

# Breaking the Deadlock: Options for the Future (Part I)

May 7, 1998



In-Depth Reports

**M**r. Chairman, Mr. Satloff, dear friends, ladies and gentlemen. Please allow me to say first that I changed my mind three times before this meeting so as to engineer a successful meeting for this institute and its anniversary of the foundation, which we highly appreciate. And I hope, I'm sure, that such institution with such -- whether we will call it an intellectual exercise or exploring the possibilities -- will help to give material to the leaders in the region to think about how to solve their problems.

First, please allow me to emphasize about some remarks and some principles. We are not here to negotiate; we listen to each other carefully. We agree with things and disagree with many things, and therefore it's good to listen to us and it's good to give us your support.

Second, there are a real crisis; we should recognize it. And I would like here to say that the American administration has tried since a long time to put an end to this crisis, through, I think, about six meetings between Secretary Albright and Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Arafat, and through about six or seven meetings or visits from the coordinator, Mr. Dennis Ross, to the region. And they are doing all their best efforts, but unfortunately, the last meeting, in London, was not successful. I don't want to say that it was a failure, but I want to say that it was not successful.

Third, I want to say that there is a real negotiation that should start, which is the permanent status negotiation. The delay in building the bridge toward the permanent status negotiation will delay the process of peace, and nobody knows what's the result. To go there, to permanent status, we should have the bridge. The bridge, according (to) Oslo, was designed to be the interim agreement, to respect the implementation of the interim agreement.

And I would like to thank Mr. Sharon. When he said that Oslo is the only agreement that we have, and that's true, therefore, we should pay a lot of attention and respect to this agreement, because it is the only agreement. You may not like it. We may not like it. But later this is this compromise, this is the bridge. Without it, I think, we will not able to sit together.

Then, also, I think we are looking for a comprehensive and lasting peace. We are not looking for another interim period or a transitional period, or interim agreement and a transitional agreement. If you want to maintain security and stability, I think we should work very seriously to a comprehensive and lasting peace, whether on the Palestinian-Israeli track, or on the Syrian-Israeli track, the Lebanese-Israeli track, to have -- because if we will be able to reach a comprehensive and lasting peace, I think, then, the concept of the security will be changed, because I think later we have to identify where is the border of security. It is zones here and zones there? It's kilometers here and there? Or it is a real, comprehensive security in the whole of the region that will reshape the region again?

One other principle which I want to emphasize is that the principles of the peace process since it started in Madrid was land for peace, and Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. And, I add that the international legitimacy is binding for all parties.

The Madrid peace process has started, in my point of view, in a very genuine design. It's a great design, one that's been designed into two tracks: one track the bilateral, which worked and solved a problem of the past, and one track for future that will design the cooperation and the future of the coexistence and cooperation between the parties. And if you'll go back to the multilateral, I think we all have to appreciate what has been done in that.

The issues that have been left for the multilateral, are the important issues. It is the future. It is the refugees. It is the economic cooperation. It is the arms control and security. And it is the environment. These are very important. It's a concern to all the parties in the region, all the people in the region. And I think the multilateral talks, when the negotiations were going on, achieved a lot.

I remember also that one of the most important events in the region was the Casablanca conference. When all the leaders of the region and all the Israeli cabinet -- I remember I was there, the cabinet members of the Israeli cabinet, and all the leaders of the Jewish community in the world were all together in one meeting in one conference thinking about tomorrow, how to go together tomorrow to make economy, joint projects, joint efforts, to maintain and security. Please don't underestimate that.

Unfortunately now, this conference after it moved from Casablanca to Amman, Jordan, and then to Cairo; and last, everybody remembers how it was in Qatar -- and now it's been postponed.

Other things I would like to say about the Oslo agreement- the "graduality" in the Oslo agreement. It is not the Palestinian request to have a transitional period, an interim period, and the gradual withdrawal and the gradual acts. No. Our intention was to go, to sit at the table, to discuss the issue from all its aspects, and to find a solution once and forever. Unfortunately, it was not possible.

I know that it is the Israeli position, not only in Madrid, even before Madrid, even before Camp David; they are all the time saying that "We don't have trust. We need transition period." That concession we made; okay, we are ready for a transitional period. Build trust; we are for it.

And then the process started. What is the philosophy of the Oslo agreement? The Oslo agreement in my point of view, was built on three main principles. One is the gradual withdrawal leading to the full implementation of Security Council Resolution 242 and 338. This is the first pillar of this agreement-a gradual withdrawal from the Occupied Territories of 1967. And what has been achieved until now is good. But unfortunately now, we are stopped.

What has been achieved? The first phase, it was Gaza, Jericho. It was not easy. I remember how it was implemented, what difficulties. But later, it was implemented, despite all the difficulties we faced and despite all the difficulties that the Israelis faced. But it's been implemented to the satisfaction of both parties.

And then we came to another phase of the withdrawal. It was the populated area. I believe I remember that we spent nine months negotiating the comprehensive agreement for all the interim period -- it's about 410 pages. It is necessary. It can give answers about any problem that we may face in the interim period. Go there; you will find answers about any question, about any problem that can face us during the implementation or during the interim period. This was the interim agreement, 410 pages. Even we were not able to forget how to manage relations between people to people; there are special parts of this agreement involving people to people, students to students, teachers to teachers, scientists to scientists, et cetera.

Area B and C and A, et cetera -- it was not a partition of the West Bank. Area B and C was a symbolic identification to the security responsibility. That's enough. None of us will accept the division of the West Bank. The meaning of Area A, B and C is as follows:

For Area A, as you know that it is full responsibility of the Palestinians, whether civil affairs or security affairs. In Area B, it is the responsibility of the Palestinians in the civil affairs, and the Israelis have the overriding security

responsibility. We accepted that. We are courageous to say, "Yes, we accepted that." Some of our people blamed us. We said, "Okay, it's a transitional period. We want to build trust. This is the only way, and we want to give it." And yes, we gave it. And then Area C is an Israeli responsibility. We accepted that.

Now we came to the third phase. It was not easy for the Israelis. I know. That was a difficult decision to conclude the agreement and to take the position of the implementation of this part of the agreement, which is the withdrawal from the populated area, which means -- it has been identified in the agreement that it is cities, towns, villages and hamlets. That's been implemented.

And then we came to the another phase of the agreement, which is the withdrawal from -- the gradual withdrawal, which we called in the agreement "further redeployment", from Area C, and from Area B to Area A, after a period of trust building and confidence-building. Unfortunately, here we are facing the crisis, and here is the problem.

For us, the Palestinians, this is the bridge from where we can cross from the place we are here to other place. We cannot go now, after we convinced our people with this agreement -- we cannot go back to say, "Okay, leave this behind you, and go to the permanent." We are not against the permanent. We want the permanent yesterday, not tomorrow. But unfortunately, this is the fact, this is the real. And therefore, here is the real crisis.

I know that there are many other issues that may be raised regarding security and other issues, but believe me, we are doing 100 percent of the efforts. But we cannot guarantee 100 percent of the results. And I don't think that there are any country in the world who can guarantee 100 percent of the results for security.

We understand carefully the needs of the Israeli for security. I told many Israeli officials that if it is a matter of security, we are ready to give you the roof of our houses, to monitor and to see the situation. But what about the territory? When we say, "Land for peace," well, okay, we are ready for security. Up to what extent? But what about the land?

If the conflict will be that there is a dispute about the land, I can say that there's a very serious problem. We are not ready to compromise about the issue of the land. But we are ready to cooperate as long as possible for the security and to maintain security, because this is the future.

I know that there are two schools, one school which is -- they're calling, "Okay, we have land; keep it," from the Israeli side. One is calling the Palestinian side, "Okay, forget everything; let's go for armed struggle 100 years, 200 years, and let's see it." No, we are realistic enough, and we took the brave decisions, as President Arafat sees. Really it is the peace of the brave. It is the peace of the brave -- to take the difficult decisions.

And we need the concessions. We need the concession. Everybody knows we were claiming that all Palestine, historical Palestine, et cetera -- well, that's our claim. But the concession is being taken and being decided from the PNC and from all the institutions, the Palestinian institutions, and the institutions of the PLO, that there are two states and one land. This is the Palestinian concessions. Unfortunately, it has not been appreciated as yet, but I'm sure that later we will be able to reach it.

How we can overcome the problem of today? In my point of view, there is a package that should deal with the further redeployment -- the first and the second. And we accepted the American proposals. It was not our request. And I can say honestly that the American proposal was nearer to the Israeli request more than it was to the Palestinian request. Our request, we were claiming 40 percent, and then we came to 13 percent, not because we want to keep the land (at all?); no, but because it lets the process go forward.

And the others. What is the issues of the interim period at the moment? At the moment, the interim period, there are the further redeployment, there are the settlements, there are the prisoners, and there are other issues, like the airport, the seaport, the safe passage, and the economic issues. All these, if we will be able -- and I can say in front of

you that Minister Sharon: and his colleagues, they can do it. And this is the only thing that can build a bridge to take us from this point to other point on the other side of the river. Let's go there for the permanent status. Let's study our problems carefully from all its sides and from all its aspects.

The final status negotiation. You know, this is my understanding, that the final status, it is not issues; it is not Jerusalem, settlement, refugees, borders, state/non-state. It is not that. The permanent status, it is a framework that manages and designs the future of two people in one land.

How it will be designed: Inside this framework, there are issues, which we assume that it is difficult, but if we'll take it serious, it is not difficult.

Aside from that, there is Jerusalem. There is the refugees, which is in my point of view the core of the problem, because if we will be serious and we want to solve our problems, let's go to see how we will solve the problem of the refugees, and the settlements and other issues. You know that the final-status negotiations was supposed to start last May and lead to a "just and permanent peace" with Israel, based however on the precondition that the interim phase had been achieved in full, that all the related issues had been resolved and implemented in accordance with the signed agreement and to the satisfaction of both sides.

This has not been the case. And all I can say is that each of the remaining issues -- Jerusalem, refugees, settlements and borders, and of course, the water and maybe other issues -- will require extensive negotiations, backed by a true commitment to advancing the peace process and an Israeli willingness to refrain from returning to point zero. We don't want to go back each time to the zero point after each crisis; presenting obsolete suggestions and attempting to introduce new agendas or bypass them all together.

I believe we will recognize -- if we will come to Jerusalem -- I believe we will recognize the special importance of the city of Jerusalem for the three monotheistic religions-Islam, Judaism and Christianity. International law and a large number of resolutions and conventions issued since the occupation of east Jerusalem, all affirm its status as an integral part of the Arab territories occupied in 1967. And it is on this consensus that any future solution must be based, clearly acknowledging the Palestinian rights in Jerusalem and refusing Israeli claim to exclusive rule of governance.

The Palestinian leadership, recognizing the sensitivity of the Jerusalem question, made a big concession by accepting to postpone it to the final-status negotiations. This in no way means that we have given up occupation. This is not an occupation which we only identify; it has been identified by the Security Council, by the United Nations, by all the international community, and to eliminate the occupation is one of the resolutions of the Security Council resolution. And therefore, we don't want to go back to these things. Let's keep it for the negotiations.

Thank you.

Ariel Sharon addressed the conference on this same topic. [Read his remarks.](#)

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