror. In his mind, the Oslo process had created a new reality, which he termed ‘The New Middle East’. However, for most Israelis it was the old, familiar, bloody Middle East. People wanted to feel secure riding buses, going to shopping malls, waiting in bus stops and living in society free of constant terror. The Arab response to Peres’ ‘New Middle East’ was lukewarm at best, angry and suspicious at worst. Unfortunately, the Middle East was not ready for the role that Peres wanted Israel to assume. It is still not ready.

There are two conflicting interpretations of the bloody events of the 1993–1996 years:

- Arafat was unable to control the extremists in his own camp. He tried to halt the terrorists, but to no avail.
- Arafat never meant peace. He had the ability to control the extremists, but showed a conspicuous lack of will. He even initiated some of the attacks.

The second interpretation seems more logical. As former Israeli Home and Foreign Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami pointed out, Arafat considered terrorism, including that perpetrated by Hamas, a strategic weapon he used to soften Israeli resistance. On 11 May 1994, a week after signing the Gaza Agreement, Arafat called for a jihad to recover Jerusalem, comparing the Oslo Accords to Muhammad’s Hudaibiya agreement (628) with the Meccans – a tactical ploy that allowed the prophet to conquer the city two years later.⁶ He would repeat this metaphor of Oslo as an expedient agreement that could be broken at the first available opportunity on numerous occasions. Likewise, he reportedly reprimanded his negotiators for making concessions whenever progress was made.⁷

The turning point was the suicide bombing of 4 March 1996 at Tel Aviv’s Dizengoff Centre, in which 13 people died, mostly youngsters in costumes celebrating Purim, the most joyful festival in the Jewish calendar. Only then did Arafat make some attempts to curb Hamas, but it was too little too late: by that time, some 160 Israelis had been murdered in terrorist attacks, and hundreds more injured, and the Israeli public was getting rapidly disillusioned with the Oslo process.

As a result, Peres, who was leading the polls by a margin of 20% since the Rabin assassination, narrowly lost the May 1996 elections to Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu as his aloof 'New Middle East' vision and depiction of murdered Israelis as 'victims of peace' – a new and frivolous Orwellian oxymoron⁸ – seemed detached from reality to most Israeli voters.

Viewing the PLO as an unrepentant terrorist organization using Oslo as a ploy for the implementation of its 1974 'phased strategy' for Israel's destruction, Netanyahu made no effort to break the deadlock and made it clear that ensuring Israel's security constituted his foremost priority. The promised second and third phases of withdrawal and redeployment were long overdue and the settlements, in turn, continued to expand. Yet, bowing to pressure, in January 1997 he signed the Hebron Agreement providing for Israel's redeployment from the city. At the October 1998 Wye Plantation summit (near Washington DC), convened at President Clinton's initiative, Netanyahu pledged to withdraw from 13% of the West Bank within 90 days and to transfer another 14% of the land that was under joint Israeli–Palestinian control to sole PA control. In return, the PLO agreed to amend its charter, which called for the destruction of the state of Israel (and which should have already been abolished years earlier in accordance with the Oslo accords), and Arafat committed himself (yet again) to a policy of zero tolerance of terrorism and violence.⁹ This agreement, however, was only partly implemented. In May 1999, the Netanyahu government lost power and was replaced by a Labour-led government headed by Ehud Barak.

The Camp David failure

Barak moved quickly to revive the peace process between Israel and its neighbours. Having realized that Syrian President Assad was unwilling to take the plunge,¹⁰ he decided to bring the Israeli–Palestinian conflict to a swift end by addressing without delay the core issues left by the Oslo Accords: borders, Jerusalem, the Palestinian refugees, the Israeli settlements, etc. This came to a head at the US-organized Camp David summit of 11–25 July 2000, where Barak offered the Palestinians a comprehensive 'peace package' comprising:

- The establishment of an independent Palestinian state in 91–92% of the West Bank and the entire Gaza Strip.
- The evacuation of most Israeli settlements in these territories and the cession of Israeli land to the nascent Palestinian state in exchange for the handful of settlement clusters that would remain in place.
- Partitioning Jerusalem and acknowledgment the Arab part (al-Quds) as the Palestinian capital.
- Palestinian permanent custodianship over Temple Mount (al-Haram al-Sharif).
- Return of refugees to the prospective Palestinian state, but not to Israel, and a massive international aid programme to facilitate their rehabilitation.¹¹

Barak hoped that these concessions would bring Arafat to sign a peace treaty with Israel that would end the conflict once and for all, only to find the Palestinian leader reluctant to make this momentous move.

The decision to convene the Camp David summit at this particular juncture was probably a mistake. Like a good meal, peace cannot be made in a pressure cooker without the existence of certain key ingredients. In this case, the parties came to the summit unprepared, with impossibly wide gaps in their positions and the negotiators unfamiliar with details of possible solutions.¹² For his part, Arafat feared an American–Israeli collusion to impose a solution on the Palestinians.¹³ The Palestinians did not consider the Americans in general and President Clinton in particular an impartial mediator and attempted to evade the summit altogether, with Arafat telling Secretary of State Madeline Albright that they needed more time for preparations. To his delegation Arafat reportedly said: ‘We’re going to face a disaster. We are being set up . . . they want to take us to Camp David so they can blame us’.¹⁴ The agenda included too many difficult issues and the lack of adequate preparations allowed fears, suspicions, prejudices and insecurities to surface. So much so that Dennis Ross, the Chief US Negotiator, argued that the Palestinians were not serious for the first eight days of the summit and that the Israelis were not serious for the first six days of the summit.¹⁵

Nor were Barak’s strategic vision and boldness matched by political acumen and personal skills. Politics is all about quiet conversations, negotiations, listening, manoeuvring and compromising; having spent a lifetime in the army taking, and a far longer time giving orders, Barak was totally impervious to this culture. He remained arrogant, distant, aloof, suspicious and cold. In the words of his close advisor, Gilad Sher: ‘Ehud is brilliant, but has zero social intelligence’.¹⁶

Barak’s two meetings with Arafat, in July 1999, reportedly ended in failure,¹⁷ and during the Camp David summit he made little effort to bond with Arafat and assuage his fears and suspicions. On several occasions, at critical moments in the negotiations, the Prime Minister’s advisors urged him to speak directly with Arafat but Barak refused, having no trust in the Palestinian leader and his reluctance to prematurely reveal his cards.¹⁸ At meals Barak ignored Arafat, absolutely oblivious to the consequences of such an insult.¹⁹ No personal relations were created as Barak perceived courteous gestures as a prize to be granted only when an agreement is finalized, not realizing that this attitude actually hampered prospects for agreement. Indeed, Arafat complained to the Americans a few times that Barak would not engage him at Camp David.²⁰ Barak was willing to commit Israel to peace but apparently not to commit himself to pursuing it wholeheartedly.

Part of Barak’s reluctance to indulge Arafat stemmed from his decision to leave the arena to Clinton, the summit’s architect and moving spirit, in the hope that the energetic and highly committed US president would induce Arafat to compromise. However, whether due to his reluctance to put the necessary pressure on Arafat as argued by US peace negotiator Aaron David Miller²¹; whether President Clinton was unable to assert its will²² as former Foreign Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami asserted (Ben-Ami argued that at Camp David the US looked like a diminished and

humbled superpower), or due to Arafat's resilience to the US pressure as argued by a pro-Palestinian account of the talks, the president failed to broker the coveted agreement. 'If the Israelis can make compromises and you can't, I should go home', Clinton pleaded with Arafat. 'You have been here fourteen days and said no to everything. These things have consequences; failure will mean the end of the peace process ... Let's let hell break loose and live with the consequences.'²³

Immediately after the summit, Clinton left no doubt as to who bore the main responsibility for its failure. 'Prime Minister Barak showed particular courage, vision, and an understanding of the historical importance of this moment',²⁴ he told a White House news conference announcing the end of the talks. 'The prime minister moved forward more from his initial position than Chairman Arafat, particularly surrounding the question of Jerusalem'.²⁵ A few days later, in a special interview on Israeli television, Clinton elaborated:

I kept telling the Palestinians, and I will say again to the world that you cannot make an agreement over something as important as a city that is the holiest place in the world if it is required of one side to say: 'I completely defeated the interest of the other side'. If either side gets to say that at the end, there won't be an agreement. There can't be.²⁶

Barak had a similarly scathing view of his peace partner. As he saw it, Arafat failed to negotiate in good faith, rejecting all offers without making any counterproposals, leading the Prime Minister to conclude that Arafat believed that Israel 'has no right to exist, and he seeks its demise'.²⁷ Shlomo Ben-Ami, who participated in the talks, echoed this view by telling the author of this article that the most frustrating thing in Camp David was that Arafat never came with a counterproposal.²⁸ To a certain extent, this passivity arose from the conviction that the Israeli team was not putting all its cards on the table and sought to close a low-price deal. The Israeli delegation spoke of 'security needs', which appeared arbitrary to the Palestinians.²⁹ Thus, all that Arafat did was to reject the Israeli proposals, thus pushing the Israeli delegation to raise the price and make further concessions. In the words of Dennis Ross: 'never erase an option, never close a door, and never commit to anything that was irrevocable – indeed, never regard any commitment as binding'.³⁰

In the final account, Arafat said no in Camp David because he was unwilling to agree to a permanent deal that would resolve the conflict once and for all. Yet Barak's clumsy personal skills and negotiating style played into Arafat's hands and made it easier for him to reject the Israeli concessions.³¹ As Arafat complained to Clinton: 'I have the impression that we're expected to keep quiet and wait for Mr. Barak to decide what's good for him and for us'.³² A more sophisticated negotiating style, one showing respect and equality, would have made it more difficult for Arafat to reject.

Abba Eban quipped that 'History teaches us that men and nations behave wisely once they have exhausted all other alternatives'.³³ Following this reasoning, peace negotiations are more likely to succeed once both adversaries realize that the costs of continued conflict exceed those of its resolution.³⁴ In Camp David, only the Israeli side was anxious to reach an agreement, and this

desperation played into Arafat's hands. All he had to do was to bide his time and simply reject all of Barak's offers, driving the anxious Israeli Prime Minister to come forward with further concessions. Indeed, one of the main problems in Camp David was the constant shifting of red lines. Israel would say 'This is the most we can do' only to come forward with more concessions upon Arafat's rejection. The red lines kept moving, making the absolutely-last-offer hardly credible and the negotiation exercise most difficult. According to Aaron Klieman, Ben-Ami was instrumental in tabling supplemental concessions that systematically erased Israel's 'red lines',³⁵ but the former minister puts the blame on Barak.³⁶ Be that as it may, the Israeli negotiators lacked the necessary skills for the momentous task and until the collapse of the talks did not really understand their opponent.

To make matters worse, Barak went to Camp David without real public support. By that time, he had lost his parliamentary support and his coalition included only 42 members of the Knesset's 120 MKs. Indeed, Barak had to delay his arrival at Camp David because he had to face a vote of no confidence, which he narrowly lost (52–54) but still survived as a simple majority of Knesset members (61) was required to remove a serving Prime Minister from office.³⁷ Barak's government's ability to function was extremely limited. The person who came to power on the promise to effect a sea change in Israel's relations with its neighbours found himself incapable of prevailing over political allies and rivals alike or winning public trust in his political skills and statesmanship. By the time Israel was about to go to new prime ministerial elections in early February 2001, after only two years in power, Barak was desperate to salvage his position by making further concessions to the Palestinians, this time in another summit meeting in the Egyptian resort of Taba on 22–28 January 2001.

Deadlock in Taba

With elections due within a fortnight, an Israeli delegation headed by Minister of Justice Yossi Beilin, architect of the Oslo process, made unprecedented concessions to its Palestinian counterpart. According to senior PLO official Mamduh Nawfal, the Israeli delegation agreed to the establishment of a fully contiguous Palestinian state in the entire Gaza Strip and in 97% of the West Bank. Together with the Israeli territory to be ceded in compensation for the remaining 3%, the nascent Palestinian state was to be larger than the combined territory of the pre-1967 West Bank and Gaza.³⁸

No less important, for the first time in the history of the Arab–Israeli conflict an official Israeli representative (i.e. Beilin) effectively recognized the Palestinian 'right of return'. The draft proposal included:

- return to Israel capped at an agreed number and with priority accorded to those Palestinian refugees currently resident in Lebanon;
- return to Israeli 'swapped territory' where special infrastructure would be prepared for the absorption of refugees;
- return to the nascent State of Palestine;

- rehabilitation within existing host countries; and
- relocation to third countries that expressed readiness and capacity to absorb Palestinian refugees.³⁹

As for the Temple Mount, Israel agreed that it would be under Palestinian control but the issue of sovereignty over the holy places remained open, with internationalization contemplated as a possible solution.⁴⁰

Despite these far-reaching concessions, no agreement was reached. At the immediate level, the Palestinians insisted on an unfettered Israeli acceptance of the 'right of return' and on having sole sovereignty over the Temple Mount.⁴¹ But more fundamentally, Arafat did not wish to go down in history as the first leader who gave up on the Palestinian dream of one Palestine, on Israel's ruins. Peace, a precious commodity, requires compromises that Arafat was unwilling to make. The legacy he wanted to leave behind was of a man who stood by his ideas, who served his people until the very end, and who remained loyal to the idea of Palestine in its entirety as part of the larger Arab nation. Compromises for him meant betrayal, disloyalty to the ideas of Palestine and Arabism. In the words of Dennis Ross, Chief US Negotiator: 'Arafat could not do a deal that ended the conflict... Whenever Arafat gets in trouble with his own people, to divert attention to this, he always incites them against Israel. This is a common tactic among dictators. Arafat knew, he could do this no more if he agreed to peace'.⁴²

On the other side, the Israeli public was unwilling to pay what was perceived by many as an exorbitant price for an uncertain peace (and a last-ditch attempt by Barak to save his premiership). There is a zero-sum game between terrorism and the democratic process. One comes at the other's expense and the two cannot coexist.

The Sharon government

On 6 February 2001, in the first (and only) direct elections for the premiership (but not the Knesset) in Israel's history, Ariel Sharon routed the incumbent Barak, winning 62.4% of the vote.

In his two years in power, Barak had totally undermined his security credentials and at a time when Israelis were murdered and maimed by the day in endless suicide bombings and shootings they were looking for a someone to restore basic physical security to their lives rather than pursue lofty ideals of peace. Yet it would take longer than expected for Sharon, despite his reputation for military adventurism, to unleash an all-out offensive against the PA and the other Palestinian groups; and the trigger of this offensive was the 27 March 2002 massacre, when a suicide bomber entered the Park Hotel in the coastal town of Netanya and blew himself up amidst the 250 guests celebrating the Passover seder, killing 30 of them and injuring another 140, 20 of them seriously. Hamas promptly claimed responsibility for the attack.

The Seder massacre was the last straw for many Israelis in the long process of disillusionment with the Oslo process since the launching of the 'al-Aqsa intifada' in September 2000. It led to Operation Defensive Shield, which promptly uprooted the terrorist infrastructure in the West Bank,⁴³ and subsequently led to

the construction of a security barrier to prevent future terrorist attacks emanating from this territory. From this point of view, the barrier has proven an unadulterated success story: before its construction, the number of terrorist attacks averaged 26 per year (down from hundreds in the years preceding Operation Defensive Shield); since its partial construction, the number has dropped to between three and zero per year as Israel was able to foil any suicide bombing originating from the northern West Bank and specifically from the cities of Nablus and Jenin, areas that had previously been infamous for exporting suicide bombers.

Politically, however, the barrier proved problematic as most of its route passes on the West Bank side of the 1967 Green Line, and on 9 July 2004 the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled in its advisory opinion that it contravened international law, and that it had to be dismantled with compensation paid to the Palestinian owners of property confiscated for its construction.⁴⁴

Another major decision taken by the Sharon government involved the completion of Israel's disengagement from Gaza.⁴⁵ To recall, by May 1994 Israel had completed its withdrawal from the Gaza Strip apart from a small stretch of territory containing Israeli settlements; now Sharon decided that the time had come to unilaterally evacuate these settlements since the PA proved to be no partner to an agreement on the issue. This was done in the summer of 2005 in the face of vociferous public and political opposition, so much so that Sharon felt compelled to leave the Likud and to establish (on 24 November 2005) his own party, named Kadima (Forward).

A troubled political agenda

Sharon did not manage to lead his newly established party to electoral victory. On 4 January 2006 he suffered a massive stroke (a fortnight after suffering a milder one) and fell into coma from which he has not recovered to date. He was succeeded by Ehud Olmert, who went on to win (on 28 March 2006) the parliamentary elections, albeit not with the same popular support enjoyed by Sharon at the time of his incapacitation, and to form a coalition government headed by Kadima.

During his three years in power (14 April 2006–31 March 2009), Olmert, who promised in his political platform to make a real effort to reach an agreement with the PA, headed since Arafat's death in November 2004 by Mahmoud Abbas, went on instead to launch two large-scale military confrontations: the July–August 2006 'Second Lebanon War' following Hezbollah's attack on an IDF patrol within Israel and the abduction of two soldiers,⁴⁶ and Operation Cast Lead (December 2008–January 2009) in Gaza, aimed at stopping Hamas's constant rocketing of Israeli villages and towns.

Olmert met Abbas at the Annapolis peace conference (November 2007),⁴⁷ and some confidence-building measures were taken by Israel but these were not enough to bring about peace.⁴⁸ According to Olmert's peace plan, Israel would retain the large settlement blocks comprising 6.3% of the West Bank's territory (containing 75% of the Jewish population there), in return for which it would

transfer to the Palestinians territory equivalent to 5.8% of the area of the West Bank as well as a safe-passage route from Hebron to the Gaza Strip via a highway that would remain part of the sovereign territory of Israel but where there would be no Israeli presence. Following in Beilin's Taba footsteps, he was even willing to consider absorbing a token number of Palestinian refugees in Israel.⁴⁹ Abbas rejected these proposals, dismissing out of hand Olmert's request to recognize Israel as a Jewish state alongside the would-be Palestinian state and reiterating his insistence on the full implementation of the 'right of return'.⁵⁰

Abbas responded in a similarly dismissive fashion when Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whose Likud party won the February 2009 parliamentary elections, broke from Likud's foremost ideological precept (in a speech on 14 June) and agreed to the establishment of a Palestinian Arab state provided the Palestinian leadership recognized Israel's Jewish nature. It is true that Netanyahu's envisaged Palestinian state was to be fully demilitarized, with iron-clad international guarantees to ensure this eventuality (e.g. prevention of smuggling of prohibited weaponry, restrictions on the use of airspace to avert possible aerial attacks on Israel, etc.).⁵¹ But then, given Israel's tiny size and extreme strategic vulnerability none of the Jewish parties left of Likud would acquiesce in the establishment of a non-demilitarized and internationally supervised Palestinian state.

It may also be true that Netanyahu's acceptance of the two-state solution (which he reiterated on a number of other occasions, notably his congressional address of 24 May 2011)⁵² was a ploy to fend off the intensifying international pressure on Israel, first and foremost by the Obama administration. But even so, the PA could have taken him at his word (or attempted to call his bluff) by accelerating the peace talks rather than walking away from the negotiating table – for the first time since the beginning of the Oslo process. Abbas, however, does not believe that the time is ripe for peace.

Conclusions

It is unrealistic at this juncture to expect the attainment of peace in the short term, not least since over the past six years the PA had been largely overpowered by Hamas, which won a landslide victory in the first Palestinian parliamentary elections in January 2006, and the following year took control of the Gaza Strip by force of arms. Hamas is openly and unabashedly committed to Israel's destruction and there is little hope for peace so long as religio-violent Hamas plays a crucial role in Palestinian society and politics.

This, however, should not prevent Israel from working to lay the groundwork for the resumption of the peace process and its successful culmination in a peace treaty. In the short term it should endeavour to rebuild trust with the PA through such measures as settlement construction freeze, improvement of economic conditions in the West Bank, and reduction of checkpoints so as to ease the lives of ordinary Palestinians. At the same time, it should work out the general principles of the final status agreement and ways for its implementation, notably:

- *A Palestinian state* will be established in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.
- *Borders* will be based on the June 1967 Green Line with minor territorial adjustments.
- *Settlements*: Most settlements will be evacuated apart from the major settlement blocks comprising 70% of the Jewish population in the West Bank and less than 2% of its size. The Palestinian state will be compensated with equal-sized Israeli territory.⁵³
- *The Security Barrier* will run along the mutually agreed border.
- *Territorial contiguity*: A major elevated highway will connect the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to allow safe and free passage. The road will be solely Palestinian. No Israeli checkpoints will be there.
- *Security*: The Palestinian state will be non-militarized with an international observer force monitoring compliance. There will also be joint Israeli–Palestinian patrols along the Jordan River.
- *Jerusalem*: Palestinian neighbourhoods will be included in the capital al-Quds; Jewish neighbourhoods will remain under Israeli sovereignty.
- *Temple Mount/al-Haram al-Sharif*: The Palestinian state will be granted extraterritorial sovereignty over the site under Waqf administration. Jews will enjoy free right of access.
- *Water*: A fair solution should be found to prevent infringement on the rights of either side and assure that both have the required water supply for sustenance and growth.
- *Terrorism and violence*: Both sides will work together to curb terrorism and violence as there is zero-sum game between terrorism and peace.
- *Incitement*: Both sides will overhaul their education curricula, excluding incitement, racism, bigotry and hate. The curricula should reflect a language of peace, tolerance and liberty.
- *Prisoner exchange*: As an act of goodwill and trust building, Israel will release a number of agreed-upon prisoners. Over time, as peace strikes root, all security prisoners will return home.
- *Right of return*: The 1948 Palestinian refugees and their descendants will be able to settle in Palestine. Israel will recognize the Nakba and compensate the 1948 refugees and their children (but not grandchildren) for their suffering. Unification of families should be allowed on a limited quota annual scale. But massive refugee return to Israel will not be allowed. This dream must be abandoned.

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Notes

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