

# Bush, Sharon, and Arafat:

## The Pursuit of Israeli-Palestinian Peace (Part I)

Oct 4, 2002



### In-Depth Reports

**W**e are at a stalemate. Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat is able to thwart any real political reform on the Palestinian side. Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon has no good military options left, and, given the fact that he has the prospect of a primary and then elections coming up, he is unwilling to take a political initiative. U.S. president George W. Bush is preoccupied with regime change elsewhere in the region. And Palestinian security reform is going nowhere.

So essentially, despite the president's vaunted vision of a democratic Palestinian state alongside a secure Israel, no progress is being made. Sooner or later, something will give, whether it follows the next terrorist bombing or the one after that. Sooner or later, Sharon will have his way with Arafat and send him into exile. The Palestinian Authority, which is already on its last legs, will then presumably collapse. And whether that happens first or whether the Israeli army goes into Gaza to root out the Hamas infrastructure there, either alternative will produce something with catastrophic potential.

When, as a result, we come back to trying to do something about it, we can adopt an incremental approach. But the incremental approach cannot alter the basic reality, which is that there is no responsible Palestinian partner with whom Israel can make a deal, and there is no Palestinian security apparatus capable of taking on the terrorist organizations. As long as this reality persists, it is very difficult to see how an incremental approach can possibly work.

I would like to lay out an alternative approach, one that has been tried in other parts of the world -- in East Timor and Kosovo -- with considerable success, and one that I believe could be successful in this situation. It is a Palestine trusteeship -- a U.S.-led, United Nations-approved international trusteeship -- that would have responsibility for the following elements:

- Overseeing Palestinian efforts to establish democratic political institutions, transparent economic institutions, an independent judiciary, and an effective security apparatus.
- Managing a sort of Marshall Plan for rebuilding an independent Palestinian economy, which should not depend on 120,000 Palestinians working in Israel for its welfare.
- Directing a U.S.-led multinational force to establish order in the territories under trusteeship control, including working with the emerging Palestinian security apparatus to confront terrorist organizations, uproot their infrastructure, and disarm military groups.

For such a trusteeship to have a chance of being accepted by Israelis and Palestinians, it would need to be established under the following conditions:

- First, a summit meeting would need to be convened by President Bush to bring the heads of the European Union, the United Nations, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Egypt together with the Israeli and Palestinian leaderships. This summit would declare an independent Palestinian state with provisional borders.
- Second, those provisional borders would comprise Areas A and B, that is, the 42 percent of the West Bank and most of Gaza that is now

nominally under the control of the Palestinian Authority, plus an additional 10 percent or so to provide contiguity for the new state. As a consequence, some outlying settlements would need to be evacuated. • Third, the summit would place these territories in the hands of the trusteeship for a three-year period -- the period defined by President Bush during which the institutions of the state would be established, elections would be held, and the terrorist infrastructure would be eliminated. • Fourth, the summit would launch -- and a steering group including Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Egypt would oversee -- a final-status negotiation between Israel and the Palestinian delegation, to be completed by the end of the third year of the trusteeship. • Fifth, the summit would need to develop broad general parameters for this final-status negotiation. Its objective would be, as the president laid out in his speech, to end the occupation and to produce a two-state solution, with a democratic Palestine established in most of the West Bank and all of Gaza, living alongside a secure Israel.

I am sure this audience could, and no doubt will, come up with a hundred reasons why this idea will not work. I could list a few myself, but I challenge anyone to come up with a more credible way out of this conflict. Everyone knows what the solution is, but we do not have a way to get there. And if we do not find a way to get there, the two-state solution will disappear and far more drastic solutions will become conceivable, solutions that doom both Israelis and Palestinians. In short, trusteeship provides a mechanism for getting to a two-state solution.

Read remarks by the other participants on this panel: [David Makovsky, \(templateC07.php?CID=129\)](#) [David Satterfield, \(templateC07.php?CID=130\)](#) and [Dennis Ross \(templateC07.php?CID=131\)](#) ❖

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