

THE SWING TO THE RIGHT IN U.S. POLICY TOWARD ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

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U.S. support for Israel has taken a qualitative shift to the right during the past year. While previous administrations have generally supported Israel's negotiating positions, most analysts placed the U.S. position more or less in the center of the Israeli political spectrum. In most ways, U.S. policy makers identified with the more hawkish wing of the center-left Labor party, well to the right of the Israeli peace movement yet more moderate than the rightist Likud bloc. In the year since the September 11 terrorist attacks against the United States, however, the U.S. position has lined up with the quintessential rightist Ariel Sharon.

When Arab hijackers crashed their planes into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the second *intifada* was nearly a year old. Israeli occupation forces had erected more than 100 new military posts around Palestinian population centers in a series of multiple sieges, dividing them into 220 tiny enclaves, where the civilian

population began experiencing severe food shortages, lack of medical care and unemployment of over 70 percent. Once one of the more prosperous regions of the Arab world, more than 60 percent of the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip found themselves living in abject poverty. In November of that year, Amnesty International condemned both terrorist violence by Palestinians and human-rights abuses by Israeli occupation forces, which – the report noted – included extrajudicial killings, detention without charge, collective punishment, the use of torture, the demolition of homes and other abuses.

The previous June, the United States – spearheaded by CIA director George Tenet – followed up on the Mitchell Commission Report by pushing for a cease-fire agreement from the Palestinians even as the Sharon government pledged to continue building more settlements. The Bush administration and Congress essentially put forward the Mitchell Report only in terms of getting a cease-fire, conveniently

dropping the report's insistence on a settlement freeze and other Israeli obligations. Tenet's plan called for a complete cessation of violence for one week followed by a six-week cooling off period when Israeli forces would withdraw to where they were prior to the outbreak of violence in September 2000. In effect, the report was used to put pressure on the Palestinians to cease their resistance to Israeli occupation forces without anything in return. Israel simply had to redeploy forces to the demarcation lines already agreed to in previous treaties.

Throughout the fall, the Palestinian resistance had escalated beyond stone-throwing youths to include increased armed attacks by Palestinian militiamen against Israeli occupation forces and settlers as well as terrorist attacks by extremist Islamic groups against civilians inside Israel. Israeli repression increased as well, including air strikes against Palestinian Authority buildings and the killings of scores of Palestinian paramedics and other medical workers seeking to rescue the wounded in riots when the Israelis would respond with lethal force. In December 2001, the United States vetoed a U.N. Security Council resolution strongly condemning Palestinian terrorism because it also criticized Israeli policies of assassinating Palestinian dissidents and imposing collective punishment against civilian populations. The United States was the only dissenter within the 15-member council.

To follow up on the Tenet Plan, President George W. Bush dispatched retired Marine Commandant Anthony Zinni in November 2001 as his special Middle East envoy. Zinni, former head of the U.S. Central Command, had only limited experience in diplomacy. His mission was solely

to establish a cease-fire, not to restart negotiations or address any of the other elements of the Mitchell Report. Zinni presented his plan on March 26, 2002. In it, he used unconditional language in reference to the Palestinians, requiring them to "cease" violent activities, while only asking the Israelis to "commit to cease." This new U.S. proposal also dropped the Tenet plan's requirement that Israel should stop its attacks on "innocent civilian targets" and its other restrictions against "proactive" Israeli military operations. Instead, Zinni's proposal would permit Israeli attacks on Palestinian Authority (PA) buildings, including prisons, "in self-defense to an imminent terrorist attack," a situation that the Israelis had defined quite liberally. The Palestinians rejected such revisions, arguing, "It is impossible to imagine a scenario in which bombing a prison or the president's compound would be 'self-defense' This, in effect, justifies all the so-called 'retaliatory' attacks the Israelis have conducted so far."¹

After a particularly destructive and deadly wave of Israeli attacks into civilian areas of the West Bank in early March 2002, Vice-president Dick Cheney visited the region. He met with Prime Minister Sharon but refused to meet with Arafat until the Palestinian leader "renounced once and for all the use of violence."² At this time, Arafat was under siege inside his offices in West Bank city of Ramallah, and his security forces were scattered to avoid being killed by Israeli forces bombing their facilities. Apparently, at no point in his meetings with the Israeli prime minister did the American vice-president bring up the possibility of a freeze on settlements, a resumption of peace negotiations, a withdrawal of Israeli troops to the areas of

control promised under U.S.-brokered disengagement agreements, or an end to Israeli violence.

Throughout this period, it was becoming increasingly clear within the international community that the Palestinians had international law and U.N. Security Council resolutions firmly on their side. Similarly, while this by no means justified attacks against Israeli civilians, most nations recognized that it was the ongoing Israeli occupation and colonization of the West Bank and Gaza Strip that were the central issues. As a result, U.S. policy makers had to find a way to bolster their position backing Israel and its rightist prime minister. The Bush administration and congressional leaders of both parties then zeroed in on the Palestinians' most vulnerable area: Palestinian Authority president Yasser Arafat.

Even many of their strongest supporters acknowledge that the Palestinians have been saddled with what may be the worst leadership of virtually any national liberation movement in recent decades. The rule of Arafat and his Fatah organization – originally a guerrilla group formed during exile – has alienated broad segments of Palestinian society, making it difficult to control much of his population. Similarly, the Palestinian Authority failed to create a sociopolitical base necessary to promote a viable sovereign entity. Furthermore, Arafat did not sufficiently prepare the population for the likelihood that the vast majority of refugees would not be able to return home and that even getting back most of occupied Arab East Jerusalem would be a protracted struggle. Arafat refused to disarm Fatah's Tanzim militia, which had grown largely beyond his control as the uprising had pushed younger and more militant leaders

to the forefront, attacking both Israeli occupation forces and civilian settlers in the occupied territories. Segments of the PA, including some of its own media, had even encouraged such violence. The most serious charges against Arafat, however, involved terrorism.

PALESTINIAN TERRORISM AGAINST ISRAELIS AND THE U.S. RESPONSE

After a virtual absence of terrorist violence from the Palestinian side for more than a decade, the mid-1990s saw a resumption, this time from Islamic groups within the occupied territories that targeted not only Israeli settlers but also Israelis inside the Green Line. These escalated dramatically in 2001 and 2002 in response to increased Israeli repression. Most of the attacks have been organized by the Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of Hamas, a large multifaceted Palestinian Islamic organization based in the occupied territories. A smaller and even more radical group, Islamic Jihad, has been responsible for a number of terrorist attacks as well. Both groups oppose Arafat and his secular Fatah movement and the peace process with Israel, seeking the establishment of an Arab Islamic state in all of Palestine through revolution. These attacks have killed hundreds of Israeli civilians and have been particularly traumatic for a country that has suffered from terrorism for decades and for a people that has experienced systematic persecution for centuries.

Arafat and the Palestinian Authority have repeatedly condemned such acts of terrorism, though there are serious questions regarding the sincerity and consistency of their opposition. While Palestinian

police have arrested hundreds of Islamic militants, there has been some infiltration by radical Islamist sympathizers within the ranks of Palestinian police. A combination of corruption, incompetence and popular pressure has led to some terrorists being released from prison and major suspects remaining free.

However, while it would be wrong to assume Arafat and his government are blameless for the terrorist attacks, it would also be wrong to assume that they are directly responsible for most of them, as Israeli officials and U.S. congressional leaders have alleged. For example, a large number of the terrorists implicated in attacks inside Israel have come from areas under Israeli security control. Secondly, Israeli attacks on the PA's offices and jails have severely crippled their antiterrorism efforts by destroying records and killing investigators. In some cases, in the midst of an Israeli attack or believing an attack was imminent, the PA officials hurriedly released suspected terrorists to spare their lives. In addition, Israel's multiple sieges of Palestinian towns and cities have oftentimes made it impossible for investigators to get from one town to another to follow through on their tips and arrest suspects.

Many Palestinians have pointed out – with some justification, based on international law – that Israeli forces firing missiles into inhabited homes, shelling civilian areas, utilizing death squads and firing live ammunition against protesting children are also acts of terror. Similarly, they argue that it is wrong for the United States to demand that the Palestinians punish terrorists who murder Israeli civilians but not demand that Israel punish its soldiers who murder Palestinian civilians.

Despite all this, in November 2001, 88 out of 100 U.S. senators signed a letter addressed to President Bush intending to prevent Secretary of State Colin Powell from including direct or indirect criticism of Israel in a speech he was planning to give at the University of Louisville. The senators insisted that President Bush not restrain Sharon from retaliating fully against Palestinian violence and that he give the Israeli military assaults his full support, declaring,

The American people would never excuse us for not going after the terrorists with all our strength and might. Yet that is what some have demanded of the Israeli government after every terrorist incident they suffer. No matter what the provocation, they urge restraint.

The senators also voiced opposition to any U.S. inducements to the Palestinians.³

In mid-December 2001, bowing to Israeli and American pressure, Arafat turned his crippled security forces on Hamas and Islamic Jihad, arresting scores of militants, closing offices and even shooting into crowds of Islamist protestors. As a result, Arafat was able to force nearly four weeks of calm in late December and early January. However, Israel then engaged in a series of assassinations of local Palestinian leaders. Immediately afterwards, Palestinian violence resumed.⁴ As *The Washington Post* noted, in a review of the ongoing conflict,

Each period of Palestinian restraint was greeted with Israeli assassinations, home demolitions or incursions into Palestinian territory. Each terrorist attack launched by Arafat's

extremist rivals was answered by devastating Israeli assaults on Arafat's own security forces.⁵

Strategic analyst Zbigniew Brzezinski, who served as national security adviser in the Carter administration, provided an observation crucial to understanding apparent Israeli intentions, criticizing the “deliberate overreactions by Mr. Sharon, designed not to repress terrorism but to destabilize the Palestinian Authority and to uproot the Oslo agreement – which he has always denounced.”⁶

In the subsequent months, despite State Department and CIA analysts noting Sharon's ongoing provocations and overreactions, President Bush continued to focus almost exclusively on Palestinian terrorism as the cause of the crisis, using the same rhetoric as Sharon.⁷ In part this was a reflection of President Bush's decision to give Defense Department officials unprecedented clout in the formulation of U.S. policy towards the conflict, which had previously been largely under the purview of the State Department. One result was that the hard-line Pentagon officials who view the conflict strictly in security terms – Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz and Undersecretary of Defense Douglas Feith – have marginalized the more pragmatic conservatives in the administration, such as Secretary of State Powell, who see the conflict more in political terms. For example, Feith – prior to joining the administration – contributed to a 1996 paper that advised Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu to make “a clean break from the peace process.”⁸ Similarly, Feith wrote a widely read 1997 article that called on Israel to re-occupy “the areas

under Palestinian Authority control” even though “the price in blood would be high.”⁹ These hawkish voices have been augmented significantly by a coalition of Democrats and right-wing Republicans in Congress.¹⁰ For, in the eyes of the Bush administration and both parties in Congress, the struggle in the occupied territories was not a matter of a military occupation of one country by another, but simply a part of the U.S.-led war on terrorism. As a result, the Israelis refused to ease up on their siege of Palestinian towns and cities or end the closures. Not surprisingly, the violence continued. Despite this, it appeared that the majority of Palestinians were still interested in peace, with a majority polled showing that they supported neither Hamas nor Arafat.¹¹

However, Secretary of State Powell declared that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was not a result of “the absence of a political way forward” but from “terrorism . . . in its rawest form.” Furthermore, he accused Iraq, Iran and Syria of “using the Middle East conflict as an excuse for those terrorist organizations operating in the region.”¹²

Part of the dilemma for U.S. policy makers comes from President Bush's insistence, in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States, that those who harbor terrorists or have any links to terrorists will be treated as terrorists themselves: subjected to military action and excluded from negotiations. In the case of Israel and Palestine, this would essentially require the United States to support Sharon's attacks against Palestinian institutions and his refusal to engage in peace talks. The Bush Doctrine, however, not only fails to address the problem of the far greater civilian casual-

ties inflicted by the Israeli occupation troops; it also ignores the structural violence, such as the U.S.-backed military occupation, that results in the terrorist backlash. American officials are therefore in a weak position to condemn Palestinian terrorism as long as the United States supplies much of the weaponry used in carrying out the even more destructive Israeli acts of violence.

In the early weeks of 2002, Arafat convinced Hamas to cease terrorist attacks inside Israel and

to join PA militias in focusing their armed resistance exclusively in the occupied territories. After a series of successful strikes against Israeli occupation forces,

however, Israel launched some devastating incursions into Palestinian cities in retaliation, along with a series of assassinations, leading the Islamic groups to return to their attacks against civilians inside Israel. The Palestinian public, which had largely opposed such terrorism, began to shift noticeably in support of suicide bombing as their situation worsened and they lost any hope that the United States would pressure Israel to end its attacks and its 35-year occupation.

At this point, there are indications that Arafat and his senior commanders made a major shift in strategy: Perhaps aware that they were losing popular support in favor of Hamas and wanting to demonstrate to

Sharon that the increased repression was not working, they apparently authorized a Fatah faction known as the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade to begin a series of terrorist attacks inside Israel as well. If indeed this was the decision, they must have known it would harden American and Israeli attitudes still further, but perhaps they felt there was little to lose, since the Israeli and American governments were accusing them of being responsible for the terrorist attacks anyway.

On March 20, the Israeli newspaper *Yediot Ahronoth* quoted IDF intelligence reports that the U.S.-backed IDF actions in the occupied territories had made matters worse by

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preventing the PA from taking actions against terrorists. Furthermore, according to the reports, the IDF assassinations and bombings had motivated subsequent suicide bombings against Israelis, leading senior PA leaders to start cooperating with terrorist groups. In short, a bloody stalemate had resulted because the Israeli attacks made it politically impossible for Arafat to crack down on the terrorists, while the terrorist attacks gave Sharon the excuse to put off peace negotiations and continue his assaults on Palestinian population centers.

In early March, Israeli forces reoccupied large areas of the West Bank that Israel had handed over to the PA in

previous disengagement agreements. The United States initially supported the incursions, again blaming Arafat and calling for a cease-fire without anything in return from the Israelis. But, as international criticism of the Israeli assaults on the Palestinian infrastructure grew, the Bush administration – in one of a series of public rebukes against the Sharon government – finally insisted that Israel withdraw. Sharon ordered the troops to pull back. At the end of the month, however, a particularly devastating series of terrorist attacks in Israel by both Hamas and Fatah suicide bombers prompted Israel to launch its largest military incursion yet.

U.S. SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL'S SPRING 2002 OFFENSIVE

Israel began its offensive on March 30, occupying most major towns, cities and refugee camps in the West Bank. The Israeli military operation had been planned for months, and the unusually vicious acts of Palestinian terrorism during the last week in March – including a blast at a Passover seder in Netanya that killed 28 people – gave the Israeli government the excuse it was looking for. On March 28, Zinni had told Arafat that he could stop the planned attack if Arafat accepted his implementation proposal, but Arafat reiterated that it was unrealistic to impose a cease-fire under such conditions.¹³

Meanwhile, Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah announced a peace proposal that called on Arab states to not only provide security guarantees for Israel, but establish full normal diplomatic relations in return for a full Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories. At the Beirut summit of the League of Arab States in late March, every Arab government, including the

Palestinian Authority, endorsed the Saudi proposal. Just as with Sharon's 1982 invasion of Lebanon, the 2002 invasion of the West Bank – probably not coincidentally – took place just when the Palestinians were making diplomatic headway through a peace initiative.

It soon became apparent that the goal of Sharon's offensive was to destroy political life in the occupied territories in pursuit of the Israeli right's dream of a "Greater Israel." Uri Avnery, writing in the Israeli newspaper *Maariv*, confirmed reports of most foreign observers that "the real aim" of the offensive was to "break the backbone of the Palestinian people" and "crush their governmental institutions" resulting in "the destruction of organized Palestinian society."¹⁴ Serge Schmemmann, writing in *The New York Times*, observed that there was "a systematic effort by the Israeli Army to strip institutions of the Palestinian Authority of as much data as possible,"¹⁵ with the Cultural Ministry and Education Ministry ransacked and records destroyed. Scores of civil agencies, commercial establishments and non-governmental organizations were looted, damaged or destroyed, mostly after the military had established firm control of the given area. In addition, a large number of historic buildings, particularly in the casbah of Nablus, were reduced to rubble.¹⁶ Independent Israeli analysts observed that Sharon's strategy was to totally destroy any kind of central Palestinian government in the hopes that it might lead to an effective reoccupation by Israel or the establishment of a kind of Vichy-style collaborationist authority.¹⁷

On the day Sharon launched the offensive, Bush defended the Israeli action by declaring, "I fully understand Israel's

need to defend herself.”¹⁸ The U.N. Security Council, in emergency session, voted in support of a cease-fire and for an Israeli withdrawal from the recently reoccupied cities. The United States voted in the affirmative, but only after successfully demanding that there be no call for an immediate withdrawal or a set timetable and that the Security Council call for the implementation of Zinni’s interpretation of the Tenet plan.¹⁹ Two days later, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld ruled out sending U.S. forces to enforce a cease-fire and focused his remarks on Iran, Iraq and Syria for allegedly “inspiring and financing a culture of political murder and suicide bombing in Israel.”²⁰ As reports of widespread civilian casualties intensified protests against Israel’s incursions, President Bush made a speech in which, while condemning Palestinian terrorism and claiming the violence was Arafat’s fault, did call on Israel to “halt the incursions and begin withdrawal.” He did not, however, say how soon Israeli forces should pull back. Two days later, with the global outrage growing, Bush clarified that he meant “without delay.” He did nothing to pressure the Israelis to actually do so, however, leading Israeli Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer to publicly dismiss Bush’s request, telling American reporters, “I don’t think that he meant that.”²¹

Israel’s attacks continued amid increasing reports of widespread civilian casualties. On April 15, the White House sent Deputy Secretary of Defense Wolfowitz to speak at a right-wing rally in Washington in support of Israel’s military offensive. Two days later, Bush claimed that Israel had finally heeded his call, though the Israeli pullback was limited to only a few specific locations while the

offensive continued and even expanded elsewhere. Bush added that he “understood” Israel’s continued siege of Ramallah.²² On April 19, the United States supported another U.N. Security Council resolution that largely emphasized humanitarian concerns but did not condemn the Israeli assaults.²³

Meanwhile, the Bush administration announced on April 2 that Secretary of State Powell would be dispatched to Israel on an “urgent” mission. However, Powell took a full week before arriving in Israel. En route, he visited Morocco, Spain, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, a reflection of the administration’s position that it was the Arabs, not Israel, who required pressure to change their policies. When Powell finally arrived in Jerusalem, he refused to see Arafat until the Palestinian president issued a strong statement in Arabic condemning attacks against civilians; Arafat complied, reiterating similar statements he had made previously. Powell did not, however, make a similar demand of Sharon. As Arafat remained besieged in two rooms of his heavily damaged offices in Ramallah surrounded by Israeli tanks, Powell demanded that Arafat take “actions, not just words” to stop the terrorism, though the Secretary of State did not clarify what actions he thought Arafat could take under such circumstances.²⁴ Says Palestinian analyst Mouin Rabbani, “The unconditional U.S. support for Israel’s offensive led many in the region to wonder if Israel had merely secured a green light from Washington or was in fact doing its bidding.”²⁵

Graham Fuller, former vice-chairman of the National Intelligence Council at the CIA, observed that Israeli intelligence officers have regularly pointed out that

massive repression will not work and that Sharon's escalating military repression "has in fact multiplied terrorist attacks." As a result of such Israeli military offensives, he observed, "The terror is now totally decentralized as the Palestinian government infrastructure is destroyed."²⁶ The BBC reported that during the offensive,

the campaign climaxed with the bombardment of the Preventive Security Headquarters near Ramallah, the institution responsible for security coordination with Israel, which was the backbone of the Oslo agreement. Now there is no one to enforce a cease-fire, should one be declared.²⁷

Even Israeli Defense Minister Eliezer admitted, at the end of the offensive in late April, "It is impossible to eradicate the terrorist infrastructure."²⁸

While the Bush administration was, at least on the record, calling for an Israeli pullback, Senator Joseph Lieberman – the 2000 Democratic vice-presidential candidate – and other leading members of Congress sought to undercut the Bush administration's call for restraint by inviting Benjamin Netanyahu, the rightist former Israeli prime minister, to address legislators on Capitol Hill in support of Israel's military offensive. Democratic and Republican leaders criticized Bush for failing to express stronger support for Israel's actions. Meanwhile, in overwhelming margins, both houses of Congress passed bipartisan resolutions in support of the Israeli offensive, blaming the Palestinians exclusively for the violence and insisting that the Israeli attacks were only in self-defense. The vast majority of both liberals and conservatives supported these resolutions, which also commended President

Bush's "leadership" in addressing the conflict. There were only two "no" votes in the Senate and only twenty-one "no" votes in the House. At the peak of the offensive, Democratic congressional leaders – such as House Minority Leader Dick Gephardt, Assistant House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle and Assistant Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid – spoke at a series of rallies and forums supporting Sharon's policies and condemning the Palestinians.

In contrast to Congress, which blamed the violence exclusively on the Palestinians and vindicated the Israelis, public-opinion polls during this period indicated that most Americans believed both sides were to blame. For example, a May 2002 poll indicated that a majority of Americans opposed Sharon's invasion and his refusal to heed President Bush's request to withdraw from the reoccupied Palestinian towns. It also showed that two-thirds of those polled believed the United States should be strictly evenhanded in its approach to the conflict.²⁹ According to Steven Kull, director of the Program on International Policy Initiatives at the University of Maryland,

What this poll makes clear is that recent actions by Congress are out of step with the American public and their views on the crisis in the Middle East. Americans clearly hold both sides equally responsible for the current situation and are willing to increase pressure on both sides to achieve a peace deal.³⁰

Furthermore, a Time/CNN poll indicated that, in response to Israel's offensive, 60 percent of Americans believed some or

all U.S. aid to Israel should be suspended, while only 1 percent believed it should be increased.³¹ However, in an effort to reward Israel for its offensive, Representative Nita Lowey, the leading Democrat on the House Appropriations Subcommittee, pushed for an additional \$200 million in military aid for Israel in addition to the more than \$2 billion of military assistance already allocated to Sharon's government for the fiscal year. Initially opposed by President Bush due to budget limitations, the administration gave in under Democratic pressure and the supplemental funding passed by an overwhelming margin.

While there has always been a strong bias in Congress and in successive administrations in support for the Israeli government, the events since the breakdown of the peace process do show a qualitative shift. Only a few years earlier, Ariel Sharon had been considered to be on the extreme right wing of Israeli politics, due to his strident opposition to the Oslo process; he was also widely viewed as a war criminal. By 2002, however, both the administration and an overwhelming majority of both parties in Congress had solidly thrown their support behind Sharon and his policies.

BLAMING THE PALESTINIANS

Though Sharon has failed to support a single peace treaty or disengagement agreement with any Arab party, the Bush administration and congressional leaders have insisted that he is sincerely interested in pursuing peace with the Palestinians. At the height of Israel's devastating military offensive in the West Bank during the spring of 2002, President Bush lauded Sharon as "a man of peace," adding, "I'm

confident he wants Israel to be able to exist at peace with its neighbor."³² While President Bush has welcomed the rightist prime minister to Washington on several occasions, he has refused to meet with President Arafat, yet another indication of U.S. support for Sharon's negotiating position.

On June 24, in the face of a new wave of terrorist attacks by Palestinian extremists inside Israel and the re-conquest of Palestinian cities by Israeli forces, President Bush gave a major policy speech in the White House Rose Garden on Israel and Palestine. In it, the president described what steps the United States would insist were necessary to bring the peace process forward.

After more than 30 years of rejecting the international consensus that peace requires the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside a secure Israel, President Bush made the most explicit statement by an American president to date affirming that principle. However, his speech focused upon the idea that while Israel's right to exist is a given, Palestine's right to exist – even as a mini-state on the West Bank and Gaza Strip – is conditional. Perhaps the most striking element of the speech was his assertion that U.S. support for Palestinian statehood was predicated on major internal reforms by the Palestinian Authority, to the point of insisting that "peace requires a new and different Palestinian leadership, so that a Palestinian state can be born."³³

The irony is that, whatever the many faults of Arafat and the PA, the Palestinian negotiating position on the outstanding issues in the peace talks – Jerusalem, the rights of refugees, Israeli withdrawal from occupied territory, the Jewish settlements – is far

more consistent with international law and U.N. Security Council resolutions than that of the Israelis. Despite that, President Bush was insisting that it was the Palestinians, not the Israelis, who needed to have new leadership in order for the peace process to move forward. Similarly, President Bush focused his speech primarily on Palestinian violence against Israeli civilians, despite the fact that Israeli occupation forces were responsible for far more Palestinian civilian deaths than were Palestinian terrorists for Israeli civilian deaths.

The administration's priorities were baldly obvious: in the course of his speech, the president mentioned terrorism 18 times but did not mention human rights or international law even once. Nor did he mention the peace plan of Saudi Prince Abdullah or U.N. Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, long considered the basis for Middle East peace. Not only did President Bush fail to demand a total withdrawal of Israeli occupation forces, he called only for a freeze on additional Israeli settlements, when international law – reiterated in U.N. Security Council resolutions 446 and 465 – requires Israel to abandon the existing settlements as well.

Turning the understanding of most observers on its head, President Bush insisted that it was Palestinian terrorism that was preventing the Palestinians from achieving their freedom, not that the denial of Palestinian freedom was resulting in terrorism. There was no apparent awareness of the near absence of terrorism from the Palestinian side from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, at a time when Israel refused to withdraw from most of the occupied territories or curb the dramatic expansion of Jewish settlements on confiscated Palestinian land.

While many if not most Palestinians would love to see Arafat go, President Bush's insistence that the United States has the right to say who the Palestinians should have as their leader resulted in widespread resentment. Even Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres was quoted as saying,

Making the creation of a Palestinian state dependent upon a change in the Palestinian leadership is a fatal mistake. Arafat has led the Palestinians for 35 years, kept their head above the water in the international arena. No, no, you can't just brush him aside with one speech.³⁴

President Bush's criticisms of Arafat's regime, however valid, have never been the reason the United States has opposed the Palestinians' right to self-determination. They are simply the excuse.

THE U.S. ASSAULT ON HUMAN RIGHTS

For the past decade, the United States has claimed that the Geneva Convention pertaining to conduct by occupying powers does not apply to Israel. For example, in a U.N. General Assembly resolution in December 2001 reaffirming the applicability of the Geneva Convention to the Israeli-occupied territories (supported by 165 countries), the United States cast one of only four "no" votes. (In addition to Israel, the only others voting "no" were the tiny island states of Micronesia and the Marshall Islands, both former colonies of the United States heavily dependent on U.S. foreign aid.) In addition, the United States has backed Israel's refusal to allow investigators from the U.N. High Commission for Human Rights to investigate the

human-rights situation in the occupied territories. The United States also boycotted the meeting of the Fourth Geneva Convention that month at which Israel was reprimanded by 114 states – including Great Britain and other European Union nations – for its “grave breaches” of the Geneva Convention, including indiscriminate and disproportionate use of violence against Palestinian civilians, among others.³⁵

Even Israel’s bloody offensive against Palestinian cities last spring failed to prompt American rebuke. In its account of the Israeli assault, Amnesty International reported,

. . . the IDF acted as though the main aim was to punish all Palestinians. Actions were taken by the IDF which had no clear or obvious military necessity; many of these, such as unlawful killings, destruction of property and arbitrary detention, torture and ill-treatment, violated international human rights and humanitarian law. The IDF instituted a strict curfew and killed and wounded armed Palestinians. But they also killed and targeted medical personnel and journalists, and fired randomly at houses and people in the streets. Mass arbitrary arrests were carried out in a manner designed to degrade those detained.³⁶

The U.S. House of Representatives categorically rejected Amnesty International’s findings. On May 2, by a vote of 352-21, they declared that “Israel’s military operations are an effort to defend itself . . . and are aimed only at dismantling the terrorist infrastructure in the Palestinian areas.”³⁷ This was widely interpreted as an attack against the credibility of Amnesty International, winner of the 1977 Nobel

Peace Prize. In an apparent retort to growing demands by peace and human-rights groups to suspend military aid to Israel, the house resolution called for an *increase* in military aid, which many of these activists felt was, in effect, rewarding Israel for its repression. That same day, the U.S. Senate, in a 94-2 vote, passed a similar resolution, again referring to the Israeli assault on Palestinian towns and refugee camps as “necessary steps to provide security to its people by dismantling the terrorist infrastructure in the Palestinian areas.”³⁸ Both resolutions stressed their support for Israel’s military offensive in the West Bank.

According to a joint statement by Senators Diane Feinstein and Mitch McConnell, co-sponsors of an amendment that would block Palestinian officials from entering the United States and institute other steps to keep the Palestinian Authority out of the peace process,

Israel has done no less – and certainly no more – than what any country would do to defend itself. . . . Israel’s military operation has been one based on specific intelligence information, with specific military goals – to act directly against terrorists . . . – and carried out with considerable restraint.³⁹

This statement, like the resolutions, came after journalists’ cameras were finally allowed into the refugee camps and urban areas targeted by the Israeli assaults and the widespread destruction to the civilian infrastructure became apparent even to casual viewers of the evening news. Still, House minority leader Dick Gephardt proclaimed that, in supporting the Israeli government’s offensive, “We will stand for freedom.”⁴⁰

This was widely seen as not only indicative of the widespread disdain for basic human rights by both major American political parties, but also an act of racism: The majority of liberal Democrats – most of whom were on record in support of human rights in Guatemala, East Timor, Colombia, Tibet and elsewhere – had decided, in a situation where the victims of human-rights abuses were Arabs, to instead throw their support to the perpetrator of the human-rights abuses. In fact, one of the two sponsors of the House resolution was California Democrat Tom Lantos, the long-time chairman of the Human Rights Caucus, frequently cited in the news media as Congress's leading advocate for human rights.

The most serious human-rights abuses during Israel's spring 2002 offensive were perpetrated in the Jenin refugee camp, where Israel claimed there were a number of terrorist cells operating. U.S.-supplied Apache helicopters and F-16 fighter jets pounded Jenin for eight days, with Israeli infantry shooting their way into the densely populated camp. The result was a humanitarian disaster, with fears that hundreds of civilians had been killed and Palestinian officials and some international observers alleging that a massacre had taken place. The Israelis did not allow any journalists into the occupied refugee camp for two weeks and even barred ambulances and rescue workers, despite widespread casualties. In addition, Israeli occupation forces barred civilian convoys – including those consisting of Israeli human-rights activists – from bringing in water, medications and food.⁴¹

On his visit to Israel and the West Bank in the immediate aftermath of the assault, Secretary of State Powell asked to

view the site of a Palestinian terrorist attack in Jerusalem that killed six Israeli civilians but refused to go to Jenin. He did state, however, that while there may have been isolated killing of civilians, no massacre took place in Jenin. This was virtually the same response that Powell gave in 1968 when, as an Army major, he was asked to investigate charges of a massacre in the Vietnamese hamlet of My Lai. His coverup succeeded for more than a year until a soldier from the unit wrote a letter to a congressman revealing, as confirmed by a subsequent investigation, that American forces had murdered as many as 500 civilians, including women, children and elderly people.⁴²

In response to demands by human-rights organizations that the United Nations dispatch a team to investigate the alleged massacre, some Muslim states drew up a resolution in the Security Council to organize such an inquiry. U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations John Negroponte threatened to veto the proposed investigation, however, arguing that the Bush administration did not believe it should be done through a Security Council resolution.⁴³ However, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres stated that Israel would actually accept such an investigation if the language of the resolution was toned down. Not wanting to appear to take a more obstructionist position than the Israelis, the Bush administration reversed its position and drew up its own resolution calling for an investigation, which passed the Security Council unanimously on April 19. Secretary General Kofi Annan appointed a prestigious team headed by former Finnish president Martti Ahtisaari and including an impressive team of international civil servants with expertise ranging from

human rights to forensic science; William Nash, a retired U.S. Army major general, was chosen as their military adviser.

Israel objected to the makeup of the commission, however, and refused to allow them to investigate unless more military and counterterrorism experts were included. In response, the secretary general added four additional military and police experts and three additional forensics experts. Israeli officials then raised at least a half dozen new conditions, including demands that the mission also investigate Palestinian terrorism, that Israel control submission of documents and testimony to the commission, that it have the power to review and comment on Palestinian testimony, that soldiers and officials be guaranteed immunity from any future prosecution, and that the team not make any public “observations” or “conclusions.” Traditionally, the United Nations has not allowed countries subjected to such investigations to change the makeup or the mission of such investigative teams. In fact, the United States has responded to similar objections to the makeup and mission of U.N. inspection teams by the government of Iraq by bombing that country. However, on April 29, the United States promised the Israelis that it would support their refusal to allow the U.N. team to investigate. U.S. National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice conveyed to Prime Minister Sharon a personal message from President Bush that the United States “will be with you the entire way.”⁴⁴ This may be the first time that a sponsor of a U.N. Security Council resolution ended up blocking its implementation within a matter of days.

On May 7, the U.N. General Assembly voted on a resolution condemning Israel for

its assaults against Palestinian civilians, particularly in the Jenin refugee camp, and for its refusal to cooperate with a fact-finding team. In addition, the resolution emphasized the importance of civilian safety and well-being throughout the Middle East and condemned all acts of violence and terror resulting in deaths and injuries among Palestinian and Israeli civilians. Only four of 189 member nations, the United States, Israel, Micronesia and the Marshall Islands, voted “no.” A public-opinion poll that week indicated that more than three-quarters of the American public believed Israel should allow the United Nations to investigate.⁴⁵

During Israel’s April 2002 offensive, U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees Mary Robinson reiterated her call for an end to the suicide bombings as well as to the occupation. She particularly criticized the Israelis for placing 600,000 Palestinians under a strict curfew for most of the month and the destruction of Palestinian medical, religious and service institutions in contravention of international law, as well as the use of Palestinian civilians as human shields. Robinson, a former president of Ireland, had been one of the most visible and effective commissioners in the history of the U.N. Human Rights Committee. In response to her criticisms of America’s most important Middle East ally, however, the United States – which has veto power over the reappointment of top U.N. officials – forced her to step down at the end of her term.

THE DOUBLE-STANDARD ON ASSASSINATIONS

Israeli occupation forces have assassinated scores of Palestinians, ranging from suspected terrorists, to Fatah officials, to

community activists. The Bush administration has expressed its objection to the practice but has done little to stop it; Vice-president Cheney, in an interview last summer, appeared to endorse it. Senator Joseph Biden, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, has openly defended the Israeli use of these extrajudicial killings, as have Senator Charles Schumer and other leading Democrats.

The United States takes a very different attitude, however, if Palestinians assassinate Israelis. For example, on August 27, 2001, Israeli occupation forces – using a U.S.-supplied helicopter gunship and missiles – assassinated Abu Ali Mustafa, head of the far-left Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine in his office in Ramallah. Seven weeks later, four PFLP militants retaliated by assassinating Rehavam Zeevi, head of the far-right Moledet party, who had been serving as Israeli tourism minister. Regarding Mustafa's murder, the State Department issued only a mild statement reiterating its opposition to Israel's assassination policy. By contrast, President Bush personally condemned Zeevi's murder, criticized the PA's handling of the situation and demanded that the assassins be punished. He furthermore expressed his understanding for Israel's maintaining a six-week siege of Yasser Arafat's offices in Ramallah in the spring of 2002 on the grounds that the PFLP suspects had sought refuge there. Referring to the "Zeevi Five," Bush noted how "these people are accused of killing a cabinet official of the Israel government. I can understand why the prime minister wants them brought to justice." He added, "They should be brought to justice if they killed this man in cold blood."⁴⁶ Arafat finally agreed to

have the PFLP assassins – along with the PFLP leader Ahmed Saadat – jailed in return for the Israelis lifting the siege of his Ramallah office, convicting them in a quick secret trial in his compound surrounded by Israeli tanks. While refusing to send American forces to the West Bank to try to separate the sides and end the violence, President Bush did deploy American servicemen to help guard the prisoners. By contrast, there were no American demands to bring to justice the Israelis responsible for Mustafa's assassination. Similarly, there was no U.S. criticism of the 1988 Israeli assassination of a member of Arafat's cabinet, Defense Minister Khalid al-Wazir in Tunisia, much less a demand that those responsible for his murder be brought to justice. (An investigation by the Israeli newspaper *Maariv* revealed that the leader of the seaborne command center that oversaw al-Wazir's murder was Israel's then-deputy military chief, Ehud Barak, who would later become prime minister.)⁴⁷

UNDERMINING ISRAEL'S REAL SECURITY INTERESTS

A strong case can be made that U.S. support of Sharon's policies actually endangers Israel's legitimate security needs because it gives the Israeli government little outside incentive to make peace. As Israeli writer Gideon Samet complained, "Instead of calming things down and balancing the pressure on Arafat with demands on Sharon to start talking with the Palestinians seriously, Uncle Sam is writing a script for a horrifying Western of the good guys against the bad guys, to death."⁴⁸ As the late Israeli Major General Matti Peled once put it, "The United States is making Israel less and less secure

by encouraging the reckless agenda of the Israeli right.”⁴⁹ More recently, long-time Israeli peace and human-rights activist Gila Svirsky observed,

For decades, we in the Israeli peace movement have been struggling to get Israelis to compromise on the issue that feeds the conflict with the Palestinians. And then our work for peace gets doused twice: once by a prime minister who believes brutality will convince the Palestinians to give up, and then by a U.S. president who supports him on this. Bush has become a big part of the problem. He has to make up his mind: either he’s for peace, or he’s for Sharon. He can’t be both.⁵⁰

Some, like Avnery, already believe that they know the answer and have given up: “Those of us who desire an Israeli-Palestinian peace cannot rely on America. Now everything depends on us alone, the Israelis and the Palestinians.”⁵¹

The fact is that the Israeli public takes a far more moderate viewpoint than do the Israeli or American governments. In a public opinion poll taken in May 2002, a sizable majority of Israelis supported peace talks, believing the problem of terrorism could not be solved without it, and 60 percent believed that a withdrawal that was not acceptable to both sides would not lead to a peace accord. Most significantly, 59 percent said they would support – if accompanied by American security guarantees – an Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 lines with minor mutual and agreed-upon adjustments, evacuation of most of the settlements and compromise on Jerusalem.⁵²

According to former CIA official Graham Fuller,

Only when the Palestinians have a genuine stake in the new state and its sovereign freedom – something to lose – will the atmosphere of society change. Only then will radicals be perceived as damaging to their state, society and future. Only then can a Palestinian government start its own crackdown internally on the remaining radicals, as the value of violence fades under new conditions.⁵³

Indeed, Jewish terrorist groups active in the early Zionist struggle, like the Irgun and Stern Gang, disappeared soon after Israel became independent. Similarly, Hamas and Islamic Jihad, either on their own or through what would then be a widely supported crackdown by the Palestinian government, would also likely cease to be a threat if the Palestinians had a viable state of their own.

Israeli commentator Gideon Samet, in his analysis of American support for Sharon, complained,

With favors like that from our friends, we don’t need enemies. Bush should have learned from the superpower’s blitz against the Taliban that force is not enough. The trouble is that both the American administration and Sharon’s regime have mixed up cause and effect In the current Bush-Sharon lexicon, the source of evil is terrorism. But terror has its reasons, historical and immediate, which must be dealt with wisely.⁵⁴

THE FUNDAMENTAL ISSUE: SELF-DETERMINATION

Israeli commentator, author and peace activist Uri Avnery observed, “We are in their territory, not they in ours. We settle on their land, not they on ours. We are the occupiers, they are the victims. This is the

objective situation, and no minister of propaganda can change that.”⁵⁵ As accurate as that may be, it has not stopped U.S. administrations and members of Congress of both parties from doing their best to convince the American people otherwise. Ordinary Americans are confused, as they watch the Palestinians’ legitimate quest for freedom mixed with acts of murder against innocent Israeli civilians and Israel’s legitimate quest for security mixed with the destruction of Palestinian institutions and society.

By the spring of 2002, it was apparent that both the administration and Congress, in facilitating the destruction of the Oslo process and failing to support Saudi Prince Abdullah’s initiative, had abandoned decades of U.S. policy based on the premise of land for peace. Instead, the United States has thrown its support behind the far right-wing in Israel that rejects meaningful territorial compromise. Such a position runs against not just a broad international consensus that includes most U.S. allies in Europe and elsewhere, but also the position of most independent scholars of the region in the United States and even most State Department and CIA analysts. And, despite Israeli public opinion swinging to the right as a result of the upsurge in terrorism, 52 percent of Israelis polled supported the Saudi peace plan calling for the full withdrawal from all occupied territories in exchange for peace with the Arab world.⁵⁶ Unfortunately, Israeli commentator Gideon Samet, writing in *Haaretz*, noted how the United States has become “more Israeli than the Israelis Continuing to rage, raining abuse on ‘the other,’ and demonizing the Palestinians” – comparable to the former terrorist leader and prime minister Menachem Begin.⁵⁷

Leading American elected officials see things otherwise, however. Tom DeLay, assistant majority leader in the House of Representatives, declared that in his visits to the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, “I didn’t see any occupied territory. I saw Israel.”⁵⁸ House majority leader Dick Armey also claims that the occupied Palestinian territories are actually part of Israel and has even advocated the removal of Palestinians from this expanded Jewish state. In defending his call for ethnic cleansing, Armey noted, “There are many Arab nations that have many hundreds of thousands of acres of land, soil and property and opportunity to create a Palestinian state.” In order to facilitate such a forced population transfer, says Armey, “We’re perfectly content to work with the Palestinians in doing that.”⁵⁹ One reason for congressional Republicans’ lack of concern about international law is the widespread belief within their ranks that the solution was spelled out by a higher authority thousands of years ago. For example, Senator James Inhofe, in a floor speech in the U.S. Senate in December 2001, insisted that the West Bank belongs to Israel because God promised it to Abraham. Israel, according to the Oklahoma Republican, “has a right to the land . . . because God said so This is not a political battle at all. It is a contest over whether or not the word of God is true.”⁶⁰

Putting aside the rhetoric of fundamentalists of all faiths, at the core of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict – from Israeli settlements to U.S. aid and from Israeli security concerns to the question of which side’s violence constitutes terrorism – is a simple but profound issue: the right of self-determination. The bipartisan consensus in the U.S. Congress has been rock-solid for

years: The fate of the Palestinians is up to their Israeli occupiers. While the U.S. government has grudgingly accepted the possibility of some sort of Palestinian state, statements by both the Clinton and Bush administrations and congressional resolutions passed by huge bipartisan majorities have long made clear the U.S. position: Whether and under what form Palestinian independence will take place is to be defined not by the international community or international law, but by Israel. Given that the Israeli government is under the leadership of Ariel Sharon's far right Likud party, which has long opposed Palestinian self-determination, the United States is essentially endorsing continued Israeli military occupation and the violent reaction and repression that inevitably results. More than 80 years after President Woodrow Wilson helped establish the right of national self-determination as a cornerstone of international law and U.S. foreign policy, and more than ten years after President George Bush, Sr., declared that a New World Order had come into effect based upon such principles, both the Democratic and Republican parties are now adhering to a very different principle: the right of conquest.

Many Arab leaders, ranging from heads of government to terrorists, have used the Palestinians as political pawns to promote their agendas. They do this because they know the Palestinian cause has a lot of sympathy throughout the Arab and Islamic world. U.S. support for Israel and its occupation forces continues to be one the foremost reasons for Arab anger at the United States and has become a

favorite cause of Islamic extremists. With the advent of satellite television enabling millions of Arabs to see graphic scenes of Israeli human-rights abuses in the occupied territories and American officials defending the Israeli actions, this anger has snow-balled.

Historically, the United States has defined Israeli security primarily in terms of American arms transfers, which may be lucrative for U.S. arms exporters and enhance the U.S. domination of the region, but they do not address Israel's core security concern, the violent reaction of a population resentful over three-and-a-half decades of military occupation.

Such militarization does not promote American security interests either. Zbigniew Brzezinski, the hawkish former national security adviser, has noted that Israel, "a symbol of recovery of a people who were greatly persecuted, now looks like a country that is persecuting people. Meanwhile, the United States and Israel are becoming isolated internationally. This could hurt America's ability to conduct its war on terrorism."⁶¹ Tragically, it appears that the increased solidarity Americans feel with Israelis – long the victims of terrorist attacks – since September 2001 has included the propensity to pursue some of the same misguided and ineffective policies in response to terrorism that the Israelis have pursued over the decades. These policies have only made matters worse, producing more martyrs and victims among the oppressed populations and thereby creating more recruits for increasingly fanatical and dangerous terrorist organizations.

¹ Brian Whitaker, "Truce Plan Lets Israel Continue Attacks," *The Guardian*, April 4, 2002.

² United States Information Agency, Department of State, "Cheney Says U.S. Goal is Clear: End Terror and

Violence,” March 18, 2002.

³ “Senators Urge Bush Not to Hamper Israel,” *The New York Times*, November 17, 2001.

⁴ Gideon Samet, “In Uncle Sam’s Cabin,” *Haaretz*, February 9, 2002.

⁵ Jackson Diehl, “The Catastrophe of U.S. Inaction,” *The Washington Post*, March 31, 2002, p. B7.

⁶ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *News Hour with Jim Lehrer*, Public Broadcasting System, April 1, 2002.

⁷ Jim Lobe, “Hawks Control U.S. Middle East Policy,” *Alternet*, April 2, 2002.

⁸ “A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm,” Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies, June 1996, with Richard Perle as principal author.

⁹ Douglas Feith, “A Strategy for Israel,” *Commentary*, September 1997.

¹⁰ Alan Sipress, “Policy Divide Thwarts Powell in Mideast Effort,” *The Washington Post*, April 26, 2002.

¹¹ Cited in Edward Said, “A New Current in Palestine,” *The Nation*, February 25, 2002.

¹² Cited in Jim Lobe and Tom Barry, “Enough is Enough,” *Global Affairs Commentary*, Foreign Policy in Focus, April 5, 2002.

¹³ Mouin Rabbani, “Bleak Horizons After Operation Defensive Wall,” MERIP Press Information Note 93, April 30, 2002.

¹⁴ Uvi Avnery, “The Real Aim,” *Maariv*, April 27, 2002.

¹⁵ Serge Schmemmann, “Ramallah: Palestinians Say Israeli Aim Was to Destroy Framework, From Archives to Hard Drives,” *The New York Times*, April 16, 2002, p. A18.

¹⁶ Rabbani, op.cit.

¹⁷ Barbara Plett, “Palestinian Society Lies in Ruins,” BBC News, April 12, 2002, citing Ronni Skaked in *Yedioth Ahronoth*, Uzin Benziman in *Haaretz* and Boaz Gaynor of the Israel Centre for Counter-terrorism.

¹⁸ Fareed Zakaria, “Colin Powell’s Humiliation,” *Newsweek*, April 29, 2002.

¹⁹ U.N. Security Council resolution 1402 (2002).

²⁰ Lobe, op. cit.

²¹ ABC This Week, April 7, 2002.

²² Zakaria, op. cit.

²³ U.N. Security Council resolution 1405 (2002).

²⁴ Adam Entous, “‘Troubled’ Bush Demands Arafat Renounce Terror,” Reuters, April 12, 2002.

²⁵ Rabbani, op. cit.

²⁶ Graham E. Fuller, “As Killing Mounts, Who’ll Blink First?,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 3, 2002.

²⁷ Plett, op. cit.

²⁸ Cited in Rabbani, op. cit.

²⁹ Cited in Lobe, “U.S. and Israeli Governments Out of Step,” *Foreign Policy in Focus*, May 13, 2002, Internet Edition, <http://www.fpiif.org/commentary/2002/0205mideastpoll.html>.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ *Time*, April 29, 2002.

³² U.S. Department of State, International Information Programs, “Bush Praises Powell’s Message of ‘Hope and Peace’ to Mideast,” April 18, 2002.

³³ Press Release, Office of the Press Secretary, The White House, “President Bush Calls for New Palestinian Leadership,” June 24, 2002, Washington, DC.

³⁴ Shimon Shiffer, *Yediot Aharonot*, June 25, 2002.

³⁵ Conference of High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention, convened on December 5, 2001 at Geneva. The phrase “grave breaches” in reference to the Geneva Conventions is widely interpreted as diplomatic language for war crimes.

³⁶ Amnesty International, “Israel And The Occupied Territories: The Heavy Price of Israeli Incursions,” AI-index: MDE 15/042/2002, April 12, 2002.

³⁷ House Resolution 392, 107th Congress, 2nd session.

³⁸ Senate Resolution 247, 107th Congress, 2nd session.

³⁹ Prepared statement, “Senators Feinstein and McConnell Urge Sanctions Against Arafat PLO over Palestinian Suicide Bombings,” April 18, 2002.

⁴⁰ Office of the House Democratic Leader, Gephardt Statement to National Rally in Solidarity with Israel, April 15, 2002.

⁴¹ Uri Avnery, “Something Stinks,” *Gush Shalom Billboard*, April 20, 2002.

⁴² See *The New Republic*, April 17, 1995.

⁴³ "U.N. Security Council Give Nod to Jenin Probe," CNN.com, April 19, 2002.

⁴⁴ Dina Shiloh, citing article in *Yediot Ahronot* in "U.S. Promise on Jenin Won Arafat's Freedom," *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 30, 2002.

⁴⁵ Jim Lobe, "Poll Points Toward Peace," *Alternet*, May 13, 2002.

⁴⁶ Office of the Presidential Press Secretary, "President Bush, Secretary Powell Discuss Middle East," Remarks by the President and Secretary of State Colin Powell, The Oval Office, Washington, DC.

⁴⁷ Gwen Ackerman, "Barak Assassination of Abu Jihad," Associated Press, July 4, 1997. American troops were also sent to guard a sixth man, Palestinian Authority finance chief Fuad Shubaki, arrested for attempting to smuggle arms from Iran. The U.S. position has been that while it is legitimate for the United States to send arms to facilitate the Israeli occupation, it is illegitimate for the Palestinians to import arms to resist the occupation.

⁴⁸ Samet, *op. cit.*

⁴⁹ Interview, May 12, 1992, Seattle, Washington.

⁵⁰ Kathleen Christison, "Who's Behind U.S. Middle East policy?," *Middle East International*, March 8, 2002, p. 23.

⁵¹ Uri Avnery, "The Great Game," February 9, 2002.

⁵² Galia Golan, Shalom Achev, May 10, 2002. A Dahaf (Mina Zemah) poll, conducted 5-6 May, 2002.

⁵³ Fuller, *op. cit.*

⁵⁴ Samet, *op. cit.*

⁵⁵ Uri Avnery: Oct. 21, 2000, Disseminated through Avnery's website, <http://home.mindspring.com/~fontenelles/avnery.htm>.

⁵⁶ Cited in Sasha Polkow-Suransky, "War Now Peace Later," *The American Prospect*, April 16, 2002.

⁵⁷ Samet, *op. cit.*

⁵⁸ American Israel Public Affairs Committee, transcript from 2002 Policy Conference, April 23, 2002.

⁵⁹ Transcript, Hardball with Chris Matthews, CNBC, May 1, 2002.

⁶⁰ James M. Inhofe, "An Absolute Victory: America's Stake in Israel's War on Terrorism," Senate Floor Statement, December 4, 2001. Inhofe, in his speech, cites Genesis 13:14-17. However, in Genesis 15, God promises Abraham's descendants all the land between what is now Egypt and Iraq, which would probably require – in the minds of Inhofe and other Christian fundamentalists in government – U.S. support for an Israeli conquest of much of the Middle East. In reference to the terrorist attacks on the United States the previous September, Inhofe argued, "One of the reasons I believe the spiritual door was opened for an attack against the United States of America is that the policy of our government has been to ask the Israelis . . . not to retaliate in a significant way against the terrorist strikes that have been launched against them." In his speech, which has been widely circulated among Christian conservatives, Inhofe also claimed that Palestine – famous for centuries for its olive orchards, terraced vineyards and citrus fruits – was actually an uninhabited wasteland before the Zionist settled the land during the previous century; he even claims those who call themselves Palestinians were actually migrants from other Arab countries wanting to take advantage of Jewish prosperity.

⁶¹ Interview by Nathan Gardels, Global Viewpoint, *New Perspectives Quarterly*, April 12, 2002.