

## Taking Stock:

### The Bush Administration and the Roadmap to Peace

by [Dennis Ross \(/experts/dennis-ross\)](#)

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#### ABOUT THE AUTHORS



[Dennis Ross \(/experts/dennis-ross\)](#)

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**W**hen the Bush Administration assumed office in January of 2001, it shifted direction in a number of foreign policy areas. Nowhere was the shift in direction and priority more pronounced than in the approach to Arab-Israeli diplomacy. It was not only that the President would not be engaged; it was also that there would be no American envoy to the peace process. Indeed, in the first months of the administration, the very words “peace process” were banned from the public and private lexicon. The policy was one of disengagement. A number of assumptions seemed to guide the new approach: the Clinton Administration erred in wanting peace more than the parties, with the President having been far too involved; Yasir Arafat was indulged too much; the new Ariel Sharon-led government in Israel would now rule out being able to achieve much; and U.S. interests in the region were threatened far more by Iraq. Dealing with that problem—as opposed to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—was more likely to transform the landscape of the area. Whatever one thinks about the wisdom of America’s intensive, high-level engagement in the 1990s, disengagement from peacemaking efforts was clearly not the answer.... ❖

National Interest

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