

***The Pilgrims' Road:***  
**The Process of Peace Making in the Arab-Israeli Conflict**

The longest on-going war in the world today is the *Arab-Israeli Conflict*, And despite opinions to the contrary it is not about to end soon. It remains *the* primary source for instability in the entire region from Egypt to Pakistan. In truth the so-called *roadmap to peace* has never run through Baghdad, or Kabul. Today, as always, it runs through Jerusalem. In just over half a century there have been less than half a dozen serious attempts at peace-making in this conflict, and only two of them bore any kind of success. worse, the process has once again reached a virtual stalemate, often over-shadowed by American emphasis on the *war on terror*, and the war in Iraq. Not unlike one of his predecessors, Ronald Reagan, George W. Bush has determined that peace in the *Arab-Israeli Conflict* is dependent upon, if not secondary to, a larger issue. In Reagan's case peace in this conflict was to follow an end to the Cold War. Of course it did not. For Bush, the conflict is part of a broader source of instability that is attached to his *war on terror*, as a result of the events of September 11, 2001. In fact, he has reality upside down. All other sources of instability in the region are one way or another connected to peace in the *Arab-Israeli Conflict*. Tragically, this problem has been put on the back burner of American foreign policy, and as long as it remains there a successful peace process will be elusive. Unravel the *Gordian Knot* that is peace in the *Arab-Israeli Conflict* and a monumental and necessary first step to regional stability will be taken.

**Paper by**  
**Dr. G. Michael Stathis, Ph.D.**  
**Professor**  
**Political Science and**  
**International Relations**  
**Southern Utah University**  
**Cedar City, Utah**  
**Stathis@suu.edu**

**Based on Lectures Presented at**  
**The University of Jordan**  
**Amman, Jordan**  
**February 2007**

## Introduction

As the war in Iraq grinds into its fourth disastrous year it is easy to lose sight of the fact that it is not the longest war in the region or the most significant. Of course it is neither. The longest ongoing war in the world today is the *Arab-Israeli Conflict*, and despite opinions to the contrary it is not about to end soon. And it remains *the* primary source for instability in the entire region from Egypt to Pakistan. A simple fact that seems lost to the Bush Administration which has determined that its war in Iraq and its *war on terror* in general are the keys to stability in the Middle East. Thus repeatedly George W. Bush and his Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, have emphasized that the *roadmap to peace* in the area must go through Baghdad and perhaps Kabul. In truth the so-called *roadmap to peace* has never run through Baghdad, or Kabul. Today, as always, it runs through Jerusalem. In just over half a century there have been less than half a dozen serious attempts at peacemaking in this conflict, and only two of them bore any kind of success. Worse, the process has once again reached a virtual stalemate, most often overshadowed by American emphasis on the *war on terror*, and the war in Iraq. Not unlike one of his predecessors, Ronald Reagan, George W. Bush has determined that peace in the *Arab-Israeli Conflict* is dependent upon, if not secondary to, a larger issue. In Reagan's case peace in this conflict was to follow an end to the Cold War. Of course it did not. For Bush, the conflict is part of a broader source of instability that is attached to his *war on terror*, as a result of the events of September 11, 2001. In fact, he has reality upside down. All other sources of instability in the region are one way or another connected to peace in the *Arab-Israeli Conflict*. Tragically, this problem has been put on

the back burner of American foreign policy, and as long as it remains there a successful peace process will be elusive. Unravel the *Gordian Knot* that is peace in the *Arab-Israeli Conflict* and a monumental and necessary first step to regional stability will be taken, the beginning of a *pilgrim's road* to peace.

### **The Pilgrim's Road**

In a series of lectures on the history of the *Crusades* at Indiana University in 1957 esteemed historian Aziz S. Atiya portrayed the history of East-West relations in the Middle East as the *Eastern Question* of which the conquests of Alexander the Great was part of the ancient solution, and the *Crusades* were merely part of the medieval solution to a broader question, just as the *Arab-Israeli Conflict* is simply the modern part of that same question. Atiya also noted that one of the most successful periods in this question was what he called the *Age of Pilgrims* which began generally with the building of the *Church of the Holy Sepulchre* in Jerusalem by St. Helena, mother of Constantine the Great, and later formalized by the an agreement between Charlemagne and Caliph Harun al-Rashid known as the *Way of Peace* in 797 establishing protection for all pilgrims to Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup> The *Age of Pilgrims* was reinforced by a later pact between the Fatimid Caliph al-Hakim and Byzantine Emperor Basil II in 1000 and continued until the events that culminated in the declaration of *crusade* by Pope Urban II in 1095.<sup>2</sup> But for a period of some three centuries Jerusalem rested in relative tranquility, certainly a far more

---

<sup>1</sup> Of course this so-called *Age of Pilgrims* was itself a part of a larger period of relatively peaceful Muslim rule that began when Caliph Umar entered Jerusalem and lasted virtually uninterrupted until the twentieth century with the obvious exception of the embattled period of the Christian Kingdom of Jerusalem from 1099 to 1187 which ended when Salah al-Din (Saladin) defeated the Crusaders and restored Muslim rule in Jerusalem. It should also be noted that a Christian Kingdom was restored briefly (with the exception of the al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock) as the result of an agreement (the *Treaty of Jaffa*) between the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II and the Ayyubid Sultan of Egypt, al-Malik al-Kamil (Salah al-Din's nephew) roughly from 1229 to 1244.

<sup>2</sup> Aziz S. Atiya, *Crusade, Commerce and Culture* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1962), 40-47.

peaceful status than the state of affairs since the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>3</sup> The *Way of Peace* or the *Pilgrims' Road* had paved the way to a period of peace acceptable to both Christianity and Islam.

In more recent memory the Middle East has again been plagued by war, in this case the *Arab-Israeli Conflict*, which has lasted since 1948. Far too often wrongly blamed on either religion or the simple intransigence of one side, the Arabs or the Palestinians, this conflict has its roots in the mismanagement of those usually considered peace makers at Versailles. Sadly, few other peacemakers have been successful in settling the *Arab-Israeli Conflict*, the modern manifestation of failed statesmanship, and sadder yet have been numerous efforts since 1967 that have failed to bring lasting peace. Still, the possibilities of settlement have yet to be exhausted completely, they will however require a new realization of existing affairs, not one based on the empty rhetoric of *democracy* and *freedom*, or unrealistic preconditions, but rather the simple and immediate recognition of the justifiable claims to a state of their for the Palestinians. This road to peace must be through Jerusalem, without detours to Baghdad or Kabul. It is not a *road map* to peace, but simply a *pilgrim's road* to the chance of regional peace.

### **The Grave Beginning: Versailles, the Peace to End All Peace**

Ironically, relative peace and tranquility reigned in the region from 1516 to 1918 and the beginning of the modern era under the rule of the Ottoman Sultans, indeed, it was only later as British *Mandate* that the area recognized in the *Peace of Versailles* as

---

<sup>3</sup> The same could not be said for the centuries of Greek and Roman *imposed peace* in the area which seemed a constant target of *zealots* resulting in the phenomena of armed reprisal, repression, and *diaspora*.

*Palestine* was plunged into interminable, modern conflict.<sup>4</sup> In 1916, Sir Percy Sykes and François Georges Picot could not possibly have imagined the long-term problems they would set in motion with the *Sykes-Picot Agreement*. The immediate purpose of this document was to placate French fears concerning their interests in the Middle East vis a vis those of Great Britain after the defeat of the Ottoman Empire. Essentially, however, *Sykes-Picot* became the initial blueprint for the modern Middle East. Later, during the negotiations that became the so-called *Peace of Versailles* (1919-1920) it served as the primary guideline for Georges Clemenceau, David Lloyd George and Woodrow Wilson. Palestine became an unclear compromise for future attention, but in the meantime a British Mandate Territory. How simple it would have been to avoid future heartache by simply recognizing a state of Palestine then. Of course the Peace of Versailles was the source of so many ills that it can rightly be called the *peace to end peace*, as it was cynically referred to by British Field Marshall Archibald Wavell.<sup>5</sup>

Britain continued to forestall a logical solution until it became too politically difficult to make and then surrendered it to the newly formed United Nations. That body emulated King Solomon with its decision to divide Palestine into an Arab state and a Jewish state. The essential idea was right but the details were mismanaged and conflict ensued. There was yet one more chance to try to salvage some dignity in 1948, but again the United Nations failed by deferring the recognition of an independent Palestine in

---

<sup>4</sup> Jerusalem was taken by Sultan Selim the Grim in 1516 during his eastern and southern sweep through Syria, Palestine, and Egypt. Ottoman rule ended in December of 1917 when forward units of General Edmund Allenby's army entered Jerusalem as part of his big push on Damascus in World War I.

<sup>5</sup> Wavell's sarcastic turn of President Wilson's phrase the *war to end all wars* in reference to the *Peace of Versailles*. See David Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East* (New York: Avon Books, 1989), 6.

favor of a further territorial division among other existing Arab states. Palestine had again been lost, and the *Arab-Israeli Conflict* had begun.

Amazingly, the conflict continued until 1967 before serious attention was paid to a diplomatic settlement by way of *United Nations' Security Council Resolution 242*, but by this time it was too little (the Palestinian issue was noted only by reference to *refugees*), and too late for a simple solution, but the stage was set for yet another chapter of conflict in 1973 that at least seemed to open the door for possible diplomacy.

### **Henry Kissinger and Shuttle Diplomacy**

The actual significance of Henry Kissinger's so-called *shuttle diplomacy* is still debated. It was perhaps more important than many critics give it credit for, but perhaps less vital than some popular views.<sup>6</sup> At most Kissinger was responsible for beginning a process that led to the Camp David Accords and the *Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty*; at the least his efforts at a disengagement agreement set the stage for the more significant events that followed. The name given to his efforts, *shuttle diplomacy*, clearly symbolized his approach to foreign policy and international relations: it should not be left to the untrained, and should be handled personally, statesman to statesman. In this regard he effectively dismissed the idea, proposed by the Soviet Union, for a regional conference.

Following a United Nations' sponsored ceasefire in 1973, Secretary of State Kissinger began a complicated process of personal peacemaking that initially did not bear fruit. Ultimately, he began shuttling from one capital to another to meet face to face with the principle leaders in the conflict. By January 1974 he had arranged for a military

---

<sup>6</sup> See Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York and London: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 738-740; Jimmy Carter, *Palestine Peace Not Apartheid* (New York and London: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 35; and John G. Stoessinger, *Why Nations Go to War* (Belmont: Wadsworth/Thomson, 2005), 216-220.

*disengagement* between Israel and Egypt to be followed later in the spring with a similar agreement between Israel and Syria. In September of 1975 Kissinger succeeded in bringing about the *Sinai Agreement* between Israel and Egypt that provided for a limited restoration of Egyptian territory in the Sinai in exchange for an Egyptian promise not to use force against Israel. All of this fell well short of anything amounting to a comprehensive peace. It was a piecemeal approach. But it did indicate that new forces were at work, positive forces that could be turned to a broader advantage. But Kissinger was not to be involved to that point, a series of developments in domestic American politics made sure of that, but so did some unexpected changes in the Middle East.

### *Camp David I*

Little was expected of Anwar al-Sadat when he succeeded Gamal Abdel Nasser as leader of Egypt. The American Central Intelligence Agency (the CIA) believed he would be little more than an interim figure. With his role in the *October War* of 1973 it seemed that the CIA might be right. But it soon became apparent that Sadat was someone special, someone destined for great but tragic ends. Soon after the cease-fire in 1973 Sadat boldly sent feelers to Israel and the United States. He also broke ties with the Soviet Union, and stunned the world by visiting Israel to speak to the Knesset. In short, he set a new course for Egypt and for the states involved in the *Arab-Israeli Conflict*. Clearly, his primary goal was to further the interests of his own country, but he also recognized that those interests were tied the possibilities of peace in the region.

The efforts of Anwar al-Sadat alone were probably not enough to cause significant change. But they were not alone. In 1976 Jimmy Carter was elected President of the United States. In his January inauguration speech in 1977 Carter broke

precedent and laid out a number of foreign policy initiatives including a goal to end the *Arab-Israeli Conflict*. Generally it was the coincidence of the dramatic actions of Sadat and Carter that led to the Camp David meetings of 1978. But it must also be conceded that the cooperation of the Prime Minister of Israel, Menachem Begin, opportunistic as it turned out to be, was also essential. While Carter and Sadat were sincere in their efforts to further the peace process, Begin was satisfied to separate Egypt from other Arab states thus reducing the possibility of a future war against a unified Arab world. He knew full well that no Arab coalition could stand without Egypt.

In September 1978 Carter hosted a summit meeting with Anwar al-Sadat, and Menachem Begin at the presidential retreat in Camp David, Maryland. It was an unprecedented and dramatic act. After two weeks of difficult diplomacy Carter announced that two agreements had been made. First, the *Framework for Peace between Israel and Egypt* which set the stage for a formal peace treaty the next year, and a more comprehensive *Framework for Peace in the Middle East* that promised an on-going peace process for the *Arab-Israeli Conflict* and the plight of the Palestinians. For a fleeting moment the *Camp David Accords*, as they were named, seemed to promise peace at last. Indeed, a year later Sadat and Begin signed the *Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty*, the first formal peace treaty by an Arab state with Israel, and another first, the recognition of Israel by an Arab state. That fleeting moment seemed still in place. Sadly, the hope of the moment was not to last.

By 1981 what had been called the *spirit of Camp David* was all but dead. Three events doomed what seemed to be a conflict ending process. First, Begin began to drag his feet regarding the on-going process regarding the *Arab-Israeli Conflict* and the

Palestinians. In particular he backed off of agreements to stop new Israeli settlements in the West Bank. When confronted by Carter on this issue, Begin retorted that something must have been lost in translation in 1978 that he only promised to stop the new settlements *during* the negotiations. Carter boldly questioned the Israeli Prime Minister's honesty. Matters were made even worse when the Israeli Government reiterated its pledge that Jerusalem would be Israel's capital for all eternity. Second, Carter, himself, lost the 1980 presidential election to Ronald Reagan, who, as the next president, either refused or was at least reluctant to pick up the Carter initiative. Finally, the last act that doomed Camp David was the assassination of Anwar al-Sadat by extremists in his own military in 1981. Sadat had been generally condemned by other Arab leaders, and his own people for breaking Arab solidarity with a separate peace with Israel. Part of this was true, but his ultimate devotion to the peace process was beyond reproach, and he paid the ultimate price for a statesman.

### **The Legacy of Jimmy Carter**

Without exaggeration, Jimmy Carter can be noted as the most successful President of the United States in efforts to end the *Arab-Israeli Conflict*. Indeed his efforts did not end with his presidency. He has remained committed to the peace process, and was recognized, largely for the accumulation of his lifetime efforts as statesman and peacemaker, with the *Nobel Peace Prize* in 2002.<sup>7</sup> It must be noted that his efforts were favored by the coincidental efforts of Egypt's President Anwar al-Sadat, but the limited success of the *Camp David Accords* and the *Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty* clearly would not have been possible without him. Most recently he has caused new focus on the problem

---

<sup>7</sup> Jimmy Carter is only the third American president to be honored with the *Nobel Peace Prize*. He was preceded by Woodrow Wilson in 1919 for his work with the *Peace of Versailles*, and Theodore Roosevelt in 1906 for his efforts in ending the Russo-Japanese War with the *Treaty of Portsmouth* (1905).

of the *Arab-Israeli Conflict* by his blunt honesty in his latest book on the subject Palestine Peace Not Apartheid in which he has been criticized for being too favorable to the plight of the Palestinians.<sup>8</sup>

### **The Reagan Peace Plan: The Failure of Cold War Imperatives**

Ronald Reagan viewed the *Arab-Israeli Conflict* as second in importance to questions relating to the Cold War and the Soviet Union, indeed he believed that peace in the Middle East could not be reached or considered independent from an end to the Cold War. He certainly had little interest in picking up the efforts established by Carter at Camp David, after all this was an initiative of not only a Democratic rival but in Reagan's eyes a failed presidency. When finally motivated to focus on the *Arab-Israeli Conflict* by the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 Reagan offered the so-called *Reagan Peace Plan* which was remarkably lacking in new insights. Worse he preferred an aloof position waiting for the principal parties to make the initial and significant moves. This latter sense of hesitation was especially apparent after the American failure as a peacekeeping force in Lebanon. Not even personal visits by Middle Eastern leaders to the White House could move Reagan to more dramatic involvement. Ironically, even with the end of the Cold War, which could be dated as early as 1986, Reagan refused to become directly involved in the Middle East peace process on the scale of his predecessor. For the time the process seemed dead in water, especially as public attention turned east and northward to the Persian Gulf.

The Reagan Administration had been steadfast in its claims that it would not deal with individuals, organizations or states that supported terrorism. Of course this

---

<sup>8</sup> Carter has actually written two books focusing on the *Arab-Israeli Conflict*: The Blood of Abraham: Insight Into the Middle East (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1985), and Palestine Peace Not Apartheid (New York and London: Simon & Schuster, 2006).

administration violated this principle repeatedly (especially by its arms sales to Iran as part of the *Iran-Contra Scandal*). In particular, Reagan was adamant that the United States would not talk to the *Palestinian Liberation Organization* (the *PLO*) or its chief spokesman, Yassir Arafat, until that organization and its leaders renounced terrorism and recognized the state of Israel. In 1988, in Tunisia, Arafat dramatically declared the independence of Palestine, and perhaps more importantly condemned terrorism and recognized Israel. Secretary of State George Shultz reluctantly honored the American commitment and met with Arafat. Israel, on the other hand still refused to meet directly with members of the *PLO*. Despite the fact that the general peace process had seemingly hit a dead end these developments in North Africa added missing and vital parts to the puzzle.

### **The Bush-Baker Initiative**

Saddam Husayn's invasion of Kuwait began the *Second Gulf War* which ultimately led to Iraqi defeat and an increased American military presence in the Persian Gulf.<sup>9</sup> Surprisingly, it also offered new opportunity to revive the Arab-Israeli peace process, facts not lost on George H.W. Bush and his Secretary of State James Baker III. Both Bush and Baker were experienced hands at foreign policy and recognized that the diplomatic door seemed to be favorably ajar. Baker especially devoted his latter career to jumpstarting the process with amazing success. Events in Madrid, Oslo, and even Camp David (in 2000) were tied, at least in part, to the *Bush-Baker Initiative*. Ironically, Baker

---

<sup>9</sup> Terminology regarding conflict in the Persian Gulf since 1980 has been confusing to say the least. There have been three wars in the Persian Gulf and at some point each one has been referred to as *The Gulf War*. In several papers this writer has offered that it would be more meaningful to number them; thus reference would be made to *The First Gulf War* between Iran and Iraq (1980-1988); *The Second Gulf War* between Iraq and an American led United Nations coalition (1990-1991); and *The Third Gulf War* between Iraq and an American led coalition (2003- ).

was pulled from this effort to rescue Bush's flagging reelection campaign. Not even Baker could save this administration that had been successful abroad but disappointing at home. Bush lost the election to newcomer William Jefferson Clinton. However, the reinvigorated peace process survived, again due in large part to a president committed to the peace process, and another was waiting in the wings.

### **Madrid**

The first tangible result of Baker's notable efforts was a meeting in Madrid, Spain in October 1991. It was surprising that Baker was able to convince all of the parties to meet at all. After all it had been some forty years since there had been anything vaguely resembling a peace conference. While no significant offers or concessions were made the meeting was at least proof that the peace process could be resuscitated and to positive effect, and for the moment a good turn had come. One of the reasons for the unexpected turn in events would surely be the incidence of consecutive American presidential administrations committed to a hands on involvement in the process. Sadly, as time would tell, that alone would not be enough, but for the moment hope was alive again.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, as William Jefferson Clinton took office as President of the United States there were new possibilities.

### **The Oslo Accords**

What are popularly known as the *Oslo Accords* were actually more of a process than a set agreement. Indeed, they could be described as a continuation of the efforts at Madrid which in effect had started with the *Bush-Baker Initiative*. Beginning with very secret meetings in Oslo arranged (without American help) by the Foreign Minister of Norway, Johan Holst, Professor Terje Larsen (and their wives). Opportunity was again

---

<sup>10</sup> See Stoessinger, Why Nations Go to War, 227-228.

ripe and interested national leaders were cognizant of this fact and acted to take advantage. Israel's leaders, Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres, had embraced a *territory for peace* platform that seemed amenable to the acceptance of the idea of a Palestinian state. For political reasons Bill Clinton could not openly speak of this necessary idea, but privately he embraced it fully. And Arafat proved eager to enhance his chances of being the first president of Palestine. Again a dramatic meeting took place in the United States, this time in Washington, D.C. The 1993 agreement signed by Rabin, Arafat, and Clinton produced what had heretofore had seemed impossible, peace between Israel and the Palestinians including a Palestinian recognition of Israel.<sup>11</sup> But this agreement did not come without troubles. Extremists on both sides condemned it and attempted to unravel its success by violence. What proved to be a nearly crushing blow came in 1996, at the very time Rabin and Peres were about to negotiate differences with Syria. An Israeli extremist assassinated Prime Minister Rabin. And worse, in the elections that followed Benjamin Netanyahu, a noted conservative and critic of both the territory for peace initiative and an independent Palestine, became Prime Minister of Israel.

Clinton tried reinvigorating matters with a hastily put together meeting of Arafat, Netanyahu, himself and King Husayn of Jordan at the Maryland Plantation at Wye, near Washington, D.C. in October 1998. Netanyahu, under pressure from Clinton, promised a modest reduction of Israeli settlements in the West Bank but little else, and later he even backed out of that, and indeed the Israeli cabinet voted to put off indefinitely the so-called *Wye River Memorandum*.<sup>12</sup> In July of 1999 the pendulum of Israeli politics turned yet again, but this time favored a moderate coalition Prime Minister, Ehud Barak who

---

<sup>11</sup> Rabin, Peres, and Arafat were all honored with the *Nobel Peace Prize* in 1994. See Carter, *Palestine Peace Not Apartheid*, 133-134.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

dedicated the next fifteen months to a resurrection of the peace process, ironically this was almost exactly the time left in Clinton's presidency, and it was running out quickly.

**Camp David II and the Last Gasp at Sharm al-Shaykh (Taba)**

Beset by a host of troubles, not the least among which was an impeachment trial, and a general lack of political support from the opposing Republican Party, Bill Clinton attempted one last try at a negotiated settlement between the Israelis and the Palestinians. The rhetoric of 1999 seemed to indicate that once again the ground might be fertile for a summit meeting. Ehud Barak seemed committed to find a workable compromise, Arafat seemed favorable, and the President of the United States very much wanted to turn the efforts of his troubled administration to a positive final act. Clinton tried to recreate the image, if not the spirit, of Carter's earlier success by proposing a meeting at Camp David in the summer of 2000. Clinton's critics accused him of making a vain and futile attempt to pad his presidential legacy, and indeed hope of actual success seemed limited at best. Still, what can be called *Camp David II* came close to a dramatic agreement only in the end to fail.

Today, the failure of *Camp David II* is variously blamed on all three negotiators, albeit quite unfairly. Clinton has been attacked by cynics who argue he failed to use necessary political clout to push Israel into a settlement. Barak has wrongly been blamed for not offering enough in the way of meaningful concession. But above all Arafat bore the blame to for asking too much and accepting too little. To be blunt a plan was on the table for a joint American-Israeli recognition of Palestine as a sovereign state, and maybe that should have been enough. But as they say the devil is in the details, and in this case they doomed this effort, and no one was really to blame. Barak believed he was playing

all of his cards at once in a final bold move. In truth he was probably throwing in everything (and perhaps more than) his government would approve. He offered recognition of Palestine and even went so far as to offer to talk about throwing in part of East Jerusalem. Arafat countered with further details about Jerusalem, it had to be the Palestinian capital, specifics about settlements in the West Bank, and issues regarding displaced Palestinians (the *right of return* and reparations). Arafat believed his political fate hinged on a full package and he continued to refuse despite the pleadings of the American president. Ironically, Arafat was proven partially correct in that he returned home not in failure but was received as something of a hero with many Palestinians. Barak was criticized for offering too much. And Clinton watched as his presidency began to ebb away.<sup>13</sup>

At this unhappy juncture fate raised its ugly head and the cruel side of naked politics took over. In September 2000 Ariel Sharon, with as many 1,000 bodyguards, made his march to the Jewish Temple Mount which of course doubles for the site of the Dome of the Rock and the Holy Al-Aqsa Mosque inciting a new process of *intifada*, but this time one marked by violent desperation. Sharon turned Israel to a more hard-line position with his election as Prime Minister in February 2001.

As J.G. Stoessinger put it “Bill Clinton made one last Herculean effort to break the deadlock.”<sup>14</sup> In October of 2000, literally as the days of his presidency ran out, Clinton once again brought Arafat and Barak together, this time at Taba, Egypt. What is known as the *Sharm al-Shayk Agreement* (or *Accords*) amounted to little in substance, but

---

<sup>13</sup> Another partial explanation for the failures at Camp David have since been related: that Israel never in fact offered formal details, and that the Palestinians were not quite prepared to deal with any offers, indeed, they had originally expressed reservations about a summit at that time and had requested more time to prepare. See *The Middle East* (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2005), 73.

<sup>14</sup>Stoessinger, *Why Nations Go to War*, 230.

is a testament to the frustrations that have marked the peace process of late. By this time the new violence throughout Israel had taken center stage. Arafat and Barak agreed to take steps to end the violence, and Clinton promised to pursue an investigation of the causes of these acts. Clinton also proposed to keep in touch with Arafat and Barak, but only in terms of stemming the violence and the *possibility* of a new peace summit. Tragically the violence has continued and there has been no major summit.

In 2001 the Arab-Israeli peace process had been overwhelmed by the forces of history. Violence in Israel, terrorism against the United States, and an American incursion of Afghanistan prevented attention to any possible peace efforts. Moreover divisions among the Palestinians (*Fatah* and *Hamas*) were on the horizon. Worse still, the new President of the United States, George W. Bush, lacked the commitment and knowledge of his predecessor Bill Clinton, and even that of his own father; it was never clear that Ariel Sharon was truly committed to peace via an independent Palestine; and Yasir Arafat, old and ill, seemed unable to command a Palestinian consensus. Despite Sharon's momentary and questionable concessions, and what the younger Bush called his *Roadmap to Peace*, it seemed clear that the peace process had be blunted.

### **The Legacy of William Jefferson Clinton**

It can be said that Bill Clinton came close to a major success in the last months, weeks and days, of his second term as President of the United States at Camp David. Briefly, it appeared that Clinton's conference with Arafat and Ehud Barak at Camp David might repeat Jimmy Carter's efforts in 1978. But sadly *close* was not enough. The talks there proved less than productive, and the last gasp at Taba offered little more. Still, overall, Clinton had been productive in keeping the process going through the *Oslo*

*Accords* and later talks. And there has never been any doubt about his commitment to the peace process. Anecdotes of American presidents are usually apocryphal, but sometimes they are based in fact, or are at least symbolic of actual events or intentions. One story is told that while visiting the United States in 1998 (for the Wye conference), Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who was not known for his support for either a Palestinian state or the peace process in general, was attending an evening social function, where he had made continued pessimistic comments about the possibilities of peace in the conflict. Finally, it is told, Clinton had had enough and pulled Netanyahu into an adjoining room and warned him in the bluntest of terms that if he did get on board with the proper spirit of peace making that the President might consider an immediate unilateral recognition of the state of Palestine. Accordingly, Netanyahu did change his tone, but not his policies. It is also commonly held that in January 2001, as Clinton was about to leave office, Arafat telephoned the President and told him that “You’re a great man.” Clinton replied “The hell I am. I’m a colossal failure.”<sup>15</sup>

In the end several things doomed the lasting impact of Clinton’s efforts. First and foremost were final details that could not be agreed upon: final questions regarding Jerusalem, and reparations and the right of return to displaced Palestinians.<sup>16</sup> Second, Israeli politics had turned to the right once again with the election of Ariel Sharon. And third, the president that succeeded Clinton, George W. Bush lacked the knowledge, experience, foresight and most importantly the commitment to keep the peace process alive at a critical moment. The moment was lost, and after September 11, 2001, Bush’s view of the *Arab-Israeli Conflict* and the peace process were permanently affected by his

---

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 230-231.

<sup>16</sup> Again, it is reported that Clinton even offered to pay for the reparations if other concessions could be agreed upon.

dogged emphasis on his *war on terror*. The *pilgrim's road* had suddenly and tragically been diverted again.

### **The Roadmap to Peace, But Not With Conditions, and Not Through Baghdad**

It is not that George W. Bush has since 2001 ignored the *Arab-Israeli Conflict* altogether. Indeed, his *Roadmap to Peace* is all about peace in that conflict, and clearly Bush is the first American President to officially promote the idea of an independent state for Palestine. The problems with this administration are fivefold. First and foremost, since September 11, 2001 the so-called *roadmap* has been diverted away from Jerusalem to Kabul and Baghdad. Sadly, success in settling the *Arab-Israeli Conflict* became part of a broader plan for stability in the entire region, but immediate focus had to be on the efforts of the war on terror in Afghanistan and Iraq. Second, not unlike Ronald Reagan and clearly unlike Carter and Clinton, Bush has determined that the best course for the United States in the Arab-Israeli peace process is one of indirect involvement; the principles must make the essential moves themselves. Third, although the President has offered rhetorical support for an independent Palestine and peace he has done precious little to actually bring it about. Indeed, he has established necessary preconditions that are hardly realistic: all violence must cease, and a Palestinian government must meet the approval of Washington, D.C. and Tel Aviv. And fifth, the United States under George W. Bush has hardly taken the role of the honest broker between Israeli interests on the one hand and Palestinian and Arab interests on the other. He has blundered in his use of the term *crusade* in his rhetoric and has been the very example of what John G. Stoessinger, Henry Kissinger, and Stanley Hoffmann have called the *crusader statesman*, one who is *rashly idealistic*, even *naïve*, and is prone to *blind passion*, even *fanaticism*,

rather than moderation or compromise.<sup>17</sup> These problems have marginalized the United States as a motivating player in the peace process at a time when active participation is needed most.

The cruelest ramification of this presidency, so far, has been its myopic perception of the significance of 9/11, the war on terror, the war in Afghanistan, and the war in Iraq, and how this perception has effectively diverted attention, time, political resources, and focus in general from the *Arab-Israeli Conflict* and possible processes to settle this problem. Bush clearly seems to see this conflict as a subtext of the general war on terror which means he has no intention of a focused peace initiative in the time left in his last term of office. Given the necessity of direct American involvement in the peace process this conclusion means that the conflict and the process itself must wait and hope that a new president in 2009 will be someone with more insight, and commitment to peace in the region.

### **The Kingdom of Jordan: *The Diplomatic Constant***

The role of Jordan as the diplomatic constant, at least since 1973, has remained with its new monarch, but recent statements exhibit grave concern for the future of the peace process. In an interview with Scott MacLeod of *Time World* King Abdullah II of Jordan conceded some of his worst fears regarding the prospects of peace in the *Arab-Israeli Conflict*. In the wake of Israel's latest incursion into Lebanon, and anxious about rumors of possible American military actions against Iran's nuclear facilities, Abdullah's usual optimism seemed shaken, "I'm one of the most optimistic people you'll come

---

<sup>17</sup> See J.G. Stoessinger, *Crusaders and Pragmatists: Movers of Modern American Foreign Policy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1985), 315-318; Stanley Hoffmann, *Duties Beyond Borders: On the Limits and Possibilities of Ethical International Politics* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1981), 229-230; and Henry Kissinger, *Does America Need a Foreign Policy?* (New York and London: Simon and Schuster, 2001), 286.

across. For the first time, I started becoming pessimistic about the region...I believe the Lebanese war dramatically opened all our eyes to the fact that if we don't solve the Palestinian issue, the future looks pretty bleak for the Middle East."<sup>18</sup> Abdullah emphasizes the urgent need for the creation of a sovereign state of Palestine as a necessary starting point to resurrect the peace process, "There needs to some sort of Palestinian integral, geographic state, today and not tomorrow." But he concedes that a stalled peace process has effectively doomed the prospects for this event, "By 2007, if we don't see something that reassures all of us-the international community, the Israelis, the Arabs and the Palestinians-then I think we are doomed t another decade or decades of violence between Israelis and Arabs which affects everybody."<sup>19</sup> King Abdullah also warns that the role of moderates, like himself, has been "neutralized" by the stagnation of the peace process, "A lot of the moderate countries are feeling isolated." He also cautioned that the United States and the international community need to do more to encourage the process, "We keep hoping that the Americans and the international community will step forward, we keep hoping that Israel will make a difference and reach out to the Arabs."<sup>20</sup>

Under two monarchs, Jordan has been viewed by all sides in the *Arab-Israeli Conflict* as a diplomatic constant, a role determined by political reality since 1973, but also one based on the benevolent roles of King Hussein and his son Abdullah II in their attempts to keep the peace process alive.

---

<sup>18</sup> Scott Macleod, "A Monarch's Dire Warning About the Middle East," *Time World* (September 7, 2006).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

**The Pilgrim's Road: As Always the Road Leads to Jerusalem**

Part of the problem with peacemaking in our time is an apparent change in the philosophical, legal, and political approach to this process. For half of the twentieth century, and historical tradition that goes back to ancient times, formal peace treaties were part of a recognized process in ending conflicts. Often these treaties came about via regional conferences with representatives from all of the affected parties. This was done both to recognize particular and common interests, but also to back up and enforce the treaties. This tradition has dwindled considerably since World War II. Preference has been given to resolutions from the United Nations' Security Council, case in point *Resolution 242* which emphasized valid points but accomplished little, and a variety of resolutions that were used to effectively end open hostilities in the *Second Gulf War* (1991), and even a simple presidential declaration to attempt to end the *Third Gulf War* (May, 2003, the infamous *Mission Accomplished* speech). Indeed, there has yet to be a comprehensive peace treaty for any of the Gulf Wars. And in the *Arab-Israeli Conflict* there has only been one formal peace treaty (the *Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty*) and it was simply bilateral, hardly comprehensive. Part of this could be attributed to Cold War politics and the bipolar political arrangement of that time, and more recently a world with one superpower that often expects peace as a unilateral dictate or ultimatum, vaguely shrouded in the legitimacy of United Nations resolutions.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> An interesting comparison can be made with recent comments by Robin Lane Fox about the rise of Roman power and the expectations that went with it, "Within seventy years, from the disaster at Cannae in 216 [B.C.] to the ruination of Carthage in 146 [B.C.], the Romans had become the one superpower in the Mediterranean. The results are instructive. Romans now expected 'obedience' to orders which they issued of their own accord; Roman commanders were used to exercising 'command' (*imperium*) as magistrates at Rome." See Robin Lane Fox, *The Classical World: An Epic History From Homer to Hadrian* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 317.

More than ever there is a grave need for regional peace conferences to deal with the war in Iraq, the war in Afghanistan, and most of all the *Arab-Israeli Conflict*. And, accordingly, these wars must end by virtue of formal peace treaties, not simple conditional accords, resolutions, or dictates. The problem is how to bring all of the parties to the table when many of them do not recognize each other and in many cases see diplomacy as a reward, not a necessary process.<sup>22</sup> If national leaders will not meet with each other they are sadly left with only unacceptable alternatives. And it must be understood that the basis of a treaty is not the imposition of the will of a victor on the vanquished as much as a recognition of respective and common interests.

Peace in the Middle East at this point will surely need more than one conference and treaty dealing with the war in Afghanistan, the war in Iraq, and of course the *Arab-Israeli Conflict*. Regional peace in the region must be laid out like a series of tectonic plates where pressure upon one will ultimately affect the others. But it must be understood that one of these plates in the clear epicenter or keystone: the *Arab-Israeli Conflict*. Pressure here, or hopefully the relief of pressure, will either further destabilize the entire region, or begin a positive process for stabilization.

There are three wars going on in the Middle East: the *Arab-Israeli Conflict*, the war in Iraq (the *Third Gulf War*) and the war in Afghanistan.<sup>23</sup> George W. Bush has attempted to put all of them, along with other areas of instability such as Lebanon, under

---

<sup>22</sup> This has been a particular problem with George W. Bush who will only negotiate with those he respects. The essence of the problem is that most of the time the people a national leader most needs to talk with are those they may not agree with or respect initially. Bush has refused to talk directly to leaders from North Korea, Syria, Iran, and representatives of *Hamas* and *Hizbollah*. In his mind *diplomacy* would be a reward for what he considers bad behavior. It is a process he has yet to understand fully.

<sup>23</sup> The *First Gulf War* (1980-1988) between Iran and Iraq; the *Second Gulf War* (1990-1991) between Iraq and an American led United Nations coalition; and the *Third Gulf War* (2003- ), the current war in Iraq which still defies a simple description. And there are a number of scenarios (a Kurdish war of independence along with Turkish intervention; a war with Iran to name but two) that could lead to a *fourth* Gulf war.

his dubious semantic umbrella of the *war on terror*. The fact that there are three separate wars of course proportionately reduces the prospects for a regional peace. But there are always possibilities. All three conflicts do have something in common foreign powers on indigenous, national soil. The first step, it would seem, is for outside forces to go home and leave peacemaking primarily, though not exclusively (the United States must, however, be directly involved on this level), to those who actually reside in the area. Three regional peace conferences, including all of the interested parties (whether they wish to talk to each other or not), are needed.

And again though the wars are separate there is a primary source of instability in the area from Egypt to Afghanistan, and that is the *Arab-Israeli Conflict*, not only the longest on-going war in the world, but also the most problematic. It can be said that if this conflict can be settled it will go a long way bring stability to the entire region, and indeed the road map to peace must be through Jerusalem, not Kabul or Baghdad.

The beginning of peace in the region must start with the *immediate recognition* of a sovereign Palestinian state, *now and without preconditions*. George W. Bush has spoken often of an independent Palestine but in reality has treated it as a secondary concern. Bush and Israel have been adamant that Palestinian independence be preceded by an end to all violence, and the creation of a Palestinian government acceptable to both Washington, D.C. and Tel Aviv.<sup>24</sup> Imagine if similar conditions had been set before the founding fathers of the United States by Great Britain in 1783.

---

<sup>24</sup> To this end the recent Mecca agreement between Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian Authority President and leader of *Fatah* and Khaled Meshal of *Hamas* (February 8, 2007) might be interpreted as a step in the right direction at once reducing local violence, and promising a more compatible association of Palestinian voices.

In short, and sadly, the prospects for Palestine, and thereby the beginning of regional stability, are at the moment simply not reasonable. And as time passes the number of added complications multiplies. But the time for such recognition is coming, as it will for regional conferences to begin the healing in Iraq and Afghanistan, but it will not be soon. For over half a century interested parties have spoken of political settlement, but have done little by way of action, or they have resorted to military solutions, often without attempting alternative policies or allowing them to run their necessary course. Is it any wonder that peace is so elusive?

The road to peace, the *pilgrims' road* if you will, in the entire region must first go through Jerusalem, as it always has. Begin here and stability will follow slowly everywhere else. Ignore this most elementary of beginnings and we must prepare for continued years, if not decades, of turbulence and heartache.

### **Conclusion: The Road Not Taken**

The words *pilgrim* and *pilgrimage* are generally used to refer to Christian pilgrims and pilgrimage, but clearly they apply to Jewish and Muslim custom as well. In this paper the notion of *pilgrimage* and the *pilgrim's road* refers to a common process and destination: *peace*, and *Jerusalem*, for these too apply to Jews, Christians, and Muslims. The *pilgrim's road* is the path to peace often sought after but rarely actually taken in the *Arab-Israeli Conflict*. Indeed, this road is so uncommon that today it is almost rejected instinctively as something that is patently impossible. Sadly, we may have reached a stage that has deteriorated so far that negotiations or diplomacy are simply not immediately possible as Richard N. Haas suggests,

Diplomacy also needs to be revived in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which is still the issue that most shapes (and radicalizes) public opinion in

the region. The goal at this point would be not to bring the parties to Camp David or anywhere else but to begin to create conditions under which diplomacy could usefully be restarted.<sup>25</sup>

Edward P. Djerejian also notes that recent events have all too clearly demonstrated that current actions in this conflict have resorted to simple crisis or conflict management with little or no hope for actual conflict resolution.<sup>26</sup> But what actions can be taken to revive the peace process, or foster conditions favorable to a negotiated or diplomatic settlement that could lead to the resolution of the *Arab-Israeli Conflict*?

First, it must be understood that the *Arab-Israeli Conflict* is the key to stability in the region. Second, it must be accepted that a settlement of this conflict *is indeed possible* and in the interests of all. Third, it must be accepted that the stagnation of the peace process necessitates a dramatic positive act, one that only the two determining parties, Israel and the United States, have the power to grant: *the immediate and unconditional recognition of a sovereign state of Palestine*. It is only by this gesture that the road to peace, the *pilgrims' road* can begin anew. Usually essential details would have to be worked ahead of such an act. But in this case they must come later. And indeed there will be difficult details to consider, but at least a favorable foundation will have been created. Failing at this, however, it should be known that King Abdullah is quite right in warning that if the *Palestinian issue* is not settled very soon we are all *doomed* to live in a very unsettled world.

---

<sup>25</sup> Richard N. Hass, "The New Middle East," *Foreign Affairs* 85: 6 (November/December 2006): 11.

<sup>26</sup> Edward P. Djerejian, "From Conflict Management to Conflict Resolution," *Foreign Affairs* 85: 6 (November/December 2006): 41.

### Bibliography

- Atiya, Aziz S. Crusade, Commerce and Culture. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962.
- Cahill, Thomas. The Gifts of the Jews: How a Tribe of Desert Nomads Changed the Way Everyone Thinks and Feels. New York and London: Nan A. Talese/Anchor Books, 1998.
- Carter, Jimmy. The Blood of Abraham: Insights Into the Middle East. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1985.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Talking Peace: A Vision For the Next Generation. New York: Dutton Children's Books, 1993.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Palestine Peace Not Apartheid. New York and London: Simon and Schuster, 2006.
- Djerejian, Edward P. "From Conflict Management to Conflict Resolution." Foreign Affairs 85: 6 (November/December 2006): 41-48.
- Fromkin, David. A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East. New York: Avon Books, 1989.
- Haas, Richard N. "The New Middle East." Foreign Affairs 85: 6 (November/December 2006): 2- 11.
- Hoffmann, Stanley. Duties Beyond Borders: On the Limits and Possibilities of Ethical International Politics. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1981.
- Lane Fox, Robin. The Classical World: An Epic History From Homer to Hadrian. New York: Basic Books, 2006.
- Laquer, Walter, and Barry Rubin, eds. The Israel-Arab Reader: A Documentary History Of the Middle East Conflict. 6<sup>th</sup> ed., Revised. New York: Penguin Books, 2001.
- Kingdom of Heaven*. Ridley Scott, dir. and prod. 194 mins. 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, 2005; Director's Cut, 2006, DVD.
- Kissinger, Henry. Diplomacy. New York and London: Simon and Schuster, 1994.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Does America Need a Foreign Policy? New York and London: Simon and Schuster, 2001.

MacLeod, Scott. "A Monarch's Dire Warning About the Middle East." *Time World*. (September 7, 2006).

The Middle East. 10<sup>th</sup> ed. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2005.

Noor, Queen. Leap of Faith: Memoirs of an Unexpected Life. New York: Miramax Books, 2003.

Peters, F.E. Jerusalem: The Holy City in the Eyes of Chroniclers, Visitors, Pilgrims, and Prophets from the Days of Abraham to the Beginnings of Modern Times. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985.

Sanders, Ronald. The High Walls of Jerusalem: A History of the Balfour Declaration and the Birth of the British Mandate of Palestine. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1983.

Stathis, G. Michael. "The Crusades: A Modern Perspective on the 900<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Of the Event." Delivered and Published as the Distinguished Faculty Honor Lecture at Southern Utah University, Cedar City, Utah, November 30, 1995.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Leadership, Statesmanship, and Politics: A Realist Interpretation." The Journal of the Utah Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters 82 (2005).

Stoessinger, J.G. Crusaders and Pragmatists: Movers of American Foreign Policy. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1985.

\_\_\_\_\_. Why Nations Go To War, 9<sup>th</sup> ed. Belmont: Thomson/ Wadsworth, 2005.