

## **CHAPTER II**

### **UNITED STATES' BIASED FOREIGN POLICY IN ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT**

#### **2.1 A Brief Overview of U.S.-Israel Relations**

Israel has long been, and remains, America's most reliable partner in the Middle East. No one would question the close ties between the two countries ever since the establishment of Israel as a state. The United States was the first country to recognize Israel as a state in 1948, and the first to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel in 2017. Israel and the United States are bound closely by historic and cultural ties as well as by mutual interests (Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, 2018).

Between 1945 and 1948, President Harry Truman played a crucial role in bringing the U.S. decisively to the support of the Zionist program. Despite the State Department's objection, fearing that U.S. backing of a Jewish state would negatively impact relations with Arab states in the Middle East, limit access to oil, and destabilize the region, on May 14, 1948, only minutes after the Zionists declared the independent state of Israel the U.S. under President Harry Truman, became the first country to recognize Israel. Truman also endorsed the first U.S. loan to Israel, marking the beginning of America's financial commitment to Israel (Tillman, 1974).

There appear to be many reasons for the special U.S.-Israeli relationship. Most studies of U.S. - Israel relations, emphasize the role of American domestic politics, others mention broader security considerations. The argument that the intensity of the "friendship" between the two is rooted in mutual national interests is difficult to accept, since both Israel and the United States are pluralistic in their social, ideological, and political makeup (Sheffer, 1987). Washington's initial support for the creation of the state of Israel was primarily based on domestic political considerations. American early commitment to Israel was rooted in shared values and sentiment, duty and affiliation. The existence of common values is the

most important basis for the favorable American attitude towards Israel. The reality of the Nazi Holocaust, which resulted in the murder of 6 million Jews, generated powerful support for Israel in the U.S. (Gilboa, 1987).

Many scholars assume that the bond between the two countries is based on shared strategic interest or compelling moral imperatives. Israel may have been a strategic asset during the Cold War, especially because of Israel's overwhelming military success in the 1967 war. By serving as America's proxy, Israel helped contain Soviet expansion in the region and inflicted humiliating defeats on Soviet clients like Egypt and Syria (Reich, 1995). While the perception of Israel's important strategic value for the U.S. during the Cold War was not shared by everybody, it gained widespread legitimacy and assured almost unconditioned U.S. military, economic, diplomatic and political support for Israel. None of the various reasons discussed suffices in itself to explain the close U.S.-Israeli relationship: they all form together a strong root system for almost unconditioned U.S. support to the State of Israel since it's coming into being (Rubenberg, 1986). Israel's strategic value during this period should not be overstated, however. Backing Israel was not cheap, and it complicated America's relations with the Arab world. Beginning in the 1990s, and especially after 9/11, U.S. support for Israel has been justified by the claim that both states are threatened by terrorist groups originating in the Arab or Muslim world. Israel is thus seen as a crucial ally in the war on terror because its enemies are said to be America's enemies (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2006).

Apart from its alleged strategic value, Israel's backers also argue that it deserves unqualified U.S. support because of four aspects, according to Mearsheimer and Walt (2006). The first rationale is Israel is weak and surrounded by enemies. Israel is often portrayed as weak and besieged, a Jewish David surrounded by a hostile Arab Goliath. This image has been carefully nurtured by Israeli leaders and sympathetic writers. Contrary to popular belief, the Zionists had larger, better-equipped, and better-led forces than its Arab neighbors. Israel was far from helpless even in its earliest years. Today, Israel is the strongest military power in the Middle East. Its conventional forces are far superior to its neighbors', and it is the only state in the region with nuclear weapons.

Second, it is a democracy, which is a morally preferable form of government. American backing is often justified by the claim that Israel is a fellow democracy. But it cannot account for the current level of U.S. support. After all, there are many democracies around the world, but none receives the level of support that Israel does. The United States has overthrown democratic governments in the past and supported dictators when this was thought to advance U.S. interests, and it has good relations with a number of dictatorships today. The “shared democracy” rationale is also weakened by aspects of Israeli democracy that are at odds with core American values. The United States is a liberal democracy where people of any race, religion or ethnicity are supposed to enjoy equal rights. By contrast, Israel was explicitly founded as a Jewish state, and whether a citizen is regarded as Jewish ordinarily depends on kinship, it is not surprising that Israel’s 1.3 million Arabs are treated as second-class citizens or that a recent Israeli government commission found that Israel behaves in a “neglectful and discriminatory” manner towards them (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2006).

Third, the Jewish people have suffered from past crimes and therefore deserve special treatment. Because Jews were persecuted for centuries and can only be safe in a Jewish homeland, many believe that Israel deserves special treatment from the United States. This history, as noted, provides a strong moral case for supporting Israel’s existence. Israel’s founding was also consistent with America’s general commitment to national self-determination. But the creation of Israel also involved additional crimes against a largely innocent third party: the Palestinians. The mainstream Zionist leadership was not interested in establishing a bi-national state or accepting a permanent partition of Palestine. Zionist mainstream thought had always regarded a Jewish state from the Mediterranean to the Jordan River as its ultimate goal. To achieve this goal, the Zionists had to expel large numbers of Arabs from the territory that would eventually become Israel. Europe’s crimes against the Jews provide a strong moral justification for Israel’s right to exist. But, the tragic history of the Jewish people does not obligate the United States to help Israel no matter what it does today (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2006).

The last argument is Israel's conduct has been morally superior to its adversaries' behavior. The final moral argument portrays Israel as a country that has sought peace at every turn and showed great restraint even when provoked. The Arabs, by contrast, are said to have acted with great wickedness. In fact, Israel's conduct is not morally distinguishable from the actions of its opponents. The early Zionists were far from benevolent towards the Palestinian Arabs. The Arab inhabitants did resist the Zionists' encroachments, which is hardly surprising given that the Zionists were trying to create their own state on Arab lands. The Zionists responded vigorously, and neither side owns the moral high ground. Although Israel is clearly justified in responding to violent acts by groups like Hamas and Hezbollah, its willingness to inflict massive suffering on innocent civilians casts doubt on its repeated claims to a special moral status (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2006). Israel may not have acted worse than many other countries, but it clearly has not acted any better. These facts about Israel's conduct have been amply documented by numerous human-rights organizations, including prominent Israeli groups, and are not disputed by fair-minded observers.

There is a strong moral case for supporting Israel's existence, but that is fortunately not in jeopardy. Viewed objectively, Israel's past and present conduct offers little moral basis for privileging it. But neither these aspects convincing enough to explain the unwavering support of the U.S. towards Israel. These justifications regarding Israel should not blind United States to act objectively according to the international law to punish those who found guilty in this conflict not only Palestinians but also Israel as well.

## **2.2 The U.S. Involvement in Israel-Palestine Conflict**

The Israeli-Palestinian issue remains one of the most significant and difficult dilemmas facing the international community. The ongoing conflict between Israelis and Palestinians has directly and indirectly spawned several regional wars in the past five decades, threatened Western access to critical oil resources in the Middle East, provided a justification for increased militarization throughout the region, and caused a high number of civilian deaths as result of terrorism.

To end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not simply a question concerning Israel's security and finding a just solution for the Palestinians, it is vital for the interests of the U.S. in the region. Israeli-Palestinian peace prospects, however, are not hopeful. Many peace plans have been advocated to reach a settlement and the U.S., under every president, has undertaken efforts on its own. Almost every peace plan has focused on persuading Jewish and Arab leaders to divide the land lying between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. However, numerous groups on both sides reject the idea that land division is the solution and the more peace initiatives move forward between Israelis and Palestinians, the more extremists on both sides are resorting to ever more outrageous acts of terrorism to compromise the progress toward a peaceful resolution. Neither the Israeli government nor the Palestinian leaders seem to be able or willing to combat these subversive elements. This leaves only one possible path to progress: an externally imposed solution. A trusted outside force will have to act not only as guarantor of any agreement, but also has to be willing to apply diplomatic, economic and military pressure on all concerned parties involved in the conflict. With its strong influence and presence in the Middle East, the U.S. has to take on the leading role to coerce Israeli officials and the Palestinian authority to achieve a comprehensive settlement (Schmaglowski, 2007).

The U.S. should take the lead in a renewed diplomatic initiative of the international community to facilitate a sustainable settlement. Only through direct and firm U.S. commitment to a renewed peace process can the current cycle of violence be broken and a sustainable settlement be reached. A new strategy should involve the Arab nations, has to be based on international consensus on the end state for both conflict parties up front, and should establish firm milestones on the "road to peace". A successful long-term approach has to consider all issues preventing a peaceful coexistence of Israelis and Palestinians. Besides defining borders and addressing issues, like security for the region, refugee return and compensation, the framework has to answer the question on how to build a survivable sovereign Palestinian state (Schmaglowski, 2007).

### **2.2.1 The U.S. Role in the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process**

The role of the United States of America in the Israeli-Palestinian Peace process has been very crucial particularly after the end of Second World War. The pressure from the American Zionist organization as well as the space provided by the termination of the British mandate due to the weakened British Empire was fully utilized by the rejuvenated economically and militarily strong and powerful United States. It proactively involved itself and assumes the role of mediator in the Palestine-Israeli conflict, through it in the strategically important Middle East region (Riyad, 1981).

The furtherance of its economic and strategic interests during the cold war period the U.S., policy in the Middle East remained one of strengthening and supporting Israel economically and militarily in order to make it a military base and a satellite state in the region. The policy was also guided by directly involving itself in the Arab-Israel conflict and through it in the Middle East region. The policy also was directed to win over the support of the Arab states. In this direction, it sought to seek the support of anti-communists and pro-west authoritarian and non-democratic and traditional states of the region. In order to ensure the security for transiting the flow of oil, from the region the potential beneficiary states were provided with economic incentives of business expansion and, therefore made part of the western alliance (Riyad, 1981).

The United States has been an active participant in Middle East peacemaking, and American involvement has usually been considered as an important aspect for the successful negotiations of any Arab Israeli agreement. While the U.S. did not initiate most successful negotiations, it took a central and forceful role in all the peace processes leading to these agreements once they came to light. But U.S. did not play a role of impartial mediator in the peace process. Therefore, the role of the U.S. in the Middle East region and particularly in Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been one of indifference and non-involvement and disinterestedness to more proactive

and direct involvement with the problem at different times in the history of the conflict. At times, it has taken a back seat, and allowed arbitration by the U.N. and other statutory organizations of peace making that it created from time to time. The behind the scene activities of the U.S. were also resorted to when these organizations and institutions were in the peace process. Such contradictory and conflicting roles that the U.S. has played in the long history of the peace process. The U.S. Middle East policy which has been riddled with paradoxes appears to be an important factor leading to the continuance and non-resolution of the Palestinian conflict and the creation of the Palestinian state in the Middle East (Cattan, 2000).

Mediators need not to be impartial, but they must deliver the side to which they are perceived to be close. An empirical example is the U.S. mediation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in which the government biased mediator (United States) has been accepted and even seen as necessary by the Palestinians because the Americans are basically the only ones, who are perceived as capable of convincing Israel to make costly concessions. Either through protecting their interest or through delivering their side to costly concessions, biased mediators will therefore be associated with peace-agreement stipulations that are either beneficial for one side or particularly exploitable for the other (Cattan, 2000).

The Arab-Israeli dispute basically a contest between two distinct nations seeking their claims on the same territory, has become a very complex problem in the course of more than half a century of its existence, involving issues like the border settlements, recovery of lost territories, disengagement of armies, liberation of Jerusalem, compensation and repatriation of refugees and a plethora of subsidiary issues flowing there from. Over the long decades, the Arab-Israeli dispute has attracted new disputants with the result that it has now become a crowded battle arena. There is the Palestinian-Zionist dispute at the centre, the Israeli border disputes with the frontline Arab states, the conflict between Arab nationalism and the state of Israel, and the Super Power contest at the outer

most perimeters. The battle arena, therefore, doesn't represent a neatly drawn picture as there are crooked lines, broken angles and overlapping borders. The Arab-Israeli dispute is a very complex and a difficult task. At the same time because of its complexities it is open to clever manipulation and exploitation if the mediator is so inclined (Dhanani, 1982).

The role of a mediator is to create conditions in which the parties join in identifying, defining and solving the problem. The mediator may fulfill his responsibility either as a polite middle man whose task is to encourage the convergence of interests between the two warring camps without making his presence felt or he could adopt a fiercely interventionist style of mediation and might even be willing and able to carry out the results of his mediatory efforts. A mediator may start as a 'neutral' or 'biased' on certain issues but in the process may change its position as things unfold and issues may be understood differently in the course of the conflict resolution process. It may also happen in a dispute like the Palestine-Israel conflict which has existed for a long time that either the interests of the mediating party in the long history get changed due to the change in the international or regional correlation of forces (Cattan, 2000).

The Arab-Israeli problem has become extremely complex and complicated involving several issues simultaneously. The United States as a super power has great strategic, economic and political interests in the region. U.S. involvement is as old as the problem itself, and so have been its efforts to resolve it. Like any other foreign policy move, these efforts have been influenced by a combination of factors at any given time.

The U.S. Political involvement in Palestine and other Arab territories started at the end of the First World War. It was initiated through the enunciation by the U.S. of two fundamental principles in the sphere of international relation, which are the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by conquest and the right to self-determination of people. It is this resolution on which the Israeli claim for a legal statehood is based. The provision for a Palestinian state, though of the same legal validity, was never



implemented. The fact remains that the U.S. was one of the important signatories to the resolution. As such it was morally committed to the recognition of the Palestinians as a distinct nation and to their right to a sovereign independent state (Dhanani, 1982).

The U.S. made the first moves towards resolving antagonism between Israel and its neighbors. Three problems were presented in quick succession; the first called for the sharing of the waters and irrigation plans of the Jordan river among the riparian states, including Israel; the second involved a complicated flyover in the middle of the Negev desert to provide a land communication between Egypt and the rest of the Arab world to its east, and the third was a comprehensive mediatory effort in which the U.S. agreed to contribute to an international fund for compensation to the Palestinians, to help in the adjustments of the borders between the Arab states and Israel, and to enter into security treaties with Israel and its neighbors. All the three initiatives were made to formalize the situation on the ground and secure Arab acquiescence to Israel's existence to their midst. None of them yielded any positive result (Dhanani, 1982).

#### **2.2.1.1 The U.N. Partition Plan 1947**

Like later U.S. presidents, Truman was confronted by ideological divisions within his administration. Those opposing the support for an Israeli state, argued that a Jewish state would seriously damage American relations with the Arab states and that the U.S. could not afford to alienate the Arabs because Europe as well as the U.S. depended on oil supplies from the Middle East. They also claimed that a partition of Palestine would lead to increased extremism in the Arab world and that the establishment of a Jewish state would push the Arabs toward Russia. In addition, they argued that the idea of a Jewish state was contradictory to the UN Charter and American principles of self-determination and, if a partition were instituted, the Palestine problem would become a permanent feature of international politics. After the UN vote on the partition of Palestine, rational U.S. government decision making was overcome by events. Whatever theoretical

consequences of a Jewish state were debated within the U.S. administration, the partition resolution escalated the conflict in Palestine itself and the Jews of Palestine declared their independence leading to the first Israeli-Arab war (Spiegel, 1985).

Following the recognition of Israel, the Middle East became more central to American foreign policy because of the altered Soviet-American competition. The Arab world in particular was seen as a significant area for containing the Soviet Union and Washington found itself caught in a complex process of having to balance its Israeli and Arab relations through regulating arms sales and financial aid, restraining Israel during times of war, challenging the development and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in the region, and promoting attempts to mediate in the Israeli-Arab conflict. Determined to show sympathetic and impartial friendship toward the Arabs and Israelis and to contain international communism and Soviet advances in the Middle East (Spiegel, 1985).

#### **2.2.1.2 The Alpha Plan 1956**

In early 1955 Britain and the United States devised a peace plan, code-named Alpha. It was an attempt to offer a partial solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, though the eventual goal was a comprehensive settlement. The main incentive of the Western powers in launching this joint endeavor was to stabilize the region and thus maintain their own security and economic interests in the Middle East while damaging the developing Soviet-Arab relations. In addition, a settlement was seen as a prerequisite to the participation of the Arab states (particularly Egypt) in the organization of Middle East defense (Rabinovich, 1991). The growing political commitment to the Palestine issue led Egypt to take part in the 1948 War. Contacts between Israel and Egypt following the war were limited and held in secrecy. The main Egyptian demand was for Israel's withdrawal from the Negev in order to establish a territorial link with the Eastern Arab world and possibly gain land for resettling Palestinian refugees. Israel, for its part,

considered Egypt to be the most important Arab state and the key to peace with the Arab world in general (Oren, 1992).

A major episode in this regard was the Israeli- Egyptian indirect contacts surrounding a peace plan, code- named Alpha. It was a secret British- U.S. plan devised in early 1955 by Evelyn Shuckburgh, the British Foreign Office assistant undersecretary of state, and Francis Russell, from the U.S. Bureau of the Near East at the State Department. By offering a solution to the conflict, Britain under the premiership of Anthony Eden and the United States under President Dwight Eisenhower and Secretary of State John F. Dulles hoped to prevent the Soviet Union from exploiting the conflict to fortify its position in the Middle East. In addition, a settlement was seen as a prerequisite to the participation of the Egypt in the organization of Middle East defense, which was directed against what was perceived as the Soviet menace to the Free World (Caplan, 1997).

President Eisenhower, for instance, opposed the 1956 Anglo-French-Israeli Suez campaign and forced Israel to withdraw its forces from Sinai because of the potential escalation and the concern that the intervention by American allies might have a negative impact on U.S. interests in the Middle East. However, Eisenhower underestimated the intensity of feelings on both sides: first, the Israelis' psychological need for manifest support, and second, the Arabs' hostility toward Israel and imperialism. By the time Eisenhower left office, no progress had been made in resolving the Israeli-Arab conflict: a second Israeli-Arab war had been fought, the Russians had not been prevented from increasing their influence in the region, and U.S. ties with the Arab world were more uneven than they had been at the beginning of Eisenhower's first term (Shamir, 1989).

As during the following short-lived Kennedy administration, the Palestinians and their rights were essentially ignored. At first President Kennedy launched the programme of military sales to Israel and voiced the American moral and emotional attachments to the Jewish state. He even sounded the Israeli point of view that the return of the Palestinian refugees

to their ancestral land might create security dilemma and economic hardship to Israel. Palestinians during this period had no corporate identity and existed in U.S. political terms only as refugees (Schoenbaum, 1993).

### **2.2.1.3 The U.N. Resolution 242, 1967**

It fell to the administration of Lyndon B. Johnson to define a new strategy for dealing with the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Six-Day War in 1967 raised the global importance of the Middle East and the U.S. set its sights on a final resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict because of its conviction that the pursuit of U.S. vital interests in the Middle East required a definitive settlements (Tschirgi, 1989). It was evident though, that the parties involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict were locked into mutually unacceptable positions. The Arab regimes were still reluctant to recognize Israel's right to exist and demanded Israel's return to the boundaries laid down in the 1947 UN resolution. The Palestinians had established their own corporate identity and national agenda, demanding that all displaced persons must have the right of return to their original homes or should be compensated. For Israel, the claims of the Palestinians were impossible to deal with and concerning their Arab neighbors' territory would not be returned for less than peace, recognition, and security (Quandt, 1993).

The Johnson administration insisted on an interconnected resolution of all matters in dispute and developed a position somewhere in between. In Washington's view, Israel should be entitled to more than a return to the old armistice arrangements. Some form of peace contract should be achieved, and Israeli security concerns would have to be met. On the other hand, if the Arabs were willing to meet those conditions, Israel should return most, if not all, of the territory seized in the 1967 war. Basically, the Johnson position was that Israel should withdraw from the occupied territory, but only in return for a peaceful settlement. This position, the "territory-for-peace" formula, was addressed by President Johnson soon after the 1967 war and became the core for UN Resolution 242, of November 22, 1967. The American position initially developed by the Johnson administration in

1967 has remained the basis for Washington's diplomatic efforts to solve the Arab-Israeli dispute (Quandt, 1993).

#### **2.2.1.4 Rogers Peace Plan 1969**

Towards the end of 1960s the Nixon administration, through the initiative of Secretary of State William Rogers, which also known as the Roger Peace Plan recognized UN Resolution 242 and called upon Israel to withdraw from the territories occupied in the 1967 war (Bickerton & Klausner, 2005). The plan launched with a specific purpose of ending the protracted conflict on the Israel-Egypt border that was also aimed at reducing Soviet military presence in Egypt and limiting its involvement in the Arab-Israeli tensions, and thus securing U.S. predominance over the entire region. The plan was eminently successful in one side and marked the end of active Soviet diplomacy in regard to this problem (Rossi, n.d.). To emphasize the "package deal" nature of the Rogers Plan, the United States presented on December 18 a parallel document outlining an Israeli-Jordanian settlement, with several points added or modified to suit the special circumstances on this front. The permanent border, for example, was to "approximate" the armistice demarcation line but would also allow alterations based on "administrative and economic convenience." On the matter of Jerusalem, it was proposed that the two countries recognize it as a unified city while sharing some civic and economic responsibilities. As to the refugee problem, an annual quota of refugees to be agreed upon by the parties would be allowed to repatriate while the rest would be compensated financially (Podeh, 2015).

However, when Rogers made the U.S. plan public, Israel flatly rejected it, describing it as no less than "an attempt on the very existence of Israel". Israel feeling secure in its military superiority and insisting in recognition of Israel's right to exist prior to direct peace negotiations. Israel opposed Roger's effort and Washington failed to force Israel to yield to the UN resolution. While the Nixon administration played a major role in the successful restoration of peace between Egypt and Israel, following the

October 1973 war, Palestinian territorial demands were not seriously addressed by the U.S. during Nixon's terms (Rossi, n.d.).

### **2.2.1.5 Camp David Accords 1978**

The election of Jimmy Carter as the new American president in January 1977 and the entrance of a democratic administration to office offered a possible change in the U.S. position with regard to the Middle East. The transition toward a U.S. position that acknowledged the existence of Palestinian claims took place under President Jimmy Carter. Within a short time, the United States began to explore the possibilities with potential actors. Shuttle diplomacy was renewed with vigor (Podeh, 2015). From 1948 on until Carter took office, the United States treated the Palestinians as one of the problems to be solved in ending the Arab Israeli dispute rather than as an independent national movement and important entity in the peace process. Carter considered the Palestinian nationalism as a legitimate force that had to be satisfied in a settlement. He recognized UN Resolution 242 as the basis for lasting peace in the Middle East and defined three core principles for a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. These entailed the need for concrete manifestations of peace and normal relations, such as trade and the exchange of diplomats, the need for security arrangements for all parties but without pre-justice to the establishments of recognized borders along the 1967 lines, and the need for a solution to the Palestinian problem which had a political as well as a humanitarian dimension (Quandt, 1993).

Thus, the U.S. position was in favor of reconvening the Geneva Conference: Israeli withdrawal, with only minor modifications to the 1967 borders and recognition of Palestinian rights. The new American policy undoubtedly alienated the Rabin government and damaged the Labor Party's prospects of winning the elections, slated for May that year. The Israeli elections, held on May 17, 1977, resulted in the victory of the Likud Party, under the leadership of Menachem Begin. The results were not only a political "ballot box revolution" but also a major ideological shift, as

Likud was more committed to the territorial preservation of Greater Eretz Israel, particularly the biblical areas of Judea and Samaria (the Jewish term for the West Bank) and the expansion of the settlements in this area. Begin was an enigma to all the actors involved in the peace process. Their initial reaction was a combination of astonishment, bewilderment, and disappointment at his election (Shlaim, 1986).

Upon Begin's first visit to Washington (July 19–20), American officials were surprised to see more flexibility in substance and procedure than they had anticipated. He expressed a willingness to reconvene the Geneva Conference and presented a more moderate position than Rabin regarding withdrawal from Sinai. In general, he was opposed to partial agreements and favored comprehensive treaties. He was, however, opposed to recognizing Palestinian rights, either in the form of their having an independent delegation to the Geneva talks or the creation of a political entity in the West Bank and Gaza (Stein, 1999).

The lack of progress toward convening the international conference led the United States and the Soviet Union to issue a joint declaration on October 1 stating that “The only right and effective way for achieving a fundamental solution to all aspects of the Middle East problem in its entirety is negotiations within the framework of the Geneva Peace Conference,” and that a comprehensive settlement should resolve key issues such as Israeli withdrawal from territories occupied in 1967 and resolution of the Palestinian problem, “including insuring the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people” (Stein, 1999).

Convinced that the U.S. needed to get more directly involved in the peace process, Carter invited President Anwar Sadat of Egypt and Prime Minister Menachem Begin of Israel to a summit meeting at Camp David and presided over the Camp David accords in September 1978 hoping to establish self-rule for the Palestinians. Most of the discussions at Camp David, however, revolved around the Palestinian issue, as it was crucial for Sadat to make a show of Arab solidarity and refute the recurring accusation

that Egypt had abandoned the Palestinians (Stein, 1999). The negotiations resulted in an agreement between Sadat and Begin to reach a just comprehensive and durable settlement of the Middle East conflict through the conclusion of peace treaties based on UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 in all their parts. Israel promised “full autonomy” for the Palestinian refugees in the accords signed in September 1978, however, the agreement ultimately turned out to be no more than a bilateral peace treaty between Israel and Egypt (Schiff, 1989).

In the end, the Camp David “Framework for Peace in the Middle East” was never implemented; Israel returned only the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt, but refused to surrender Israeli control over the West Bank and Gaza. Instead of using American leverage, such as Israel’s reliance on American military and financial assistance, to bring about Israeli compliance, Carter remained silent, fearing that a strong stand against Israel could have a negative impact on his political future. Subsequent administrations (Reagan, Bush Senior, and Clinton) continued to support UN Resolution 242 as the foundation stone of America’s Middle East peace effort, but also failed to take a hardline against Israel’s refusal to return Palestinian land. By doing so, Washington not only allowed Israel to retain the occupied territory but also encouraged political extremists in Israel, thus serving as an obstacle for a peaceful settlement of the Palestinian issue (Tillman, 1974).

#### **2.2.1.6 The Reagan Plan 1982**

During his first year in office after his 1980 election, Reagan evinced little interest in Middle East policy. Along with his secretary of state Alexander Haig and his secretary of defense Caspar Weinberger, he viewed the Middle East primarily through the prism of the U.S.-Soviet rivalry. Though Reagan was considered a staunch ally of Israel, bilateral relations went through several crises during 1981: the battle over the AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control System) sale to the Saudis was the first. The acquisition of this sensitive technology was met by strong opposition from the Israeli lobby in the United States, and was made possible only after



Reagan intervened in the Senate. The idea behind supporting the sale was to ensure the participation of moderate Arab countries in efforts to achieve peace in the Middle East. Begin's attempt to sabotage the deal on Capitol Hill was seen by Reagan as a betrayal. In addition, Israeli bombing of the Iraqi nuclear reactor and the annexation of the Golan Heights, which led to the suspension of the U.S.- Israel strategic agreement signed in November, further soured relations (Reagan, 1990).

When Israel invaded Lebanon in early June 1982 in response to the assassination attempt on the Israeli ambassador in London by a radical Palestinian group, the United States seemed to back a limited Israeli military operation aimed at eliminating the threat posed by the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization) to northern Israel. Soon, however, as the Israeli Defense Force engaged with Syrian forces in Lebanon and the operation expanded, Reagan sent a harsh personal letter to Begin, demanding an immediate cease- fire; "a refusal by Israel to accept a ceasefire," he wrote, "will aggravate further the serious threat to world peace and will create extreme tension in our relations" (Quandt, 1993).

Due to personal and political differences, Reagan decided to replace Haig with George Shultz in late June. Unexpectedly, the newly appointed secretary of state immediately turned his attention to the long-neglected peace process. Fearing that the Lebanese War would shake the fragile Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty and destroy the chances for peace in the Middle East, he secretly gathered a group of senior officials from the State Department to discuss a fresh start to the Middle East process (Quandt, 1993). Shultz's thinking was that the end of the war, with the evacuation of the PLO fighters from Beirut, would present an opportunity for the United States to launch a peace initiative. The deliberations of the group, which also included officials involved in the past (such as Carter and Kissinger) and experts from the private sector, highlighted the fact that in light of the PLO setback in Lebanon there must be a Jordanian role in any solution to the Palestinian problem. Such a role necessitated a reversal of the 1974

Rabat declaration, which recognized the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinians. It was estimated that the PLO ousting from Lebanon and the loss of its territorial base invalidated its veto on any decision concerning the Palestinians (Shultz, 1993).

On September 1, the day marking the end of the evacuation of the PLO from Beirut, Reagan delivered his speech, presenting what later became known as the Reagan Plan. Reagan stated that during the recent war the United States was engaged in “a quiet, behind the scenes effort to lay the groundwork for a broader peace in the region.” The Lebanese War, said Reagan, “tragic as it was, has left us with a new opportunity for Middle East peace. We must seize it now and bring peace to this troubled area so vital to world stability.” Reagan repeated the phrase “opportunity not to be missed” several times in his speech (Reagan, 1990). The plan followed the outline agreed to at Camp David: the Palestinians would get autonomy after a five-year transition period beginning with the free elections of a self-governing authority, a process that would prove that the Palestinians could run their own affairs and that the new authority did not constitute a security threat to Israel (Laham, 2004).

The United States made clear that it would not support the formation of an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza or the annexation of the territory by Israel. Therefore, the plan assessed that “self-government by the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza in association with Jordan offers the best chance for a durable, just and lasting peace.” In addition, the plan called for the “immediate adoption of a settlement freeze by Israel” to raise Arab confidence in the peace process, and it clarified that UN Resolution 242 applied to all fronts, including the West Bank and Gaza. Yet, “The extent to which Israel should be asked to give up territory will be heavily affected by the extent of true peace and normalization and the security arrangements offered in return.” Finally, it was determined that Jerusalem must remain undivided until its final status was decided through negotiations (Laqueur & Rubin, 1984).

In a way, the Reagan administration attempted in this plan to introduce certain changes to the Camp David Accords, which seemed necessary in light of changing reality. The absence of Jordan and representatives of the Palestinian inhabitants of the occupied territories from the negotiations has been the crucial missing link in the Camp David process. Indeed, the Reagan Plan can be seen as an extension of the Camp David Accords (Reich & Hollis, 1985).

The reactions to the Reagan Plan in the United States and the West were favorable. In the Arab world the most encouraging response came from Jordan. Egypt and Saudi Arabia also expressed some support, if lukewarm, for the plan. Meanwhile, vociferous criticism came from two different directions: Syria and the radical organizations within the PLO, also from Israel. On September 2 the Israeli government decided to reject the plan outright; after enumerating all the differences between the texts of the Camp David Accords and the Reagan Plan, the communiqué stated that because of the contradictions between the two documents, Israel had decided not to enter into any negotiations, offering to renew the autonomy talks on the basis of the Camp David Accords (Laham, 2004).

#### **2.2.1.7 The Shultz Initiative 1988**

On December 9, 1987, a car accident in Gaza sparked off demonstrations there, spilled over to the West Bank, and quickly spiraled into what would soon become known as the Intifada, or Palestinian uprising. The uprising was triggered by a combination of factors, such as the economic and political repercussions of the Israeli occupation as well as the absence of any semblance of a peace process, which in turn led to growing despair and frustration, particularly among young people. The Intifada brought about a reevaluation of the U.S. policy toward the Arab-Israeli conflict in general and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in particular. Shultz, the dominant architect of the Reagan administration's approach to the peace process, thought that the Intifada created a wholly new situation, one that in its own way altered the fundamental concept of the peace process. It posed

a “fresh opportunity” that could drive changes in a far more rapid way than the usual pace of the peace process (Shultz, 1993).

Shultz’s premise, however mistaken in the long run, was that since the PLO did not initiate the grassroots uprising, it bore the promise of a new generation of Palestinians, with new leaders trying to take hold of their own affairs. This development coincided with the Israeli desire to talk to indigenous leaders, but not members of the PLO. Shultz reckoned that the United States could help identify local leaders who would participate in the dialogue. In March 1988, Shultz launched a peace initiative. He thought that by creating an active and visible peace process, he would be able to lessen the dangers of escalating violence (Quandt, 1993).

The Shultz Initiative included the following elements. First, the process was to begin with an international conference, held in mid-April, to allay Israeli fears and reminiscent of the London Agreement, the conference was planned only as a ceremonial kickoff event and had no power to impose solutions or to veto any agreements previously reached by the parties. Second, two weeks after the conference, negotiations would begin between Israel and each of the willing parties. The plan envisioned talks between Israeli and joint Jordanian- Palestinian delegations, with U.S. involvement, working on the parameters of a transitional self- rule for the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. These talks were expected to end within six months (November). The transitional period would begin three months later (February 1989) and would extend for three years. The plan then proposed that the final talks would be held seven months after the negotiations on the transitional period began (in September 1989), and would be completed within one year. This was a new element termed “interlock”: a built-in connection between the transition period of self- rule and talks on the final status, aimed at allaying Arab fears that the transitional period would last forever (Spiegel, 1985).

The failure of the Shultz Initiative was due to opposition from the PLO, which was disappointed that even as the uprising raged it was given

the role of junior partner to Jordan in the plan (Quandt, 1993). Jordan's departure from the diplomatic lexicon meant that the United States and Israel would have to engage directly with the PLO. While Israeli leaders were still far from thinking in such terms, the United States was almost racing to that end, the major impediment was Kissinger's pledge to Israel in 1975 that the U.S. would not recognize or negotiate with the PLO unless it acknowledged Israel's right to exist, accepted UN Resolutions 242 and 338, and renounced terrorism (Spiegel, 1985).

### **2.2.1.8 The Madrid Conference 1991**

In 1991 a convergence of dramatically shifting circumstances, primarily the end of the Gulf War and the crumbling of the Soviet Union, made possible an international conference on the Israeli-Arab conflict. The three-day parley, hosted by the Spanish government in Madrid and cosponsored by the United States and the Soviet Union, was unprecedented in its broad participation. Opening on October 30, it marked a concerted attempt to revive the peace process with Israeli, Syrian, Lebanese, and Jordanian-Palestinian delegations. The conference and the ensuing ten rounds of bilateral and multilateral negotiations did not produce an agreement, but they did facilitate a breakthrough on the Palestinian and Jordanian tracks. A recurring feature of Arab-Israeli negotiations throughout the 1980s, is the sense among decision makers and diplomats that an international conference is needed to kick-start a peace process. All such efforts failed due to the intransigence of key regional actors, as well as a lukewarm U.S. response (Ross, 2005).

The international conference idea was revived during the war against Iraq (January 1991). Just like with the 1982 Lebanese War, the State Department assessed that the war in Iraq might create conditions for a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict (Quandt, 1993). No wonder that Bush conveyed this sentiment to Congress, on March 6, 1991, in the aftermath of the victory in Iraq: "We must work to create new opportunities for peace and stability in the Middle East. On the night I announced Operation Desert

Storm, I expressed my hope that out of the horrors of war might come new momentum for peace” (Kurtzer, et al., 2013).

The convening of the Madrid Conference was the result of several major developments in the international and regional arenas. The first was the demise of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, this profoundly affected the region, eliminating the patrons of the Arab Rejection Front such as Syria, Iraq, Libya, and the PLO which could no longer rely on the Soviet Union to back their often antagonistic policy toward peace with Israel. In addition, the fact that the crumbling superpower had opened its gates to some million Jewish immigrants strengthened Israel economically and demographically. The second development was the victory of the United States and the supporting coalition in the Gulf War against Iraq and the liberation of Kuwait. On the one hand, the war weakened Jordan and the PLO because of their support of Saddam Hussein’s annexation of Kuwait, it was estimated that they might respond positively to any serious diplomatic overture in order to break out from their siege. On the other, the war strengthened the U.S. determination to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict. Becoming a hegemon in the international system, the United States saw the moment as propitious to establish a new order in the Middle East (Arens, 1995).

Finally, though the Intifada had largely exhausted itself, it had greatly affected the Israeli public, which was more willing now to resume the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and not necessarily through the Jordanian channel, understanding that the role of the Palestinians and the PLO cannot be ignored (Kimmerling & Migdal, 2003). It took Baker eight months of shuttle diplomacy to persuade all the relevant players to seize the opportunity and take part in the suggested international conference (Baker, 1995). The regional countries responded to the idea with varying degrees of interest. Israel, on the other hand, led by Shamir and the Likud, had always opposed the idea of an international conference, fearing an imposed solution. However, when Bush decided to delay the approval of \$10 billion

in loan guarantees for the purpose of dealing with the Jewish immigration from Russia over the following five years, Shamir had to rethink his position. In addition, Bush and Baker made it clear that they considered Israel's ongoing settlement activity as a major obstacle to peace (Eisenberg & Caplan, 1998).

The result was an impressive and unprecedented gathering, which, presented as the most serious attempt ever on the part of the United States to promote a comprehensive settlement of the Arab- Israeli conflict. It was the result of determined presidential leadership, a strong secretary of state enjoying full presidential backing, and positive regional and international environments (Kurtzer, et al., 2013).

The conference opened ceremonially on October 30, 1991. It immediately turned into a stage on which each party presented its own historical narrative, colored by the personality and posture of the presenter before the international press. The conference was followed by five rounds of bilateral talks in Washington, which did not bring any breakthrough. Against Israeli wishes, the joint Palestinian-Jordanian delegation was soon separated into a Jordanian and a Palestinian track, with the Palestinian delegates sanctioned by the PLO and their activity fully coordinated with it, these factors marked an important step on the road to holding direct PLO-Israel talks (Khatib, 2010). The Madrid Conference also offered a new multilateral channel that included some twenty states and dealt with regional issues such as water, environment, economic development, arms control, and refugees. The first round of the talks was held in Moscow in January 1992 (Ashrawi, 1995).

The futile bilateral negotiations in Washington were interrupted by elections in Israel on June 23, 1992, which brought to power for the first time since 1977 the Labor Party, led by Rabin (prime minister) and Peres (foreign minister). The ideology and aims of the new government were markedly different from its predecessor. Rabin stated that the government's main goal would be to promote the making of peace and take vigorous steps

that will lead to the end of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Rabin promised to continue the Madrid track and put more substance into achieving peace. Undoubtedly, the composition of the new government and its platform reflected a change in the national priorities in the realm of Arab-Israeli relations (Karsh, 1994).

The change in the Israeli policy was not noticed immediately. Though the atmosphere in the Washington talks resumed for the sixth round in August 1992 considerably improved, and though the government abolished the law prohibiting any contacts between Israeli citizens and the PLO. The talks in December were virtually at a dead end, as each side steadfastly clung to its position. The Palestinians wanted an end to the occupation while negotiating an interim agreement that would lead to an independent Palestinian state; the Israelis wanted to retain as much control as possible for as long as possible, without dismantling settlements, while preventing the mushrooming of the interim agreement into the nucleus of a Palestinian state (Savir, 1998). The eighth round ended abruptly on December 16 when Rabin decided to deport Hamas activists to Lebanon in reaction to a terrorist operation perpetrated by that organization. The unexpected move discredited the peace process and strengthened the extremists on both sides. The next round of negotiations was delayed for another four months and produced no results. After twenty months and ten rounds of negotiations, the Madrid formula was not capable of ushering in a new era of peace in the Middle East (Shlaim, 2000). Though unproductive, these talks were continued by the new U.S. administration under Bill Clinton, who entered office in January 1993.

#### **2.2.1.9 Oslo Accords 1993 and 1994-1998 Agreements**

The deadlock in the talks convinced Rabin and Peres that their preferred partners, Jordan and the local Palestinian leaders, were unable to deliver an agreement. At the same time, the setbacks suffered by the PLO led the organization to consider a more conciliatory approach. Thus Israelis and Palestinians appeared of one mind in sensing the futility of the



Washington talks. This served as a background to the opening of a secret channel in Oslo in January 1993. It was initiated by Yossi Beilin, the Israeli deputy foreign minister, and Terje Larsen, a Norwegian social scientist, who headed FAFO, a peace research institute in Oslo. The informal talks were held between two Israeli academics, and three Palestinian officials (Beilin, 1994).

As the negotiations in Oslo progressed, Rabin and Peres saw that a serious opportunity to strike a deal with the PLO was in the offing. A major factor in their decision to pursue this track was the intelligence assessment that in light of the dire situation in the occupied territories a political solution to the Palestinian problem was urgent, and that the rising prestige of the Islamic Palestinian organizations, Hamas and Islamic Jihad, made Arafat the most convenient interlocutor for Israel at that juncture (Kristianasen, 1999). In addition, coincidence played a role: simultaneous with the Israeli-Palestinian breakthrough, the talks with Syria which is Rabin's initial preferred channel, stalled due to Asad's insistence on full Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights and his disappointing response. As a result, Rabin decided to change his priorities and focus on the Palestinian track, which seemed to offer an immediate political reward. Agreement with the Palestinians would have meant that he almost kept his word to his voters to sign an interim agreement within six to nine months of the elections (Eisenberg & Caplan, 1998).

In late July 1993, Israelis and Palestinians involved in the negotiations sensed the existence of a genuine opportunity for signing an agreement. On August 20, 1993 Israel and Palestine signed, in a confidential ceremony in Oslo, the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements (Ross, 2005). On September 9, Israel and the PLO exchanged letters of mutual recognition. The Palestinian letter recognizes the right of the state of Israel to exist in peace and security. In addition, the PLO renounced the use of terror and all forms of violence, accepted UN Resolution 242, and promised to remove all the articles in the

Palestinian National Charter that denied Israel's right to exist. In another letter submitted to the Norwegian foreign minister, the PLO called on the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza to "take part in the steps leading to the normalization of life," which meant a call to end the Intifada. Though the letter did not define which Israel was being recognized, the reference to Resolution 242 meant that the PLO had limited its future aspirations to the 1967 boundaries. The Israeli letter recognized the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people and vowed to commence negotiations with it within the framework of the peace process. Beyond that, Israel recognized no rights belonging to the Palestinian people. Clearly, the recognition letters were not even, reflecting the asymmetry between the parties and the weakened position of the PLO (Golan, 2007).

Though Norway was the main facilitator of the negotiations, it was suggested that the United States announce that it had brokered the agreement and hold a signing ceremony in Washington. Secretary of State Christopher refused to take credit for a role he did not play, but the ceremony did take place at the White House on September 13 (Christopher, 1998).

The DoP was not a peace agreement, but rather a blueprint for temporary arrangements by which the territories were to be administered pending the determination of their final status. The main premise expressed within it was graduality, with a peace process moving in stages from occupation to self-rule and then permanent solution. The stated aim was to establish a Palestinian Interim Self-Government Authority (PA) and an elected council for the Palestinian people (Shlaim, 2000). Soon after the PLO's return to the negotiation table, two agreements were concluded. The Paris Protocol, signed in late April 1994, dealt with economic relations between Israel and the Palestinians, including limited customs union, transfer of goods, taxes, and monetary relations (Golan, 2007). The second, the Gaza and Jericho Agreement, was signed in Cairo on May 4. This document had not been called for in the DoP but was the result of repeated

delays, disputes, and haggling over implementation procedures. Since the scheduled withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and Jericho, which was to signal the commencement of the timetable, had not yet begun, the agreement called for an accelerated withdrawal within three weeks. It also had a clause regarding “prevention of hostile acts,” which was meant to protect both Israelis and Palestinians from terrorist attacks. It also included some confidence-building measures, such as the release of prisoners (Khatib, 2010).

The most important agreement was the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (Oslo II), signed in Washington on September 28, 1995. Comprising an astounding 410 pages and eight maps, it specified a timetable for the withdrawal (euphemistically called redeployment) of the Israeli army. Led by President Clinton, the summit drew representatives from twenty-seven countries, including several Arab states and the Palestinians, though it produced no significant results beyond the expression of international solidarity with Israel in its fight against Islamic terror (Shlaim, 2000). However the new-elected Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, did not feel committed to the process, which he had ideologically opposed from the very beginning. The Israeli withdrawals were stalled, and the standard of living in the West Bank and Gaza deteriorated. The situation was volatile (Ross, 2005).

Hoping to arrest the escalation, Clinton immediately invited both Netanyahu and Arafat to a summit in Washington. This meeting resulted in the signing of the Hebron Protocol on January 17, 1997, according to which Israel had to withdraw from the Muslim area of Hebron (constituting 80 percent of the territory) while maintaining security in the “Jewish zone” (the remaining territory, which included some thirty thousand Palestinians). The agreement bound Israel to three further redeployments over the next eighteen months. In addition, it was decided to release Palestinian prisoners, resume talks regarding the safe passage between the West Bank and Gaza, restart the construction of the Gaza airport and port; and resume permanent

status negotiations within two months after implementation of the Hebron Protocol. It was agreed to deploy a token Temporary International Presence (TIP), manned by Norwegians, to maintain order in the city (Golan, 2007).

The importance of the agreement pertained not only to its contents but to the fact that it was the first time a right-wing government agreed to relinquish lands in the heart of Eretz Israel. In addition, the United States returned to play a leading role in the negotiations. Though the Israeli withdrawal from Hebron was completed, other commitments specified in the agreement were not implemented. Netanyahu's excuse was that the Palestinians had not dismantled terrorist infrastructure, though in fact the number of attacks and casualties had considerably declined. The Palestinians' main complaint was that Israel continued to expand settlement building in the West Bank, particularly in and around East Jerusalem. The United States tried again to breathe life into the peace process by offering a second redeployment in return for dropping the third and the beginning of the negotiations over the permanent status. In order to achieve that goal, Clinton was willing to offer Israel a formal defense treaty and the Palestinians a commitment to support the idea of Palestinian statehood in the final talks (Ross, 2005).

With the original deadline (May 4, 1999) for ending the permanent status talks rapidly approaching, Clinton, by now well into his second term, invited the parties to a Carter-style summit, this time at the president's Wye River retreat, on October 15, 1998. There, the Wye Memorandum was concluded by Netanyahu and Arafat on October 23. This was the first time that a third party, the United States, was nominated to be actively involved in monitoring the implementation of the agreement. The U.S., which had hitherto played the role of facilitator and mediator, now assumed the role of referee and arbitrator. The final attempt to save the Oslo Agreements was in July 2000, when Clinton invited Barak and Arafat to Camp David to negotiate the final status agreement (Lasensky, 2004).

### **2.2.1.10 Camp David Summit 2000**

When Barak was elected prime minister in July 1999 he demonstrated determination to move forward on the peace process, on both the Syrian-Lebanese and Palestinian tracks. Though he decided to give priority to the first track against the better judgment of some of his ministers and aides, he was also keen to explore possibilities on the other track. Opposed to the principle of gradual progress embedded in the Oslo Accords, Barak sought a negotiation process leading to a final settlement that would entail the end of all claims. His logic was that if Israel implemented all its commitments in a transitional period, it would have no further bargaining chips with which to obtain concessions from the Palestinians. Therefore, his talks with the U.S. officials focused on the modalities of what became known as the Framework Agreement on Permanent Status (FAPS). The Palestinians received Barak's election with relief. In principle they agreed with the logic of pursuing a final agreement, though Arafat expected Barak to fulfill the remaining elements of the Wye Agreement before moving to final negotiations (Qurei, 2008).

On July 29, 1999, the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, led by Gilead Sher on the Israeli side and Sa'eb Erekat on the Palestinian, commenced in Jerusalem. These talks, which required American mediation, culminated in the Sharm al- Shaykh Memorandum on September 4, exactly four months after the original date set for signing the permanent status agreement, with the participation of Secretary of State Albright, Egyptian president Mubarak, the newly crowned Jordanian king Abdallah, Arafat, and Barak. This agreement called for Israeli withdrawal from a further 11 percent of the West Bank, the release of 350 Palestinian prisoners, the opening of safe passages between the West Bank and Gaza, and the construction of a seaport in Gaza (Indyk, 2009). There was also a timetable for final status talks to deal with Jerusalem, borders, refugees, and settlements: the FAPS was to be achieved by February 13, 2000, and a Comprehensive Agreement on

Permanent Status (CAPS) by September 13, 2000. On September 13, 1999, the FAPS negotiations officially commenced (Bregman, 2014).

An Israeli-Palestinian back channel was established in early November 1999 that operated in parallel to the official channel, dealing with the final status issues. The parties managed to agree on some principles and issues, but the differences regarding the details remained wide. As a result, the first FAPS deadline on February 2000 was not met (Qurei, 2008). In late April an abortive attempt was made to reach a FAPS in marathon discussions in Eilat. The Palestinians clarified that they opposed further interim agreements, preferring instead to move directly to a final settlement. As to substance, they insisted on only minor, and mutual, modifications of the 1967 borders, which in their view, reflected their major concession at the Oslo Agreements that is, the establishment of a Palestinian state on only 22 percent of the historical Palestine. In addition, they demanded formal Israeli recognition of the Palestinian Right of Return and the division of Jerusalem into Arab (East) and Jewish (West) parts. The gap between the parties was as wide as ever (Ross, 2005).

On the basis of these talks, Israeli and Palestinian delegations chosen a remote site in Scandinavia for talks, reminiscent of the Oslo channel, was meant to allow the parties to consider secretly some daring solutions to the most sensitive permanent status issues in the conflict, namely, borders, security, refugees, and Jerusalem. Yet two unexpected developments put a spoke in the wheels of the talks: first, news of the secret channel was leaked; second, on May 15, the day the Palestinians commemorate the 1948 War (called Nakba Day), widespread demonstrations began in the West Bank and Gaza in solidarity with a hunger strike by Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails. It was the most violent day in the territories since the opening of the Western Wall tunnel in 1996. These events affected the dynamics of the negotiations and led the parties to present more extreme views for fear of being accused of presenting a too-moderate position by groups opposing the peace process. Still, the talks were important as they clarified the gaps

between the parties regarding the permanent status issues and signaled possible areas of agreement (such as the question of boundaries), which laid the basis for further negotiations (Qurei, 2008).

As Israeli-Palestinian diplomatic interactions continued to lead nowhere, the idea of a tripartite summit seemed the only way to break the deadlock. Barak, who entertained the thought of a “Ben-Gurion style of decision” of ending the conflict once and for all, was the most enthusiastic. Clinton, too, was in favor of a grandiose move that would crown the end of his term, but he wanted to ensure the summit’s success by another round of pre-negotiations. In contrast, Arafat opposed the idea, fearing a trap that would impose an unsatisfactory solution on him. He also worried that the Palestinians would be blamed for any failure at the summit. In any case, he wanted to first see Israel’s fulfillment of the provisions made in Sharm al-Shaykh regarding withdrawal and the prisoners’ release, provisions Barak tried to eschew (Qurei, 2008). At that time, the Palestinians considered a “negotiating summit,” that is, a series of meetings that would eventually yield an agreement. Therefore, the Israeli-American-Palestinian contacts concentrated on exploring the chances of a summit (Indyk, 2009).

On the road to the summit an important meeting took place on June 25 in Nablus, between Arafat and all the Palestinian leadership and an Israeli delegation led by Ben-Ami. There it became obvious that even if in the territorial field there was some room to maneuver, the gaps in the refugee and Jerusalem issues remained wide. A careful analysis of the detailed positions of both parties in the run-up to the summit reveals that, at this stage, the differences between the parties were gaping and the chances of narrowing them were slim, unless one party was hiding some major concessions in its pocket (Qurei, 2008).

In spite of the uncertainties, on July 4 Clinton sent the parties an invitation to a summit at Camp David. Though Barak was still enthusiastic, Arafat came to the summit with a profound sense of gloom and suspicion. It was Clinton’s task to convince Arafat that this was not a trap Barak was

setting to corner him, but an opportunity to fulfill Palestinian aspirations. Thus the parties arrived at Camp David with a sense of anxiety and apprehension. The Camp David summit lasted fifteen days (July 11–25) before ending in naught (Indyk, 2009). A good deal of scholarship was subsequently dedicated to the questions of what went wrong and which party should be blamed for the summit's failure.

In the days that followed, a battle over the memory of Camp David ensued between Israelis and Palestinians, in which the Americans also took part. Each side now presented its own version of the events with the aim of pinning the blame on the other. The Israeli narrative spoke of a generous Israeli offer that was unilaterally rejected by the other side, proving the nonexistence of a Palestinian partner. Clinton too ascribed the blame to Arafat, in contrast to his earlier promise to the Palestinians. The Palestinian counter-narrative insisted that the Israeli position was neither generous nor an offer at all and that the failure was in fact Barak's. This "memory battle" remains yet another historiographical debate in the annals of the Arab-Israeli conflict (Shamir & Maddy-Weitzman, 2005).

#### **2.2.1.11 Clinton Parameters**

On December 19, high-ranking Israeli and Palestinian delegations met at the Bolling Air Force Base. On December 23, the last day of the talks, Clinton met the delegations and informed them of his bridging proposals (later to become known as the Clinton Parameters). According to Indyk, the document had been meticulously prepared after extensive consultations with Israeli and Palestinian negotiators and leaders. In addition, all the important Arab leaders had been briefed on the details and had endorsed the plan. Clinton presented the parameters as his own ideas, noting that they remained on the table only so long as he was in office. He emphasized that they were non-negotiable (Indyk, 2009).

The Clinton Parameters included a plan on territory which the Palestinian land 94 to 96 percent of the West Bank for the Palestinians with



a land swap from Israel of 1 to 3 percent, and an understanding that the land kept by Israel would include 80 percent of the settlers in blocs. On security, Israeli forces would withdraw over a three-year period while an international force would be gradually introduced (Indyk, 2009). The Israelis would also be able to maintain their early warning station in the West Bank with a Palestinian liaison presence. The new state of Palestine would be “non-militarized,” but would have a strong security force; sovereignty over its airspace, with special arrangements to meet Israeli training and operational needs; and an international force for border security and deterrence. On Jerusalem, the Arab neighborhoods be in Palestine and the Jewish neighborhoods in Israel, and the Palestinians would have sovereignty over the Temple Mount/Haram and the Israelis sovereignty over the Western Wall and the “holy space” of which it is part, with no excavation around the wall or under the Mount, at least without a mutual consent (Ross, 2005). On refugees, the new state of Palestine should be the homeland for refugees displaced in the 1948 war and afterward, without ruling out the possibility that Israel would accept some of the refugees according to its own laws and sovereign decisions (Qurei, 2008). There also need to be an international effort to compensate refugees and assist them in finding houses in the new state of Palestine, in the land-swap areas to be transferred to Palestine, in their current host countries, in other willing nations, or in Israel. Both parties should agree that this solution would satisfy UN Security Council Resolution 194. Finally, the agreement had to clearly mark the end of the conflict and an end to the violence (Shamir & Maddy- Weitzman, 2005).

Clinton asked the parties to give him a final answer within five days. For that purpose he was willing to meet the two leaders separately. On that day, the Israeli cabinet decided to accept the Clinton Parameters as the basis for negotiations, provided that the Palestinians accepted them too. The final chapter in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations saga was written in Taba from January 21–27, 2001, just as George W. Bush entered office and a few days before the elections in Israel. While the Intifada was still raging (a brutal

Palestinian terror operation even led to a temporary suspension of the talks), top-level Israeli and Palestinian delegations attempted a last-ditch effort to arrive at an agreement. The new U.S. administration preferred to abstain from participating in the talks and was only briefed of the proceedings. In the absence of official documents (except pertaining to the refugee problem), the account of the Taba Talks is largely based on a non-paper, prepared by European Union observer (Rabinovich, 2004).

At the press conference following the talks, the delegations announced that they have never been closer to reaching an agreement and it is thus our shared beliefs that the remaining gaps could be bridged with the resumption of the negotiations following the Israeli elections. On balance, it seems that the Israeli and Palestinian positions became closer, particularly with regard to the borders, security, and refugee problems, though much work remained, particularly with regard to the Jerusalem issue (Golan, 2007). On February 6, 2001, Ariel Sharon, head of the Likud Party, was voted in as Israel's new prime minister. The combination of a hard right-wing prime minister in Israel and a new Republican administration in the United States that was unwilling to be burned in the conflict left little option but a suspension of the peace process (Podeh, 2015).

#### **2.2.1.12 The Arab Peace Initiative (Beirut Summit) 2002**

The election of Ariel Sharon as prime minister in February 2001, the relentless terror attacks of the Intifada, and Israeli military retaliation operations in the areas of the Palestinian Authority (PA) effectively ended any further peace negotiations. The United States, as mediator, was not engaged in pursuing peace talks but rather in seeking a formula for ending the violence. During 2001–2002 there were three attempts at reaching a cease-fire. The first was led by U.S. senator George Mitchell, whose report was published in April 2001; the second was by the head of the CIA, George Tenet, who issued the Tenet Plan in June 2001; and the third was General Anthony Zinni's "Joint Goals" plan in March 2002. All these endeavors failed to achieve the declared target of an Israeli-Palestinian cease-fire. In

light of the continuing violence, the timing of the peace overture offered by the Saudi crown prince Abdallah caught many by surprise, which also known as the Arab Peace Initiative (API) (Golan, 2007).

The U.S. response to the API was not enthusiastic. The Bush administration's first fourteen months in office were characterized by a "hands-off approach" to the Middle East. In the immediate post 9/11 period, Bush was preoccupied with fighting against international terrorism and the Afghanistan War. His national security adviser, Condoleezza Rice, thought that it was a bold proposal and could have been an important point of departure for negotiations. On February 21 the State Department defined the Saudi Initiative as a significant and positive step. A few days later, Bush expressed publicly for the first time his support of the initiative, clarifying that only with the cessation of hostilities and terrorist attacks could it be implemented. On April 4 he made an important speech, which linked the summit's resolutions with the Israeli- Palestinian predicament (Rice, 2011).

At the end of his speech Bush announced his intention to send secretary of state Colin Powell to the Middle East to seek broad international support for his vision. Yet the tour was largely a blunder; it failed to stop the vicious circle of Palestinian suicide attacks and Israel's retaliation operations that undermined the chances of a dialogue. In the midst of the political impasse, Bush invited Abdallah to his ranch in Crawford, Texas (an honor reserved for special guests) on April 25. During this meeting the crown prince presented a modified peace plan (Bahgat, 2007). The new version was intended as a synthesis of the "vision" of the original Saudi Initiative and the necessity to deal with the reality. Significantly, it was more "friendly" to the United States and Israel: it did not mention the refugee problem and did not specify Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 borders. Israel rejected the proposal, and that it was basically devised to rescue Arafat and the Palestinian Authority (Podeh, 2014).

In May-June 2002, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, with the cooperation of both Jordan and the PLO, attempted to promote the API in Washington, but

to no avail. On June 24, Bush delivered the Rose Garden speech that outlined the American view of a future Israeli-Palestinian settlement. The speech constituted a compromise between the positions of the State Department, the Pentagon, and the White House. “My vision” Bush declared, “is two states, living side by side in peace and security. There is simply no way to achieve that peace until all parties fight terror (Meital, 2006).” But Bush’s vision of a Palestinian state was with a new and different Palestinian leadership. He talked about normalization of relations between Israel and the Arabs but ignored the Saudi Initiative. In many ways, this speech heralded the birth of a new American peace plan, the Road Map, which was formally launched in April 2003, in parallel to the occupation of Iraq (Podeh, 2014).

The Road Map referred only indirectly to the API. It was stated that the envisaged settlement would be based on the foundations of the Madrid Conference, the principle of land for peace, UN Resolutions 242, 338, and 1397, agreements previously reached by the parties, and the initiative of Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah which endorsed by the Beirut Arab League Summit calling for acceptance of Israel as a neighbor living in peace and security, in the context of a comprehensive settlement (Golan, 2007).

As expected, the parties to the conflict focused on advancing the Road Map, at the expense of the API. In Israel, the Sharon government continued to delegitimize the API. This was the situation until the outbreak of the Second Lebanon War in summer 2006. During this period important changes took place: Arafat had died in November 2004 and was replaced by Abu Mazen in January 2005, while Sharon completed his unilateral Disengagement Plan from Gaza in August 2005 before resigning from the Likud Party and founding a new party, Kadima, in November 2005. As a result, elections were brought forward to March 2006, but Sharon suffered a stroke and was replaced by his deputy, Ehud Olmert. At the same time, Hamas won the Palestinian elections to parliament and a government led by Ismai’l Haniyeh was formed. In light of these changes in the regional

balance of power, coupled with the deadlock in the Palestinian track caused by the Fatah-Hamas rift, the API suddenly appeared as a possible instrument for igniting the peace process and building a new moderate coalition (Podeh, 2014).

The renewed effort to launch the API did not receive any more of an enthusiastic response from the United States than had the original plan; in mid-July, Bush called for the convening of an international meeting aimed at promoting the establishment of a Palestinian state. After prolonged consultations regarding its agenda, the Annapolis Conference opened on November 27 with an impressive participation of delegations from sixteen Arab countries, five Islamic countries, as well as other states. At the end, the final communiqué stated that the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations on the final status agreement would commence in mid-December, with the aim of finalizing the discussions at the end of 2008. The implementation of the agreement was conditioned on the fulfillment of the obligations of the two parties within the Road Map under American supervision. Though the final communiqué did not mention the API, Olmert related to its importance in his speech at the conference. In practical terms, the Annapolis Conference led to direct negotiations between Olmert and Abu Mazen though the API again was thrown in the dustbin (Podeh, 2014).

#### **2.2.1.13 The U.S. Road Map 2003**

On April 30, 2003, a day before the U.S. military operations in Iraq ended, President George W. Bush announced the Road Map, a new Israeli-Palestinian peace plan devised by the Quartet on the Middle East that is, the United States, Russia, the European Union, and the United Nations. It was the first American peace initiative since the Reagan Plan of September 1982, though it did not carry the official endorsement of the president or the secretary of state so that it would not damage their prestige in case of failure. The Road Map was the consummation of a long process of negotiations and consultations between members of the Quartet and the relevant regional players that began right after Bush's Rose Garden speech on June 24, 2002,

in which he outlined his vision of a two-state solution for Israel and Palestine. It was a performance-based and goal-driven plan, with clear phases, a timeline, target dates, and benchmarks aimed at offering substance to Bush's vision and bringing an end to al-Aqsa Intifada (Kurtzer, et al., 2013).

Shortly after, the situation in the West Bank degenerated. In response to a series of terrorist attacks perpetrated by Hamas during the Jewish Passover holiday, the IDF with U.S. political support launched Operation Defensive Shield in late March. The Israeli operation eclipsed the rather dramatic announcement in Beirut of the Arab summit's peace initiative, Israel largely ignored it, and the U.S. response was lukewarm at best. Meanwhile, pressure was exerted on the U.S. by the Quartet and certain regional countries to do something to pacify the situation (Miller, 2008). In his meetings with the Jordanian and Saudi kings, the Egyptian president, and the Israeli prime minister, Bush became acquainted with the positions of the different parties, and though Arafat was ostracized, Bush had also received a position paper from the Palestinians regarding final status talks. All these meetings helped the administration to prepare the ground for a major speech delivered on June 24 at the White House Rose Garden. When the president makes a speech in the Rose Garden, it signals that the message is important. To a large extent, the speech foreshadowed the publication of the Road Map (Muasher, 2008).

The president's speech was preceded by a declaration by the European Union on June 22 calling for an end to the occupation and the early establishment of a democratic, viable, peaceful and sovereign state of Palestine, on the basis of the 1967 borders, if necessary with minor adjustments agreed by the parties (Muasher, 2008). Two days later, Bush outlined his vision for two states living side by side in peace and security. From the Palestinians he demanded the replacement of the current leadership with a new, elected leadership opposing terrorism. He also demanded the drafting of a constitution and the introduction of serious

institutional reforms leading to democracy. The final borders, the capital, and other aspects of the state's sovereignty were to be negotiated between the parties, with the help of the Arab states. The agreement on final status issues was supposed to end within three years. Israel was asked to withdraw its military forces to the pre- Intifada positions and to stop all settlement activity (Meital, 2006).

Undoubtedly, it was not a balanced speech, it tilted toward the Israeli position. The Israelis actually had significant input in shaping the final version of the text, even providing some of the language. Indeed, the fact that Bush fully embraced Sharon's position regarding the necessity to oust Arafat and the need for institutional reforms was a victory for Israeli policy. In addition, the call for Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 line was in accordance with UN resolutions based on the accepted formula of recognized and secure boundaries. Even the notion of a Palestinian entity was not anathema to Sharon, as already in September 2001 he delivered a speech in which he expressed for the first time his readiness to accept an independent Palestinian state. The Palestinians, for their part, received with gratification Bush's call for the establishment of a viable state, yet its provisional borders raised fears regarding the end result of the negotiations. In addition, the demand to replace the iconic Arafat was a condition bound to raise difficulties within Palestinian leadership and society. In the final analysis, the speech stamped Bush as pro-Israeli, making it difficult for him to present himself as an honest broker in the conflict (Miller, 2008).

The Road Map was finally presented to the parties on April 30, 2003. From an American perspective, the overthrow of Saddam Hussein marked an opportunity in the realm of democratic regime changes and the Arab-Israeli conflict similar to that created following the 1991 Gulf War, which led to the convening of the Madrid Conference and the resumption of several Israeli-Arab bilateral tracks. With the nomination of Mahmoud 'Abbas (Abu Mazen) by Arafat as prime minister in March 2003, it seemed

that a new Palestinian leadership more suited to the American and Israeli demands was emerging (Rabinovich, 2004).

By the time it was published, the parties were already intimately acquainted with its details. In an attempt to satisfy everyone, it included all the necessary elements: sequence, mutual responsibility, and parallelism. In the preamble it was stated that the goal of the plan was a final and comprehensive settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by 2005. That, in turn, would result in the emergence of an independent, democratic, and viable Palestinian state living side by side in peace and security with Israel and its other neighbors (Muasher, 2008).

In principle, the Road Map had several drawbacks. First, like Oslo it was guided by the logic of graduality, yet unlike Oslo it provided mechanisms for testing and evaluating the performance of the obligations entailed in the Quartet's plan. It was unclear, however, how the monitors would interpret performance and with what authority. In addition, the existence of spoilers on both sides of the conflict indicated that they would attempt to obstruct the success of this process. Second, the promise of the establishment of a Palestinian state with provisional borders could be seen by the Palestinians as a device to limit the boundaries of the state to the existing areas which consisted of less than 50 percent of the envisaged Palestinian state in its 1967 borders. Should the negotiations collapse, it was noted, the Palestinians would find themselves controlling more or less the same amount of territory. Third, the undisguised attempts at removing Arafat from power and the undemocratic interference in Palestinian political life (setting dates for elections, drafting a constitution, nominating a prime minister, etc.) were bound to raise antagonism within the Palestinian leadership and society (Golan, 2007). The inability, or rather unwillingness, of both parties to implement the Road Map sealed its fate: though it was never formally aborted, the Palestinian domestic rivalries and Sharon's decision to gamble on the Gaza Disengagement Plan in December 2003



meant that for all practical purposes, the Road Map was doomed (Kurtzer, et al., 2013).

#### **2.2.1.14 Obama's Role in the Peace Process**

In September 2010, the Obama administration pushed to revive the stalled peace process by getting the parties involved to agree to direct talks for the first time in about two years. While U.S. President Barack Obama was the orchestrator of the movement, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton went through months of cajoling just to get the parties to the table, and helped convince the reluctant Palestinians by getting support for direct talks from Egypt and Jordan (Burns, 2010).

The aim of the talks was to forge the framework of a final agreement within one year, although general expectations of a success were fairly low. The talks aimed to put the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to an official end by forming a two-state solution for the Jewish and Palestinian peoples, promoting the idea of everlasting peace and putting an official halt to any further land claims, as well as accepting the rejection of any forceful retribution if violence should reoccur. The Israeli government rejected any possible agreement with Palestine as long as it refuses to recognize Israel as a Jewish state (Tessler, 1994).

In 2011, Obama became the first U.S. president to adopt Palestinian recognition of Israel as a Jewish state as a U.S. parameter for peace. This is in accordance with the principle of the two-state solution, first proposed in the 1980s. The mainstream within the PLO have taken the concept of territorial and diplomatic compromise seriously and have showed serious interest in this. The Obama administration apparently hoped adopting Palestinian recognition of a Jewish state as a peace parameter might encourage Israel to end settlement expansion and accept Palestinian statehood. Though no Palestinian leadership could ever survive conceding refugee return and equality for Palestinian citizens of Israel, this was the price the administration believed Palestinians would have to pay if they

wanted sovereignty. Aside from the legal invalidity of compelling such concessions from an occupied people, adopting the recognition of Israel as a Jewish state as a parameter produced the opposite effect. Settlement building accelerated during the Obama administration's tenure, and the Israeli government is now laying the foundation for the annexation of the greater part of the West Bank (Hassan, 2018).

In April 2012, Mahmoud Abbas sent a letter to Benjamin Netanyahu reiterating that for peace talks to resume, Israel must stop settlement building in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and accept the 1967 borders as a basis for a two-state solution. In May 2012, Abbas reiterated his readiness to engage with the Israelis if they propose "anything promising or positive". Netanyahu replied to Abbas April letter less than a week later and, for the first time, officially recognized the right for Palestinians to have their own state, though as before he declared it would have to be demilitarized, and said his new national unity government furnished a new opportunity to renew negotiations and move forward (Tessler, 1994).

Direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians began on 29 July 2013 following an attempt by United States Secretary of State John Kerry to restart the peace process. Martin Indyk of the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C. was appointed by the U.S. to oversee the negotiations. Indyk served as U.S. ambassador to Israel and assistant secretary of state for Near East affairs during the Clinton administration. Hamas rejected Kerry's announcement, stating that Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas has no legitimacy to negotiate in the name of the Palestinian people (Tessler, 1994).

The negotiations were scheduled to last up to nine months to reach a final status to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict by mid-2014. The Israeli negotiating team was led by veteran negotiator Justice Minister Tzipi Livni, while the Palestinian delegation was led by Sa'eb Erekat, also a former negotiator. Negotiations started in Washington and were slated to move to the King David Hotel in Jerusalem and finally to Hebron. A deadline was set for establishing a broad outline for an agreement by 29 April 2014. On

the expiry of the deadline, negotiations collapsed, with the U.S. Special Envoy Indyk reportedly assigning blame mainly to Israel, while the U.S. State Department insisting no one side was to blame but that both sides did things that were incredibly unhelpful (Indyk, 2009).

U.S. President Barack Obama's meetings with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in late September 2016 renewed speculation about what, if anything, the president would do to advance the goal of Israeli-Palestinian peace before he leaves office. With just four months left in his term, and virtually no chance of resuming negotiations before then, the president is reportedly considering the option of laying out the basic parameters of a final status agreement, perhaps in the form of a UN Security Council resolution, as a way to preserve the possibility of a two-state solution under a future U.S. administration. That Obama was seen as the last, best hope for a two-state solution is deeply ironic given how little he has done to advance that goal in the nearly eight years since he took office. Not only has he failed to live up to the high expectations he set out at the start of his administration, Obama failed to break new political ground in terms of resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In fact, his legacy could well be the death of the two-state solution itself (Elgindy, 2016).

#### **2.2.1.15 Trump's Peace Initiative**

Current President of the United States, Donald Trump came into office as a self-described outsider and deal-maker seeking to disrupt the status quo and challenge prevailing political norms. At least with respect to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, President Trump has stayed true to his word, which has been marked by various shifts in United States attitudes in the region. For example, compared to past presidential administrations, the Trump administration seems much less committed to a two-state vision, places lesser emphasis on the importance of the peace process, and seemingly refuses to accept traditional "rules of the game," such as

considering Palestinian perspectives when making key regional decisions (Shalom & Michael, 2018).

The Palestinian Authority said that Trump's peace team has given every indication that its contents will reflect bias in favor of Israel by sidestepping explicit references to a two-state solution, dismissing refugee claims, endorsing a permanent Israeli presence in the Jordan Valley, allowing Jewish settlers to remain in the West Bank and remaining silent on the future placement of a sovereign Palestinian capital. They have removed all reference to a two-state solution, to Palestinian independence or Palestinian territories from State Department language, dismissing those terms as "meaningless" without yet spelling out alternatives. And they have defunded the UN Relief and Works Agency, characterizing the Palestinian aid organization as a corrupt and inefficient body perpetuating a false narrative on refugees unhelpful to the pursuit of peace (Wilner, 2018).

Trump's Middle East peace team is moving forward with a Gaza-plus plan: a state let in Gaza enlarged by annexing part of the Sinai. U.S. General David Petraeus has described the idea as a "Sinai Riviera." The apparent aim is to coax Palestinians into swallowing the bitter pill of indefinite Israeli occupation and eventual annexation of the West Bank. In exchange for Gaza-plus, Palestinians must accept what Netanyahu has dubbed "a state-minus." With a healthy infusion of donor money and the easing of movement and access restrictions, Trump and Netanyahu believe that Palestinians can be lulled into trading sovereignty or political and civil rights for an upgrade to their quality of life (Hassan, 2018).

President Trump is no longer certain that either side truly desires peace through mediation and compromise. President Trump claims he can strike the "ultimate deal" in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He contends that old methods have not worked, that only new approaches can provide a breakthrough. But while his use of business executives and lawyers rather than seasoned diplomats with regional know-how is novel, his plan is not. In fact, it perpetuates the very problem that has long undermined U.S.

pursuit of peace in the Middle East: not involving Palestinians in the discussion. Bringing peace back to the table is no easy task, but the lesson of the past is clearly that the only way to do so is to include both the central parties, Israel and the Palestinians (Jensehaugen, 2018).

Trump seems to have missed this point. His reversion to the pre-Oslo era where the Palestinians were, at best, talked about, but not with, is a poor choice of diplomatic method. While it is difficult to make peace with one's enemy, it is impossible to make peace without it. The unilateralist peace process has not worked in the past, nor will it work now. Much like Israel would not accept any solution decreed by an outside power, the Palestinians will not, either. For an "ultimate deal" to bear fruit, it must have legitimacy with both parties. That legitimacy can be gained only if the Palestinians are included. Taking the Israeli side on the Jerusalem question has the exact opposite effect. It destroys the chances for peace, it excludes the Palestinians, and it delegitimizes Trump's peace plan (Jensehaugen, 2018).

Unfortunately, however, U.S. policy regarding the problems of the Palestine did not seek their solution in accordance with justice and international law. On the contrary, it radically changed course by supporting the Israeli aggressor militarily, economically and politically, and acquiescing in the wrong done in Palestine. A careful examination of the events appears to indicate that the primary fault for the failure of the peace process and the subsequent violence lies squarely with the occupying power (Israel) and its patron (the United States). This is particularly important to understand in light of the September 11 terrorist attacks on U.S. targets, as questions are being raised about the popular anger against the U.S. generated in the Arab and Islamic world. Although very few Arabs or Muslims support terrorism, Washington's support for the Israeli occupation has been one of the key issues provoking growing resentment over the U.S. role in the Middle East. Many Americans are under the mistaken belief that Washington has tried to play the role of an even-handed mediator and are

perplexed as to why so many people in the region see the U.S. role otherwise (Zunes, 2002).

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a leading source of discontent and unrest in the Middle East and U.S.-Arab or U.S.-Muslim relations will not improve while the conflict persists. Accordingly, the U.S. should treat the Israeli-Palestinian issue as a serious threat to U.S. national security. America's strategic interests and internal politics regarding the Middle East in the past have constrained its ability to deal with Israel head-on. This is obvious from the fact that the U.S. has always refused to apply pressure that would have forced Israel to return territory on terms that the Israeli government felt unacceptable. The close relationship between Israel and the U.S. has limited Washington's ability to serve as a neutral mediator. Successful diplomatic efforts by the United States to resolve the conflict, however, require an evenhanded policy: the U.S. has to be recognized by all involved parties as a true honest broker. This will only be possible if Washington addresses the issue of sovereign Palestinian statehood consequently against Israeli resistance (Schmaglowski, 2007).

### **2.3 Diplomatic, Financial, and Military Supports Given by the American Administration to Israel**

For decades, the United States and Israel have maintained strong bilateral relations based on a number of factors, including robust domestic U.S. support for Israel and its security; shared strategic goals in the Middle East; a mutual commitment to democratic values; and historical ties dating from U.S. support for the creation of Israel in 1948. U.S. foreign aid has been a major component in cementing and reinforcing these ties. Although successive Administrations have disapproved of some Israeli policies, including settlement construction in the West Bank, U.S. officials and many lawmakers have long considered Israel to be a vital partner in the region, and U.S. aid packages for Israel have reflected this calculation. Some observers, including opponents of U.S. aid to Israel, argue that U.S.

assistance to Israel supports Israeli arms purchases without providing sufficient scrutiny of controversial Israeli military actions that contravene various laws and international norms, particularly regarding treatment of Palestinians (Sharp, 2018).

Congress consistently passes aid bills for Israel that provide the full amount requested by Israel, or sometimes in excess of what the president has requested. Israel receives U.S. aid at the beginning of each fiscal year in a lump sum that is deposited directly into the Federal Reserve Bank where it earns interest at about 8 percent. Israel is the only nation with this special privilege; other countries receive their grants quarterly and they are carefully overseen by the U.S. government. Israel is also protected against any possible cuts in the future by the so-called Cranston amendment whereby economic aid to Israel will be at least as much as its annual debt payments to the United States. No other nation has such assurances. Unlike regulations governing aid expenditures for other nations, there are also no special restrictions on how Israel spends the money (Terry, 2005).

### **2.3.1 Military Assistance**

Almost all current U.S. aid to Israel is in the form of military assistance. U.S. military aid has helped transform Israel's armed forces into one of the most technologically sophisticated militaries in the world. U.S. military aid for Israel has been designed to maintain Israel's military superiority over neighboring countries. The rationale is that Israel must rely on better equipment and training to compensate for being much smaller in land area and population than its potential adversaries. U.S. military aid also has helped Israel build its domestic defense industry, which ranks as one of the top global suppliers of arms. Israeli officials periodically express concern over U.S. sales of sophisticated weaponry, particularly aircraft, airborne radar systems, and precision-guided munitions, to Arab Gulf countries. As the United States has been one of the principal suppliers of defense equipment and training to both Israel and the Arab Gulf states, U.S. policymakers and defense officials have sought to carefully navigate U.S. defense commitments, while following the legal requirement to maintain Israel's military might. Although at times Israel and the Arab Gulf states

have coalesced against a commonly perceived Iranian threat, U.S. arms sales to states such as Saudi Arabia still periodically raise Israeli security concerns (Sharp, 2018).

U.S. aid to Israel from 1959 until 1985 consisted largely of loans, which Israel repaid, and surplus commodities, which Israel bought. Israel began buying arms from the United States in 1962, but did not receive any grant military assistance until after the 1973 Yom Kippur War. As a result, Israel had to go deeply into debt to finance its economic development and arms procurement. The decision to convert military aid to grants that year was based on the prevailing view in Congress that without a strong Israel, war in the Middle East was more likely, and that the U.S. would face higher direct expenditures in such an eventuality. U.S. aid package later was approved in 1985, following a severe economic crisis in Israel, which sent inflation rates soaring as high as 445 percent. The \$1.5 billion in emergency assistance-disbursed in two installments, in 1985 and 1986-was provided as part of Israel's economic stabilization program, which was implemented under the guidance of the U.S.-Israel Joint Economic Development Group (JEDG). An extraordinary package was approved in 1996 to help Israel fight terrorism. Israel is to receive a total of \$100 million, divided equally between fiscal years 1996 and 1997. (Jewish Virtual Library, 2019).

Since 1999, overall U.S. assistance to Israel has been outlined in 10-year government-to government Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs). MOUs are not legally binding agreements like treaties, and thus do not require Senate concurrence. Also, Congress may accept or change year-to-year assistance levels for Israel, or provide supplemental appropriations. Nevertheless, past MOUs have significantly influenced the terms of U.S. aid to Israel; Congress has appropriated foreign aid to Israel largely according to the terms of the current MOU (Sharp, 2018).

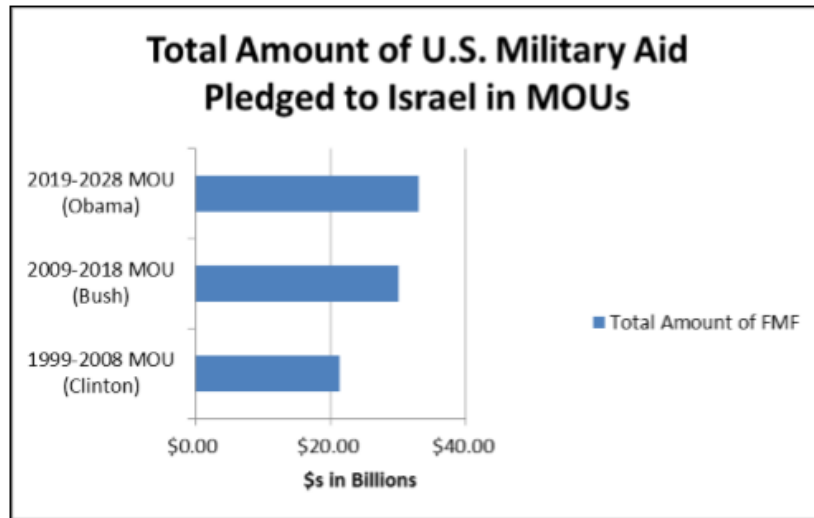
The first 10-year MOU (FY1999-FY2008), agreed to under the Clinton Administration, was known as the “Glide Path Agreement” and represented a political commitment to provide Israel with at least \$26.7



billion in total economic and military aid over its duration (of which \$21.3 billion was in military aid). This MOU provided the template for the gradual phase-out of all economic assistance to Israel (Government Publishing Office, 1999). In 2007, the Bush Administration and the Israeli government agreed to the current \$30 billion military aid package for the 10-year period from FY2009 to FY2018. Under the terms of the agreement, Israel was explicitly permitted to continue spending up to 26.3% of U.S. assistance on Israeli-manufactured equipment (known as Off-Shore Procurement or OSP). FMF has largely taken the role of a grant given to U.S. allies to allow them to buy defense equipment. With the exception of Israel, all countries that receive FMF have to spend it on goods made in the United States, a boost for the domestic defense industry. The agreement states that “Both sides acknowledge that these funding levels assume continuation of adequate levels for U.S. foreign assistance overall, and are subject to the appropriation and availability of funds for these purposes.” (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2007)

At a signing ceremony at the State Department on September 14, 2016, representatives of the U.S. and Israeli governments signed a new 10-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on military aid covering FY2019 to FY2028. Under the terms of this MOU, the United States pledges to provide \$38 billion in military aid (\$33 billion in FMF grants, plus \$5 billion in defense appropriations for missile defense programs) to Israel. It is the largest pledge of its kind in American history. According to the terms of the MOU, “Both the United States and Israel jointly commit to respect the FMF levels specified in this MOU, and not to seek changes to the FMF levels for the duration of this understanding.” Israel is the largest cumulative recipient of U.S. foreign assistance since World War II (Office of The Press Secretary, 2016).

**Figure 2. U.S. Military Aid to Israel over Decades**



Source: CRS Report, 2018

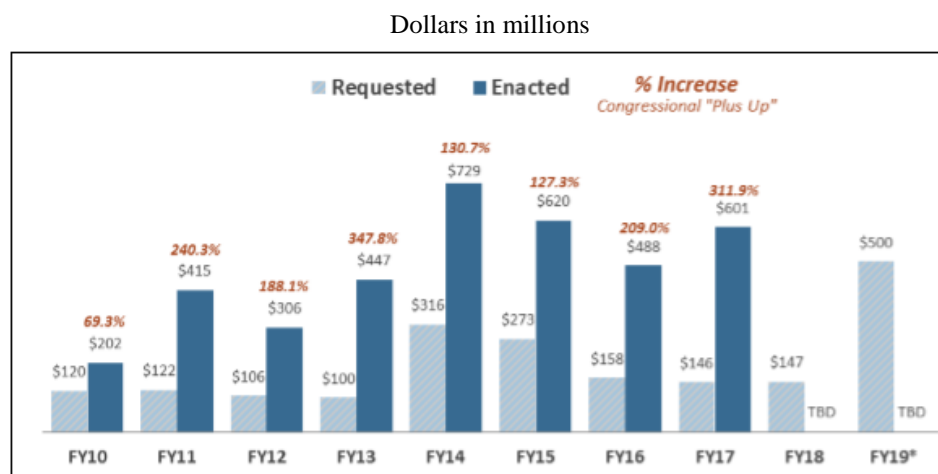
Israel is the largest recipient of U.S. Foreign Military Financing. For FY2019, the President’s request for Israel would encompass approximately 61% of total requested FMF funding worldwide. Annual FMF grants to Israel represent approximately 19% of the overall Israeli defense budget (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2017). Section 23 of the Arms Export Control Act (22 U.S.C. §276351) authorizes the President to finance the “procurement of defense articles, defense services, and design and construction services by friendly foreign countries and international organizations, on such terms and conditions as he may determine consistent with the requirements of this section.” Successive Administrations have used this authority to permit Israel to finance multiyear purchases through installment payments, rather than having to pay the full amount of such purchases up front. This benefit enables Israel to negotiate major arms purchases with U.S. defense suppliers with payments scheduled over a longer time horizon. Congress has mandated that Israel receive its FMF aid in a lump sum during the first month of the fiscal year (Sharp, 2018).

Israel is the first international operator of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, the Department of Defense’s fifth-generation stealth aircraft

considered to be the most technologically advanced fighter jet ever made. In September 2008, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) notified Congress of a possible Foreign Military Sale of up to 75 F-35s to Israel in a deal with a possible total value of \$15.2 billion. Since then, Israel has purchased 50 F-35s in three separate contracts using FMF grants. Israel is to install Israeli-made C4 (command, control, communications, computers) systems in the F-35s it receives, and call these customized F-35s known as “Adirs.” (Defense Security Cooperation Agency, 2008)

Congress and successive Administrations have demonstrated strong support for joint U.S.-Israeli missile defense projects designed to thwart a diverse range of threats. The range spans from short-range missiles and rockets fired by non-state actors, such as Hamas and Hezbollah, to mid- and longer-range ballistic missiles in Syria’s and Iran’s arsenals. Congress provides regular U.S. funding for Israeli and U.S.-Israeli missile defense programs in defense authorization and appropriations bills. Israel and the United States each contribute financially to several weapons systems and engage in co-development, coproduction, and/or technology sharing in connection with them (Sharp, 2018).

**Figure 3. Congressional “Plus Up” for Israel Missile Defense: FY2010-FY2017**



Source: CRS Report, 2018

**Table 1. U.S. Missile Defense Funding to Israel**

	Iron Dome (short range anti-rocket system)	David’s Sling (Short/medium range defense system)	Arrow I (Anti- missile system)	Arrow II (Anti-missile system)
Research	-	\$63.8 million	-	\$133.1 million
Procurement	\$92 million	\$120 million	\$71.5 million	\$120 million

Source: Federation of American Scientists, 2018

All of this creates an odd backdrop for a historic military-spending deal. No matter how bad the relationship between the two countries’ top leaders, no matter who gets elected to the White House, no matter how loudly some voters voice their opposition or how charged the underlying ideological debate: The United States has reasons to keep providing large sums of money for Israel’s military. There are straightforward explanations for why this particular deal got done. Politically, the spending package was partly a response to the nuclear deal that the United States and other world powers finalized with Iran in July of last year, and which Obama hailed as cutting off Iran’s pathway to nuclear weapons for more than a decade. Netanyahu was harshly critical of that agreement, which he called a “historic mistake” that would ease sanctions on Iran while leaving it with the ability to one day get the bomb. Even with the deal in place, and taking the nuclear-weapon capability of Iran off the table at least for the next 10 to 15 years, there are still considerable destabilizing activities that Iranians are pursuing in the region that are not consistent with U.S. or Israeli interests or objectives (Green, 2016).

Defenders of the deal would say it’s necessary. The uptick in spending as a natural extension of the long-standing relationship between the United States and Israel, as well as close ties between those countries

and their peoples. The fraught neighborhood surrounding Israel also help explain the historically high promise of \$5 billion in missile funding over the next 10 years. Most people who are pro to the deal considered the MOU is not just good for Israel, it's good for the United States. Both states' security is linked. When allies and partners like Israel are more secure, the United States is more secure (Green, 2016).

On another field, the intelligence cooperation between Washington and Jerusalem is one of the cornerstones of the strategic alliance between the two states. Given the extensive US military aid to Israel along with Washington's and the American public's backing of Israel in the international arena, it has been widely argued that the alliance unilaterally favors Israel. Washington and Jerusalem have maintained a strong intelligence relationship since the 1950s. During the 1950s and 1960s, the Middle East served as a combat testing ground for Soviet military doctrine and advanced weaponry, with the experience amassed by Israel in its wars against the Egyptian, Syrian, and Iraqi armies – trained by Soviet advisers and equipped with Soviet weapons – providing the U.S. military with operational lessons; information about new Israeli technologies to neutralize the Soviet weaponry; and direct access to Soviet weapons systems captured by Israel. Those kind of close cooperation still exist until today. The most important intelligence both countries share are mainly regarding security issue in Middle East, most notably Iran nuclear threats. This marks the unshakeable bond between U.S. and Israel in military aspect (Ofek, 2018).

### **2.3.2 Other Ongoing Assistance and Cooperative Programs**

#### **2.3.2.1 Migration & Refugee Assistance**

Since 1973, the U.S. government has helped vulnerable Jewish migrants from the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, Africa, and the Near East, resettle in Israel. Israel has received grants from the State Department's Migration and Refugee Assistance account (MRA) to assist in the resettlement of migrants to Israel. Funds are paid to the United Israel

Appeal, a private philanthropic organization in the United States, which in turn transfers the funds to the Jewish Agency for Israel. Between 1973 and 1991, the United States gave about \$460 million for resettling Jewish refugees in Israel. Annual amounts have varied from a low of \$12 million to a high of \$80 million, based at least partly on the number of Jews. The FY 2019 MRA request for Humanitarian Migrants to Israel supports this relocation and integration of humanitarian migrants through the United Israel Appeal (UIA). In FY 2019, the Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI), UIA's implementing partner, will assist approximately 16,000 migrants to emigrate to Israel from Russia, Ukraine, Ethiopia, and other countries. Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) funding supports services for these migrants, including pre-departure assistance, travel to Israel and short-term housing for vulnerable migrants. The funding also provides language, preparatory, and vocational education, including for youth, as well as independent monitoring of the program (U.S. Department of State, 2018).

**Table 2. Migration and Refugee Assistance Funding Levels**

FY2000-FY2012	\$519.3 million total
FY2013	\$15 million
FY2014	\$15 million
FY2015	\$10 million
FY2016	\$10 million
FY2017	\$7.5 million
FY2018	TBD
FY2019 Request	\$5.0 million

Source: U.S. Department of State, 2018

### **2.3.2.2 Loan Guarantees**

Loan guarantees are a form of indirect U.S. assistance to Israel, since they enable Israel to borrow from commercial sources at lower rates. Congress directs that subsidies be set aside in a U.S. Treasury account in case of a possible Israeli default. These subsidies, which are a percentage of the total loan (based in part on the credit rating of the borrowing country), have come from the U.S. or the Israeli government. In 1992, Israel received \$10 billion in loan guarantees from the American government to help the nation rebuild after its economy took a major hit following the Gulf War. The United States has extended loan guarantees to Israel to assist with housing shortages, Israel's absorption of new immigrants, and its economic recovery following the 2000-2003 recession, which was probably caused in part by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In 2003 the United States Federal Reserve promised to pay off Israeli loans worth up to \$9 billion. The extension announced in 2012 means that United States commits itself to guaranteeing future Israeli loans worth up to the \$3.8 billion remaining on the original agreement until 2015. From 2003 to 2011, just under \$1.1 billion was subtracted from the overall \$9 billion guarantees as that is what Israel was estimated to have spent on infrastructure in the West Bank. Israel repaid every loan it withdrew and the United States was never called on to fulfill its guarantor obligations. Likewise, Israel has never defaulted against the loan guarantees put in place in 2003. Israel could also request loan guarantees to help Israel's economic recovery (U.S. Department of The Treasury, 2018).

In general, Israel may view U.S. loan guarantees as a "last resort" option, which its treasury could use if unguaranteed local and international bond issuances become too expensive. Israel considers the loan guarantees as preparation for a rainy day. This is a safety net for war, natural disaster and economic crisis, which allows Israel to maintain economic stability in unstable surroundings and if they become involved in war or other financially draining activities. Israeli officials may believe that although

they have not used the loan guarantees in the last 13 years, maintaining the program boosts the country's fiscal standing among international creditors in capital markets. Israel ideally uses the guarantees to offset the high costs of constantly fighting terror, preparing for future wars, building national infrastructure and buffering its high-tech community in case of another international meltdown (U.S. Department of The Treasury, 2018).

### **2.3.2.3 American Schools and Hospitals Abroad Program**

Through foreign operations appropriations legislation, Congress has funded the ASHA program as part of the overall Development Assistance (DA) appropriation to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). According to USAID, ASHA is designed to strengthen self-sustaining schools, libraries, and medical centers that best demonstrate American ideals and practices abroad. ASHA has been providing support to institutions in the Middle East since 1957, and a number of universities and hospitals in Israel have been recipients of ASHA grants. Recipients of ASHA grants on behalf of overseas institutions must be private U.S. organizations, headquartered in the United States, and tax-exempt. The U.S. organization must also serve as the founder and/or sponsor of the overseas institution. Schools must be for secondary or higher education and hospital centers must conduct medical education and research outside the United States. Grants are made to U.S. sponsors for the exclusive benefit of institutions abroad (USAID, n.d.).

### **2.3.2.4 U.S.-Israeli Scientific & Business Cooperation**

In the early 1970s, Israeli academics and businessmen began looking for ways to expand investment in Israel's nascent technology sector. The sector, which would later become the driving force in the country's economy, was in need of private capital for research and development at the time. The United States and Israel launched several programs to stimulate Israeli industrial and scientific research, and Congress has on several occasions authorized and appropriated funds for this purpose (Sharp, 2018).



### **2.3.2.5 U.S.-Israeli Energy Cooperation**

In 2005, Congress began to consider legislation to expand U.S.-Israeli scientific cooperation in the field of renewable energy. Lawmakers reviewed legislation in the House and the Senate entitled, “The United States-Israel Energy Cooperation Act.” Various forms of the bill would have authorized the Department of Energy to establish a joint U.S.-Israeli grant program to fund research in solar, biomass, and wind energy, among other directives. Although it did not appropriate any funds for joint research and development, it did establish a grant program to support research, development, and commercialization of renewable energy or energy efficiency. The law also authorized the Secretary of Energy to provide funds for the grant program as needed. To date, Congress and the Administration have provided a total of \$15.7 million for the grant program, known as BIRD Energy. As of 2017, total combined U.S. and Israeli investment in BIRD Energy for 37 approved projects stands at \$30 million (U.S. Department of Energy, 2017).

### **2.3.2.6 U.S.-Israeli Cybersecurity Cooperation**

In 2016, Congress passed P.L.114-304, the United States-Israel Advanced Research Partnership Act of 2016, a law that permanently authorized the expansion of an existing joint research-and development program at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and expanded it to include cybersecurity technologies (Library of Congress, 2017). In January 2017, the House passed H.R. 612, the United States-Israel Cybersecurity Cooperation Enhancement Act of 2017. If enacted, the bill requires the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to establish a grant program to support cybersecurity research and development, and the demonstration and commercialization of cybersecurity technology in accordance with existing bilateral agreements between the United States and Israel on Cooperation in Science and Technology for Homeland Security Matters (Committee on Homeland Security, 2017).

### **2.3.3 Diplomatic and Political Support**

It was America, which not only defended Israel all along but in a way made the Israeli's very arrogant and less concerned about criticisms against them in the international forums. The Israeli indifference and lack of any regard of world opinion was the direct result of its reliance on a super power and a conviction that United States would always come to rescue and bail Israel out even from the most difficult situations (Osgood, 1970).

Since the mid-1960s U.S. policy became increasingly supportive of Israeli actions, even of those that are of an illicit character. U.S. political support of Israel is of different kinds and takes various forms. In 1967 the U.S. administration failed to follow President Eisenhower's attitude at the time of Suez of condemning Israel's aggression and insisting upon its immediate and unconditional withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza. This new attitude represented the turning point of the U.S. government's policy with regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict. The new American attitude of extending support to Israel was again followed during the war of 1973 in which Egypt and Syria sought to recover its own territories which Israel had seized in 1967. The U.S. then actively intervened in the war by organizing a massive aircraft during which it delivered to Israel great quantities of war material (Cattan, 2000).

With the U.S. political support Israel has totally succeeded in winning all its historical strategic objectives. It conquered Palestine by force and legitimizes its acquiescence with the help of unwavering U.S. support. The United States also comes to Israel's rescue in wartime and takes its side when negotiating peace. The United States coordinated its positions closely with Israel and consistently backed the Israeli approach to the negotiations. Washington has also given Israel wide latitude in dealing with the Occupied Territories (the West Bank and Gaza Strip), even when its actions were at odds with stated U.S. policy (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2006).

Washington provides Israel with consistent diplomatic support. Since the late 1970s, the United States has vetoed over 40 United Nations Security Council resolutions that were critical of Israel, a number greater than the combined total of vetoes cast by all the other Security Council members (United Nations, n.d.). In 1976, the U.S. vetoed a resolution calling on Israel to withdraw from all Palestinian territory which in this case, the UK, Sweden and Italy abstained. A draft text presented by Tunisia in 1980 stressed the “inalienable rights of the Palestinian people”. The U.S. voted against the draft text; the UK, France, Norway and Portugal abstained. Resolutions condemning Israeli settlements were blocked only by the U.S. in 1983, 1997 and 2011. And in 2004 and 2006, the U.S. refused to call on Israel to halt wars against Gaza, which together killed hundreds of civilians (Jewish Virtual Library, 2018).

The Obama administration cast its first veto in the Security Council in February 2011 to block a resolution denouncing Israel’s settlement policy as an illegal obstacle to peace efforts in the Middle East. At the time, Susan Rice, then U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, said the U.S. veto should not be construed as a defense of Israel’s settlements, which it views as illegitimate. But she argued that the resolution, which was backed by 14 of the council’s 15 members, risked “hardening the positions of both sides” and making the establishment of a Palestine state less likely. Five years later, the outgoing Obama administration’s calculus has apparently changed or sour relations with Israel finally pushed it to change tack in a way it never had before (Lynch, et al., 2016).

In 2016, Israel was elected to head the Sixth Committee at the incoming United Nations General Assembly. One of the UN’s six permanent boards, the Sixth Committee is the primary forum for the consideration of legal questions in the General Assembly. Considering Israel’s running history of breaching international law, the Fourth Geneva Convention and countless UN resolutions, it is exceptionally ironic that it will be chairing a legal committee that aims to uphold international law and

protect basic human rights. It has taken no action to remedy the breaches (Hammond, 2010). There's a confusion within the UN itself. On the one side, they're fairly consistent in their condemnation of Israel's policies and practices; on the other hand, they create political ambiguity by taking initiatives like this that are pushed by the U.S. (Alfarra, 2016).

But in late 2016, following the election of Donald Trump but before he took office, the U.S. abstained from a vote on Israeli settlements. It was the first time in four decades that a UN resolution condemning Israel had passed. This was despite the U.S. using its veto against a similar vote in 2011, and the only time the administration of Barack Obama had wielded its veto during his presidency. The abstention was the first time the Obama administration stepped aside and allowed the Security Council to censure Israel (Middle East Eye, 2017). The resolution 2334 was drafted by Palestine and put in blue by Egypt, and co-sponsored by Malaysia, New Zealand, Senegal and Venezuela. It demands that Israel "immediately and completely cease all settlement activities" on Palestinian land, saying they are "imperiling the viability of the two-state solution." The establishment of such Israeli settlements, including those in East Jerusalem, has "no legal validity and constitutes a flagrant violation under international law." The text also calls on all states "to distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967", language that Israel fears will lead to a surge in boycott and sanctions efforts. The resolution 2334 against Israeli settlements was passed with 14 votes, and an abstention by the United States (Lynch, et al., 2016).

Samantha Power, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, defended the abstention and stated that "Israeli settlement activity in territories occupied in 1967 undermine Israel's security, harm the viability of a negotiated two-state outcome, and erode prospects for peace and security." The United States has been sending a message that the settlements must stop privately and publicly for nearly five decades. Power said the U.S. did not veto the resolution because the Obama administration believed it reflected

the state of affairs regarding settlement and remained consistent with U.S. policy. One cannot simultaneously champion expanding Israeli settlements and champion a viable two-state solution that would end the conflict. One had to make a choice between settlements and separation (Beaumont, 2016).

During the Security Council session, U.N. Middle East envoy Nickolay Mladenov said that since a 2016 resolution demanding a halt to settlement activity in East Jerusalem, construction had continued unabated, and there has been an increase in violence between Israelis and Palestinians. Mladenov warned against more unilateral actions, saying the lack of a peace proposal is “undermining moderates and empowering radicals” (Morello, 2017). U.S. officials criticized resolution 2334 saying that while it “describes Israeli settlements as impediments to peace,” in reality, “it was resolution 2334 itself that was an impediment to peace,” because the Security Council once again acting and “injecting itself” between Palestinians and Israelis. If the United Nations’ history in the peace efforts proves anything, it is that talking in New York cannot take the place of face-to-face negotiations between the regional parties. It only sets back the cause of peace, not advance it. U.S. considered that the UN is a disproportionately hostile place for the Middle East’s most enduring democracy, Israel (Landau, 2017).

The U.S. decision to abstain was immediately condemned by Netanyahu’s office as “shameful” which pointedly referred to Israel’s expectation of working more closely with Donald Trump. The vote will, however, be seen as a major defeat for Netanyahu, who has long had a difficult relationship with the Obama administration. Netanyahu had tried to prevent the vote by appealing to Trump. President-elect Donald Trump’s intervention in the discussions, which included a conversation with Egypt’s president Thursday that preceded the delay in the planned vote (Memoli, 2016). “Israel looks forward to working with president-elect Trump and with all our friends in Congress, Republicans and Democrats alike, to negate the harmful effects of this absurd resolution,” a statement from Netanyahu’s

office said. Pro-Israel senators and lobby groups also weighed in following the vote. They were deeply disturbed by the failure of the Obama administration to exercise its veto to prevent a destructive, one-sided, anti-Israel resolution from being enacted by the United Nations Security Council. They also pointedly thanked Trump for his attempts to intervene (Beaumont, 2016).

The United States then vetoed a draft UN Security Council resolution on December, 2017 that rejected President Donald Trump's move to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital. The vote marked the Trump administration's first Security Council veto. The text put forward by Egypt affirmed that any decisions on the status of Jerusalem had "no legal effect, are null and void and must be rescinded." The 14 other members of the council voted in favor of the motion. The U.S. permanent representative, Nikki Haley, described it as an "insult" and warned that it would not be forgotten (BBC News, 2017). Haley's remarks were a general expression of support for President Donald Trump's move and the United States is standing alone on the issue. Haley said Trump's decision does not contradict existing Security Council resolutions, which constitute international law and date back decades. Haley emphasized that the administration supports the status quo of the city's holy sites and will support a two-state solution if that is what the parties want. The veto also criticized by U.S. close allies. French Ambassador François Delattre stated that "without an agreement on Jerusalem, there will be no peace accord. This is why an agreement on Jerusalem can only be decided by the parties themselves, with the support of the community of nations, and not by the unilateral decision of a third country that would bring us back one century ago," Britain's envoy reiterated his government's disagreement with the Trump administration's decision (Besheer, 2017).

The resolution demanded that all states comply with Security Council resolutions regarding the Holy City of Jerusalem, and not to recognize any actions or measures contrary to those resolutions. It also reiterated the longstanding position of the Security Council, in several

resolutions dating back 50 years, rejecting Israel's sovereignty claim over Jerusalem, the holy city revered by Christians, Jews and Muslims (Schwartz & Gladstone, 2017). Riyad Mansour, the Palestinian ambassador to the UN, said: "It is paradoxical that while we were waiting for a peace plan from the U.S., the administration instead decided to further obstruct peace and delay its realisation. The U.S. decision encourages Israel to persist in its crimes against the Palestinian people and to continue its occupation of our territory. No rhetoric will hide this complacency in prolonging the occupation." The Trump administration's decision on Jerusalem reflected its "glaring bias" toward Israel and had undermined its role in any future peace process (Hanna, 2017).

Anticipating the U.S. veto, the Palestinian leadership in the West Bank promised to take the issue to the UN General Assembly to seek the passing of a resolution there. Riyad al-Maliki, foreign minister of the Palestinian Authority (PA), said in a statement on Monday: "The member states of the General Assembly will be asked to vote on the same draft resolution that we presented to the Security Council, which the U.S. has blocked with the veto. In the General Assembly, the U.S. will not be able to use this privilege." 128 votes in favor and nine against, while 35 countries abstained of the resolution in the 193-member UN General Assembly, however, is not legally binding. This means it would only serve as a recommendation and would act as an expression of the international community's stance on Jerusalem (Hanna, 2017). This decision reaffirms once again that the just Palestinian cause enjoys the support of international community, and no decisions made by any side could change the reality, that Jerusalem is an occupied territory under international law. Most UN member states that voted in favor of the draft resolution did not necessarily do so to back the Palestinians but to support "international legality." They voted for what they saw as a violation of international law (Bishara, 2017).

The latest, U.S. also vetoed on June, 2018 a Kuwaiti-drafted U.N. Security Council resolution that condemned Israel's use of force against

Palestinian civilians on the “march of return”, marking the 44th time the U.S. has used its veto power against Israel-related UN Security Council draft resolutions (Campos, 2018). Nikki R. Haley, the American ambassador to the United Nations, described the measure, a United Nations Security Council resolution drafted by Kuwait, as one-sided. She accused the measure’s authors of inexplicably absolving Hamas, the militant group that controls Gaza and organized the protests. A separate American resolution proposed by Haley, which would have condemned Hamas for the Gaza violence, failed to gain any support from fellow Council members. She considered the votes showed that the Security Council majority was willing to blame Israel, but unwilling to blame Hamas, for violence in Gaza. This votes offered some insight into the challenges the United States is facing diplomatically over what critics call its unbridled support of Israel’s side in the protracted conflict with the Palestinians (Gladstone, 2018).

About 120 Palestinians have been killed and hundreds wounded by Israeli forces along the fence that divides Israel from Gaza since the protests erupted at the end of March inside Gaza. Israel has contended that its military is acting lawfully to stop the protesters from breaching the fence, and it has rejected accusations that soldiers have used deadly force needlessly. The Israelis have also accused Hamas and its militant affiliates in Gaza of using the protests as cover for sending attackers into Israel. The United States has backed Israel completely on the Gaza issue (Besheer, 2018).

Amid international condemnation of its use of lethal force, Israel said many of the dead were militants and that the Israeli army was repelling attacks on the border fence between Israel and Gaza. Washington has maintained Israel’s right to defend itself and refrained from joining calls for Israeli restraint. Palestinians and their supporters said most of the protesters were unarmed civilians and Israel was using excessive force against them (Campos, 2018).



The international response to Israel's continuing expansion of settlements inside occupied Palestinian territory is broadly divided. In Europe, action is being taken to uphold international legality, by making the half-century-old military occupation less profitable than it has been for Israel. Across the Atlantic, however, in the U.S., members of Congress are promoting legislation that would normalize Israel's annexation of the occupied West Bank and legitimate the economic activity of Israeli settlements. European Union efforts to take Israel to task include the issuing of labeling guidelines and advisories to businesses concerning their international legal obligations. There are also legislative initiatives underway for city- and state-wide bans on Israeli settlement products and services. To help assist with and encourage states and businesses in complying with their legal obligations, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has been working on a database calling out local and international businesses for violating their obligations (Hassan, 2018).

The U.S. has taken a markedly different view of international efforts to differentiate between Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. Rather than preventing the fruit of Israel's illegal settlement enterprise from entering the U.S., 25 U.S. states have passed constitutionally questionable laws punishing those who would support the movement to boycott products and services that facilitate Israel's occupation over Palestinian land. More than 100 such bills have been considered by state and local legislatures so far. On the federal level, legislation is being advanced in both the Senate and the House to prohibit compliance with UN Security Council Resolution 2334 and the UN Human Rights Council call for differentiation. Most of U.S. officials calls UN efforts to identify businesses facilitating human rights abuses by Israel as an effort to "wage economic warfare against Israel." Under the bill, the Trump administration and its successors would be empowered to issue regulations to impose civil or criminal penalties on anyone complying with UN or foreign calls to uphold international law as it applies to Israel's illegal colonization enterprise. The bipartisan bill has

garnered 287 co-sponsors to date. The U.S. has always supported Israel and given its diplomatic backing in the international arena, even when it meant standing alone against the rest of the world (Hassan, 2018).

When it comes to Israel's occupation of Palestine and its refusal to withdraw from Arab territories, America has been absent compared to the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait which was freed by mainly American military forces. This bias of American support for Israel has brought charges of double standards and hypocrisy from many Arabs and Arab-Americans. Most of them argued that Washington is willing to bomb Iraq to enforce Security Council resolutions but doesn't even criticize Israel when it flouts the Council. This little concern from American state department has caused observers to see danger in the specifics of American foreign policy. The moral hypocrisy underlying America's demand for democracy in Palestine while simultaneously coddle the dictators in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. Israeli and American double standards show in the values of democracy that contradicts with the principles of what democracy is. So Israel is not as it claims a victim when it occupies others land, nor it is a democracy, when it doesn't treat all its citizens equally. Rather, Israel is an oppressor. American rhetoric in defense of democracy is out of touch with reality (Azar, 2011).

#### **2.4 U.S. Biased Foreign Policy in Israel-Palestine Conflict under President Donald Trump's Administration**

Trump's policy toward Israel is informed by an evangelical base and pro-Likud campaign donors that view the Israel-Palestine conflict through a biblical prism in which only one side has legitimate claims. He has relocated the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem, has closed the PLO office in Washington, will close USAID offices in the West Bank and Gaza by 2019, and has defunded UNRWA (the UN agency responsible for Palestinian refugee relief). But, in doing so, the United States has forfeited its role as a neutral peace broker in favor of a policy of maximum pressure on Palestinians to accept the U.S. plan (Hassan, 2018).

### **2.4.1 The Issue on Jerusalem**

The issue on Jerusalem became such a big deal not only for the parties involved in the Israel-Palestine conflict but for the world as a whole. Jerusalem has become a central issue in Israel-Palestine conflict since decades ago. Both Israelis and Palestinians claim the city as their political capital and as a sacred religious site. Israel controls the entirety of the city. Any peace deal would need to resolve that. The city's status has been disputed, at least officially, since the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. Before that, the United Nations had designated Jerusalem as a special international zone. During the war, Israel seized the city's western half. It seized the eastern half during the next Arab-Israeli war, in 1967. The United States, in order to present itself as a dispassionate broker, long considered Jerusalem's status to be a conflict issue that was up to Israelis and Palestinians to decide. Mr. Trump is breaking with that traditional neutrality. On December 6, 2017, President Trump announced his decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. This implies that the United States is increasingly supportive of Israel's position of full annexation, though this would almost certainly kill any viable peace deal (Fisher, 2017).

Trump claimed that declaring Jerusalem to be the capital of Israel was "nothing more, or less, than a recognition of reality," which, he speculated, would better facilitate negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. In fact, Trump's declaration and its fallout reveal how the U.S.'s role as mediator since the 1970s has always rested on shaky foundations. That's because the U.S., despite official claims, has rarely considered Arab-Israeli peace a vital interest. The U.S.'s prioritization of peace has ebbed and flowed in the past 40 years. The Trump administration's recent decisions and the fallout are a departure from the U.S.'s historical position, but they also lay bare the awkward fit of U.S. mediation on an issue that has often been secondary to other U.S. interests in the Middle East (Hummel, 2017).

Vice President of the United States Mike Pence had been scheduled to visit the Middle East two weeks after this decision. On January 21, 2018, Vice President Pence arrived in Israel as part of his long awaited Middle East trip. While he could

have deescalated the existing tensions with President Abbas and the Palestinian Authority, Vice President Pence magnified the conflict surrounding the Jerusalem decision. The United States did not intend to prejudge the vision of Jerusalem to be agreed upon by both sides. Instead, Vice President Pence stated that the United States intends to implement its new policy by transferring its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem by the end of 2019 (BBC News, 2017).

This reference to a specific timetable was a dramatic addition to President Trump's original statement. Before explicitly outlining a timetable to move the embassy, President Trump's decision could have been perceived as only a symbolic gesture to Israel, because in practice the United States embassy would stay in Tel Aviv for the foreseeable future, and the status quo would remain the same. However, in his speech to the Israeli Knesset, Vice President Pence made it clear to millions of people in Israel and in the Middle East, that within two years the region would face the new political reality of a United States embassy in Jerusalem. Unlike other diplomatic decisions, it will be extremely difficult for future United States administrations, even administrations led by a president from the Democratic Party or one otherwise opposed to this move, to restore the status quo of the embassy's location (BBC News, 2017).

Vice President Pence made two other notable stops on his Middle East trip. First, he met with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi and reaffirmed the countries' close political ties and mutual cooperation in the war against radical Islamic terror. Given the Palestinian public's opposition to the United States' role as the mediator of the Middle East peace process, President el-Sisi's meeting with Vice President Pence was viewed by many Palestinians as a "slap in the face" because the Palestinians had hoped that other Arab states would join in its criticism of the Trump Administration, and in its broader position regarding the Israel-Palestinian conflict (Shalom & Michael, 2018).

Vice President Pence also met with King Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein of Jordan. King Abdullah's statement following the meeting emphasized that although Jordan has a special position in Jerusalem, especially with respect to the Islamic holy places, and although the vast majority of its population is Palestinian, the

country is not currently in a position to join the Palestinian boycott of the Trump administration. In other words, Jordanian leaders are indicating that they expect the Palestinian Authority to tolerate the United States' new position regarding Jerusalem and try to make the best of the current situation. But in other hand, Jordanian King had called Trump's move "a violation of decisions of international law and the United Nations charter." (The Times of Israel, 2018).

Following Vice President Pence's trip to Israel, the tension between the United State and the Palestinian Authority continued to grow. Both President Trump and United States Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley blamed the Palestinian Authority for the lack of progress in the peace process. President Trump went further, and explicitly threatened to stop all financial aid to the Palestinian Authority, and said that he was personally insulted by President Abbas decision not to meet with Vice President Pence. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has refused to meet with Mike Pence because of Trump's pivot on Jerusalem. Abbas considered Trump's decision a "crime" that threatened world peace. He called on the United Nations to take charge of the peace process and create a new mechanism, arguing that Washington is no longer "fit" for the task. The Palestinians are committed to a peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but after Trump's seismic shift on Jerusalem, Washington is not accepted as a fair negotiator for Palestinians. U.S. indifference to force used by Israel to put down demonstrations on its border fence with Gaza—on top of the move of its embassy to Jerusalem—means Washington has yielded a traditional honest broker role in an age-old conflict (Bilginsoy & El Deeb, 2017).

Vice President Pence's trip to the Middle East, and the responses of regional allies such as Egypt and Jordan, show that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not the United States' top diplomatic priority in the region. Instead, the United States seems far more concerned with the Iranian nuclear threat. This is the new political landscape in which the Israeli-Palestinian peace process will take place — the United States is strongly determined to move its embassy to Jerusalem, tensions between the United States and the Palestinian Authority have escalated, and the Trump administration may soon release a new, controversial peace proposal. The

United States is still committed to the advancement of the peace process and the implementation of the two-state solution, if agreed upon by the two parties. However, it is also quite apparent that the Trump administration knows that any Palestinian leader will find it very hard (if not impossible) to accept its Jerusalem decision, or other proposals regarding a future peace agreement. Trump is backing Netanyahu's government with hardly a critical word of Israeli activity towards the Palestinians. The embassy move is a case in point – it gains nothing for the United States, makes it impossible for the Palestinians to view this administration as a neutral mediator for peace talks, and stoked violence (Shalom & Michael, 2018).

#### **2.4.2 U.S. Quitted United Nations Human Rights Council**

The U.S. has pulled out of the United Nations Human Rights Council on June, 2018 calling it a “cesspool of political bias”. Nikki Haley, the U.S. envoy to the UN, said it was a “hypocritical body that makes a mockery of human rights”. Formed in 2006, the Geneva-based council has faced criticism in the past for allowing member countries with questionable human rights records. But activists said the U.S. move could hurt efforts to monitor and address human rights abuses around the world (BBC News, 2018). Announcing the decision to quit the council, Haley described the council as a “hypocritical and self-serving organization” that displayed unending hostility towards Israel. She was speaking alongside U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who denounced the council as “a protector of human rights abusers”. This is just the latest rejection of multilateralism by the Trump administration, and will likely unsettle those who look to the United States to protect and promote human rights around the world. The United States has always had a conflicting relationship with the UN Human Rights Council. The Bush Administration decided to boycott the council when it was created in 2006 for many of the same reasons cited by the Trump administration. It wasn't until years later, in 2009 that the United States re-joined under the Obama administration (Foulkes, 2018).

Last year, Nikki Haley told the council it was “hard to accept” that resolutions had been passed against Israel yet none had been considered for Venezuela, where dozens of protesters had been killed during political turmoil.

Israel is the only country that is subject to a permanent standing agenda item, meaning its treatment of the Palestinians is regularly scrutinized. The U.S. and Israel think this is unfair, so too do some European countries such as the U.K. But their voices are outnumbered by countries which firmly believe that Israel must be permanently held to account. Haley thought that the world's most inhumane regimes continue to escape scrutiny and the council continues politicizing and scapegoating of countries with positive human rights records in an attempt to distract from the abusers in their ranks. For too long the human rights council has been a protector of human rights abusers and a cesspool of political bias (Borger, 2018).

Haley also said the “disproportionate focus and unending hostility toward Israel is clear proof that the council is motivated by political bias, not by human rights.” The United States has long shielded its ally Israel at the United Nations. In citing what it says is bias against Israel, the administration of President Donald Trump could further fuel Palestinian arguments that Washington cannot be a neutral mediator as it prepares to roll out a Middle East peace plan. Haley said a year ago that Washington was reviewing its membership. The body has a permanent standing agenda item known as “agenda item 7” on suspected violations committed by Israel in the occupied Palestinian territories that Washington wanted removed. The council last month voted to probe killings in Gaza and accused Israel of using excessive force. The United States and Australia cast the only “no” votes (Wroughton & Nichols, 2018).

Haley argued the U.S. had spent a year in pursuit of reforms while the council's flaws deepened. She pointed to the election of the Democratic Republic of Congo to council membership in the past year, despite the U.S. reform campaign, as proof that the body could not be fixed. She also noted the council had failed to hold a single session on Venezuela, which is a council member, or Iran, despite its ruthless crushing of opposition demonstrations. The Trump administration had been signaling its intention to leave the council for some months, but the announcement came while the U.S. itself is under intense criticism for its own human rights, because of the administration's policy of forcibly separating young children from

their parents when apprehended on the Mexican border (The Week UK, 2018). The Trump administration's withdrawal is a sad reflection of its one-dimensional human rights policy: defending Israeli abuses from criticism takes precedence above all else. The UN human rights council has played an important role in such countries as North Korea, Syria, Myanmar and South Sudan, but all Trump seems to care about is defending Israel. Like last time when the U.S. government stepped away from the Council for similar reasons, other governments will have to redouble their efforts to ensure the Council addresses the world's most serious human rights problems (Borger, 2018).

### **2.4.3 Defunded UNRWA**

In mid-January 2018, U.S. President Donald Trump announced his administration's intention to drastically reduce payments to the relief organization. The move came after Trump had recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel in December, a move that angered Palestinians and led them to scale back communication with the Trump administration. The United States is ending all funding for the UN's Palestinian refugee agency in late August, 2018. It described the organization, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), as "irredeemably flawed" (BBC News, 2018). The U.S. administration has carefully reviewed the issue and will not make additional contributions to UNRWA. The U.S. disagrees with UNRWA, and Palestinian officials, on a number of issues. U.S. President Donald Trump has previously complained that the U.S. received "no appreciation or respect" for the large sums of aid it provided to the region. He threatened to cut aid to the Palestinians over what he called their unwillingness to negotiate with Israel. According to the state department, the U.S. is contributing a very disproportionate share of the burden of UNRWA's costs. It complains of a business model and fiscal practices, which is "unsustainable and has been in crisis mode for many years". A review ordered by Trump earlier this year of U.S. assistance to the Palestinians had established that the money "is not in the best interests of the U.S. national interest and also at this time does not provide value to the U.S. taxpayer." This decision further heightening tensions between the Palestinian leadership and the Trump administration (Beaumont & Holmes, 2018).



Following the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict, UNRWA was established by United Nations General Assembly Resolution 302 (IV) of 8 December 1949 to carry out direct relief and works programs for Palestine refugees. Its mandate, was twofold: to carry out, in collaboration with local governments, the direct relief and works programs as recommended by the Economic Survey Mission and to consult with interested Near Eastern governments concerning measures to be taken in preparation for the cessation of international assistance for relief and works projects. The agency currently supports more than five million Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, including providing health care, education and social services. UNRWA benefits from the generous support of UN Member States, the European Union and regional governments. Together, these sources represent over 92 per cent of financial contributions to the Agency. UNRWA also partners with businesses and foundations, ranging from small local tech companies to large multinationals; and tailor each partnership to make the best use of partner's expertise and ensure mutual benefit. UNRWA work closely with small community-based organizations and with international NGOs, drawing on their unique resources and strengths to deliver effective services for Palestine refugees (UNRWA, n.d.).

The U.S. has been the largest single donor to UNRWA, responsible for providing about \$350 million each year, a quarter of its annual budget. The U.S. providing \$364m (£283m) in 2017 and funding almost 30% of its operations in the region. The U.S. had already stated its intention to withhold \$65 million in UNRWA funding back in January. But after a concerted push by Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, who is also a senior Middle East adviser, the State Department will now withhold the remaining amount. It was later reported that the Trump administration had withheld about \$305m in funding, and only delivered \$60m to UNRWA. (BBC News, 2018). By ended funding to UNRWA the U.S. is damaging not only an already volatile situation but the prospects for future peace. Palestinian officials have already accused the Trump administration of worsening tensions due to its pro-Israel stance. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has previously called for UNRWA's funding to be cut gradually and its responsibilities transferred to the UN's global refugee agency, the UNHCR, arguing

that it “perpetuates the Palestinian problem.” Some Israelis have raised concerns that weakening UNRWA could cause regional instability and create more extremism in the region. Trump’s administrations argued that the cuts would come amid a general push to reduce foreign aid and assistance to other countries, and are reportedly intended to pressure Palestinian politicians into making concessions ahead of a U.S.-sponsored Middle East peace plan (Underwood, 2018).

The decision to cut U.S. funding to UNRWA was made earlier in the month at a meeting between Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Kushner, and was intended to place pressure on Palestinian leadership. Kushner contends that UNRWA’s assistance has built a culture of dependency among the Palestinians and that it helps preserve unrealistic expectations that they might one day return to the homes they left in the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. He and Haley are gambling that the financial pressure will force the Palestinians to resume negotiations with Washington’s Middle East peace team, which Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas halted over Trump’s decision to move the U.S. Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem (Lynch, 2018). U.S. would cut funding to UNRWA unless Palestinians decided to come to the table and continue peace talks with Israel. “We’re trying to move for a peace process, but if that doesn’t happen, the president is not going to continue to fund that situation,” Haley said. But it’s unclear if cutting funding will have the desired effect, and experts don’t believe that the U.S.-brokered Middle East peace plan has a high chance of succeeding (Foran & Labott, 2018).

The U.S. and Israel also disagree with UNRWA on which Palestinians are refugees with a right to return to the homes they fled following the 1948 war. The “right of return” is one of the key core issues of dispute in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Palestinians claim that five million people (tens of thousands of original refugees from what is today’s Israel, and their millions of descendants) have a “right of return.” Israel rejects the demand, saying that it represents a bid by the Palestinians to “destroy” Israel by weight of numbers (The Times of Israel, 2018). Abbas and other top Palestinian officials have long called for “a just and agreed upon” solution to the issue of refugees in accordance with UN General Assembly resolution 194. Israel has staunchly opposed the return of Palestinian

refugees to their former and ancestral homes, arguing that, with the number of refugees now inflated into millions because of the UNRWA criteria, such a move would spell the end of the country as a Jewish-majority state. Nikki Haley, the U.S. ambassador to the UN, said that UNRWA exaggerated the number of Palestinian refugees, and needed to reform (Deutsche Welle, 2018).

Israeli Defense Force's official also worried that Washington's apparent efforts to weaken the United Nations organization that deals with Palestinian refugees may strengthen the Hamas terror group in Gaza and endanger Israel's security. A serious cut to the budget of the UNRWA would create a vacuum in the provision of basic services in the Strip, where the majority of residents are dependent on the organization. This would be particularly felt in food shortages and a breakdown of education, which Hamas could use to strengthen its grip on the coastal enclave (Cortellessa, 2018).

The international community have a rather similar reaction on Trump's decision, which condemning the move. The Trump Administration's decision to end U.S. assistance to Palestinian refugees is wrong on every level. The loss UNRWA could unleash an uncontrollable chain reaction. Disruption of UNRWA services will have extremely dangerous humanitarian, political and security implications for refugees and for the whole region. A drastic cut by the United States to the United Nations agency could potentially be "extremely destabilizing." The U.S. decision to end all funding to the agency is a cruel and irresponsible move targeting the most vulnerable segment of Palestinian society. With such a decision, the U.S. is doing Israel's bidding and destroying the very foundations of peace and stability by taking all permanent status issues 'off the table', including the right of return for refugees and occupied Jerusalem (Wong, 2018). UNRWA's support would be needed as long as the parties failed to reach an agreement to end the crisis. The agencies' official said that "UNRWA does not perpetuate the conflict, the conflict perpetuates UNRWA. It is the failure of the political parties to resolve the refugee situation which perpetuates the continued existence of UNRWA". (Wroughton & Sawafta, 2018)

#### **2.4.4 The Closing of PLO Office in Washington**

The United States announced the closure of the Palestinian mission in Washington, DC, on September last year in what Palestinian leaders described as “a declaration of war” on peace efforts by the administration of President Donald Trump. U.S. State Department said the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) office “has not taken steps to advance the start of direct and meaningful negotiations with Israel.” They also considered that PLO leadership has condemned a U.S. peace plan they have not yet seen and refused to engage with the U.S. government with respect to peace efforts and otherwise (U.S. Department of State, 2018). PLO Secretary-General Saeb Erekat expressed the decision was yet another affirmation of the Trump administration’s policy to collectively punish the Palestinian people, including by cutting financial support for humanitarian services including health and education. “This dangerous escalation shows that the U.S. is willing to disband the international system in order to protect Israeli crimes and attacks against the land and people of Palestine as well as against peace and security in the rest of our region,” he said (Al Jazeera News, 2018).

The administration had told the Palestinians that closure was a distinct possibility unless they agreed to sit to down with the Israelis. It has yet to release its own much-vaunted but largely unknown peace plan although it said it still intends to do so. The Trump administration will not keep the office open when the Palestinians refuse to take steps to start direct and meaningful negotiations with Israel. Although the U.S. does not recognize Palestinian statehood, the PLO has maintained in Washington a general delegation office that facilitates Palestinian officials' interactions with the U.S. government. The United States continues to believe that direct negotiations between the two parties are the only way forward. “This action should not be exploited by those who seek to act as spoilers to distract from the imperative of reaching a peace agreement,” spokeswoman Nauert of the State Department said in her statement. But U.S. moves regarding this issues have clearly indicated otherwise. Many argue that U.S. is bias towards Israel-Palestine conflict and surely sided with Israel (Ngan, 2018).

The decision to close PLO office in Washington is also consistent with Administration and Congressional concerns with Palestinian attempts to prompt an investigation of Israeli settlement policies in the West Bank and the violent clashes on the Gaza border by the International Criminal Court. The U.S. also threatened sanctions against the International Criminal Court if it pursues investigations against the U.S., Israel, or other allies. The moves are likely to harden Palestinian resistance to the U.S. role as a peace broker (The Times of Israel, 2018). The United States clearly supports a direct and robust peace process, and will not allow the ICC, or any other organization, to constrain Israel's right to self-defense. Trump's national security adviser, John Bolton, said that "the United States will use any means necessary to protect our citizens and those of our allies from unjust prosecution by this illegitimate court, we will not cooperate with the ICC. We will provide no assistance to the ICC. We will not join the ICC. We will let the ICC die on its own. After all, for all intents and purposes, the ICC is already dead to us." He is also expected to warn that the U.S. will sanction the ICC if it pursues investigations of the U.S. and Israel. Such sanctions could include barring judges and prosecutors from entering the U.S., as well as asset freezes (Lynch, 2018).

Over the past year, Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law and senior adviser, has repeatedly questioned Mahmoud Abbas' commitment to peace and the U.S. president's so-called "deal of the century." While the details of Trump's deal of the century have not officially been released, leaks have suggested that the Palestinians would initially control the Gaza Strip and less than half of the occupied West Bank, while a Palestinian capital would be created from villages surrounding Jerusalem. The Israelis would retain security control over the Jordan valley and have total control over Palestinian travel between the West Bank and Gaza, while a corridor will be created between Palestinian territory and Jerusalem's holy sites. It appears meanwhile that Palestinians would have to surrender the principle of the right of return of Palestinian refugees expelled during the creation of Israel, while the future of illegal Israeli settlements and the final border between Palestine and Israel would be decided at a later date (Thomas & George, 2018). The administration has said it's trying a new approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict after decades of failed peace talks, chipping away at the Palestinians' key issues as it reshapes U.S. policy.

But Palestinian officials view the new administration as biased in Israel's favor and have cut contact with it. The U.S. would do better to finally understand that the Palestinians will not surrender, and that no amount of coercion or unwarranted collective punitive measures will bring the Palestinian leadership or people to their knees (Wadhams, et al., 2018).

#### **2.4.5 The Closing of USAID Office in West Bank and Gaza**

Last year Washington cut hundreds of millions of dollars of aid to the Palestinians, which included funding to humanitarian groups supported by USAID. The announcement comes after humanitarian officials in the West Bank and Gaza said they were already facing a cutback from donors worldwide. The U.S. cuts were widely seen as a means of pressuring the Palestinian leadership to resume the peace talks with Israel and to engage with the Trump administration ahead of its long-awaited Middle East peace plan. As a result, dozens of NGO employees have been laid off, programs shut down, and infrastructure projects halted (Farrell & Lubell, 2019). After U.S. President Donald Trump's decided to freeze funding to various Palestinian relief organizations, USAID's dozens of projects in the West Bank and Gaza were suspended, including those that had been partially completed. In the current budgetary year, the United States was projected to have transferred a total of \$250 million in aid to various Palestinian organizations. \$35 million of which was supposed to be allocated to the Palestinian Authority security forces and \$215 million to economic development, humanitarian assistance and coexistence projects, some through USAID. Last August, the United States announced that the money would be diverted to matters were deemed higher priority to U.S. interests (Kubovich, 2018).

Besides, The U.S. Agency for International Development office in the West Bank and Gaza is closing as NGOs must shut down operations in the Palestinian territories by January, 31 this year as a result of apparent unintended consequences of a U.S. terrorism law passed in 2018. The Anti-Terrorism Clarification Act (ATCA), which was signed into law last October, stipulates that foreign governments which accept aid from the U.S. government will be eligible for prosecution in U.S. courts for damages as a result of terrorism. For this reason, the

Palestinian Authority said it would no longer accept such funds from the U.S. According to U.S. official the aid was cut, not just suspended at the PA's request because they didn't want to be subject to U.S. courts which would require them to pay U.S. citizens killed by Palestinian terrorists when the PA was found guilty. Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah said that while he was grateful for the aid the U.S. has provided to Palestinians, it would no longer accept the funds since the provisions of ATCA could make the Palestinian Authority financially liable in American courts. He stated that "the Government of Palestine, including the Palestinian National Authority and its agencies, does not undertake or accept any responsibility for any public or private aid from U.S.-affiliated sources that is or may be provided directly, or indirectly by any third party, to any non-government Palestinian institution." All USAID assistance in the West Bank and Gaza has ceased (Knell, 2019).

To reverse the impact ATCA is having on aid operations in Gaza and the West Bank, Congress would need to pass and the president must sign legislation that includes language clarifying that humanitarian assistance and NGO operations would not trigger legal liability for the Palestinian Authority in U.S. courts. A standalone bill is seen as too politically sensitive, so the language would likely need to be attached to another unrelated bill in the U.S. Congress in order to pass. The Palestinian Authority has indicated that a clarification of the U.S. law could cause a reversal of its refusal of U.S. aid. Naturally, if circumstances change, such that Palestine's acceptance of aid under these programs could not be used to undermine due process protections for Palestine in the U.S. courts, then the Government of Palestine would revisit its decision and take the steps to restore these aid programs, which have a proven track record of success. USAID and U.S. NGOS already face severe challenges operating in the Palestinian territories, where they must be careful not to run afoul of terrorism laws. They must ensure that no funds end up in the hands of Hamas or support the terrorist group (Welsh, 2019).

The U.S. federal government agency handles civilian assistance to various countries around the world. USAID is the principal U.S. government agency that administers the United States' foreign assistance program in the West Bank and

Gaza. The USAID chapter in the West Bank and Gaza began operating in 1994, focusing mainly on economic issues including water, infrastructure, education and health. The goal of USAID programs is the achievement of a just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, while addressing the aspirations of Palestinians for economic opportunity, effective governance, youth development, and humanitarian needs. These efforts help build a more democratic, stable, and secure region benefiting Palestinians, Israelis, and Americans. USAID has invested about \$5.5 billion in the West Bank and Gaza in the construction of roads, schools, clinics and community centers. USAID also buys medical equipment, provides humanitarian assistance to those in need of medical care and teaches lifesaving techniques to doctors from Gaza and the West Bank via Israel and other countries. In recent years USAID has conducted in-service education for teachers, built schools and worked on projects to keep young Palestinians in the education system. Last August, Israel approved the entry of containers with equipment needed for the completion of water projects into Gaza. USAID had been working on for the project for past year, including construction of a large desalination plant and eight large drinking water reservoirs. The project, whose cost was estimated at 60 million shekels (\$16 million) was conducted USAID by American companies through a contractor in Gaza (USAID, n.d.).

USAID and many NGOs operating in West Bank and Gaza has brought positive impacts to million lives of Palestinians. With the new law, the practical impacts are consequential, but more significant are the breaches of trust and the threats of destabilization in the region. Palestinians appreciate not only the new schools, rebuilt roads, advanced training, and access to technologies, but also the thousands of constructive relationships fostered by these multitude of programs. USAID's absence will reinforce Palestinian assumptions regarding the perceived biases of U.S. policy in the region. At some point, meaningful peace negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis will once again resume, perhaps without direct U.S. mediation. Shutting down USAID and terminating assistance programs will have detrimental short-term consequences and will make more costly, complicated, and time-consuming a resumption of efforts in the future. By contrast, approving an amendment to the ATCA to exempt humanitarian and development assistance



provided through nongovernmental organizations might contribute to a rebuilding of trust between U.S. officials and Palestinian counterparts, and counter the growing cynicism regarding U.S. intentions in the region (Garber, 2019).

The money from the United States is almost a quarter of the annual global funding for peace and reconciliation activities between Israelis and Palestinians. The grants are bid out for as much as \$1.2 million over three years, and are by far the largest of their kind. Cutting off programs that benefit Palestinians would deeply damage the integrity of the program. The American aid agency previously said the funds' aims are "to support Israelis and Palestinians working on issues of common concern." Last year, the funding proposals sought to support cross-border projects that bring together Israelis and Palestinians and activities that bring together Israelis, Palestinians, and Jordanians are strongly encouraged. The program activities vary widely, such as bringing Israeli and Palestinian almond farmers together and organizing soccer games for Palestinian and Israeli girls. Many humanitarian officials in West Bank and Gaza considered the end of fund leads to the end of hope for two nations to live in peace. Reconciliation activities should be beyond politics. Republican and Democratic presidents have tried for decades to position the U.S. as an honest broker between Israel and the Palestinians. President Trump has abdicated that critical role and squandered U.S. influence and credibility with the Arab world on this critical issue (Halbfinger & Kershner, 2018).

#### **2.4.6 U.S. and Israel Left UNESCO**

The United States and Israel officially quit the UN Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization, the culmination of a process triggered more than a year ago, amid concerns that the organization fosters anti-Israel bias. The withdrawal is mainly procedural yet deals a new blow to UNESCO, co-founded by the U.S. after World War II to foster peace. The Trump administration filed its notice to withdraw in October 2017 and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu followed suit. Both countries announced their departure from UNESCO in 2017, effective at the end of 2018. The Paris-based organization has been denounced by its critics as a crucible for anti-Israel bias: blasted for criticizing Israel's occupation of east Jerusalem, naming ancient Jewish sites as Palestinian heritage sites and granting

full membership to Palestine in 2011. According to U.S. official, UNESCO has adopted systematic discrimination against Israel and UNESCO is being used in order to rewrite history by people who hate the Jewish people and the state of Israel (Haaretz, 2019).

The withdrawals will not greatly impact UNESCO financially, since it has been dealing with a funding slash ever since 2011, when both Israel and the U.S. stopped paying dues after Palestine was voted in as a member state. Since then officials estimate that the U.S. which accounted for around 22 percent of the total budget has accrued \$600 million in unpaid dues, which was one of the reasons for President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw. Israel owes an estimated \$10 million. Israel has been infuriated by repeated resolutions that ignore and diminish its historical connection to the Holy Land and that have named ancient Jewish sites as Palestinian heritage sites (Beaumont, 2017).

The U.S. intends to stay engaged at UNESCO as a non-member "observer state" on "non-politicized" issues, including the protection of World Heritage sites, advocating for press freedoms and promoting scientific collaboration and education. The United States has pulled out of UNESCO before. The Reagan administration did so in 1984 because it viewed the agency as mismanaged, corrupt and used to advance Soviet interests. The U.S. rejoined in 2003. Israel has been a member state of UNESCO since 1949. In the last 17 years, the global cultural body has registered nine sites within the country on its World Heritage List. But its pro-Palestinian stances have created increasing friction with both the U.S. and Israel. Both countries lost voting rights in the organization in 2013 over their failure to pay dues, but maintained all other participation rights (Kraemer, 2019).

The situation intensified in 2016 after the Palestinian Authority and the Arab states pushed forward resolutions at UNESCO's Executive Board that ignored Jewish ties to the Temple Mount and the Western Wall, describing the most holy sites in Judaism solely by their Muslim names of al-Haram al-Sharif and the Buraq Plaza. They also passed texts disavowing Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem. Also in 2017, the World Heritage Committee voted to inscribe Hebron's Old City and the Tomb of the Patriarchs to the "State of Palestine." The inscription focused

heavily on the city's Muslim history after the year 1250, in spite of the city's biblical and Jewish roots (The National, 2018).

In 2018, UNESCO's executive board passed a benign text that included no controversial elements. But an addendum was attached to the document with more controversial statements added. The addendum, for example, affirmed that Jerusalem was holy to all three religions, but also disavowed Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem and claimed that Hebron and Rachel's Tomb were an integral part of Palestine. Israeli Ambassador to the UN Danny Danon was fairly blunt in stating that the compromise did not go far enough, because it still allowed for problematic language to move forward (Murphy, 2019). For instance, the agency's Executive Board passed two decisions critical of Israel, but did it in a way meant to answer some of Jerusalem's concerns. The cultural agency celebrated the move as a sign of "goodwill," but Danon still slammed it as further proof of the organization's "lies and biases" against the Jewish state. The two texts on "Occupied Palestine" sharply criticized Israel — called the "occupying power" throughout — for various policies vis-a-vis the Palestinians. For instance, Decision 28 deeply "deplores the ongoing military developments around the Gaza Strip and their heavy toll of civilian casualties," and refers to the Tomb of the Patriarchs in the Old City of Hebron "an integral part of the Occupied Palestinian Territory." Decision 29 said UNESCO's Executive Board is deeply "concerned by the Israeli army violations against Palestinian universities and schools" and referred to the Golan Heights as occupied Syrian territory (Ahren, 2019).

In June of this year, UNESCO launched its first policy guide for educators on antisemitism. It also held a forum on antisemitism on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly's opening session in New York. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, however, boycotted the session. At the time Netanyahu said, "Since 2009, UNESCO has passed 71 resolutions condemning Israel and only two resolutions condemning all other countries combined. This is simply outrageous. The mark of antisemitism was once singling out the Jewish people for slander and condemnation. The mark of antisemitism today is singling out the Jewish state for slander and condemnation. No matter what UNESCO says, the Western Wall is not

occupied Palestinian territory, and the Cave of the Patriarchs or known as the burial site of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Leah is not a Palestinian heritage site.” In withdrawing from UNESCO in 2017, Israel and the United States made a clear moral statement that UNESCO’s antisemitism will no longer be tolerated. If and when UNESCO ends its bias against Israel, stops denying history and starts standing up for the truth, Israel will be honored to rejoin. Until then, Israel will fight antisemitism at UNESCO and everywhere else (Lazaroff, 2018).

This move seems self-evident that the disdain for multilateralism expressed in Trump’s ‘America First’ foreign policy outlook partly explains why the U.S. left UNESCO. For the U.S., the present withdrawal from UNESCO is thus not too big a deal and smoothly integrates into prior history. The situation may be somewhat different for Israel. While passing resolutions opposed to Israeli interests is nothing new to what UNESCO does, this is the first time Israel has left the organization. It is a move that puts the U.S. and Israel against the virtually global membership of UNESCO. Under the far-right government of Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel, for better or worse, is trailing along the not-so-easily predictable foreign policy course set by the administration of Donald Trump. The current episode in the diplomatic drama of how the Israel-Palestine conflict unfolds on the stage of UNESCO needs to be seen historically and in terms of the changing American strategic and tactical outlook towards the UN (Marwecki, 2019).

#### **2.4.7 Trump Recognized Israel’s Sovereignty over Golan Heights**

President Trump signed a proclamation on March, 2019 that recognizes Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights, formalizing the Middle East policy shift he announced over Twitter last week. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was with Trump at the White House as he signed the presidential proclamation. “Israel has never had a better friend than you,” Netanyahu said, enumerating several instances in which the administration has delivered on campaign promises favoring the Israeli leader (Pileggi & Ahren, 2019). For right-wing Israelis, U.S. recognition is a two-fold act of historic justice. Israel won the Golan Heights in a just war of self-defense, and the Jewish people’s roots in the Golan go back thousands of years. The latest move reverses the position U.S. administrations have held for more than

50 years, when Israel captured the Golan Heights from Syria during the 1967 Six-Day War. The region was annexed by the government in 1981, officially making it part of Israel and serving as a strategic military and agricultural post. Netanyahu called the high ground “invaluable” to the national security of the nation, as did Trump’s proclamation which envisaged this policy shift as critical strategic and security importance to the State of Israel and Regional Stability (Romo, 2019).

Israel fears that aggressive acts by Iran and terrorist groups, including Hizballah, in southern Syria continue to make the Golan Heights a potential launching ground for attacks on Israel. Any possible future peace agreement in the region must account for Israel’s need to protect itself from Syria and other regional threats. Based on these unique circumstances, it is therefore appropriate to recognize Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights. This is in accordance with Trump’s administration to recognized Israel’s sovereignty over Golan Heights. The decree puts the U.S. at odds with much of the international community, which considers the Golan occupied territory. Previous U.S. administrations have treated Golan Heights as occupied Syrian territory, in line with UN Security Council resolutions. Trump declared his break with that policy (Borger, 2019).

After Trump’s announcement, Syria, Russia and the EU strongly condemning the decision to recognize Israel’s annexation of the Golan Heights, which they consider occupied Syrian territory. Syria’s Foreign Ministry rejected Trump’s decision to legitimize Israel’s claim over the contested land, calling it “a flagrant aggression of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic, turning a blind eye to all international reactions that condemned such resolution.” The country’s foreign ministry said the U.S. move represents the “highest level of contempt for international legitimacy”. The U.S. president has no right or legal capacity to legalize the occupation or usurp the others’ land by force and this U.S. hostile policy makes the region and the world subject to all dangers (Salama & Schwartz, 2019). UN Secretary-General António Guterres said it is “clear that the status of Golan has not changed.” The UN’s policy on Golan is reflected in the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and that policy has not changed. Critics, including the U.N., contend U.S. recognition of Israel’s control

over the disputed Golan is an irreversible break from the long-held principle of territorial integrity, prohibiting the acquisition of territory by war that will inevitably have global consequences. By defying a 52-year-old unanimously adopted UN resolution on “inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war”, Trump has also broken the postwar norm of refusing to recognize the forcible annexation of territory which has underpinned western and international opposition to the Russian annexation of Crimea. They argue this bold move may pave the way for the Trump administration to recognize any future Israeli annexation of the West Bank (Alexander & Ahmann, 2019).

The timing of the policy shift comes at an opportune time for Netanyahu, who faces a difficult election on April 9 and has been lobbying the Trump administration for several weeks to recognize the Golan as Israeli territory. This decision marked a dramatic move that likely to bolster Benjamin Netanyahu’s hopes to win re-election, but which will also provoke international opposition. The announcement marks a diplomatic coup for Netanyahu. Trump denied his announcement was intended to help Netanyahu hold on to office, even suggesting he had been unaware the election was imminent. Administration officials had previously rebuffed Netanyahu’s pressure for recognition of Israel’s possession of the strategic border area, pointing out that Trump had already handed the Israeli leader a significant political gift by moving the U.S. embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem (Morin, 2019).

Recognition of the Golan could pave the way for U.S. recognition of Israeli sovereignty in the Palestinian occupied territories. In a recent state department report on human rights, the administration changed its description of the West Bank and Gaza from “occupied territories” to “Israeli-controlled territories”. Additionally, a separate section on the West Bank and Gaza Strip, areas that Israel also captured in the 1967 Middle East war, did not refer to those territories as being “occupied” or under “occupation”. The change of wording built on the state department’s 2017 report, when it renamed the publication from “Israel and the Occupied Territories” to “Israel, Golan Heights, West Bank and Gaza”. The current U.S. policy on who controls the West Bank and Gaza is that the final status is to be

decided in peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. But the description changes from Israel occupying the aforementioned areas to controlling them demonstrates a significant shift in semantics by U.S. officials (Holmes, 2019).

However, Michael Kozak, head of the State Department's Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Bureau, noted that the language in the report does not reflect any policy changes. But most of foreign policy analysts think that the change of wording might cause a serious shift in future U.S. policies in that arena. It is extremely significant that the State Department, for the first time, has dropped the term 'occupied' when referring to the Golan Heights, the West Bank (i.e., Judea and Samaria), and Gaza. This seems to acknowledge that these lands were acquired through wars of self-defense and not through some sort of expansionist quest for territorial acquisition. The new term 'Israeli-controlled' works to advance Israel's security interests and warns Iran to pull back its cross-Syria ambitions, directly and through its proxies. The new language regarding the West Bank and Gaza is a warning shot to the Fatah leadership that continued obstinacy is not an option. It also signals Palestinians that they must re-engage the diplomatic process, or their future will be written for them by their adversaries. The report is certain to frustrate the Palestinian leadership, which sees Donald Trump as the most biased U.S. president in the history of the conflict (Richman, 2019).

Over the decades there have been a string of abortive attempts to negotiate a peaceful solution to the fate of the Golan Heights, most recently in 2010 when the Obama administration and Netanyahu engaged in secret talks with the Syrian dictator, Bashar al-Assad, on a peace treaty involving Israeli withdrawal. But that effort foundered with the spread of the Arab Spring revolt to Syria, and Assad's decision to crush the rebellion by massacring protesters in 2011. Frederic Hof, a former senior state department official involved in those negotiations, stated that annexation "would be an entirely gratuitous gesture with potential diplomatic downsides for Israel and for the security of Israelis". It will be welcomed by Israel's bitterest enemies, Iran and Hezbollah, who would see annexation as additional justification for terror operations. It would enable Syria's Assad regime to change the subject from its war crimes and crimes against humanity to Israel's formal

acquisition of territory in violation of UN Security Council resolution 242. It would do nothing whatsoever positive for Israel's security (Crowther, 2019).

Trump's move has clearly undermines standing international laws. Trump has just complicated America's policy toward the Middle East. But he likely doesn't care too much, since he just delighted one of his closest allies in the region, Netanyahu. The Trump administration is extremely close to Israel's prime minister. Trump's decision regarding Golan Heights has giving Netanyahu a major win that could boost his chances of victory. Many foreign policy experts argue that this move has no justification or basis in U.S. direct national interest. It might protect U.S. and Israel from Iran and extremist groups' threat, but this only brings huge benefit for Israel and its security concern. The U.S. seems to gain little profit from this controversial policy. It therefore seems that Trump upended American bipartisan consensus just to help a friend. That might make him a nice guy in Netanyahu's eyes, but the move will likely be considered disastrous by many others. The administration is likely once again to be completely isolated internationally (Ward, 2019).

Much of the world already considered the United States a biased and unhelpful actor, promoting Israeli interests in a way that perpetuated the conflict. Partly this is because of the power imbalance between Israelis and Palestinians. Because the far stronger Israelis are the occupiers, and the United States is seen as a steward for the conflict, the Americans are sometimes blamed, rightly or wrongly, for that imbalance. Partly it is because of domestic politics that led American leaders to pronounce themselves as pro-Israel while pursuing policies intended as neutral. But it is also because of a decades-old American negotiating tactic. The last three administrations led by Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama all believed that they needed to grant Israel concessions to make Israeli leaders feel secure and comfortable enough to make their own concessions for peace. So Mr. Trump's move, though he does not describe it this way, is arguably in line with past American strategy. And it is seen abroad as confirming long-held doubts about American leadership, rather than as drastically new (Fisher, 2017).



Warnings of a long-term shift tend to hinge on the idea that losing American neutrality means losing American leverage over Israelis and Palestinians to achieve peace. But the simple fact of American power makes the country an important broker, neutral or not. American leverage with Israel also comes from implicitly guaranteeing Israel's security and providing it with lots of military hardware. Still, because Israel got something for nothing from Mr. Trump's announcement, it has little reason to make difficult concessions. American leverage over Palestinian leaders is also significant, since those leaders rely on American support to keep their administration funded and stable. But those leaders are deeply unpopular with their own people. A real risk here is that they one day grow so unpopular that their administration collapses. This would risk chaos and violence in the short term and, long term, a likely takeover by the militant Palestinian group Hamas. Trump's move likely edges Israelis and Palestinians closer to that future (Fisher, 2017).