

Developments in the Middle East

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Articles & Testimony

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Mr. Chairman,

It is an honor to participate in this timely and important hearing on a subject of vital national interest. I thank you for the opportunity to present my views to this Committee today.

With the resolution-albeit temporary-of the Iraq crisis, regional and international attention has already returned to the Arab-Israeli peace process and the U.S. role therein. Linkage between these issues has been raised by many observers and in many different ways. A crude, false and malicious form of linkage has been drawn by those who see a direct parallel between Iraq and Israel. More sophisticated, though still misguided, are those who see a connection between the stalemated peace process and the general Arab reluctance to support U.S. policy on Iraq, including possible military action, and who make the wholly unsupported and counter-intuitive argument that the lack of progress in the peace process-i.e., the lack of Israeli concession to the Palestinians-is the reason why Arab states refuse to cheer U.S. policy in the Gulf. In reality, both the crude and the sophisticated forms of linkage are wrong. The former fails to discriminate between Saddam Hussein's outrageous defiance of the United Nations weapons inspection regime and Israel's desire for a negotiated peace founded on compromise, whereas the latter fails the tests of both history (Why did Arabs support America in 1990, when Israel had a Likud government? Why did many Arabs oppose U.S. military against Saddam at the height of Oslo's glory days, 1993-95?) as well as politics (Would Saudi Arabia really have shifted policy and welcomed U.S. strike aircraft if only Israel had agreed to withdraw from 13 percent of the West Bank, not 9 percent?) Despite these false arguments, these ideas have given birth to a policy recommendation that, in some quarters, is gaining currency-i.e., the need for a new form of U.S. diplomatic activism, including perhaps the promulgation of an American "peace plan," designed principally to dispel notions of an American "double-standard" in the Middle East, to salvage a peace process adrift, and restore American "credibility" in the eyes of many in the Arab world.¹

In my view, Mr. Chairman, this recommendation is as wrong as the rationale upon which it is based. It runs against the tide of America's historic role in the peace process and an accurate understanding of American interests in this process. It also fails to comprehend what are, in my view, the main reasons why this process has reached stalemate.

The balance of my testimony will address these issues and offer two main recommendations for moving this process in a more positive direction.

Mr. Chairman, for more than thirty years, the pursuit of Arab-Israeli peace has been a high priority for the United States.² While the rationale has changed over time-particularly with the demise of the Soviet Union and the consequent disappearance of the threat of superpower confrontation emerging from local conflict-the American interest in Arab-Israeli peace remains strong and pressing. For the United States, the Arab-Israeli peace process is a means to many ends: to build a community of interest among moderate states in the region in the pursuit of regional peace and stability; to help Israel, America's democratic ally, achieve peace, security and prosperity; to help fulfill Palestinian political aspirations within the context of peaceful co-existence with Israel; to permit regional allies to reduce military expenditures and focus instead on economic and social development; to isolate radical states and organizations while highlighting the benefits that would accrue to them from abandoning their support for terrorism and other unacceptable forms of behavior; and to reduce the likelihood of war at a time when its potential costs have risen dramatically due to advances in technology and the spread of weapons of mass destruction and the means to deliver them. While many countries may share many of these interests, the United States has a unique role to play in realizing these objectives. Indeed, U.S. leadership in the pursuit of these goals is prerequisite to their realization.

Over time, three core principles, born of three decades of American involvement in the peace process, have correctly governed U.S. efforts:

- The United States cannot and should not want peace more than the parties themselves.
- The United States cannot impose an agreement on the parties nor should it propose an "American plan" for resolution of the Arab-Israeli dispute.
- Enduring agreements are those made through direct negotiations, with America's principal contribution being to nurture an environment in which the parties can reach accord, and, secondarily, to advance ideas to bridge differences the parties cannot themselves overcome.

Implementing this strategy has three main components:

- Fulfilling the responsibilities of an "honest broker" and "full partner" to the negotiations, offering to facilitate talks, maintain the integrity of the negotiating process, transmit messages between parties, record hypothetical proposals, periodically propose ideas that could bridge (or at least circumvent) obstacles, and monitor compliance with contractual obligations.
- Supporting, defending, and protecting agreements and the peacemakers who make and implement them, both through direct political, financial and security assistance and via an active effort to forge an international coalition to do the same.
- Insulating the peace process from threats of rejectionist regimes and terrorist groups who seek to undermine it.

Over time, this strategy has borne fruit. It was the strategy that helped Israel and Egypt to reach peace at Camp David, helped Israel and Jordan reach peace the Wadi Arava, and created the conditions for Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization to define a pathway toward peace in Oslo. While the first two of these agreements have endured, though not without moments of crisis and disappointment, the third of these-the Oslo Process-faces serious, perhaps terminal, problems. Why?

Mr. Chairman, there are two main reasons why the peace process has stalemated. The first is obvious-Oslo has yet to

produce very much peace. Here, one needs to go to basics. In absolute terms, more Israelis have died in the four years since Oslo than did during the six previous years, dating back to the start of the intifada (Palestinian uprising). And while it is true that Palestinians and Israelis both continue to suffer deaths at the hands of each other in rioting, terrorism and other clashes, the trend lines for the two communities are moving in opposite directions. According to the Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem, a group not known for its sympathies with the current Israeli government, the number of Palestinian deaths in conflict with Israelis dropped by two-thirds since Oslo; in contrast, the number of Israeli deaths at the hands of Palestinians increased by 40 percent.

This is a central issue because it addresses the heart of the bargain that constitutes the Oslo Process. Oslo was an equation between Israelis and Palestinians along the following lines: recognition + withdrawal + government + process = security. Israel offered the Palestinians four items. First, Israel extended diplomatic recognition to the PLO, a significant step at the time, given that the PLO had recognition from nearly every country in the world except the one-Israel-that was in control of territory it claimed as its own. Second, Israel offered to withdraw from significant parts of the territories occupied in 1967, beginning with Gaza and Jericho, then expanding to the urban centers of the West Bank and then expanding further into villages and some rural areas. These withdrawals would leave more than 95 percent of the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza under Palestinian (not Israeli) control. Third, the Israelis permitted the creation of a Palestinian government, with a fully elected legislature, to govern these territories under self-rule. Fourth, and perhaps most important, the Israelis proposed to participate fully in a meaningful diplomatic process by which the Palestinians could achieve resolution of all outstanding claims against Israel, including those concerning the fate of Jerusalem, refugees, Israeli settlements and the ultimate political disposition of territory under Palestinian self-government. (This diplomatic process is called the "final status" or "permanent status" negotiations.) In exchange for this four-part package, the Palestinians promised to end the "armed struggle" against Israel; accept diplomacy as the only means to resolve conflicts with Israel; work both independently and cooperatively with Israel to prevent terrorism, incitement and violence; and punish those Palestinians who violate that commitment to peaceful resolution of conflict. In essence, the Palestinian part of the equation can be summed up in one word-security.

The trend-lines of Israeli and Palestinian deaths I cited earlier highlight the fact that, with the incidence of horrific terrorist acts in the heart of Israel's major urban centers, most Israelis have not been-and certainly do not believe themselves to be-more secure as a result of Oslo. Indeed, Prime Minister Netanyahu's election victory in May 1996 reflected the fact that an absolute majority of Israelis thought something was wrong enough with the pace, content and direction of the peace process to choose him over Oslo's architect and champion, Labor's Shimon Peres. Given that the peace process remains, at its core, a process by which Israelis must be convinced of the wisdom of conceding tangible assets in exchange for promises of cooperation, goodwill and peace, than this sense of Israeli ambivalence about a process that has produced such insecurity is the "crisis of confidence" that must be addressed if the peace process itself is to be saved. (Ironically, even with the establishment of a Palestinian Authority-the first Palestinian government in the history of the Middle East-a large segment of the Palestinian population probably shares this sense of insecurity, though at least partly out of fear of the myriad Palestinian security agencies as from fear of the Israel Defense Forces.)

Mr. Chairman, the "lack of peace" cited above extends to other aspects of the definition of peace as well. For Palestinians, this includes an economic situation that has left per capita income lower today than it was before the signing of the Oslo Accords. (The reasons for this are complex and numerous-they include the corruption and mismanagement of the Palestinian Authority; onerous restrictions on movement of people and goods imposed by Israeli authorities; the lack of full donor commitments on the part of various members of the international community; and the absence of real economic aid by wealthy Arab oil exporters. It is important to note that the number of Palestinians working in Israel, both legally and illegally, is today higher than at any point since the signing

of the Oslo Accords.) For Israelis, this includes clear signals from states throughout the Arab world that the diplomatic warming that Israel enjoyed in the immediate aftermath of the Oslo handshake was conditional on Israel's future performance in this process, not a new, permanent feature of the regional landscape. In sum, while I believe that the Oslo Accords can provide a valuable and constructive framework for the negotiated solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, so far-five years after the White House handshake-they have not yet fulfilled that promise.

A second, less obvious, but no less accurate, reason for the peace process stalemate is "not enough process." To some, this may be a curious commentary on a process famous for its complex detail and arcane diplomatic formulations. But the fact remains that a key factor in the peace process stalemate is the that too little emphasis has been placed on the need for implementation of existing agreements as prerequisite for future progress. Sadly, this is a charge one can make against all three main parties in this process-Israel, the Palestinian Authority and the United States.

This is not to say that the three parties are failing to live up to their responsibilities equally. I believe that any fair-minded observer who assesses the record of the past four years, spanning the Rabin, Peres and Netanyahu Governments, would reach the conclusion that Israel has, by and large, fulfilled its contractual obligations to the Palestinians (diplomatic recognition of the PLO, withdrawal from Gaza and significant chunks of the West Bank, establishment of an elected self-rule authority, and an invitation to "permanent status talks"). Neither Israel's construction at Har Homa in southern Jerusalem nor its opening of the Hasmonean Tunnel in the Old City is proscribed by Oslo; though those steps were perhaps politically unwise, the Oslo Accords specifically and deliberately omitted reference to Jerusalem in discussing those areas in which the two sides would avoid acts that may prejudice "final status" negotiations. Similarly, Israel's expansion of settlements and other infrastructure development in the West Bank is not proscribed in the 314 pages of highly detailed text that comprise the Oslo II accords (the 1995 interim agreement). On other matters, such as the opening of a Gaza port, airport and the creation of safe passage between Gaza and the West Bank, Israel has not yet fulfilled its obligations but it does recognize them as such and is engaged in negotiations to resolve security aspects of these items. As for the issue of the first "further redeployment," it was not implemented in March 1997 because the Palestinians refused to cooperate with a withdrawal they deemed too meager, not because Israel failed to offer a redeployment according to agreed procedures.

In contrast, one could not justifiably reach the conclusion that the Palestinians have, by and large, fulfilled their obligations to Israel. The list of outstanding obligations is long and includes promises to complete the process of the revision of the Palestinian National Charter; terminate all official Palestinian activities outside PA-controlled areas, especially Jerusalem; confiscate or license all weapons; incarcerate or transfer to Israel of all terrorist suspects; and impose agreed limitations on the size of the PA security forces and their weaponry. Moreover, many of these items are not even recognized by the Palestinians as obligations.

Mr. Chairman, these are very serious items, issues that should not be left to political demagoguery. Take for example the commitment regarding confiscation or licensing of all weapons in PA-controlled areas. Here, the language of the accords is clear and unambiguous: Article XIV, para 4: "Except for the arms, ammunition and equipment of the Palestinian Police described in Annex I, and those of the Israeli military forces, no organization, group, or individual in the West Bank and Gaza Strip shall manufacture, sell, acquire, possess, import or otherwise introduce into the West Bank or the Gaza Strip any firearms, ammunition, weapons, explosives, gunpowder or any related equipment unless provided for in Annex I." The relevant paragraph from Annex I (Article II, para. 1, subsection c) states the following: "The Council will issue permits in order to legalize the possession and carrying of arms by civilians. Any illegal arms will be confiscated by the Palestinian Police." In practice, with thousands of weapons floating around the

West Bank and Gaza-many of which are visible in Hamas rallies in major Palestinian cities and refugee camps-a bare handful have been confiscated and almost none have been licensed. This is not a political issue in which the Palestinians could simply "do better;" this is an issue which is not being addressed at all.

But even more important than this list of unfulfilled obligations is the fact that the concept of compliance itself has never been given adequate emphasis by any of the parties, with the overall diplomacy of peacemaking suffering as a result. Here, the United States bears as much of the blame as do the principals.

While the United States has been dogged and determined in seeking diplomatic solutions to defuse violent crises and overcome political obstacles in this process, it has not matched this effort with consistency in monitoring the two parties' commitments to each other and in fulfilling its own, independently-made commitments to them. On the positive side, following the bloody confrontation between Israeli troops and Palestinian "security forces" in September 1996, the United States was indispensable to the success of the three-month negotiation that produced the Hebron protocol in January 1997. Similar efforts at mediation are constant and ongoing. At the same time, however, the United States has issued virtually no statements calling specifically for Palestinians to fulfill their outstanding Oslo obligations, especially those outlined in the U.S.-authored and -initialed "Note for the Record" appended to the Hebron Accord. Indeed, the United States has, at times and perhaps inadvertently, issued statements and adopted positions that seem to relieve Palestinians of some of their Oslo obligations. (One year ago this month, for example, the President's spokesman praised Yasser Arafat's "admirable restraint" in not advocating violence against Har Homa and the State Department spokesman reduced the PA's counter-terror obligation to a "commitment that he [Arafat] will not encourage violence.") Similarly, despite the commitment to "immediate" and "parallel" fulfillment of obligations mentioned in the "Note for the Record," the United States has not accepted the idea that future steps to be taken by Israel, such as further redeployments in the West Bank, should be contingent on the fulfillment of the Palestinians' unfulfilled obligations or, at the very least, to the reconvening of the "final status negotiations," now one year overdue. In addition, by failing to insist upon the continued validity of an Israeli decision on the scope of its first redeployment last March and by offering its own proposals for the scope of a combined first and second redeployment now (the 13.1 percent proposal mentioned in numerous recent press reports), the United States has apparently changed its interpretation of understandings contained in correspondence between then-Secretary of State Christopher and Prime Minister Netanyahu following the signing of the Hebron protocol last year. (According to that letter, the U.S. view of "further redeployments" was that the determination of their size was a solely Israeli responsibility and that there should be three redeployments, the last one to be completed by mid-1998.) These acts of omission and inconsistency have helped to relieve the political burden on the Palestinians to fulfill their own obligations and-inadvertently, to be sure-damaged the integrity of the negotiating process.

Permit me to add my view that Israel has made its own share of tactical mistakes in this regard. First, it has failed to link its own compliance with a consistent and earnest demand for parallel Palestinian compliance on key issues. Though "reciprocity" has been a catchword of the Netanyahu Government, it has rarely insisted upon the principle in practice. Second, as noted above, Israel took measures (e.g., opening the Hasmonean Tunnel and starting the Har Homa neighborhood construction project) that were undoubtedly legal but were also politically unwise, in the sense that they provided fodder for critics of this Israeli government and gave the Palestinians a political excuse to shrug off compliance with their own obligations. Third, to an extent far greater than was the case under the previous Labor government, Israel sought to overcome obstacles in its own relationship with the Palestinians by inviting the United States to take a deeper, more thorough-going role than ever before in all aspects of the Israeli-Palestinian relationship. In the beginning, this created a new dynamic whereby a bilateral diplomatic process was turned into a trilateral process; over time, this trilateral process itself evolved into a new form of bilateral process-between Washington and Jerusalem. This is the situation today, with Israel and the United States effectively negotiating over the next stage of the peace process and with the United States playing a central role even in the tactical aspects of

Israeli-Palestinian security cooperation. Even with good will and the best of intentions on all sides, this is not a healthy situation. For years, the United States wrestled with the contradictions of being both Israel's strategic ally and the "honest broker" of the process itself, sometimes finding the proper balance and sometimes not; trying to fulfill a third role as well-"advocate for the Palestinians"-is virtually impossible.³

I note in passing that this argument runs counter to that of those who contend that the stalemate in the peace process is the result of a lost spirit of partnership that animated the Israeli-Palestinian relationship in the heady days immediately following the Oslo breakthrough. Renewing that sense of partnership, so this argument goes, is the sine qua non for resuscitating the process altogether. I disagree. Today, many observers look longingly and wistfully at the early days of Oslo for a spirit of human and institutional partnership between the Israeli and Palestinian leaders-and peoples-that never really existed. That is because from the very beginning, each side viewed the Oslo Accords through its own peculiar political and historical lens, saw in it different meanings, and viewed it as having different political implications. From the beginning, most Israelis viewed Oslo as an experiment whose outcome was (and remains) uncertain, with the late Prime Minister Rabin often arguing that Oslo posed a set of incremental tests of Palestinian commitment and behavior that, if failed, would end the experiment. In this world view, Oslo may not be reversible but it is eminently "stoppable" with an outcome that is open for negotiations, not predetermined. In contrast, Palestinians viewed Oslo's five-year period of "interim self-rule" as the painful, five-year postponement of the inevitable creation of a Palestinian state throughout the West Bank and Gaza with Jerusalem as its capital; that is certainly how virtually all Palestinian leaders have portrayed Oslo to their constituency over the years. (In this, Palestinians may have been led to believe by some of Israel's Oslo negotiators that much, though certainly not all, of their vision would be realized.)

The gap between these two views of the Oslo Accords is huge. In that context, the only way for the parties to have maintained the integrity of a diplomatic process that was already on shaky political foundations was to focus on what was agreed, not on their interpretations of what was agreed. This should have meant a focus on the implementation of the clear, written commitments within the agreements. This did not happen. That the Palestinians should seek to avoid spending the political and military capital required to fulfill these obligations-unless absolutely necessary-is sad but not surprising. That Israel and the United States would not insist upon compliance and condition any future progress on it is sad and surprising. It is in this context that I make the heretical suggestion that one of the key reasons for the current stalemate in the peace process has been a lack of "process"-i.e., a lack of vigilance regarding the agreed "process" of peacemaking.

Mr. Chairman, having outlined two main reasons for the current deadlock, permit me to offer two main suggestions for defusing it:

In the first instance, the United States should re-focus its diplomatic efforts on a simple and straightforward emphasis on compliance with all contractual obligations, to the letter of the Oslo Accords and its ancillary agreements, such as the Hebron "Note for the Record." On the issue of redeployments, for example, the United States should refrain from offering its own idea of "percentages" that would constitute a workable Israeli withdrawal because that automatically becomes the new Palestinian bottom-line figure and forces Washington into a distracting and unproductive negotiation with Jerusalem on an issue that should be solely an Israeli responsibility. At the same time, the United States should keep to the letter of the Christopher correspondence and remain faithful to the concept of three redeployments, ending up with Israel retaining self-defined "specified military locations," settlements and Jerusalem for discussion in "final status talks" that should themselves convene immediately, well in advance of the execution of that third redeployment. To the Palestinians, the United States should, in its public and private diplomacy, be consistent and unwavering in calling for full, immediate and unconditional fulfillment of outstanding Oslo obligations. The force of the Administration's contention that "security is the sine qua non of the

peace process" is undermined when the Administration does not take a clear stand against conditioning improvement on Palestinian security efforts on Israel's own actions, such as further redeployments.

In passing, it is important to note the unforeseen but deleterious impact on the peace process of a piece of well-intentioned legislation, the Middle East Peace Facilitation Act (commonly known as the PLO compliance act). This law requires the Administration to give a pass-fail, thumbs-up/thumbs-down judgement of Palestinian compliance; in practice, U.S. policy has been hamstrung by an inability to grade Palestinian compliance on a sliding scale and to demand improvements in particular areas. Since no U.S. official wants to sidetrack the process altogether by giving Congress cause to de-certify the PLO as an interlocutor and suspend U.S. aid, the Administration is left defending the PLO virtually across-the-board. This, in turn, is read by the Palestinians as an endorsement of their behavior, an impression which no number of private demarches can repair. It would be extremely useful for the Administration and Congress to re-examine legislation regarding PLO compliance to permit wider latitude in grading Palestinian behavior. This could be done in any number of ways, e.g., topically (assessing compliance in political, economic, legal and security categories) or chronologically (assessing whether the PA is doing a better job this year than last). The goal would be to turn compliance into an activity, not an act, and to measure it honestly as a way to identify misdeeds and encourage greater compliance. Freed of the all-or-nothing constraint of current U.S. law, the Administration could then have a much healthier relationship with the PA, not the minuet of winks, nods and raised eyebrows that characterize the current approach.

A corollary of the back-to-basics approach regarding Oslo compliance suggested here is the jettisoning of any idea of a U.S. plan that proposes new formulations, including those on "final status issues," that contradicts the text of the Oslo Accords and other written agreements. Here, I specifically refer to suggestions by some that the U.S. should articulate its views on the inevitability of a Palestinian state as a way to provide the Palestinians psychological succor and a "light at the end of the tunnel" for the arduous "final status" negotiations that lie ahead. That would be bad policy. It could short-circuit the negotiations, undermine the Israeli bargaining position and remove most of the Palestinian incentive for further Oslo compliance and security cooperation with Israel. To its credit, this is an idea that the Administration has so far rejected.

Now is not the time for Washington to intercede in the peace process with its own solutions; instead, now is the time for Israelis and Palestinians to calculate their own interests and decide their fate accordingly. In that regard, the current impasse resembles the pre-Oslo stalemate in spring 1993, when various parties clamored for heightened U.S. engagement to overcome the sterile exchanges between the Rabin Government and the Palestinians' Madrid delegation. Then, too, there were calls for American intervention, but Washington held firm, remaining loyal to the Madrid ground rules, with the result that Israelis and Palestinians found their own way out, via Oslo. In that respect, though America was not a player at Oslo it was Oslo's unsung hero, with U.S. insistence on the "Madrid rules" having compelled the parties to find their own solution.

My second suggestion goes to the heart of the matter. With the implementation of the Hebron accord last year by a Likud-led government, Israeli politics passed an historic watershed: Today, both Labor and Likud, Israel's two leading political parties, have accepted the idea of territorial compromise. If the goal of the Oslo process is to determine the final disposition of the West Bank and Gaza, define secure and recognized borders for Israel, and thereby settle the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, then the two main parties in Israel for the first agree that territorial compromise is the way to achieve a just, fair, lasting and equitable peace. They both agree on a re-partition of mandatory Palestine in which Israel would withdraw from virtually all of Gaza and large chunks of the West Bank. The main difference today between Labor and Likud is how much territory each would cede, not whether to withdraw at all. And even on the question of percentages of territory from which Israel should consider withdrawing, Labor and Likud are not too far apart; indeed, they are much closer to each other than either is to the official position

of the PLO.

With each passing day, Israeli leaders also edge closer to making another historic concession-accepting the idea that the political entity that will emerge from the Palestinian self-rule areas will be a state, though one lacking certain attributes of sovereignty. Even celebrated "hawks" like Ariel Sharon have associated themselves with this view. Though not yet formalized, this development would mark another watershed in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

However, both these concessions-the affirmation of territorial compromise and the still-emerging consensus on some form of Palestinian statehood-are unrequited by any comparable Palestinian concession. Here, I do not mean just the time-worn, re-hashed commitment to security cooperation; that is "old wine in new bottles." What is needed, I believe, is a comparable concession of historic importance from the Palestinian side. So far, all Palestinian concessions in the process have been concessions of time-a willingness to postpone demands until later negotiations and to accept portions of territory and political authority in piecemeal fashion. So far, however, the Palestinians have yet to make a concession in substance, a concession regarding the irrevocable withdrawal of a claim that will have to be made eventually if there is to be peace.

There are three possible Palestinian concessions that are of such historic importance that any of them could transform the process overnight -- a concession regarding Palestinian claims to Jerusalem as capital of a future state; a concession regarding refugees and their claim to a "right of return;" and a concession regarding territorial claims in the West Bank. All would be appropriate; all would be welcome; all will eventually have to happen for peace to have a chance.

Of these, I believe that an early declaration of Palestinian commitment to territorial compromise-to the idea that peace may be possible without the Palestinians attaining 100 percent of what they are asking for-would mirror the Israeli affirmation of the legitimacy of territorial compromise, convince a skeptical Israeli public that this process makes sense, and, in so doing, energize the peace process. After all, we are left with the fact that there is only one party to these negotiations that opposes territorial compromise-the PLO. The PLO call for a Palestinian state in all the West Bank and Gaza is unattainable. Holding fast to a dream is one thing; maintaining a political platform that mirrors that dream is quite another. If there is to be peace, there will be territorial compromise, with Israel retaining significantly less territory than currently under its control but with the Palestinians forever relinquishing some significant part of the territory they claim, too. Public recognition of that fact would be a major step forward in this process. Such a declaration would parallel the historic Zionist concession regarding a re-partition of Mandatory Palestine and provide a hopeful and equitable basis on which the parties can proceed with "final status negotiations."

Mr. Chairman, there are just fourteen months before the Oslo accords expire in May 1999. In Middle East diplomacy, that is not a lot of time, and as that date approaches, the chances of diplomatic resolution may grow dimmer as the popular expectations of a political "Big Bang" loom larger. If the United States wants to marry a renewed emphasis on the nuts-and-bolts of Oslo compliance with a grand strategy for reinvigorating the prospects for real Arab-Israeli peace, this is a good place to start.

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Notes:

1 For a further discussion of the linkage debate, see my my op-ed, "Target Saddam Hussein," Washington Post, December 2, 1997.

2 This discussion of American interests and roles in the peace process is drawn from Building for Security and Peace in the Middle East: An American Agenda, Robert Satloff and Samuel Lewis, editors, Report of The Washington Institute's Presidential Study Group (The Washington Institute, 1997).

3 For a fuller discussion of this new peace process dynamic, see my article "Scuttle Diplomacy," The New Republic, February 2, 1998.

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