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This essay assumes a basic knowledge by the reader of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its history as well as knowledge about current events, people involved in the conflict and commonly used terms associated with the conflict.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a long-standing and violent crisis with complicated issues and a far-reaching history. America has been involved in the conflict from before the founding of Israel in 1948. President Harry Truman was the first head of state to formally recognize the state of Israel.¹ America has maintained a special relationship with Israel, the only democratic, western-friendly country in the region by providing it with economic and military aid and supporting its fight to maintain its security against those Palestinians who are fighting for their own rights to occupy the same land and who wish to see the state of Israel destroyed.² Over the years, several United States (U.S.) presidents have tried to serve as facilitators for peace between these two battling peoples. Today, once again, a U.S. president is attempting to serve as a catalyst for change that will bring a permanent solution to this old problem and finally end the cycle of violence plaguing these people.

The U.S. has many motives for wanting to see security and peace restored to the area but the nature of the conflict itself makes it very difficult for any outside force to overcome problems that are deeply rooted in the Israeli and Palestinian societies. While the current Bush administration has put forth its own plan for a two-state solution to the conflict (the road map to peace),³ continued violence has forestalled and foreshadowed the process, now in its earliest stages. Successful foreign policy in Israel and Palestine will require the U.S. to be clear about its real motives in the area, fair in its dealings with either side, open to a real understanding of the Israeli and Palestinian people and why this conflict has continued for so

¹ Presidents and Peace, (2003, June 9). Online NewsHour [online]. McNeil, Lehrer NewsHour, PBS online, available: http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/white_house/jan_june03/historians_06-09.html

² Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, (2003, June). Online NewsHour [online]. McNeil, Lehrer NewsHour, PBS online, available: http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/middle_east/conflict/keyplayers.html

³ A Performance-Based Roadmap to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, (2003, April 30). State Department, Office of the Spokesman [online], Washington, D.C. available: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2003/20062.htm>

long and flexible in its ability to change the nature of its policies to suit the realities and needs of the situation.

Why should the U.S. be involved in finding a solution to this conflict? What are our motives for working so hard to try to secure a solution? The first, obvious and more idealistic answer is to help put an end to the cycle of violence and human suffering. Each new incident is broadcast to the world and Americans watch in horror as innocent civilians, on both sides are killed and injured. The events of September 11, 2001 (9/11) brought the realities of terrorism home to America and our sympathy with those who fight such acts everyday increased dramatically.

The more realist answer to the question is that the Middle East is an area of oil rich Arab nations. It is in the U.S.'s best interest to have positive relationships with those countries who do and could in the future provide us with oil. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a very sore subject to Arabs in the world. The U.S. has generally supported Israel's side both in word and deed. The plight and cause of the Palestinians has found little sympathy with the U.S. Arab nations in the area cite this pro-Israel stance as a source of great anger and even hatred toward the United States.⁴

The war on terrorism has added new dimensions to America's concern over the area. Terrorist networks such as al-Qaeda responsible for attacks on U.S. targets throughout the world and on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on 9/11, were Arab in descent and claim to adhere to the law of Islam, the main religion of Arabs around the world. This fact had led many in America to ask the question, Why do they hate us?, referring to Arabs or Islamic fundamentalists. Analysts have found that interviews in Arab nations cite American foreign

⁴ The information from this paragraph and the following paragraph are supported by the following reference: Ford, Peter (2001, September, 27). 'Why Do They Us?' Christian Science Monitor. (from, Annual Editions, Global Issues 02/03, Jackson, Robert M, editor, eightieth edition, Guilford, Connecticut: McGraw-Hill/Dushkin)

policies in their regions as one of the causes of anti-American sentiment as well as our support of Israel and our lack of support for the plight of the Palestinian people.

Some have suggested that the reason why the Palestinian cause is cited so often and is the impetus for anti-American protests in Arab states is that the Palestinian issue is the only one Arabs are allowed to express dissent about, in public within the non-democratic regimes that they live in. The suggestion is that the governments of many Arab nations suppress dissent over their own policies. The West and the U.S. are blamed for the poor standards of living, poverty and lack of freedom of these populations. Since the U.S. is easily demonized in societies with no free press or openness, as an infiltrating, hegemonic power that is undermining the value system and culture of the people, they in turn, with encouragement, blame the U.S. and speak out in protest over American arrogant policies.⁵

Others argue that this anti-Americanism is real and justified. Its roots lie in the support America gave to oppressive regimes, turning a blind eye to the oppression of human conditions of Arab peoples, in the name of U.S. self-interest and our fight against communism.⁶ Anti-Americanism is the result of America's overreaching, overpowering influence which is infiltrating the culture of non-Western nations without their consent or voice.⁷

Whether you prescribe to either theory, one fact is certain. There exists the perception in Arab nations that the U.S. foreign policies are anti-Arab. This includes its policies

⁵ Hanson, Victor Davis. (2003, May 23). Middle East Tragedies. National Review Online. [online] available: <http://www.nationalreview.com/hanson/hanson052303.asp> or <http://www.nationalreview.com>, find an article, May 23, 2003, Hanson, Middle East Tragedies.

⁶ Singer, P.W. (2002, October). Time for the Hard Choices: The Dilemmas Facing U.S. Policy Towards the Islamic World, Analysis Paper, number one. available online: <http://www.brook.edu/views/papers/singer/20021001.htm>. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institute

⁷ Friedman, Thomas. (2003, June 1). A Theory of Everything. New York Times. late edition, final, section 4, pg.1, column 1. available online: <http://www.commondreams.org/views03/0601-05.htm>. Common Dreams News Center Online

involving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Perceptions can easily become convictions.

Convictions twisted by extremism, fundamentalism and under the influence of the bin Ladens of the world, lead to terrorism and the deaths of U.S. citizens. How America is perceived in the region is directly linked to our national security. This applies directly to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Here, too perceptions can be just as important as reality. The perception by the Arab world that America is working diligently towards the formation of a Palestinian state will help the U.S. in its public relations battle with the Arab world.

Other internal forces acting on the U.S. to intervene in the conflict are the Jewish and Christian constituencies who influence public policy in America. The Christian traditions of America's earliest founders influence how we see ourselves as the light of the world, the new Zion where freedom and liberty prevail over injustice and oppression.⁸ Though we are a secular nation, with separation of church and state, those ideals have influenced the American idea that we must promote our democratic way of life and help to ensure the self-determination of others who seek freedom from oppression and coercion.

These ideals played a role in America's support for the founding of Israel, though they failed to inspire the same sympathy for the people living in Palestine. Since the beginning of the Zionist movement, Jewish Zionists in America and elsewhere formed a powerful lobby, influencing the policies of America and Britain to further the goal of a Jewish homeland. American presidents succumbed to this pressure and consistently and increasingly supported the need for a homeland for the Jewish people.⁹ Christians who saw the founding of the state of Israel as fulfillment of Biblical prophecy also supported this idea. The plight of the Jews

⁸ Hook, Steven W, Spanier, John. (2000). American Foreign Policy Since World War II. chapter 1. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press

⁹ Mulhull, John W (1995) America and the Founding of Israel. An Investigation of the Morality of America's Role. Los Angeles: Deshon Press

who were facing persecution in the Diaspora also played upon the morality of Christian Americans. Some point out that the flip side of this pro-Israeli support was anti-Semitism and the desire to have Jews live in Palestine instead of anywhere else.¹⁰

Regardless of intent or motive, U.S. presidents consistently supported the Zionist lobby. The ideals that led to the support of Israel could have also applied to the Arabs who were slowly being displaced by Jewish immigrants. However, Arabs lacked a cohesive, powerful lobbying force to influence Britain, the U.S. and the U.N. Whether justified or not, the U.S. consistently supported the self-determination of the Jewish people at the expense of the self-determination of the Arab people living in Palestine.¹¹

The realities of the horrors of the Holocaust and the extent that Jewish people were killed and persecuted tipped the scale to the side of Zionist goals. The world's collective conscience felt the weight of sins perpetrated upon the Jews during World War II by the Nazi regime. Jewish people were now determined to create a state of their own where they could defend themselves from any further persecution. Support for a Jewish homeland in Palestine reached its zenith and the result was the founding of the state of Israel in 1948. Thus, a tradition of support for Israel, unchallenged by any American president began and continues to influence foreign policy today.

American foreign policy has attempted many times in the last fifty years or more to influence the conflict in the Middle East. No peace plan or process has lasted. Each has failed to achieve a lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. How can President Bush, today achieve what those before him could not? Today, many analysts are saying that President

¹⁰ New, David S. (2002). Holy War, The Rise of Militant Christian, Jewish and Islamic Fundamentalism. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Co.

¹¹ The information in this paragraph and the following are supported by Mulhull, see number 9.

Bush is in a unique position to make progress in the Middle East. Through Bush's recent aggressive actions in Afghanistan and Iraq, he has shown the world that the U.S. is willing and able to back up its words with military action. This gives the current administration some credibility and clout when dealing with the leaders in the Middle East.¹² President Bush has made strong promises of U.S. commitment to help both sides achieve peace.¹³ He has promised to "ride herd"¹⁴ on the issue, presumably meaning that he will continue sustained pressure on leaders of both sides to fulfill their commitments.

On June 24, 2002 President Bush announced his road map to peace.¹⁵ The plan calls for a set of reciprocal steps to be taken by each side, eventually ending in a two-state solution. The road map reads like a list of things that should have been done over the last fifty years in order for the conflict to end. It is almost simplistic in that it seems to state the obvious. It calls for an end to all violence and the establishment of a new, reformed, democratic Palestinian government with a new leader and an effective security force. It calls on Israel to allow Palestinian free movement, end attacks on Palestinian civilians, end and dismantle Israeli settlements in areas of the West Bank and Gaza, end Israeli occupation of those areas and begin to help Palestine become a state. In some ways, the plan is more aggressive than others before, in that it addresses specific problems directly, instead of simply agreeing to try to agree on very difficult issues. It also lists deadlines, however it sets forth no consequences for

¹² Presidents and Peace, (2003, June 9). Online NewsHour [online]. McNeil, Lehrer NewsHour, PBS online, available: http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/white_house/jan_june03/historians_06-09.html

¹³ Bush, George W. (2002, June, 24). President Calls for New Palestinian Leadership (transcript of speech by Bush) The White House [online] available: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020624-3.html> or <http://www.whitehouse.gov>, news and politics, June, 2002

¹⁴ George W. Bush as reported in the following: Westcott, Kathryn. (2003, June). Bush Revels in Cowboy Speak. BBC News [online] available: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/2968/76.stm>.

¹⁵ A Performance-Based Roadmap to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, (2003, April 30). State Department, Office of the Spokesman [online], Washington, D.C. available: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2003/20062.htm>

missing the deadlines. The obvious question about the feasibility of the plan's success is: If the two sides of this conflict haven't been able to do these things before, why should they be able to now?

The position the U.S. is in now, having just exerted its military strength and will in the area is one answer. The other is Mahmoud Abbas. Bush, unlike his predecessors, has refused to deal with Yassar Arafat, calling him a terrorist. Depending on the success of Abbas, this may turn out to be a very wise move on Bush's part. By eliminating Arafat from the diplomatic process, Bush puts both himself and Sharon in a position of greater flexibility and out of a position in which they could be accused of making deals with known terrorists.

Ariel Sharon and Mahmoud Abbas, the two leaders primarily responsible for enacting the peace plan have some things in common but are very different men. Both are in unique positions to work towards peace and both face intense opposition from within Israel and Palestine that will be difficult to overcome. Both men were born in British controlled Palestine. Sharon became a soldier in the war of 1948 and Abbas fled the war to Syria. While Sharon continued his career as a soldier, aggressively defending the state of Israel, Abbas worked as a schoolteacher, earned a law degree and later a doctorate in Zionist studies in Russia, the home of Sharon's parents.

In politics, Sharon became a conservative hard-liner, opposing peace plans that called for land for Palestinians or dismantling of settlements and always putting Israel's security above any peace plan. Abbas, who co-founded the Palestinian National Liberation Organization with Yassar Arafat, later worked for peace during the Oslo Accord negotiations and other attempted peace processes. Sharon enjoys the support of the Israeli people who favor his emphasis on security. Abbas, who was appointed Prime Minister of the Palestinian

Authority, despite a falling out with Arafat over how to deal with violence of extremists and after calls from the U.S. for new Palestinian leadership, has little popular following of his own. A returning refugee, he is seen to embody the Palestinian movement.¹⁶ However, he is untested to the Palestinian people who continue to give support to Arafat and Hamas. Sharon's reputation as a conservative, who places Israel first, gives him the power and the legitimacy within his government to enact real change. Abbas is also in a unique position, in that he is a moderate leader with whom all parties can work. He represents a possible new future for Palestine if he can overcome obstacles and gain the support of the Palestinian people.

Hamas is the wildcard in the road map for peace and the single largest and most important obstacle for Abbas to overcome. In examining Hamas one gets a look into the very nature of the conflict itself and why a solution to the conflict is elusive. Hamas was formed in 1987 and claims to be an Islamic organization. It has two wings, one political and one, military. Hamas's short-term goal is to end the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and to end any Israeli settlements in those areas. Hamas's long-term goal, rooted, it claims, in religious beliefs, is the total destruction of the state of Israel and the establishment of a Palestinian state in all of what is now Israel. To that end, Hamas uses suicide bombings and other forms of violence to attack Israel military and civilian targets. Hamas is also a rival to the Palestinian Authority, the governing agency of the Palestinian people, and strives to become the sole leadership for the Palestinian people. To that effect, when Hamas attacks Israel, it is attacking the Palestinian Authority as well.

¹⁶ All of the information on Abbas, Sharon and Hamas is supported by the following reference: Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, (2003, June). Online NewsHour [online]. McNeil, Lehrer NewsHour, PBS online, available: http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/middle_east/conflict/keyplayers.html

Hamas's public support waxes and wanes as events in the conflict change. What ensures its public support is the social work they do for the Palestinian people through their political wing. They have a substantial budget and use the money to build hospitals, schools and day care centers. They provide money and food to the poor and generally help improve the plight of the Palestinian people. As long as the Palestinian government is unable to help its people in the same way or to stop the violence Hamas is perpetrating, Hamas will continue to control the process with support from the Palestinian people.

An organization like this, rooted in ideology, spreading its message to the young through schools and aid and willing to use violence against innocent people, presents a leader like Abbas with a nearly impossible challenge. While Sharon can accept U.S. help with honor, American support for Palestine and Abbas can actually hurt him in the anti-American atmosphere of the Arab world. Mahmoud Abbas is in a challenging position.

When President Bush met with Sharon and Abbas in Aqaba, Jordan¹⁷ on June 4, 2003, both leaders accepted the right of both Palestine and Israel to live together as sovereign states in peace. This in itself is a step forward. The problem however, is that not everyone in Israel and Palestine agrees with those statements. Sharon promised to immediately begin to remove unauthorized settlement outposts. At first Sharon dismantled only uninhabited trailers then on June 19, Israeli soldiers dismantled a small hillside settlement in the West Bank.¹⁸ They were met with a mob of protesters including the inhabitants themselves as well as a large group of

¹⁷ All information from the meeting in Aqaba is supported by the following source: President Bush Meets with Leaders Of Jordan, Israel and Palestinian Authority. (2003, June 4). State Department [online], Office of White House Press Secretary. available: <http://www.state.gov/p/nea/rls/rm/21193pf.htm> or <http://www.state.gov>, Middle East Peace Process, Key Documents, President Bush

¹⁸ This information about settlements is supported by the following two sources: Ali, Abu. (2003, June 19). Settlers Fight Back as Israel Removes First Outposts. Shia News [online] available: http://www.shianews.com/low/middle_east/news_id/0000524.php and Myre, Greg. (2003, June 19). Israel Dismantles a Settlement and Ignites a Family Fued. New York Times [online]. available: <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/06/20/international/middleeast/20SETT.html>

settlement supporters. The group tried to block and disrupt the dismantling, throwing rocks and setting fires. Though the protest did not become violent, and the huts and tents did come down, the settlers vowed to rebuild and continue their movement to populate all of what they see as Jewish land.

“In the Bible, it says this land is for us,”¹⁹ commented a supporter from Tel Aviv. This confrontation illuminates the internal struggle Sharon will have to contend with in order to fulfill his part of Bush’s peace plan, or any future solution to the conflict. The unauthorized outposts are small compared to the 150 or so authorized settlements now located in the West Bank and Gaza that Sharon helped to build. Tearing down huts and tents is one thing. Will Sharon be willing to relocate and demolish entire suburban communities? It is unclear whether Sharon would be willing to go that far. The settlers don’t accept the idea of a Palestinian state in the West Bank or Gaza. They believe that all of Israel, including land inhabited by Palestinians belongs to the Jews and the Jews alone.²⁰

During the Aqaba press conference, Abbas made strong promises to work to put an end to the violence of extremists. He called for an end to all violence against Israelis everywhere. Hamas, in response to what they saw as blasphemous words, joined forces with other militant groups and killed four Israeli soldiers.²¹ Hamas rejected Abbas’s idea of an end to violence and claimed that Abbas did not gain enough concessions from Sharon. This sparked weeks of back and forth retaliatory violence that has not ended. This, in a nutshell, is

¹⁹ Moshe Cohen, a supporter of the settler movement as reported by Myre, see number 13.

²⁰ Barr, Cameron W. (2003, June, 11). At First Roadmap Stop: Settlers. Christian Science Monitor. [online]. available: <http://csmonitor.com/2003/0611/p01s03-wome.html>

²¹ Fisher, Ian. (2003, June, 9) Main Palestinian Militants Join to Attack Israeli Army Outpost, New York Times, late ed., final, section A, pg.1, col. 1.

the nature of this conflict. Efforts of peace and compromise are sabotaged by extremist from both sides, each claiming to be guided by God and the Bible.

As of June 20, 2003, the conditions laid out in phase one of the roadmap, deadline for May, have not been met. Instead, dozens of people on both sides have been killed and the violence continues. Bush continues to work for peace, condemning alternatively Israel than Palestine for attacks on civilians. Secretary of State Colin Powell is in the region continuing to work both sides, to make progress in negotiations and to convince both sides to continue the process, while episodes of violence continue.

Given the complexities of this conflict, its overwhelming obstacles and the state of the current situation, how should U.S. foreign policy proceed? Will the road map be enough to achieve a lasting peace where other plans were not? The answer depends on the reality of U.S. goals in the area. Do we want to improve anti-American sentiment and build more positive relations with Arabs in the area? Do we want to root out terrorism, wherever it is found? Or, do we really want to implement a permanent two-state solution, putting an end to this old conflict? If our intentions are to improve American public relations in the area, then we simply need to keep trying to work for peace, whether our plans have real results or not. We must continue the appearance of peace dealing and enhance the perception that we are trying to solve the problem. Despite what our real intentions are, one step toward achieving all of them would be to deal with both the Israeli and Palestinian sides with more fairness and balance our historical pro-Israeli stance.

It is understandable that America should sympathize with Israel, given the history between us and our shared democratic values. Where America has sided with Israel based on our national interests and morality, we must now give support to the Palestinian cause for

those same reasons. There is no monopoly of sins in this conflict. While the horrific actions of suicide bombers and terrorists are justifiably condemned without prejudice, Hamas and extremist cannot be allowed to keep us from helping the Palestinians to achieve self-determination, security and sovereignty. Bush has balanced his support at times in words.²² He must be diligent in his fair dealings and treatment of both sides if his plan is to come to fruition. Fairness means treating the killing of Palestinian civilians the same as the killing of Israeli civilians. Fairness means providing aid to Palestine as well as Israel and conditioning both with adherence to steps towards peace. Continuing to work toward peace and being fair in our dealings with both sides can go a long way in healing anti-American sentiment in the region.

If our goal however is to actually end the conflict, the solutions may be counter to any pro-American public relations. In order for the U.S. to truly end the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, two very different approaches from one extreme to the other may be necessary. The nature of the conflict, its never ending cycle of violence and its historical, ideological and cultural source and indoctrination requires either a full-force takeover of all areas of Israel, the West Bank and Gaza or a slow, long-term approach to change the ideology and extremism that are sustaining the conflict.

The first solution would require the U.S. to take its war-on-terror, Iraqi-war tactics and apply them to Israel, the West Bank and Gaza. In this scenario, which we will call *Operation Forced Peace*, a U.S. force, along with anybody else willing to join in and possibly a United Nations (UN) Security Council resolution, if one could be passed, would go in and take control of the West Bank and Gaza, all check points, Arafat's compound etc... We would then

²² Bush, George W. (2002, June, 24). President Calls for New Palestinian Leadership (transcript of speech by Bush) The White House [online] available: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020624-3.html> or <http://www.whitehouse.gov>, news and politics, June, 2002.

proceed to root out Hamas and any other terrorist organizations, jail all suspected terrorists, and take control of the entire area. We could then rebuild democratic institutions, put a democratic governing body in place and take control of security. Then we could get the UN to help us decide where new borders should be, establish the state of Palestine, open up Jerusalem to all with an international force in the city and generally force everyone to be nice and behave themselves according to our standards or else they can suffer the consequences of force.

This could work if we are willing to pay the price and if we prove, first to be successful in our efforts in Iraq, which could be used as an example in *Operation Forced Peace*. Of course, we would have to be able to take some risks and possibly pay a heavy price. American lives would certainly be lost. Suicide bombings would continue for a long time until no one willing to blow themselves up was left alive. American soldiers would become targets. Collateral damage, in the form of Israeli and Palestinian civilians would certainly occur, possibly spurring more hatred and anger towards the U.S. and sparking a new wave of terrorists attacks. Of course we would have to maintain a presence in the area for years. But, it could work. This kind of all out takeover may be the only possible solution to the kinds of problems the conflict involves. How else can Hamas be stopped? How else could the settlements be taken down? Sharon and Abbas have their own survival at stake and opposition from within their own constituencies to contend with.

Many people argue that America has been the righteous hegemon of the world, the light on the hill. Why not accept our position in the world, throw off the shackles of Vietnam and end this problem once and for all? On the other hand, maybe we're not the infallible

hegemonic power we would like to be and perhaps the limits of our national interests don't extend that far into that kind of social work by force.²³

A second solution would also mean less public relations for the U.S. A more sustained, long-term fight against extremism and the ideology that feeds the flames of the conflict, supported and encouraged by American foreign policy could also be effective. Just as the former solution could be seen as part of the war on terrorism, so could a more sustained, long-term solution.

Many analysts have been comparing the war on terrorism to the Cold War.²⁴ That comparison is accurate in that the current fight is also one of ideology and will require long-term commitment and diligence against the forces that seek to destroy us through subversive methods. When George Kennan, the architect of Cold War foreign policy wrote about the Soviet Union he referred to Soviet ideology as being like the Church, patient, unmoving and completely justified with its every action confirmed by its own ideology, an ideology that can change to justify any action.²⁵

It is just such an ideology that blocks solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The ideas guiding the actions of the people in this conflict are indoctrinated into their social structures and educational systems and rooted in the Bible. Young Palestinians are taught a completely different history than young Israelis, each one designed to continue the antagonist relationship with the other side.²⁶ The Bible is used as a weapon of justification for polarizing

²³ Kagan, Robert. (1996, April). American Power, A Guide for the Perplexed. Commentary. New York

²⁴ Singer, P.W. (2002, October). Time for the Hard Choices: The Dilemmas Facing U.S. Policy Towards the Islamic World, Analysis Paper, number one. available online: <http://www.brook.edu/views/papers/singer/20021001.htm>. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institute

²⁵ Hook, Steven W, Spanier, John. (2000). American Foreign Policy Since World War II. chapter 2. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press

²⁶ Beichman, Arnould. (2003, May 5). Why Peace Can't Work. National Review Online [online]. available: http://www.nationalreview.com/comment/comment_beichman050503.asp

hatred. When both sides are completely justified by the core of their beliefs, those beliefs being beyond history, beyond economic condition and beyond politics, no amount of negotiations or plans or deadlines will be able to change them.

The ideology of Soviet communism eventually failed and the Soviet Union found that it was “safe to surrender,”²⁷ that is, that it was in their best interest to increase relations with the U.S. and change the structure of the republic rather than continue a battle that was failing. The Cold War went on for some forty-five years. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been going on for fifty-five years if you begin in 1948. The origins of the conflict and the sustaining forces that keep it going are within the Israeli and Palestinian people themselves. The solution ultimately will have to come from within as well.

U.S. foreign policy can help the Israeli and Palestinian people to achieve this goal by establishing a set of protocols and endeavors aimed at encouraging the Palestinian and Israeli people to fight extremism, promote moderate thinking and continue to work towards peace. This kind of policy might not make for high profile press conferences and it might not help anyone get re-elected. Its work would happen in small steps and outside the realm of daily news headlines and press conferences.

It could be achieved by a governmental or presidential commission or even an American sponsored international governmental organization. Such an organization could employ experts in the culture of the region and the history and nature of the conflict. Sociologists, anthropologists, Biblical scholars and political scientists of both local and international descent could all work together to help foreign policy leaders to understand better the nature of Israeli and Palestinian culture and ways of thinking and being. Through

²⁷ Kagan, Robert. (1996, April). American Power, A Guide for the Perplexed. Commentary. New York

understanding, ways of compromise and change and influence can be found and slow, effective change can be achieved.

Active endeavors and policies of such an organization could include economic aid to Palestinians to improve their living conditions, efforts to increase trade between Israel and Palestine and among nations in the region and efforts aimed at increasing economic interdependence, which discourages strife. It could work towards building educational institutions that teach democratic values and objective world history, giving the youth of the area a chance to learn more than fundamentalist doctrine. If young people can see that there are alternatives to ways of living, they may be more likely to hope and work for those alternative ways. Educational initiatives could teach labor force skills to young people and administrative and government operation skills to those working towards an effective, legitimate government in Palestine. This method of foreign policy could co-exist with the continuing war on terrorism, which would include eliminating violent elements within the region, and cutting off the support those terrorists receive from other countries. Extremism can be fought with tolerance, economic stability and support for moderate leaders. The U.S. can do all these things over time and with cooperation. Eventually, the Palestinian people may give up on extremists' ideology and see that it is their own self-interest to embrace moderation and compromise in order to live in peace and pursue their own happiness and self-determination. The Israel people can come to embrace the idea of a Palestinian state and accept this compromise as a justifiable peace and one in accordance with the morality of their cultural heritage.

Of course these ideas are very idealistic and have their own problems. For one, American encouragement and influence would need to be tempered. With democratic ideals

and educational opportunities often come American vices and those aspects of our culture that are counter to both Jewish and Islamic culture and values. The trick would be to bring in American non-violent institutions while respecting the culture of the people we hope to influence. The same problems that now face Bush's road map would also face this solution. However, long-term commitments, absent the pressure of press conferences and deadlines may be the only workable solution available if all out invasion is not an option and the road map leads to nowhere. Despite the obstacles and regardless of our ultimate intentions the U.S. can influence the conflict through a containment-like battle of ideology.

President Bush seems determined to continue his efforts to accomplish a lasting solution to this conflict. It is unlikely that his road map will produce a permanent two-state solution in the time frame he suggests. While obstacles continue to block the path to peace, some advances have been made and the world can continue to hope that this plan will be successful and that Bush, the victorious leader of a pre-emptive fight over terrorism and tyranny can broker a peace with the leaders of Israel and Palestine. Whatever the immediate future holds, the Middle East will continue to be an area of interests to America and our government will continue to strive for effective policy in the area in order to secure our own national interests and security and to bring peace and self-determination to the people of Israel and Palestine.

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