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Middle East: Domestic Politics and the Peace Process – Proceedings of a CRS Seminar

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Joshua Ruebner
Analyst in Middle East Affairs
Foreign Affairs, Defense and Trade Division

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Summary

On Friday, October 20, 2000, CRS held a seminar, entitled "Domestic Politics in the Middle East and the Peace Process." This seminar was made possible in part by a grant from the Charles H. Revson Foundation. The main purpose of the seminar was to examine in depth the nexus between Israeli, Palestinian, Syrian, and Lebanese domestic politics on the one hand and the formulation of foreign policy in these countries, especially regarding the Middle East peace process, on the other.

To address this issue, CRS assembled a panel of distinguished scholars and experts. Mr. Aaron David Miller, Deputy Special Middle East Coordinator at the United States Department of State, presented some of his personal observations on the Oslo peace process based upon his years of experience in helping to coordinate the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Dr. Don Peretz, Professor Emeritus at the State University of New York-Binghamton, surveyed the Israeli domestic political scene with an emphasis on the consequences of the fragmentation of political power in Israel. Dr. Glenn Robinson, Professor at the Naval Postgraduate School, examined the Palestinian domestic political scene and stressed the asymmetry of the Israeli-Palestinian power relationship, which, in his view, has contributed to the rise of authoritarianism in the Palestinian Authority. Dr. Patrick Seale, an independent Middle East analyst, critiqued U.S. foreign policy toward the Middle East and also analyzed the Syrian domestic political scene in the aftermath of Bashar al-Asad's ascent to the presidency. Mr. Frederic Hof, a partner at Armitage Associates, addressed the Lebanese domestic political scene and argued that the phrase "others will decide" epitomizes Lebanon's position regarding the peace process. The seminar was moderated by Joshua Ruebner, CRS Analyst in Middle East Affairs.

This CRS report is based on a transcript of the proceedings of the seminar. It relies on both prepared remarks and spontaneous discussion edited for grammatical construction and clarity. The diverse opinions expressed by the invited speakers do not necessarily reflect the opinions of CRS. This report will not be updated. For a brief summary of this seminar, see CRS Report RS20751, *Middle East: Domestic Politics and the Peace Process–Summary of a CRS Seminar*, by Joshua Ruebner.

Contents

Middle East: Domestic Politics and the Peace Process–Proceedings of a CRS Seminar

Introduction of Keynote Speaker

MR. RUEBNER: Our keynote speaker is Aaron David Miller. Mr. Miller is the Deputy Special Middle East Coordinator for Arab-Israeli Negotiations at the U.S. Department of State. Since 1985 he has served as an advisor to four Secretaries of State, helping to formulate U.S. policy on the Middle East and the Arab-Israeli peace process. Before assuming his current position, Mr. Miller served on the State Department's Policy Planning Staff, the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, and the Office of the Historian. Mr. Miller received his Ph.D. in American Diplomatic and Middle East History from the University of Michigan in 1977. During 1982 and 1983 he was a Council on Foreign Relations fellow and a resident scholar at the Georgetown Center for Strategic and International Studies. Mr. Miller has written three books on the Middle East and lectured widely at universities and Middle East symposia across the country. His articles have appeared in the New York Times, the Washington Post, Orbis, and numerous other publications.

Keynote Address–Mr. Aaron David Miller

MR. MILLER: I'd like to start with a personal observation so that there'd be no misunderstanding about my perspective. Over the last 20 years I've had the honor and privilege to play a very small role, and I underscore that, in a very large enterprise. That enterprise is an American effort to help Israelis and Palestinians and Arab-Israelis bring to an end a very difficult and bitter conflict. During the course of the last 20 years, I have developed what I could only describe to you as a profound faith in both the logic and power of diplomacy to resolve this problem on a basis that is both equitable and enduring. I'm not prepared to speak on whether or not other conflicts in the world can be resolved, but based on what I've seen and, more important frankly, based on what the Israelis and Palestinians and the Arabs and Israelis have accomplished, I do believe that there is a solution to this conflict that is both sustainable and fair. Now, that solution must strike a very difficult balance between the way the world is on one hand and the way we all may want it to be on the other. And it is that balance which is very difficult to achieve that I would argue is the goal, not only of any fair analysis of the Israeli and Palestinian conflict, but of a credible basis on which a policy, in this case U.S. policy, should be based.

The last two to three weeks have witnessed the worst violence and confrontation between Israelis and Palestinians since the Oslo process began. It has left in its wake, and unfortunately it's still ongoing, a series of political and psychological traumas which have profoundly influenced the limits of what is possible, at least for now, in

terms of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. And like most traumatic events, which may or may not constitute turning points, the consequences of the last three weeks will take time to unfold. You cannot have a trauma of this magnitude and somehow reach immediate or conclusive judgements on what its impact will be. Unfortunately I would argue, and it's only my opinion, that there has been too much authoritative pronouncement, both in the media and from analysts, about reaching those definitive and conclusive judgements based on what is and is not possible as a consequence of the last three weeks. And I'm simply reporting here. I've heard and read pronouncements such as the peace process is dead. I've read pronouncements that it is no longer possible to reach a permanent status agreement between Israelis and Palestinians. I've read that Prime Minister Barak's political situation is so eroded that he no longer has the political base. I've heard pronouncements that Yasser Arafat orchestrated and manufactured the crisis or alternatively that it was totally out of his control. And I've heard, perhaps most seriously of all, that any sense of Israeli-Palestinian partnership which had developed over the last seven years has been fundamentally shattered and irrevocably damaged.

I would only urge you and caution you based on my limited experience to be flexible in terms of reaching conclusive judgements in the wake of such a momentous three-week period. And I would only remind all of us, including myself, that not more than two months ago we all stood at Camp David in two quite extraordinary weeks of Israeli-Palestinian diplomacy, only to see within two months the worst Israeli-Palestinian violence in seven years. So my question is: who knows? Who really knows given the roller coaster of Israeli-Palestinian politics and Mid-East politics where in fact we could be two months from now. So I'm not here to make predictions and sound authoritative because I've been around the process too long to know or to believe that such conclusions and authoritative judgements are possible right now. What I would like to do, briefly, so as to leave some time for questions, is to offer you six observations about the nature of Israeli-Palestinian and Arab-Israeli peacemaking which I think are relevant to understanding where we may be going.

First and foremost, I would argue that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not a morality play. It is not a conflict between the forces of good on one hand and the forces of darkness on the other. It is a century old conflict being played out in a very, very difficult neighborhood. It involves religious identification. It involves incredibly volatile political issues. And it is, unfortunately, from the perspective of those who wage it, perceived as an existential conflict. Literally. A conflict over physical and political existence. To see it as a morality play and to take sides seems to me to limit what any mediator can do in terms of ultimately resolving it. All of the progress that has been made in the last 15 years from the Camp David of 1978 to the present, has been made as a consequence of looking at the Arab-Israeli conflict not as a zero-sum game, which produces one winner and one loser; but rather as a terribly complicated conflict in which both sides, whether it's Egypt, it's Jordan, it's Syria, it's Palestinians, has a set of needs and requirements that need to somehow be reconciled if in fact there's going to be an agreement. In fact all of the agreements that have been concluded reflect a measure of this balance. There is no perfect justice with respect to this conflict, and it seems to me any policy has to reflect that reality.

Second, during the past several weeks we have seen each side, Israelis and Palestinians, reflect their own narrative as to what actually has transpired: who's to blame, what went wrong, why things didn't work the way they should have worked.

As Israelis see it, the last several weeks have been about a calculated effort on the part of the Palestinians...Israel having made historic concessions at Camp David was greeted with a carefully calibrated effort on the part of Palestinians, who were unhappy over compromises that didn't go far enough, to use violence in the streets, to essentially change the rules of the game. The Israelis feel that they have been under siege. They watch Palestinian guns and rifles trained at their soldiers and civilians. They have watched their holy sites desecrated. They have watched the international community engage in what they believe is a one-sided effort to blame the Israelis for the use of overwhelming force against Palestinians. That's their narrative and by and large that's the way many Israelis have watched and interpreted recent events.

Palestinians, of course, have a different perspective. For Palestinians, Camp David didn't go far enough, but they were willing to continue to negotiate to convince the Israelis that these were the sets of needs and requirements to produce a solution to the conflict. But Sharon's visit to al-Haram ash-Sharif/ Temple Mount was a provocation; and Israel over reacted on that Friday when five Palestinians were shot to death. And when Palestinians demonstrated with rocks, Molotov cocktails, and guns, they were met with overwhelming Israeli force, including the use of helicopter gun ships, tanks, and missiles.

Therefore, Israelis feel as victims and not aggressors, and Palestinians feel as victims and not aggressors. These are the two competing narratives, and the difficulty involved in trying to mediate an end to the violence was that each side has a very difficult time recognizing the reality of the other's narrative.

Thirdly, these narratives and the ensuing brutality and violence which has characterized the last three weeks have persuaded many that Oslo was founded on fundamentally flawed assumptions. And that in fact Oslo, or the pursuit of Israeli-Palestinian peace is simply dead. Now this argument that Oslo has run its course is based on all kinds of empirical evidence. The reality, it seems to me, is that this analysis frankly misses the point. The issue is not whether Oslo has run its course as a consequence of the violence. The issue is whether the legacy of Oslo over the last seven years has provided any kinds of enduring change or basis for an Israeli-Palestinian negotiation and a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

I would argue that it has in three respects. The legacy of Oslo has already impacted in a way that is irreversible. So whatever peace process is constructed in the wake of this violence, the legacy of Oslo will have to be confronted and dealt with. First, there is the legacy of Israeli-PLO recognition which changed an existential conflict which could never be resolved–a conflict over existence–into a political conflict that could be resolved. The fact that the Israelis and the Palestinians recognize one another's identity and claims is irreversible. Once you recognize and go through that sort of process you can't unrecognize it. Israel and the Palestinians are partners, whether by necessity or design. Second are the realities on the ground. However imperfect the Oslo accords were, and they were very imperfect, they have fundamentally changed a reality on the ground between Israelis and Palestinians. The

vast majority of Palestinians are now governed by Palestinians. Israel is in the process of shedding an occupation it never sought, and which has complicated its national life ever since, and a negotiation has been underway in order to resolve the issues of permanent status. Three, Israel and the Palestinians are characterized by what you could call a proximity problem. Their lives are inextricably linked together by the forces of history and geography. And unless there has been a change which has somehow undermined those two basic realities that Israel and the Palestinians don't share a common history and a common geography then it seems to me the basis for recreating a Israeli-Palestinian relationship is simply a necessity– it's reality which cannot be fundamentally changed.

Fourth is the issue of resiliency. And I think by way of perspective it's important to point out that over the last 10 years we've seen innumerable ups and downs in the pursuit of Israeli-Palestinian peace. Had anyone in this room, including myself, known that the day after Rabin and Arafat shook hands on the White House lawn, that within five years of that signature Rabin would be murdered by an Israeli, 29 Palestinians would have been machine gunned by an Israeli settler in a mosque in Hebron, 60 Israelis would have been killed in four suicide terror attacks in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv in the spring of 1996, and a Likud Prime Minister would have signed not one but two agreements with the PLO; and in the face of that we would have gone to Camp David and then descended into this sort of violence. No one would have believed it. The fact is that the process has demonstrated remarkable resiliency. And it's not only the consequence of the forces of history and geography which committed Israelis and Palestinians to working out some sort of future together. It also has to do with the recognition that trying to determine how to get out of a protracted conflict has become a matter of national interest for both the Israelis and Palestinians. It is not some artificial creation which is forced upon the region from outside by a well intentioned mediator or some altruistic notion of what peace may be; it is a fundamental choice that Israelis and Palestinians have made and stuck to. Now, the question of course remains: Has that choice been fundamentally affected by the events of the last three weeks?

Fifth, I would argue that at some point there will be an effort to resume a negotiation and that ultimately, unless the future Israelis and Palestinians want for themselves and their children is one of unending confrontation and violence, they will, in fact, find a way to come back to a negotiation. In this regard I want to make two points about Camp David, simply to provide some sense of perspective. There are two issues circulating in the press and elsewhere these days about the Camp David initiative. The first is that it was an overreach. That is to say, some agreement might have been possible, but certainly not a comprehensive agreement on all the issues. The second is that Camp David somehow paradoxically led to the current crisis and the current violence. Both of those charges have been made. I would only say this to each notion. The search for comprehensive agreement was not an American idea. It was, in fact, a response to both Israeli and Palestinians needs. On the part of the Israelis, selling the difficult decisions involved in Israeli-Palestinian peace meant one thing: It meant convincing most Israelis that, in fact, there was the possibility of ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict meant a comprehensive settlement. It meant tackling, even though it was excruciatingly painful and difficult, issues such as Jerusalem, refugees, territory and security–the four core issues that were negotiated at Camp David.

For Palestinians, anything short of a comprehensive agreement also would not have been possible. Frustrated by the consequences of seven years of Oslo, Palestinians, and for that matter Israelis, wanted some certainty that in fact there was something called an end down the road. And they wanted to know what it was. So the notion that Palestinians could somehow settle for an agreement that eliminated any of the four basic issues, and have it be politically marketable, was simply not possible. So Israelis and Palestinians both wanted comprehensiveness.

Second, with respect to the notion that Camp David somehow, in raising expectations, not being well thought out, leaving the Israelis and Palestinians with no agreement, led to the violence, I can only say this. In going to Camp David the United States sought to confront two realities. One was the historic opportunity that Israelis and Palestinians themselves recognize that there was in fact the possibility of reaching an accord; the other reality was the impending fear on the part of both that without an agreement there would almost certainly be deterioration and violence. Had the United States not gone to Camp David and had the violence ensued, the same people who have been incredibly persistent in criticizing the Americans for their role would have criticized us for acting irresponsibly, missing an historic opportunity, and not doing everything that we possibly could in order to preempt or avert that violence. And frankly, they would have been right.

Finally, let me close with two observations. My concern, and I'll speak personally here, is not that there will not be agreements between Israelis and Palestinians. We've seen agreements reached. My concern lies more on the issue of the psychology of what in fact they are trying to achieve. And there's a very serious problem here with the gaps that separate Israeli and Palestinian realities, particularly on the issue of socialization of attitudes that underscore peace and reconciliation. And here I will offer an editorial comment, and it is not that I'm not cognizant of the realities with which Palestinians deal on a day to day basis. They are very difficult and bitter realities. However, efforts to socialize hatred, let alone condition the environment to the use of violence as an appropriate or useful tool to be used to influence negotiation, has no place in the process. And there is a serious problem with respect to conditioning and socializing a younger generation toward attitudes, toward changing attitudes toward peace, and it is not symmetrical. In part it flows from the environment in which Palestinians find themselves. Nonetheless it's a very serious problem. It's reflected in the school texts, in news broadcasts, in radio and television commentary. There has to be some way to address it. Now there are organizations, NGOs [non-governmental organizations], that have been remarkably successful. And, maybe in fact, given the realities, governments have too difficult a time, but they must provide support and encouragement to change attitudes. There are organizations, Seeds of Peace is one of them, which have had remarkable results in changing the attitudes of Israelis and Palestinians toward this conflict. And these are not kids from upper-middle class backgrounds. They're kids who deal with the bitter realities on the ground, and yet their attitudes and values and views can change. Without giving up their principles they can learn to respect, they can learn to listen, and ultimately they can learn to understand.

Finally, let me just close with one brief comment about the United States. We are not perfect, and our policy is not perfect. At the same time, despite all of the imperfections, and I've watched this now for 20 years, we still enjoy, for a variety of

reasons, more confidence and more trust. And I'm well aware of all the accusations about the American role, about the American credibility, and about American policy that are even now being launched. Throughout the region, at the same time, 20 years later, Israelis, Palestinians, and Arabs still look to Washington for support, all kinds of support. And it seems to me, and here I will provide perhaps the only other editorial comment, we have an obligation and responsibility in this regard. We do not live in the neighborhood, on one hand. I live in Chevy Chase. There's no cross-border shelling in Chevy Chase. There are no refugee camps in Chevy Chase. There's no terrorism, no check points. So we are not a party to this conflict. We can't impose. We cannot make these decisions. At the same time, we have a responsibility and an obligation to help.

Rarely do American national interests come together in three critical ways with respect to any problem in the world today. Number one, it is in our objective national interest to try to broker and to do everything we possibly can to facilitate an end to this conflict. Second, morally and because our foreign policy is in fact, or should be, a reflection of our values, who we are and what we believe in, working for Arab-Israeli peace is also the right thing to do. And thirdly, we have the capacity, in a constructive way, to influence, to help and to assist, people who want our help. I'm not sure there is a problem in the international arena today in which there is a more compelling case to be made for an American role as a consequence of those three factors. But at the same time we have to understand that every decision for peace or war in this region has been taken initially by the Israelis and the Palestinians, and ultimately by the Israelis and the Arabs. It will be up to them to determine whether the future they want for their children is a future based on unending confrontation and violence. And I give you the last three weeks as an example. Or alternatively, over time, a future based on accommodation, a future based on negotiation; ultimately one day, a future based on real peace.

Questions and Answers

MR. RUEBNER: At this point, Mr. Miller will take a few questions. [Audience members were requested not to identify themselves when asking questions, in keeping with CRS policy to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of questions posed to CRS by Members of Congress and their staff.] Please do not identify yourself. Any takers? Dr. Peretz, I can identify you.

DR. PERETZ: This might be a difficult question, but to what extent do domestic political considerations and the American inclination to be more accepting of the Israeli narrative than the Palestinian and Arab narrative affect this situation? For example, look what's happening in the New York senatorial race. Each candidate is attempting to outbid the other in their support of Israel. Look at the recent proposal for a Congressional resolution to withhold funds from Arafat. To what extent do these domestic considerations affect the whole situation?

MR. MILLER: There are certain questions which are more difficult than others to answer. This, of course, is a very difficult question. I would no more comment on Israeli internal domestic politics or Palestinian domestic politics than I would offer a

judgement on our own internal politics. I don't think it's appropriate for a government official to do that. I will only say this. Politics is a reality. Every nation has distinctive political realities. Sweden has them. Switzerland has them. The United States has them. Palestinians have them. The Israelis have them. And clearly, any sustainable foreign policy, certainly in a democracy, has to in fact reflect certain political realities. At the same time we have a remarkably close relationship with Israel which exists independently, frankly, of the pursuit of peace. For a variety of reasons, that relationship is quite extraordinary and has remained remarkably consistent and constant regardless of what administration–and I've now been through five administrations–has worked on American Middle Eastern policy.

At the same time, and I offered this judgement earlier, I think we have gotten to the position where we have secured the trust and confidence of key Arab states and over the last several years, our relationship with the Palestinians has also evolved in a way that we have gained a remarkable degree of trust and confidence from Palestinians. Our policy's not perfect and our effort, to find the balance that I talked about between the way the world is and the way we want it to be is a very difficult balance to strike. Sometimes we succeed, sometimes we do not. We'll continue to look for that balance and hopefully we will be able to preserve our role as an affective mediator in the Arabs-Israeli conflict.

QUESTION: You made a very strong case that Oslo is institutionalized and durable. I think that was one of the centerpieces of your presentation. But I think one could rightly ask with all the accomplishments of Oslo, and all the work that's been done, how could the violence have escalated to such a degree? And, given the violence as it escalated, does that lead you to question the assumption that Oslo is as durable and institutionalized as you make the case that it is?

MR. MILLER: That's a very important question and I'm not so sure I have an answer. Oslo was, in essence, a reflection of a very imperfect relationship that exists between Israelis and Palestinians. The logic of Oslo was based on separation through cooperation. It was based on postponement of difficult decisions that could not be negotiated in 1993, such as Jerusalem, with the assumption that the trust and confidence that would flow from incremental step-by-step arrangements, interim arrangements, to use the precise word, would in fact, increase the reservoir of trust and confidence which would enable Israelis and Palestinians to address those incredibly difficult issues at some point. Now, two things have happened, and they were paradoxical. On one hand, the trust and confidence reservoir never increased. The years 1996 to 1999 were a terrible period. In fact in shrinking the amount of trust and confidence available, those years directly reflected on the realities, current realities between Israelis and Palestinians on both sides. This was not the fault of one side or another. But at the same time I could only be stunned by the amount of progress and the number of openings that existed–both in talks in Sweden in May and in Camp David in July on the very issues that were presumed to be so impossible to negotiate. So the reality on the ground was difficult and very bitter. The realities up here were somehow more advanced and the whole notion perhaps was a race against the clock. What would win: the fears, suspicions, bitterness in which Israelis and Palestinians were locked as a consequence of a set of very imperfect relationships and agreements over the past seven years? Or the more enlightened vision that Israelis and Palestinian

negotiators had of the possibilities of an agreement? And perhaps those factors were in competition during the last four or five months.

Second, Oslo was in fact founded on one fundamental reality which I believe has not changed and that is the notion that in the Israeli-Palestinian relationship there is no status quo. Patrick Seale will talk, perhaps, about Syria and Israel and I will only use this as a contrast. Look at the difference between the Israeli-Syrian relationship in which arguably there was a status quo, which perhaps could be preserved, (Lebanon, of course, sees it as a potential flash point, and would argue against that fact), as compared to the Israeli-Palestinian equation in which there was real urgency on the part of Israelis and Palestinians to find a way out of a very bitter confrontation. Urgency is why people take difficult decisions. Every agreement that has been reached between Israelis and Arabs ultimately flowed from the calculation that the status quo was no longer sustainable. And Oslo was premised on that basic reality. Israelis and Palestinians are living like this. And Oslo was premised on separation through cooperation. History and geography have not changed. And I cannot tell you right now, I would be misleading you and I would be less than honest, and I refuse to be, to suggest somehow that it's inevitable that Israelis and Palestinians will have to return to the same kind of process. I don't know because I don't know what the impact of the last three weeks have been. However, what I do know is this. There still is no status quo that is sustainable from the perspective of the Israelis and Palestinians. Their history and geography has not fundamentally been altered as a consequence of this. In fact you could argue that there's even more urgency now. Therefore, I draw the conclusion, perhaps it's naive and unrealistic, that somehow these facts which are unalterable will lead Israelis and Palestinians back to an effort through negotiation rather than protracted confrontation.

QUESTION: You mentioned NGOs. Many of them are having a kind of crisis in confidence. My question concerns whom they represent, what their future goal can be, what assumptions have changed that reflect their work, and how they can find allies and more strength and assistance perhaps in the United States government to carry out their work. I was wondering if you have any sort of interim conclusions about the kind of role NGOs can play after these past three weeks.

MR. MILLER: I can only say, honestly, that I don't know, but that the role of NGOs, the role of people to people programs, however modest they may appear, however incremental, may, I would argue provide part of the bridge to transform the psychology of confrontation which is where we are right now - into the psychology of accommodation, of peacemaking, which is where we have to go. NGOs cannot do it all because governments, which hold power and to which constituencies look for support, guidance, and leadership must play a critical role in this. But the NGOs may in fact be part of the bridge that is required to get back and then to ultimately move forward.

QUESTION: The Israeli military is fighting the Palestinian rebels, but yet I see the United States media insist that the Palestinians must pull back instead of asking the Israeli military to stop firing weapons on people who are throwing rocks and bottles. What is your insight on that situation?

MR. MILLER: Well, I forgot to mention, and it was inappropriate of me, what the last three days at Sharm el-Sheikh were all about. What was produced at Sharm offered Israelis and Palestinians a way out of this, or at least a bridge. Because at Sharm certain understandings were reached, brokered by the United States. Certain responsibilities were laid out on the part of each in an effort to break the cycle of violence and escalation and to recreate what Palestinians and Israelis had, particularly on the security level. One of the other anomalies about the Oslo relationship: Israelis and Palestinians have cooperated in extraordinary ways on the ground between professionals with respect to security problems, particularly over the last 18 months. And there were certain obligations which related to reducing points of friction, to not firing on Israeli positions, to separating demonstrators from IDF positions. Certain obligations and commitments with respect to the redeployment of Israeli forces and of course, certain Israeli obligations with respect to lifting both the internal closure which exists, and the external closure. All of these were laid out at Sharm, and this is clearly the objective: to implement what was agreed. And there are responsibilities and obligations on each side. I can't, in view of events yesterday and even today which appears to be quieter, particularly in the wake of Friday prayers...we won't know for days whether or not this is going to hold and become routinized. And even if it does, it's going to be extremely difficult, but possible to preserve.

QUESTION: My question goes to U.S. presidential leadership and the peace process. I very much agree with your assessment that President Clinton is kind of in a unique position because he has earned the trust of both the Israelis and the Palestinians over these many years of his administration, but we're coming to a situation where there's only a few more months left in his administration and of course, the new president will have to take some time, whoever he may be, to sort of re-establish or develop links. So, and I agree also with your assessment that the peace process has resiliency, but at a certain point you do need that presidential leadership to get things back on track. How do you see that playing out over say the next three or four months as we come to a new administration?

MR. MILLER: I think the President and Secretary of State will do everything they possibly can right up until the final day, to create a new reality both on the ground and with respect to the prospects for Israeli-Palestinian peace making. I have some experience with transitions. I've been through three or four. I think the basic realities that I laid out, the three reasons, I find them compelling, maybe I'm too invested in this, but I still find them compelling, as to why any administration is going to have to deal with the realities that exist on the ground, both in terms of how painful they may be for our friends, our Israeli friends, our Palestinian friends, our friends in the region on the one hand, and because it's in our national interests on the other. And because in effect we have a credible, still, a credible role to play. Different presidents and secretaries approach problems differently, but the basic bipartisan character of our approach to the Arab-Israeli issue that has in fact been maintained for the 20 years that I've been involved in this process, I suspect will continue.

QUESTION: You made a comment on the United States, at least the United States Congress, support of the Israeli narrative, and yet there is the United Nations support of the Palestinian narrative. What do you as see as the challenges to the U.S. role in the United Nations, how do you see this playing out vis a vis our diplomatic

relationship inside the United Nations, and what possibly could be your advice to Congressional staff on how to advise leadership on the Hill?

MR. MILLER: Again, I can only share with you observations based on my limited experience. The only thing frankly that has ever changed the reality on the ground between Arabs and the Israelis, the only thing, has been the process of negotiation. Whether it was bilateral or whether it was facilitated by the Americans. That's what fundamentally changes things. Resolutions in New York and in Geneva do not. Now maybe that's too narrow a view. Maybe it doesn't take into account issues such as international legitimacy and international law, a grievance process and the like, but based on my experience, what really changes things are the practical consequences of negotiations between people who have a vested interest in those negotiations and by people who are prepared to make the decisions that change realities.

I will give you a case in point: the recent U.N. Security Council Resolution on which the United States abstained. Why did we abstain? We could not vote for that resolution. It was far too unbalanced. With modification and corrections it became less unbalanced. So as a consequence of our determination not to move one way or the other in response to an extraordinarily volatile situation, we decided to abstain. In the explanation of the vote, it was made very clear that realities on the ground could not be changed by rhetoric. Realities on the ground could be changed by hammering out either on their own or with the help of the United States a set of understandings which would somehow break the cycle. That's what Sharm el-Sheikh was all about. Whether it will succeed or not is frankly another matter, but certainly the prospects for changing realities on the ground will flow from direct involvement of the Israelis and Palestinians with the help of the United States or others, if they both by mutual agreement choose to involve others. Not by rhetoric and resolution, however well-intentioned some may be.

QUESTION: After Camp David, U.S. officials and the media seemed to suggest that the huge obstacle to a resolution at Camp David was Jerusalem or specifically sovereignty over the holy sites in Jerusalem. That would leave one to infer that other final status issues were on the verge of being resolved, previously huge ones: refugees, water, border, security. Is that conclusion accurate?

MR. MILLER: Let me just share an observation. What happened at Camp David was remarkable by any standard. Israelis and Palestinians had discussions on the four core issues that went well beyond any discussion that they had ever had on any of these subjects in an authoritative setting. It's not track two diplomacy. This was occurring in the presence of the Prime Minister of Israel, the Chairman of the PLO, and the President of the United States. So it's not that the things that were said didn't count. They counted a great deal. That's number one. Number two, on the four core issues–water was not discussed in the kind of detail as the other four–but on security, borders or territory, refugees, and Jerusalem, discussions at Camp David were unprecedented both in scope and in detail. Point number three: Were we on the verge of an agreement? Was it that we simply needed one additional point from one side or the other? No. No. That would not be accurate. But, the openings on each of the issues, the appearance of common ground on each of the issues, and the potential for creating common ground where they differed on each of the issues convinced Israelis

and Palestinians, and I would argue Americans, that an agreement on permanent status on the four core issues was possible. That, I think, is about as fair and accurate a rendering as I can give without getting into the details of what actually was agreed and what was not agreed. But what was equally clear was that it was too difficult for the reasons I laid out earlier for either Israelis or Palestinians to accept an incremental approach to the negotiation. What was required was a comprehensive agreement. Did that comprehensive agreement mean that every single facet of every single issue would have to be resolved? No. That is going to take a long time. The interim agreement of September 28, 1995, was over 200 pages. We were talking about an agreement on the core issues which would have convinced normal people that in fact Israelis had given up whatever claims they had and Palestinians had given up whatever claims they had. In short, an end to the conflict–by any, any reasonable standard–that was basically the objective on the four core concerns.

QUESTION: Some commentators have suggested that if the agreement had happened at the second Camp David talks, that Barak's political future would have been in jeopardy because it would have been a hard sell for the Israelis. And an observation also might be that Chairman Arafat would also have a hard sell to the Palestinians if such an agreement was reached without a comprehensive agreement on Jerusalem. Would Arafat also have to sell such an agreement to the rest of the Arab community, and if so, how would that affect the peace talks or any peace talks in the future?

MR. MILLER: Well on the four core issues at Camp David or any Israeli-Palestinian agreement, three of them were probably within the purview of a Palestinian leader to make decisions on, including refugees–although as you know, refugees would have a resonance beyond the West Bank and Gaza because of refugee constituencies elsewhere, but it was still within the purview of legitimate Palestinian decision making. The fourth was Jerusalem. This was the one issue that resonated not just beyond the Arab world, but throughout a community of a billion Muslims worldwide. This issue would be extremely difficult for any Palestinian leader unless of course, a perfect solution to the Jerusalem issue were offered. And a perfect solution was simply not possible, because it would not take into account the needs and interests of the other side. Arab support, Islamic support, for such a solution would be required. And we, of course, have been criticized for not understanding that reality. Well, everyone was aware of that reality. Then why, the argument goes, didn't you simply bring the Arabs to Camp David as well? And how could you have gone to Camp David knowing full well that Arafat couldn't make a decision on Jerusalem? Well, the answer is quite simple. Only Arafat and Barak knew before Camp David started what in fact each was prepared to offer on this issue. Only they knew. Not even their negotiators knew. It wasn't readily apparent to us, even though there was some indication that there would have been common ground. So the logic was to determine what common ground existed and then to find a way to create a basis of support if in fact the discussion of Jerusalem was advanced enough in order to reach an agreement. And that was extremely difficult at a summit that for political reasons understandably was kind of hermetically sealed to the outside world. So it does present a chicken and egg problem. And it is one of which we were aware and with which the Palestinians and the Americans would ultimately have had to deal.

QUESTION: There's going to be an Arab summit in two days. I was wondering if you could comment on that and what it will do to the peace process or the violence on the ground.

MR. MILLER: I don't know. I would hope that whatever declaration emerges avoids two issues. Number one, it does not create a hard and fast consensus which undermines any capacity for future negotiations, undermines any flexibility or creativity that will be required in future negotiations. Number two, I truly hope that it does not have an undermining effect, because events on the ground are working in their own pernicious fashion to undermine already what has already been achieved between Arabs and Israelis. One of the more extraordinary aspects of this peace process, even among the critics, if they're prepared to acknowledge it, is the stunning fact that with the exception of Sudan and Iraq, over the last eight years, every single Arab state, every single one, in the Levant, in the Gulf, and in North Africa, either maintained or maintains some form of contact with Israel, either through the donor effort, the multi-national, multilateral negotiations, or the Middle East-North African Summit. That is remarkable. That's a transformative development. And that accomplishment obviously was a lot more alive and healthy in 1996 than it is in the year 2000, but it is still something that is worth paying attention to. And I, again I think, frankly out of the Arab Summit should not come declarations that limit what is possible in the future and out of the Arab Summit should not come declarations that make impossible what had been possible in the past.

Introduction of Subject and Panel

MR. RUEBNER: In almost all countries, whether their regimes are democratic or authoritarian, populist or elitist, the end results of foreign policy decision-making tend to reflect the outcome of a long and complex balancing process that accounts for the preferences of various domestic interest groups, institutions, and public opinion. In short, domestic politics often plays a pivotal role in the formulation of foreign policy. Domestic interest groups, institutions, and public opinion can influence the course of foreign policy decision-making by setting the parameters of debate and by articulating their preferences on various foreign policy issues. By extension, these same actors can constrain the options available to the head of state in his or her foreign policy decision-making apparatus when circumstances change and a reorientation of a country's position on a foreign policy question is called for.

Therefore, it should come as no surprise that Israeli, Palestinian, Syrian, and Lebanese domestic politics have played and continue to play an important part in the formation of these countries' foreign policy decision-making regarding the Middle East peace process. However, this fact is often overlooked or downplayed. Many reports assume that the Prime Ministers and Presidents of these countries are or should be able to make significant concessions in the peace process without consulting their public's opinion or taking into account the varied interests of political institutions and interest groups in these countries. Such assumptions that domestic politics do not influence or do not constrain the decisions of the leaders involved in the peace process–namely, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat, Syrian President Bashar al-Asad, and Lebanese President Emile

Lahoud–these assumptions can lead observers to inflate expectations that these leaders can execute a political about-face and reorient their country's position on such a crucial issue as the peace process.

Recent Israeli-Palestinian clashes were triggered by Likud party head Ariel Sharon's provocative visit to al-Haram ash-Sharif/Temple Mount (and I'm going to use both terms so as not to prejudge the disposition of that area). His visit to this religious site in the Old City of Jerusalem on September 28, sparked clashes that have now left over one hundred people dead, and dramatically illustrate how domestic politics affects the course of the peace process. The timing of Sharon's visit coincided with the decision by Israel's Attorney General and Comptroller not to pursue charges against former Likud Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu, who was under investigation for allegedly committing acts of corruption and graft when he was prime minister. The decision not to prosecute Netanyahu reportedly strengthened his chances for making a political comeback and unseating Sharon in future Likud primaries for the leadership of the party.

In addition, there are reports in the Israeli media that Sharon's refusal to join Barak in a national unity government stems at least partially from electoral considerations. By not joining the government, Sharon can try to bring down Barak's government by a vote of no confidence when the Knesset reconvenes shortly on October 29. If successful, this would trigger early elections and if held soon enough might forestall Netanyahu's comeback, leaving Sharon in control of the Likud Party. Therefore, it is possible to suggest that Israel's response to the Sharm el-Sheikh summit and the fate of the peace process depends in part on Israeli domestic political considerations.

Palestinian domestic politics have factored into Arafat's response to these clashes as well. These clashes which the Palestinians have termed the "al-Aqsa Intifadah" or the "Jerusalem Intifadah," have revealed a growing gap between the leadership of the Palestinian Authority and its commitment to the step by step Oslo peace process on the one hand, and the leadership of Fatah, Arafat's own wing of the PLO, and its stated commitment to pursuing the intifadah until achieving its goals on the other hand. Fatah's apparent willingness to forgo the Oslo process and attempt to achieve Palestinian goals through other means, has resonated among other Palestinian political groups and among Palestinian public opinion as well, which tends to be disappointed and frustrated with the results of the seven year long Oslo peace process. The situation has placed Arafat in a precarious situation. He can call for a halt to the intifadah only at the risk of alienating large sections of his domestic constituency. However, by not issuing a clear call to end the violence, Arafat risks a total break with Barak on the peace process and exposes himself to possible Israeli and American counter measures. Here again we see how domestic politics influence the options available to the leaders of the countries involved in the peace process.

Although most attention is currently focused on the Israeli-Palestinian track of the peace process, it is imperative that we not overlook domestic political developments in Syria and Lebanon as well. Over the past few months, with the death of the Syrian President Hafiz al-Asad in June and Lebanese parliamentary elections in August and September, both Syria and Lebanon have experienced dramatic changes on the domestic political level. These changes could have profound implications for

the course of the Israeli-Syrian track of the peace process and the Israeli-Lebanese track of the peace process, even if these implications are not yet clearly discernable.

In order to address these and other issues in depth, we have assembled a panel of scholarly experts to address how Israeli, Palestinian, Syrian, and Lebanese domestic politics influence decision-making regarding the peace process.

First, Dr. Don Peretz will speak on Israeli domestic politics. Dr. Peretz is Professor Emeritus of Political Science at the State University of New York at Binghamton and is a highly regarded authority on Israeli and Palestinian politics as well as the Middle East peace process. His many publications include acclaimed books such as *Israel and the Palestine Arabs*, *Government and Politics of Israel*, and *Intifada: The Palestinian Uprising*. Recently Dr. Peretz co-authored an article in the Spring 2000 addition of *Middle East Journal*, entitled "Sectarian Politics and the Peace Process: The 1999 Israeli Elections." He has also worked in the Middle East as a correspondent for NBC and as a representative with the American Friends Service Committee with the U.N. Relief for Palestine Refugees.

Next, Dr. Glenn Robinson will speak on Palestinian domestic politics. Dr. Robinson is an Associate Professor at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, and is also a Research Fellow at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at the University of California-Berkeley. He is the author of the highly acclaimed book *Building a Palestinian State: The Incomplete Revolution* and has published several articles on Palestinian, Jordanian, and Syrian politics as well. Recently Dr. Robinson published an article in the Autumn 2000 edition of *The Washington Quarterly*, entitled "Palestine After Arafat." He has also conducted research projects for the Department of Defense and the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Following Dr. Robinson, Dr. Patrick Seale will speak on Syrian domestic politics. Dr. Seale is an independent Paris-based analyst of Middle East affairs. Among his many publications, he has written two seminal books on Syrian domestic politics, entitled *Struggle for Syria: A Study of Post-War Arab Politics, 1945-1958*, and *Asad of Syria: The Struggle for the Middle East*. Recently, Dr. Seale published an article in the Winter 2000 edition of *Journal of Palestine Studies*, entitled "The Syria- Israel Negotiations: Who Is Telling the Truth?" He has also recently published an article in the influential pan-Arab daily newspaper *al-Hayat*, in which he devised a compromise solution for the Israeli-Syrian territorial dispute over the northeastern corner of the Sea of Galilee. Dr. Seale has also worked as a foreign correspondent for Reuters and for *The Observer*.

Finally, Mr. Frederic Hof will speak on Lebanese domestic politics. Mr. Hof is currently a partner with Armitage Associates, a consultancy specializing in international business. He is the author of several definitive books and monographs on various aspects of the Syrian and Lebanese tracks of the peace process, including *Galilee Divided: The Israel-Lebanon Frontier, 1916 to 1984*; *Line of Battle, Border of Peace?, The Line of June 4, 1967*; and *Beyond the Boundary: Lebanon, Israel, and the Challenge of Change*. Recently Mr. Hof published an article in the January-February 2000 edition of *Middle East Insight*, entitled "The Line of 1967– Revisited," which dealt with the Israeli-Syrian border. He retired from government in 1993 as a member of the Senior Executive Service of the United States, having held many

positions, including U.S. Army Attaché in Beirut, Lebanon, Country Director for Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Palestinian Affairs in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, and senior-level mediator in the Department of State. Mr. Hof also serves on the National Advisory Committee of the Middle East Policy Council and as a contributing editor for Middle East Insight.

Israeli Politics–Dr. Don Peretz

DR. PERETZ: Israeli politics have always been characterized by a diversity of political parties, coalition governments composed of several different factions, and certain unwritten agreements such as the protection of the Orthodox religious minority through a more or less guaranteed role in any of the Israeli governments. Until recently this system seemed able to accommodate the many interest groups from which Israel's civil society is composed, i.e., religious versus secular, free enterprisers versus socialists, Ashkenazi, Sefaradi and other ethnic groups, and even, to a large extent, the country's non-Jewish Arab community. Another cleavage in the system emerged as a result of Israel's conquests in the 1967 war, i.e., whether or not to keep the conquered territory, or how much of it to keep, these differences traditionally have been mediated through the political system–through parliamentary procedures and through the creation of the broad coalitions that included territorialists and those who favored a return to the 1967 borders in exchange for peace.

Recently, however, cracks have begun to appear in the edifice that kept this system together, marked by increasing tensions within Israeli society among some of the groups that formerly were able to accommodate their differences. These tensions are exacerbated by both domestic and foreign factors. Most obvious, of course, are the events of the past few weeks– first, Prime Minister Barak's extensive "concessions" at the Camp David summit; concessions far greater than those proposed by any previous Israeli government or even greater than those proposed by the peace lobby in Israel. To many in Israel it appeared that Barak had adopted the program, not only of the left of center Meretz party but of the Peace Now movement, an NGO at the left fringe of Israeli civil society. When it appeared that there might be some possibility of agreement between Israeli and PLO negotiators on such far-reaching ideas as withdrawal from 90 percent of the West Bank and Gaza and the return to Israel of a small number of Palestinian refugees, the gap widened within Israel between hawks and doves, between the right of center nationalist parties led by Likud and Barak's small left of center coalition; debate and accusations reached a feverish pitch. It appeared that there was little room for accommodation between the nationalists and the peace blocs. When the Camp David talks collapsed last month, the acrimony became even sharper than usual and the nationalists cried out, "See, we told you so," overlooking the fact that it was the Likud government, led by the hawkish Netanyahu, that in fact had implemented many previous provisions of the Oslo agreement which they blamed for Israel's recent troubles. Indeed, one Israeli commentator observed that Netanyahu himself had emasculated the Likud party by agreeing to abandon the traditional claims of Likud to a "Greater Israel."

It was opposition to the concept of "land for peace" that was the glue that traditionally held Likud together from 1967 until Netanyahu accepted the basic

premise of Oslo, i.e., that the Palestinians do have national as well as individual rights, and that they are a distinctive people with whom Israel must share the land west of the Jordan River.

Although there were many reasons for fragmentation of the Likud Party prior to the last, 1999, election, one of them was the perception among the party's most militant nationalists that Netanyahu had abandoned Likud's most fundamental platform, i.e., maintaining the territorial integrity of the Land of Israel. Likud hawks like Benny Begin, the son of former Prime Minister Menachem Begin, and former Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir accused Netanyahu of abandoning the party ethos and they left Likud to form their own National Union party which they insisted was the true heir to Menachem Begin's old Herut movement.

On the other hand, a dovish wing split from Likud just before the 1999 election. It included several leading party members who accused Netanyahu of dragging his feet by failing to implement parts of the Wye River Plantation agreement, and by failing to withdraw from sections of the West Bank called for in the Oslo process. Although Netanyahu personally alienated many of his closest colleagues, several of Likud's leaders believed he threw away the possibility for peace and thus they abandoned the party. For example, Foreign Minister David Levy left Likud to join the opposition, Barak's new One Israel Party; Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai, former Finance Minister Dan Meridor, and the Likud Mayor of Tel Aviv Ronni Milo all left Likud and formed the core group that established the new Center Party.

Another factor was Israel's new election law. This election law, passed by the Kneset in 1992 and first implemented in the 1996 election, also was a major contribution to fragmentation and polarization of the political system. Under the system prevailing until the 1996 election each voter cast one ballot, for the party of his or her choice; the leader of the party receiving the most votes became prime minister. Even under this system there were several dozen parties and as many as a dozen represented in parliament. Since their single ballot determined who would become prime minister, voters exercised caution: most placed their parochial interests second to their larger national interests thus, they voted for the party whose leader they thought would make the best prime minister. Under the new system, where each voter casts two ballots, one for Prime Minister and one for the party of his choice, voters can select the person they consider best suited for Prime Minister while at the same time backing another political party which represents their parochial interest. The result of this has been a proliferation of small parties representing very parochial interests and a sharp decline in Knesset representation of the two major parties, Labor (or the One Israel Party) and Likud, i.e., a decline of the center left and of the center right to the advantage of a variety of special parochial interest groups.

During the last 1999 election, in addition to the three traditional large electoral blocs– Labor, the Orthodox religious, and the nationalist-right–a host of new special interest parties developed and the Knesset electoral list had more parties than ever before. They represented a women's group, men's family rights, Green environmentalists, advocates of casino gambling, opponents of income taxes, those demanding larger pensions for retired folks, several different ethnic factions including Russians, Romanians, Sephardi Jews, and several Arab factions. A former beauty queen and beauty product entrepreneur started her own Pnina Rosenbaum party and

nearly obtained 1.5 percent of votes required for Knesset representation. Fifteen of more than thirty election lists obtained the 1.5 percent of votes, the minimum required for Knesset representation. Only once before had so many parties or electoral lists passed the 1.5 percent threshold required for Knesset representation. These fifteen lists represented more than 20 different parties: Barak's One Israel included three parties–Labor, the Levy brothers' Gesher, and the moderate Orthodox religious Meimad. Benny Begin's National Union included three right wing nationalist factions–Herut, Moledet, and Tekuma.

The peace process was one of, if not perhaps the most important issue in the 1999 election. In this respect Barak had the advantage over Netanyahu. Barak's reputation as Israel's most decorated army officer who, although favoring the peace process, was known for having a rather a cautious attitude, and this seemed to attract many middle roaders among the Israeli electorate. Barak was hand picked by former Primer Minister Rabin as his protégée after Barak left the army where he had achieved the highest rank of Lieutenant General and had also been Chief of Staff. Even though he had been Rabin's protégée, Barak had voted against or abstained in the Knesset vote on the Oslo agreement. Unlike Shimon Peres who had conceived a "New Middle East" linked through economic ties, Barak was a firm believer in separation between Israel and the Palestinians and the Arabs generally. During the election campaign he had even proposed some form of a barrier between Israel and the projected Palestinian state–a fence or a wall to prevent cross border infiltration. As for Gaza, he envisaged a bypass highway linking it with the West Bank, thus avoiding any Palestinian trespass on Israeli soil. Barak even went out of his way to court the settlers hoping to gain support from a moderate fringe among the settlers in the event of a very close election. Rather than alienate the settlers as Rabin did, Barak sought to divide the moderates among them from the unreconstructed zealots by opening a dialogue with the former.

A major thrust of Barak's campaign was to achieve an honorable peace with Syria and the Palestinians while not ignoring other domestic concerns, although these were to come in second among his priorities. He promised to withdraw Israeli forces from the security zone in south Lebanon and sign final status agreements with Syria and the Palestinians within a year or so. Once concluded, he promised to submit these agreements to a national referendum, a procedure that would be the first in Israel's history.

However, Barak circumscribed these proposed agreements by four red lines and these four red lines apply to the four key issues in the Arab-Israel dispute. First of all, he said that Jerusalem was to remain, as he put it, and as Israelis generally put it, Israel's "united, eternal capital." Second: no Palestinian or any other foreign army was to be positioned west of the Jordan River. Third: no return to the 1949 armistice borders which Israel had extended during the 1967 war. Fourth: most Jewish settlements were to remain under Israeli rule. As for the return of the Palestine refugees, this was out of the question across the whole political spectrum from right to left. However, as part of a comprehensive peace settlement, the Israeli government stated that it was willing to pay compensation for property that the refugees left in 1947-1948 as part of an overall peace settlement ending the conflict. A peace settlement with these qualifications was generally acceptable to most of the Israeli electorate according to public opinion polls last year.

However, since assuming office, the hard red lines that Barak had underscored during the 1999 elections have somewhat faded away, and polls seem to indicate considerable weakening of support for his peace program. This weakening is underscored by the collapse of the coalition Barak established after he took office. Although the coalition included no militant hawks, it was built with several parties that had previously been part of Netanyahu's nationalist government. These included Natan Sharansky's Israel B'Aliyah, the ultra-Orthodox Shas party, the National Religious Party and the United Torah Judaism Party. The new Center Party, which was formed just before the election, also included several former Likud members like former Chief of Staff Yitzhak Mordechai, Dan Meridor, and Ronni Milo. However, this coalition began to disintegrate soon after Barak took office as one party after another within the coalition started to defect. First of all, two of Sharansky's six Knesset members defected and left the coalition. Leaders of both Shas and the Center Party shortly after the election were discredited over personal fraud and other malfeasance. The United Torah Judaism party quit the coalition over a dispute a few months after it was formed over a dispute about Sabbath observance. And Barak's One Israel lost the support of two of its 26 seats when David Levy and his brother did not actually withdraw from the coalition but stated that they were no longer satisfied with the Barak government, and David Levy quit as foreign minister because of his objection to Barak's revised peace initiatives.

Until the recent upheaval, following Sharon's visit to al-Haram ash-Sharif/Temple Mount, Barak was hoping to count on support in the Knesset from the 10 members of the so-called Arab political parties. Parenthetically, I say so-called because Hadash, or the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality, dominated by the Communists, is not strictly Arab. One of its three seats is held by a Jewish Member of Knesset and the DFPE receives a few thousand Jewish votes. However, since the new intifadah in the territories and within Israel, Barak seems to have lost almost all Israeli-Arab support. In the last election, when it was possible to separate the vote for Prime Minister from support for a political party, more than 94 percent of Israel's Arab electorate had voted for Barak. But the number of Arabs who voted for Jewish political parties in the last election dropped from 36 to 30 percent. Labor, the party that in the past had received the largest number of Arab votes, received only 10 percent of the Arab votes in the last election, about half the percentage it received in 1996. In addition to the ten members of the so-called Arab parties, four Arabs were on the lists of Zionist parties–Labor, Center, Meretz, and Likud. (Likud and Center Party Arab Members of Knesset were Druzes, usually listed as a separate community in Israeli government statistics.) If an election were held today, probably most Israeli-Arabs would cast a blank ballot for Prime Minister and the so-called Arab political parties would probably greatly increase their support.

Despite recent talk about formation of a wide coalition from right to left that would include Likud, Israeli politics today is in great disarray. In the past, when Labor and Likud formed a broad coalition, the two parties were able to muster a majority of Knesset seats. Their combined Knesset membership enabled them to form a powerful coalition. For example, in 1981, when their electoral strength peaked, the two political parties, when they formed a coalition government were able to control 95 out of the 120 Knesset seats. Since then, however, both parties have steadily declined where today they have only a combined strength of 45 out of 120 seats in the

current Knesset. In the last two elections this decline was attributed to the new two ballot system.

In the current situation Barak has actually been unable to determine which direction to move Israel's political future, which direction to move the ship of state. On the one hand, does any possibility remain for a successful peace agreement? If not, then in which direction should he move? In the past few weeks he's devised an alternative course focusing on major internal issues which he's called a civil revolution based on the secularization of many of the state institutions and including major programs for rehabilitating the underprivileged Arab sector of the economy. If the focus does remain on the peace process, a coalition will have to include one set of political parties. If the focus is on internal reconstruction, an entirely different coalition will have to be patched together. And I think that leaves room for discussion as to which is the most likely of these coalitions to be formed. At present, I think all of it is up in the air. It depends on both internal and external events.

One of the wild cards in this deck is Israel's third largest party, Shas, which emerged as the most successful list in the 1999 election. Shas became the fastest growing party, from 4 seats in 1984, 6 in 1988, ten in 1996, to 17 in 1999. Shas has been ambivalent about the peace process, but adamantly opposed to any tampering with the prerogatives of the Orthodox religious establishment. As a member of Netanyahu's coalition, Shas supported his foreign policies, but nevertheless agreed to become part of Barak's coalition last year. The party's mentor and spiritual guide, former Sephardi Chief Rabbi Ovadia Yosef has blown hot and cold on the peace process. On the one hand, he proclaimed that Jewish law permits surrender of occupied territory if Jewish lives are saved; on the other, he excoriated Barak for his peace proposals and characterized all Arabs as untrustworthy sub-humans. The general belief is that if the government makes large enough grants to support Shas institutions like its network of schools and social services, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef will back a Barak government.

A few words about public opinion as it affects the peace process in Israel. According to Asher Arian, one of the country's leading pollsters, Israeli public opinion is malleable and reputable politicians can lead it. Events in the past year underscore this malleability and the extent to which it is influenced by events. Before the peace treaty with Egypt, opinion was almost evenly divided about the return of Sinai in exchange for peace. Yet, when Begin signed the first Camp David agreements with Sadat he received overwhelming Knesset approval and the public enthusiastically supported him. Less than a decade ago, no Israeli leader dared call for negotiations with the PLO and Arafat was Israel's number one villain. A year or two ago the vast majority of the public supported the Oslo agreements conditioned by Barak's four red lines. As the red lines began to waver, public opinion gradually moved in his direction. Although the results of a Gallup poll a few days ago indicated growing disappointment with Barak and the peace process, if external events change, opinion could well move back toward Barak's new concept of settlement, a concept that only a few months ago seemed as improbable as recognition of the PLO and a Netanyahu-Arafat handshake less than a decade ago. Arian's thesis is that in matters of foreign policy the Israeli public follows the leader; and the leader's direction will be largely determined by, not only external events, but his or her own capacity to take

risks and to innovate, to make decisions that only yesterday were considered inconceivable.

Palestinian Politics–Dr. Glenn Robinson

DR. ROBINSON: This talk was arranged prior to the last few weeks, so at the time I thought I was just going to come here and be the voice of doom and gloom of things to come. The last three weeks have pretty much laid it out on the table, so I don't have to go into great detail, I think. I should say since I'm a professor at the Naval Postgraduate School and have done a fair amount of work with USAID on their Middle East projects that my remarks of course are only my own, and don't represent anybody else.

Josh had mentioned this piece that I had written in *The Washington Quarterly*, the current edition. What I'd like to do is to read very briefly the last page of it, the conclusion which brings out the three points that I want to make by way of introduction, and then to expand on them. But the basic point, of course, is that the violence that you've seen in the last three weeks was both predictable and predicted. Predicted by a lot of people as late, in fact, as late as June of this year. Azmi Bishara, who's a path-breaking Israeli-Arab member of the Knesset–the first Arab to run for the Prime Ministership in Israel, so he's a man of quite good stature–he was quoted to that effect, for example, and this is not something new. He's been saying this for a long time, but was quoted in June of this year saying, "The maximum Israel is prepared to compromise won't reach the minimum expectation of the Palestinians. I do not think it is either war or peace, but there is a confrontation coming." That kind of remark, again, has been quite common for a long time. So when you hear comments in the press about how unexpected this violence was, how it came out of the blue–that's not true. Those comments are being made by people who haven't been paying attention. So let me then read this one page conclusion and then expand on the three points that it makes. This was written in June and published in early September. So it's written before the Camp David meeting, but when the deal, if you will, not all the details but the grand outlines of the deal that was going to be discussed and perhaps agreed to, were becoming more and more clear.

"Three political certainties loom on Palestine's horizon. First, no matter what photo-ops emerge from the White House lawn, the nature of any peace agreement between Israel and Palestine, like the agreements of the past seven years will be one-sided, accurately reflecting the imbalance of power between the two parties. A hegemonic peace is an unstable peace that necessarily leads to wide social unrest.

"Social turmoil in Palestine is the second certainty. The exact nature of the unrest and how successful it might be contained can only be guessed, but an increase in terrorism and other forms of political violence is likely. These acts will wrongly be dismissed in Washington as the sour grapes of those inherently opposed to peace. Social unrest in its violent expression in and around Palestine will, in fact, broadly reflect the deep rejection by most Palestinians, not of peace but of the hegemonic terms of the agreement.

"The need by the Palestinian regime to clamp down on social unrest, in combination with the distributive nature of Palestine's political economy, will produce the third certainty: authoritarianism, not democracy, will be the governing politics in Palestine regardless of the leader. Although Palestine has many of the attributes of democratic polities, including a vibrant civil society, a highly educated populace, and a long ideological commitment to democracy, the realities in Palestine today strongly suggest that hopes for democracy will be overwhelmed by political necessity.

"Ironic in this gloomy forecast is the fact that succession itself would likely not be the underlying cause of disorder. Assuming that Arafat survives a few more years, a succession ought to go rather smoothly–even as Palestine seethes. In the worst case, in the immediate aftermath of a peace agreement, succession would exacerbate extant tensions resulting from an inevitably hegemonic peace. Violence may then erupt, but it would be the peace accords and not Arafat's passing that would be primarily responsible."

All right, now I'd like to, for a few minutes, expand on these three issues, beginning with this notion of hegemonic peace. When I use that term, I don't use it in a normative sense. I mean, it sounds, I don't know, somewhat spooky perhaps. Hegemonic peace. It's not supposed to be a value judgement. What it is is an analytical statement of the imbalance of power between Palestine and Israel. Israel is a regional super power. It is as Prime Minister Barak has often noted, by far the most powerful country in the region. And the Palestinians, on the other hand, are not even a country yet, and are a very weak party by comparison. So there is an imbalance in power between the two sides.

So then the question becomes, what are the practical consequences of a deal, or a near deal, as we are at this point or were at Camp David, what are the practical consequences of a deal struck by two parties that are vastly, not sort of narrowly imbalanced or out of balance, but vastly out of balance in terms of their own power? Now the near agreement, the possible agreement, at Camp David drove home to the Palestinians something that the critics of the Oslo accords have been predicting for years. And that is those things that are seen by Palestinians as fundamental rights will not be realized in the final status negotiations. In particular, the three biggies, if you will, for Palestinians. One is the issue of Palestinian refugees. The whole passion play, if you will, of Palestinian existence. Its conception of its own history, and its own nationhood, really begins in a fundamental way in 1948 with expulsion and exile from Palestine. It's very clear, Camp David made very clear, that at most a fairly nominal number of these refugees will be allowed to return to their homes or where their homes used to be in what is now Israel. And again, something like three quarters of Gaza's population and about half of the West Bank's population is refugees. These are people and their descendants, who were living in what is now Israel, who became refugees in the 1948 war. Not all the refugees are in Lebanon, Jordan, or Syria. Many remain in the West Bank and Gaza. This represented something of almost treason, if you will, on the streets in the West Bank and Gaza and even more so outside of Palestine. So refugees and the sort of international legitimacy born of U.N. resolutions and what have you regarding refugees were not going to be recognized and were not going to be dealt with in the final status solution.

Second are the settlements in the West Bank and Gaza that have been illegally built. The U.S. used to call it illegal, but now we just call it a hindrance to peace I think. The settlements that have been illegally built in the territory that was occupied in the 1967 war–it was also very clear in the Camp David agreements that only a relative few of these would be dismantled. The vast bulk of settlements and settlers would remain where they were–approximately 10 percent of the West Bank, where the settlements predominate, was going to be annexed by Israel. And so, the belief of Palestinians on the street that a final status solution would remove these settlements and the settlers, was shown not to be the case.

And thirdly, it was shown that Israel would maintain control of at least most of East Jerusalem, with the whole issue of al-Haram ash-Sharif and the Temple Mount being part of that. But even above and beyond that, this sort of annexation of East Jerusalem, the great expansion of its municipal boundaries following the 1967 war and the 130,000 or so Israelis that now live in that area of East Jerusalem that was taken in 1967–all that would remain.

So U.N. Resolution 242 which was supposed to be the basis of these negotiations called for the withdrawal from the territories occupied in 1967. I know there's a discussion about the word "the" there. But the very basis of 242 was not going to be implemented. So the promise from a Palestinian perspective, the promise of the peace process was that it would lead to a situation, not just of statehood, but the refugee issue would be solved according to international law, the settlements would be removed according to international law, and the territories occupied in 1967 including East Jerusalem would be returned according to 242–these all promised to be illusory according to Camp David. And of course this has been the critique of the opposition, not just of Hamas, but within Fatah itself, the main party of the PLO, Yasser Arafat's party. The opposition has always critiqued the peace process by saying that this will not deliver these fundamental rights. You know, this will not get to where we want to go as a nation. So again, it's not so much the people, I mean clearly there are some Palestinians like there are Israelis who are fundamentally and determinedly opposed to any peace whatsoever who view this process in Ambassador Miller's terms as an existential conflict. There are those people, don't get me wrong, but very many Palestinians, especially the ones that you've seen out on the streets the last few weeks–I know Marwan al-Barghouthi has been prominent in this regard–these are people that support, if you will, a peace, but not this peace. Not the kind of peace that has come to pass over the last seven years and was seen to be nearly completed at Camp David.

So the first point then is, the nature of the peace is hegemonic in that it is imbalanced, it is one-sided, and again, this is not something that can really change because the parties themselves are so out of balance in terms of their own power. Where does that lead?

It leads to the second point that I'm trying to make and that is, in terms of Palestinian politics, it leads to wide social turmoil. Had this discussion been held four weeks ago and I made that statement you'd probably reject it as overly pessimistic, and I can only point to the events of the last three weeks. There is a broad rejection of the terms of this peace. And that broad rejection does not come from, again, those inherently opposed to peace. It comes from very mainstream Palestinians. One of the

most outspoken and reasonable critics of Oslo is Dr. Haydar Abdul-Shafi. Here's a man who was elected to the Palestinian parliament with the most votes of any person who ran in the West Bank and Gaza. Here's a man who led the Washington talks between Madrid and Oslo. He led the Palestinian delegation. Here's a man who gave the opening talk at the 1991 Madrid Summit on the peace process. This is not somebody you can dismiss as just opposed to peace. This is a person who's actively been involved in the peace process over the years. And yet he has been a very vocal critic of the terms of Oslo and its implications in terms of Palestinian politics. And I think in large measure he and people like him have proved to be right. And part of what they have suggested, (and again I quoted Azmi Bishara; there are many others I could quote) is that the result of trying to implement this kind of an agreement, this kind of hegemonic peace, will in fact be wide social turmoil.

Then of course the question becomes: what will be the Palestinian regime's response to this turmoil? Can it, will it, try to suppress it? Will it allow it to go on to some degree as a kind of a steam release, if you will? My guess is that what you've seen in the last three weeks is not going to go away. It may not take this form, but there'll be other forms of political violence, acts of terrorism, this kind of rage...[this kind of] violence set into the institutions that will be established in a Palestinian state. The regime will feel compelled, and is feeling compelled, to restrict public voice by Palestinians knowing that the opposition to the terms of the near agreement are so strong. It's kind of interesting, because what it does is in a very direct way, it pits peace versus democracy. The Palestinian regime can't have both. If it democratizes, it is going to undermine the peace because the peace is so strongly and widely rejected by Palestinians. So if it wants peace, it can't have democracy. If it wants democracy, it can't have peace. Incidentally, I make this argument for Jordan as well–I know we're not supposed to talk about Jordan too much since it's already at peace–but you've seen a very similar process in Jordan where the democratization campaign that was begun in 1989 when Jordan went bankrupt, many of the advances that were made in the first three years of that process had to be, in affect, rolled back by the regime if it wanted to conclude a peace treaty with Israel. There was a very direct correlation between the lessening of democracy or democratization in Jordan and its conclusion of a widely unpopular peace treaty in Jordan. And of course it is even more so within the West Bank and Gaza. I'll also add, incidentally, that peace has been very destabilizing in Israel. But I think Professor Peretz has covered that already.

The third point that I'd like to expand upon very briefly is the authoritarianism that has been developing in Palestine for, I think, very particular reasons. It is clearly not only linked to the Middle East peace process, but I think the Middle East peace process has in fact encouraged the rise of authoritarianism within Palestine. Again, there are other things, and we could talk about those if you like, that have to do with the way power gets consolidated or has gotten consolidated within Palestine: the social pillars of the regime that have not a great deal of interest in opening up the political process to others, the particular form of the political economy in Palestine that oddly enough resembles oil states more than it does other states. So there are a number of reasons, and we can talk about them if you'd like, as to why authoritarianism has increased, and I think continues to increase, in Palestine. But clearly the Middle East peace process is one of the elements that encouraged the growth of authoritarianism in Palestine because of the need of the Palestinian regime to control dissent, to limit the Palestinian voice.

In crude terms, it has become basically a situation of state versus society. You've seen this in the attacks on the institutions of civil society that the PA has undertaken over the years, and I think will continue to undertake. Someone who has worked with NGOs can probably speak with authority on some of the attacks that the PA has made on its own institutions of civil society. The birth, if you will, the potential birth of democratization in Palestine has been under constant attack the past seven years. But this authoritarianism is not born of strength. It is born of weakness. It is because the Palestinian regime in effect is cutting a deal, in part, cutting a deal that is highly unpopular, but it feels the need to crack down. It doesn't feel that it can cut this kind of a deal through a position of strength and allow a wide Palestinian voice, democratization, to occur.

I find it very interesting that so many of the journalists in this country get it wrong. They have what I call the switch theory of political violence. That is, Yasser Arafat can just flip the switch. You know, he flips it on, and everybody's out on the street throwing rocks. He flips it off, and they all go home happy, as though Palestinians are somehow automatons that, you know, just get controlled this way. The real danger and I think more people in the last couple of days–Shlomo Ben-Ami, Israel's Acting Foreign Minister and others–have recognized that in fact, the violence is evidence of Arafat's weakness and of the PA's weakness not of its strength. And the danger from the viewpoint of the PA is losing control altogether. They're trying to do something that in affect their population doesn't want. And if they take the next step, they may loose control altogether. This is the dilemma that they're in. And it's a dilemma that is born of weakness not of strength.

Syrian Politics–Dr. Patrick Seale

DR. SEALE: Thank you for inviting me here. I'm a voice from across the Atlantic and I'm therefore not influenced by American domestic politics. As a result, some of the things I have to say may not be very palatable, but I hope you will agree with me that it is, nevertheless, important for me to say them.

You've asked me to talk about Syria. Some of you will have read the works of the late Professor Albert Hourani. I remember that he used to say that, for small countries, the only really important problems were the problems of foreign policy. That is why I would argue that it is pointless to talk about Syrian domestic politics without considering the regional context in which these politics and policies have worked themselves out since the death of Hafiz al-Asad last June.

As you all know, the Middle East is a system, it's a highly interconnected system, perhaps the most interconnected system in the whole world, more so at any rate than, say, Latin America or even Europe. The countries of the system influence each other to the extent that you cannot look at one country on its own, cut off from its regional environment–and certainly not from the environment that has emerged in the last few weeks and months. I make no apology, therefore, for diverging a little from Syria itself in order to sketch in what I think are some of the important developments which have taken place in the region recently.

I believe that there has been a radical change in the strategic environment. One component is, of course, the Palestinian revolt again Israeli occupation, which I believe will continue in one form or another, either violently or peacefully. Israel's response is likely to be violent and involve the use of military force.

In this connection, I think it's important to note the explosion of anger among the Arab public across the region at the killings–110 or so dead and over three thousand wounded at the latest count. This anger is something which Arab regimes have to respond to or ignore at their peril. Professor Robinson mentioned the difficulty of the Palestinian Authority (PA) in suppressing dissent, but this is true of every Arab regime in every Arab country. You may have seen on your television screens demonstrations in Morocco where over half a million people took to the streets; or the demonstrations in Egypt, for example, especially at the universities. Egyptian public opinion is now violently anti-Israeli and anti-American.

All of you will have seen what happened to the USS Cole. Coming from the other side of the Atlantic, I was very struck when turning on my television set last night to hear pundits trying to explain what happened to the Cole. They blamed Usama Bin Laden in Afghanistan, or they blamed Iraq, if you read Mr. Jim Hoagland. He wrote an article suggesting Iraq was behind it all. Nobody, so far as I can see, is saying that what happened to the Cole is the result of American policy in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

But this is why, I believe, the United States now faces a very grave crisis in the Arab and Muslim world. U.S. citizens, U.S. embassies, troops and interests are at risk everywhere. I heard the other day that the American Ambassador in Riyadh, of all places, was now living in a bunker! The threat of terrorism is certainly there. But why has this happened? Contrary to what we heard this morning from Mr. Aaron Miller, I would argue that the United States has failed in its management of the peace process.

I will explain to you why I think the United States has failed. The United States bears a heavy responsibility in this matter. In my view, the Americans have made two major mistakes over the last several decades. First of all, they allowed Israel to remain in Lebanon for 22 years. It's worth nothing that the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 was far more brutal than Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990. Some 20,000 people, Palestinians and Lebanese, were killed in the first weeks of Israel's invasion–and Israel remained in Lebanon for 22 years! The other major American mistake was, of course, to allow the settlement building in the Palestinian occupied territories. You may question "allowed." Well, the United States allowed, funded, armed Israel and provided it with diplomatic and political protection for these activities.

In Lebanon, the result of the invasion and the continued occupation of the south was the creation of the Lebanese resistance movement, Hizballah. As you all know, Hizballah has now scored a victory. That is the reality on the ground–a reality to which Aaron Miller referred. But, contrary to his view, this reality was not changed by negotiations. It was changed by violent action, by Hizballah's success, which showed up Israeli vulnerability and forced it out of Lebanon.

The violent Palestinian uprising is also changing the reality on the ground and has to be noted. It is no longer enough to say: let the parties negotiate, let them go back to the table. Things have changed. I don't think it's my role here to talk too much about the Palestinian situation because others have done so already. But it may, nevertheless, be worth giving you one or two statistics. Since Oslo, Arafat has secured control of only 70 percent of Gaza, while the remaining 30 percent is occupied by some five thousand settlers. On the West Bank, Arafat has managed to secure real control of only 13.1 percent of the territory, and nothing at all so far in East Jerusalem. Altogether, he has secured about 20 percent of the occupied territories–and the occupied territory represent only 22 percent of the whole of historic Palestine. As you all know, the Palestinians living in urban "bantustans" under Israeli military occupation suffer grave repression and hardship.

Let me turn to the Syrian track, but what I have to say applies also very much to the Palestine problem. You can't really separate these tracks. The American failure has been one of failing to insist on the implementation of deals, which America itself had brokered. I don't have to remind you how timetables have constantly slipped, how the agreements of Oslo II, in particular, have not been implemented. Anyway, in the Syrian case, you will recall that certain pledges were given by Yitzhak Rabin to withdraw from the Golan to the June 4, 1967 borders– this was the so-called "deposit in the American pocket," which we can go into later if you are interested. But, at the end of the day, when Barak came to power and refused to endorse the "deposit," the Americans did not insist upon it, although they had brokered the deal in the first place.

As a result of these failures, I would say that the United States and Israel are today facing grave challenges in the region. They are facing a revival of Arab solidarity, even of pan-Arabism. They are facing the unification of Palestinian forces, which is in itself quit unusual. They are facing a new Arab generation, which has more confidence, which is better educated, a generation interested in modernization and reform, and a generation which is somewhat comforted, I would say, by the increase in the oil price.

Let me now focus on Syria as such, in the changing strategic environment, which I have tried to sketch in, and which Bashar al-Asad, Syria's new young leader, certainly cannot ignore. He has been in power for only a little more than three months, so it is too early to make a real judgement about what he's been doing. But I think that there are one or two noteworthy new departures, which I would like to emphasize and which spring from what I've been saying.

Take, for example, his relations with Iraq. This is really very important and often overlooked in the West. Syria and Iran are very concerned about Anglo-American policy towards Iraq. They don't want a change of regime in Iraq, which would damage their interests, so we have been seeing close coordination between Syria and Iran over Iraq, and better relations between these two powers and Iraq. If you've been reading the press, you may have seen, for example, that Dr. Bashar al-Asad had a meeting with Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz in Damascus recently. And, at his press conference in Cairo with President Mubarak, Dr. Bashar made several friendly references to Iraq–how Iraq was Syria's strategic, economic and scientific depth. "We never wanted to win Kuwait and lose Iraq," he declared.

At the same time, you may have noticed that Iran's Foreign Minister Kharrazi visited Baghdad and, after talks with Saddam Hussein, announced that Iraq and Iran were reviving the 1975 Algiers Agreement. There is a good deal of talk now of enhanced cooperating between Damascus, Bagdad, and Teheran. In my view, this is a very important development.

In Lebanon, many people would argue that the recent elections have damaged Syria's position. There has been a debate going on in Syria about how to handle relations with Lebanon. Some say that Syrian should continue its old policy of divide and conquer–of retaining total control over every aspect of Lebanese life. This policy is generally associated with the name of General Ghazi Kana'an, Syria's intelligence chief in Lebanon who has been a sort of Syrian overlord there for very many years. Another view, however, which is being advanced quite forcefully, and which is reflected in the election results, is that Syria should have a more balanced relationship with Lebanon. This appears to be the view of President Dr. Bashar al-Asad. As I understand it, he believes the relationship between Syria and Lebanon should be one of equals. But it doesn't mean that Syria will totally relinquish its grip on Lebanon. The Syrians are very concerned about two things. They are anxious that there should not be a separate peace between Lebanon and Israel. And they don't want to see a consensus emerge in Lebanon calling for the withdrawal of Syrian troops. They feel that on both of these vital issues, their interests are fairly safe. Indeed, I think that Dr. Bashar would argue that a new relationship between equals would be a more respectable relationship, one easier to defend in front of international opinion and less likely to arouse opposition in Lebanon itself.

Another striking change is taking place in Syria's relations with the Palestinians, and in the way the Syrian press and television have been handling the uprising in the Palestinian territories. You may recall that the late President Hafiz al-Asad had a very poor relationship with Yasser Arafat. He believed that the Palestinian problem was far too important to be left to the Palestinians, that it involved all the Arabs. And he believed that Arafat had sabotaged the joint Arab position by his separate deal at Oslo, secretly arrived at. Asad was totally opposed to that.

Bashar, however, now seems on somewhat better terms with the Palestinians, and the union of Palestinian forces, which I mentioned earlier, is part of the new strategic environment. I think we may see some developments there because the Syrians have always dreamed of drawing the Palestinians, Lebanon and Jordan into a common front with themselves as the only way to create a sort of counter weight to Israeli power.

So, to sum up, I think that President Bashar al-Asad, in his relations with Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon, is trying to consolidate the economic underpinnings of Syria's relations with these countries in order to confirm or to strengthen his father's strategic vision of the relationship with them. Some "higher committees" have been reactivated between Syria on the one hand and Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq on the other. Trade between Syria and Iraq is very brisk, estimated at about $500 million a year. They talk about doubling it next year. And of course Syria would like its ports to be the conduit for trade with Iraq, particularly once Iraq is rehabilitated and once its reconstruction begins to generate huge contracts and huge imports.

Let me now say a word about the peace process and about developments inside Syria affecting the peace process. I think we can be pretty confident that there is not going to be any fundamental change in Syria's attitudes towards the peace process. The Syrians feel very much the same as I've suggested other people in the region feel. They feel disillusioned with the United States and with its handling of the peace process.

The late President Hafiz al-Asad had a close relationship with President Clinton. They spoke a lot on the telephone. Asad thought of him as a friend. He probably established closer relations with Clinton than with any other American president, and he had dealings with several of them. He received many pledges from U.S. presidents about the Golan–how the United States would never recognize Israel's annexation–but, at the end of the day, and particularly at the Geneva summit last March, he felt that Clinton had in a sense betrayed him. When Clinton called him from India to summon him to Geneva, Asad thought that this was at last the big breakthrough he had been expecting. He thought that Barak would at last endorse the commitment made by his predecessors, Rabin and Peres, to withdraw from the Golan to the June 4, 1967 line.

Asad arrived in Geneva with a huge delegation of 130 people, reflecting his great expectations. He was told by Clinton that Barak not was not prepared to withdraw to the June 4th line, and, moreover, that he wanted to push back the 1923 international frontier several hundred meters to the east, in order to protect not just the Sea of Galilee (Lake Tiberias), but also the road that runs around the lake. Asad found this totally unacceptable. Many people would argue that this disappointment contributed to his death.

There is no way that his son is going to more flexible on this territorial issue than Asad was himself. If Israel wants peace with Syria, it will have to pull back to the June 4th line. It will have to acknowledge Syria's sovereignty over the northeastern shoreline of the Sea of Galilee, where Syria was before the war. And the same thing will apply to the Palestinians. Something like an Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 borders will be necessary. This is what international legality demands. The idea that 200,000 settlers can somehow continue to live on the West Bank and that the Palestinians will accept to make peace under such conditions–a hegemonic peace, as we heard–is totally unreasonable. On the other hand, what Israeli government will be strong enough to remove large numbers of armed settlers, organized as they are in an underground army of the settlements? Many of them are fanatical and many believe they are there by divine right.

Let me now say a few brief words about the structure of power in Syria. There has been very little change so far in the structure of power, except that whereas Hafiz al-Asad totally dominated the men around him, in fact created them, the men around Bashar have in a sense created him. We are therefore likely to see a more collegiate leadership than before. Dr. Bashar is a young man, relatively untried. His first instinct on coming to power was to consolidate his security apparatus. He's done this at the cost, I would say, of disappointing some expectations that he would inaugurate a more liberal regime. Many people would say that he has given too much power to the security services, and also to the army, which are after all the underpinnings of his regime. Three names tend to crop up in Damascus conversations–those of General Ali

Aslan, the armed forces chief of staff; of General Bahjat Suleiman, head of internal security; and of General Asif Shawqat, Bashar's own brother-in-law, married to his sister Bushra, number two in the military security, but who is in fact a very important person.

So, as I said, Dr. Bashar's initial instinct to strengthen the security basis of his rule has meant disappointing expectations of greater liberalization and democracy, at least for the moment.

There are certain real obstacles to the emergence in Syria of democracy on the Western model. One major obstacle has to do with the mosaic nature of Syrian society and its sectarian divisions. Another is the fact that the Ba'th revolution of 1963, which was the starting point of what we are witnessing today, was largely a revolution of country boys, from the Alawi, Druze and Ismaili communities, but also from the Sunni community, young men from small towns and villages, whose names were unknown, but who supplanted and drove from power the urban families and notables who had ruled Syria since Ottoman times. These people, who have formed the new elite of the past twenty-five or thirty years, have no intention of handing power back to their class or sectarian enemies. They will want to retain their grip on power. So we are very unlikely to see the adoption of a democratic representational system on the Western model.

What we may well see, however, what many people hope and what the Syrians expect, is liberalization in other areas. We may see a more independent judiciary than at present; moves towards a liberal market economy; an end to censorship and a freer press. These changes would not necessarily challenge the basis of the regime, but they have been slow in coming.

Let me race through, if you like, some of the measures Dr Bashar has taken in the last few months since coming to power.

Hafiz al-Asad gave little attention to domestic affairs, especially in the last decade. His mind was overwhelmingly taken up with the struggle against Israel and the relationship with the Powers. The 1990s were a bad decade for him, beginning with the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Oslo accords of 1993 undercut his diplomacy. The death of his son Basil in January 1994 was a very bitter personal blow. The emergence of Netanyahu in Israel, the Israeli-Turkish alliance, the crisis with Turkey over the PKK leader Ocalan, all these developments hit him hard, as did his disappointment with American handling of the peace process.

So busy was he with regional issues that he neglected a lot of things on the domestic front. Decrees piled up unsigned on his desk. One of the things Dr. Bashar is now doing is signing decrees almost daily in an attempt to work off this backlog.

For example, the Syrian authorities are trying to reduce the number of government cars. This might sound ridiculous, but in fact a sizeable proportion of the state budget is taken up with the expense of providing and maintaining cars for ministers, officials and other dignitaries. Some individuals are said to have at their disposal as many as 30 or 40 cars with drivers, petrol and maintenance provided at the

state's expense. This is an abuse the government is now anxious to reduce, if not eliminate altogether.

More seriously, Dr. Bashar is anxious to improve the country's human rights record. A security committee has been touring jails and detention centers to review the cases of long-term prisoners. An amnesty for political prisoners is under study. [It was announced in mid-November 2000 that 600 political prisoners had been released.]

Trade in agricultural products with Lebanon has been liberalized. About 100,000 Syrians who went abroad to escape military service can now regularize their situation by paying $5,000, and in some case $10,000. Students who, on completing a first degree in Syria, want to go abroad for higher education can now collect their diplomas immediately from Syrian universities. Hitherto they have sometimes had to wait for months, which has compromised their ability to gain acceptance at academic institutions abroad. The salaries of state employees, of whom there are about 1.4 million have been increased by 25 per cent, in the hope that this will reduce the level of petty corruption in the government bureaucracy. There is a committee working on the question of unfreezing rents, which is a major problem, and there has been a lot of discussion about allowing foreign banks to operate in Syria. Three Franco-Lebanese banks have been granted a license to operate offshore, in the free zone.

One has to say, however, that in spite of the flow of decrees, the new regime has not yet clarified its fundamental economic direction. No one yet seems to know to what extent the semi-bankrupt public sector will be reformed and slimmed down, and the private sector given a freer hand.

A few key questions will have to be addressed by Dr. Bashar. Can he truly reform the political and economic system he inherited? He says he is committed to democracy, although not on the Western model. What form will this democracy take? Is it possible to carry out economic and social reform without reviving political life? These are some of the questions he will have to face.

But, to return to what I was saying at the beginning, it is important to remember that every Arab ruler, Dr. Bashar included, will have to take note of what has been happened in the Palestinian territories in the past few weeks. There has been a hardening, not just of Palestinian opinion, but of Arab opinion. There cannot be a return to a search for accommodations as in the past. Realities have changed on the ground, and I think we may see this reflected in the resolutions at the Arab summit this weekend. It will be extremely difficult for the Saudi rulers, the Egyptian rulers, the Jordanian rulers, and even the Syrian rulers, to revert back to cozying up to the United States. Accordingly, it would be a grave mistake for the United States to take for granted such allies as President Mubarak of Egypt, King Abdallah of Jordan or the ruling princes of Saudi Arabia. These people are now under enormous pressure from their own populations.

So what is the answer to all of this? Are we likely to see a change in Israeli policy–a change which I, for one, think necessary? Can an Israeli government emerge which can say: "We have to make further concessions to the Palestinians and to the Syrians. We have to give back Arab territory occupied in 1967." One should not think only of Israeli security. Security is indivisible. There can be no security for Israel

at the cost of the insecurity of its neighbors–whether its neighbors are Palestinians or Syrians. What about a return to international legitimacy? To the principle of land-for-peace? To Security Council Resolution 242? I think I'll leave you with these thoughts.

Lebanese Politics–Mr. Frederic Hof

MR. HOF: Ladies and gentlemen, I want to be perfectly honest with you. If there is a more exquisite torture than listening to someone drone on about Lebanese politics just before lunch, I don't know what it is. I've got a mission here today, so I've got to say something about Lebanese politics but for those of you who are taking notes, let me give you my bottom line up front—you can write this down—Lebanon: others will decide. That is the bottom line.

Sixteen years ago exactly I was drafting the preface to a soon-to-be-published book entitled "Galilee Divided". I'd like to frame my very brief remarks today by quoting the opening lines of that preface. "Ten years have passed since the independent Lebanese state born in 1943 died violently in the streets of downtown Beirut. Alive, Lebanon was too weak and too militarily inconsequential to be categorized as a confrontation state in the Arab-Israeli context. Yet dead, Lebanon was drawn into the very center of the Arab-Israeli vortex, an abyss from which it has yet to emerge." I would argue that Lebanon has not yet fully emerged from the abyss, even though the shooting phase of the civil war ended ten years ago, and even though the Israeli occupation of the south ended five months ago.

Lebanon is trying to find its balance in a turbulent region where Israeli-Palestinian violence and Israeli-Syrian tension completely overshadow the ability of the people and the government of Lebanon to have a political life independent of or unaffected by these struggles. The weakness of the state and the nature of political discourse are affected by the perpetuation of political sectarianism, which itself reflects the fact that some 15 years of often vicious fighting and widespread destruction failed to instill anything resembling a sense of Lebanese nationalism, anything transcending the primordial attachments of Lebanese to sect, neighborhood, clan, and the leaders thereof. What we are left with in the year 2000 is a Lebanese republic still trying to find its' sea legs, a state in which the government and much of the citizenry plays the role of an interested onlooker.

The horrors of the civil war seem to have produced one element of political consensus which even if minimal is nevertheless something. Virtually all Lebanese believe that, for better or worse, they need to co-exist within the boundaries of Lebanon, that the consequences of renewed fighting would be far worse than having to endure a failing economy and a very uncertain future. In the recent elections, Lebanese voters mustered the energy to say, in effect, we know that the government of the current prime minister has failed. We desperately want change. And, because Syrian suzerainty exists side-by-side with our frustration and anger, perhaps the change we need should extend to the terms and conditions of the Lebanese-Syrian relationship.

Yet, if the majority of Lebanese voters wanted to borrow the phrase of George Wallace to "send them a message," look at the way the message is being massaged by Lebanon's political cognoscenti. The victory of former Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri is seen by some commentators as the elevation by Sunni voters of someone strong enough to counter-balance the demographic weight of the Shi'a. The victories of Pierre Gemayel and Nassib Lahoud are ascribed to the alleged failure of President Emile Lahoud to represent the interests of the Maronites. The Maronite Patriarch has called for a national discussion about the future of Syrian forces in Lebanon. And the secretary general of Hizballah, an organization that seeks to represent Lebanon's largest sect, has countered with the observation that if Lebanon had no sectarianism it would have no Syrians. Sensing the punitive danger posed by the demographic weight of Lebanon's Shi'a, Druze chieftain Walid Jumblat has entered into an alliance with al-Hariri, the Gemayels, and even the National Liberal Party of Dori Chamoun to counter-balance the Shi'a and keep them from encroaching on his home turf, the Shuf.

Sunni, Shi'a, Maronite, Druze. Twenty-five years after the start of a deadly civil war, only the military academy at Faiyadiyah teaches the virtue and the necessity of one Lebanon. This is perhaps why the president, notwithstanding all of the criticism to which he has been subjected internally, remains, because of his military background and his refusal to act as a political Maronite, a symbol of hope for those Lebanese who actually want to transcend sectarianism. Yet President Emile Lahoud also seems to embody a foreign policy approach not unlike that of a predecessor, Elias Sarkis, who tried to hold Lebanon together during the darkest days of the civil war. This approach may be summarized in the three words I mentioned at the outset: others will decide.

The others, in the view of President Lahoud, are those who possess the power to determine Lebanon's fate: Syria, Israel, the United States. Although Lebanon's president has more than once aroused the anger and the frustration of the U.S. government and the U.N. Secretariat, and although some in both places may argue that he possesses more freedom of action than he pretends to have, he clearly sees his role as one of trying to preserve the basic structure and the admittedly weak institutions of the Lebanese state until the major players contrive to bring the peace process to fruition. Even though the recent elections were widely portrayed as a popular rebuff to the president, my sense is that most Lebanese, regardless of sect or political orientation, accept the notion that Lebanon's fate is essentially in the hands of others.

A recent incident illustrates quite strikingly the role of the government of Lebanon in matters of great national security import to the country. Last Sunday, in Beirut's Carlton Hotel, Hizballah secretary general Hassan Nasrallah told a stunned audience, including the prime minister of Lebanon, that the Islamic resistance had captured an Israeli colonel. Turning to the shocked and disoriented prime minister, Salim al-Hoss, Nasrallah extended his most fulsome sympathies, saying "God help the premiere today in dealing with the many telephone calls he will get from Albright." Now this may well have been an attempt at humor, and it no doubt reflected the jubilation of an increasingly important Lebanese political figure, who is seeking, after all, to obtain the release of Lebanese citizens held for years without due process in Israeli jails. Yet the public humiliation of the prime minister, no matter the difficulties

of his incumbency, and no matter that he's on the way out, cannot add to the political legitimacy of the struggling Lebanese republic.

It's worth noting that Secretary General Nasrallah granted an interview earlier this year in which he had the following to say about the role of Hizballah if and when Israeli forces would evacuate the South. "Let it be understood that once the region is freed, Hizballah will not exercise any security measures there. That is indisputable because the region will be under the sovereignty of the Lebanese government. Hizballah will be present in the South, but it will not have any security power because Hizballah is a resistance movement that aims at liberating the occupied territories and is not a substitute for government."

In order for this commitment to be nullified, after May 24 when Israel did the unthinkable by unilaterally withdrawing its forces from Lebanon, the government of Lebanon was obliged, presumably at the direction of Damascus, to lay claim to a 25-square kilometer patch of territory on the occupied Golan Heights, consisting of orchards and small, cultivated plots known collectively as the Sheba'a Farms. The Lebanese claim to the Sheba'a Farms, like the previous claim to seven villages assigned to Palestine by the British and French in 1923, is in my view the result of the government's desire to accommodate both Hizballah and Syria. Instead of deploying its army to the international boundaries in the wake of Israel's withdrawal, as specifically mandated by the 1989 Ta'if Accord, the Lebanese government has been obliged by others to maintain that the Israeli occupation continues. Most Lebanese have little understanding of or interest in the territorial status of remote and lightly-populated plots on the windy slopes of Mt. Hermon. They fear that Israel may react violently to a provocation staged from Lebanese territory, and they know that they are powerless to prevent these attacks and utterly unable to have an influence on events. Others will decide.

Although the prestige of the president has suffered along with the Lebanese economy over the past nearly two years, it is clear that his view that others will decide resonates strongly throughout Lebanon. The president, himself, may have an overall strategy, and as far as I know he may be pursuing tactics appropriate to that strategy. But at the grassroots level in Lebanon, there is a sense of hopelessness and resignation, combined with a feeling of victimization and a belief that the outside world owes to Lebanon nothing less than salvation itself. Popular sentiments such as these, combined with the all-too-recent memories of civil war, have drained from Lebanon any semblance of meaningful political discourse about Lebanon's role in the Middle East peace process. As Lebanon's suzerain, Syria cannot escape, in my view, a good deal of the responsibility for the country's demoralization. On the other hand, there is no shortage of Lebanese politicians seeking Syrian patronage, and calls for a national discussion about the Syrian role in Lebanon are not coupled with a demand that there also be a national discussion about the political role of Lebanese in Lebanon.

I would close by observing that what seems to unite Lebanese today, at least in the context of the peace process, is the sense that Palestinian refugees residing in Lebanon must not be permanently implanted in Lebanon; that the peace process must ultimately find a way to remove the refugees from the country. A peace treaty leaving the Palestinians, especially the camp dwellers, marooned in Lebanon would create

trouble; a conclusion on which Israel and Lebanon can find agreement in the context of frontier security. Last spring when it appeared that the Syrian-Israeli discussions might progress to the point where Lebanese-Israeli peace talks might commence, President Lahoud and the government made it clear that Lebanon would sign no peace treaty leaving the Lebanese dimension of the Palestinian refugee crisis untouched. Some American officials seemed at the time to be surprised, and not exactly pleased, by this unexpected show of Lebanese assertiveness, assuming no doubt that the role of Lebanon at a peace conference would be to sign when and where it is instructed to do so by Syria. I don't have enough information about the specific nature of the Syrian-Lebanese relationship to speculate as to whether or not there could be a Lebanon-Israel track of the peace process independent of the Israel-Syria tract. Yet we seem in any event to be far from peace negotiations.

In the meantime, one may conclude that the Republic of Lebanon which emerged from 15 years of civil war is still very much a work in progress. Although the republic has the trappings of parliamentary democracy, a lively critical press, and a literate, highly-skilled populace, the government itself is not the focus of domestic politics. Although virtually all Lebanese are happy that the Israeli occupation is over, very few had anything to do with ending it. Those who did remain in charge of the Lebanese side of the Israel-Lebanon frontier. And although Hizballah may evolve into a full-time participant in a democratic system, and may even emerge as a force for a more secular Lebanon, for the moment it stands apart from the state in direct confrontation with Israel. By focusing that confrontation at least in terms of the recent capture of three Israeli soldiers on the remote Sheba'a Farms area, Hizballah may be seeking to keep any prospective Israeli military response away from the more heavily populated areas of southern Lebanon, where its' own constituents have returned by the thousands to villages abandoned since the 1970s. Hizballah is, in this sense, very much a part of the "others will decide" mentality that animates, or perhaps more accurately freezes, Lebanese domestic political opinion with respect to the peace process. Thank you.

Questions and Answers

QUESTION: Dr. Seale, please address the economic aspects of a peace deal as well as the territorial aspects. And anyone can feel free to add as well.

DR. SEALE: Economics never really figured very much. They started to figure more prominently when Shimon Peres took over as Prime Minister after Yitzhak Rabin's assassination. If you recall, Peres's whole idea of a "New Middle East" was one based on economic cooperation. What alarmed the Syrians when the negotiations were resumed was that the Israelis came up with a long list of joint projects, including the integration of the two countries' power grids. The Syrians took fright. They felt this was some sort of a takeover.

The main discussions were over withdrawal, security arrangements, normalization, and the timetable for inter-phasing withdrawal and normalization. These were the 'four legs of the table' which Rabin used to refer to. So economics didn't really enter into it.

I myself have proposed, as one of the speakers here kindly suggested, that the contested area on the northeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee could become a joint tourist zone or "peace park," once it is returned to Syrian sovereignty with the rest of the Golan. It could be the start of greater cooperation. In a context of peace, Israeli tourists will want to visit Syria, or to transit through Syria on their way to Turkey and Europe beyond. Tour companies in Israel and Syria will have to cooperate, so why not begin with cooperation on a few hundred meters on the northeastern shore of the lake.

To be fair to Prime Minister Barak, he seemed ready to do something which Rabin only spoke about. Rabin gave a verbal commitment to withdraw to the 1967 borders, but he never actually implemented it. In fact some people suspect, myself included, that when he gave the commitment to withdraw in August 1993, just before the Oslo accords were announced, he did so not because he actually intended to honor the commitment but rather to blunt Syria's attack on Oslo which he knew was inevitable.

If you recall, after the peace process was launched in Madrid in 1991, there was no progress on the Syrian track, the Syrians refused to discuss anything substantive until they secured from Israel a commitment to full withdrawal from the Golan. Eventually, in August 1993, Rabin conceded the principle of full withdrawal. But Asad was still not satisfied. He wanted to know from Warren Christopher, the U.S. Secretary of State at the time who conveyed the Israeli commitment to Syria, whether full withdrawal meant withdrawal to the June 4, 1967 borders, and whether Israel laid claim to any Syrian territory captured in 1967. Finally, in July 1994, Rabin gave his commitment to withdraw to the 4 June 1967 line. We can discuss this further if you like.

DR. ROBINSON: Actually, Patrick, I've been allowed a follow-up question to you, and that is in your many conversations with Hafiz al-Asad and Bashar al-Asad, how have they responded to your proposal?

DR. SEALE: The Syrian answer has been two-fold. First, they've said that they want to recover their territory before discussing joint projects. The second answer, which I inferred from recent conversations in Damascus, is that the Syrians would like the United States, the main peace-brokers, to sponsor the "peace park" proposal. If the notion were taken up and proposed by the United States, I think the Syrians would give it very careful study.

DR. PERETZ: Patrick, I have a follow-up question. Is there any significance to the fact that in all of these discussions, in the press and in your reportage on it, there was never any mention of the Palestinian refugee problem. Is the implication that Syria was willing to accept the 200,000 or 300,000 refugees who were within its border? What is the significance of that?

DR. SEALE: The question of relations between Syria and the Palestinians is a long and complicated one. You may recall that from the 1967 war to the Oslo accords of 1993, the Syrians always put the Palestine problem and the recovery of Palestinian rights at the top of their agenda. But when the Palestinians went their own way at

Oslo, the Syrians felt betrayed. From then on their view was that seeing that the Palestinians had made their own bed, they should lie in it.

From then on, the Syrians didn't want their own track to be held hostage to progress or lack of progress on the Palestinian track. They felt it was time to address their own issue of the Golan. Things were envenomed by Asad's strong antipathy for Yasser Arafat, his contempt for Arafat's negotiating style, for his concessions and betrayals, as Asad would see it. I believe this was one reason why the Syrians for a long time did not raise the question of the Palestinian refugees.

I think most observers are agreed that the Palestinians in Lebanon pose a far graver problem than do the Palestinians in Syria. In Lebanon, no political party or faction is prepared to accept their long-term presence in the country. Moreover, several of the refugee camps are in the unruly south of Lebanon, which is not properly policed by anyone. There is always the danger of cross-border incidents, which could trigger a violent Israeli response.

In Syria, in contrast, the Palestinian refugees are far more integrated into society. They serve in the armed forces, they are allowed to work–whereas in Lebanon there is a long list of jobs, which they are not allowed to hold.

No doubt, at the end of the day, the Syrians will demand some form of compensation for having given house-room to some 350,000 Palestinian refugees. They will also want compensation for the 100,000 refugees driven out of the Golan by the Israelis, whose numbers have now swollen to about half a million. This is an aspect of the Golan water problem. Wanting to resettle these refugees once Israel withdraws, the Syrians will want a share of the water, which flows from the Golan into Lake Tiberias. But I've digressed somewhat from your question.

QUESTION: Where do they stand on the right of return?

DR. SEALE: They stick to the formula enshrined in UN Resolutions, which is that there has to be return and compensation. When you press Arab leaders on this question they tend to say return ***or*** compensation. I think it is regrettable that the international community has not given more thought to the question of compensation for Palestinian refugees. That part of the world – Syria, Lebanon, Palestine – has not always been able to support its populations, especially at times of crisis, drought or famine, as have occurred in the 19th and 20th centuries. As a result, large emigré communities took shape in Brazil or West Africa, for example.

No one really believes that four million Palestinian refugees can be returned to their former homes. What they are seeking from the Israelis is an acknowledgment of Israeli responsibility for the creation of the problem, and what they are looking for from the international community is adequate compensation to allow the refugees to start a new life.

So long as Israel continues to be ringed by refugee camps, peace will always be fragile. The camps will have to be dismantled and the families resettled. A number will no doubt want to return, but the capacity of absorption of a future Palestinian state will be limited. Certainly, Israel will be very reluctant to take back any significant

number. But the first step to solving the problem would be an acknowledgment of responsibility by Israel. It is not unlike the question of establishing responsibility for the Armenian genocide, which has been preoccupying your Congress recently.

QUESTION: This is a question for both Professors Robinson and Peretz. I'd like to talk about the sort of clash of perceptions here between the Israelis and the Palestinians at this point. Because from Professor Robinson's outline of things, Palestinians will not be satisfied unless they get all of the territory up to the 1967 borders, including East Jerusalem. And it seems from the Israeli perspective, Barak sort of gave as much in concessions as he could in the peace process. In fact, he was even criticized by Leah Rabin on the question of Jerusalem after certain leaks came from the press on the issue of Jerusalem. So given these two clashing perceptions, how do you see things or are things just going to continue to deteriorate?

DR. ROBINSON: Let me just begin that by saying for a number of years, as you may recall, there was this grand debate epitomized on the one hand by Ian Lustick at the University of Pennsylvania and on the other by Meron Benvenisti, the former deputy mayor of Jerusalem, about whether the occupation was reversible. Benvenisti's argument was—and this was back in the early 1980s—that as soon as the number of settlers in the West Bank hit about 100,000 the domestic considerations would be too great for any prime minister of Israel to stage a full withdrawal from the West Bank. And now of course the number of settlers in the West Bank is double that number. With Oslo, it appeared that the sort of Lustick camp of reversibility was right, that in the end it's all political. And if it's political you can do something about it. I'm not so sure he was right. And I think Benvenisti 20 years ago may have been more prescient in that while Barak clearly made concessions as Don Peretz said, that went far beyond any other concessions or concessions made by any other prime minister in Israel's history, it was not even clear he could sell it to the Israeli polity, that he could get the votes either in a straight referendum or in terms of a re-election campaign that would support it. That was going to be an iffy proposition and that still did not meet what the minimum Palestinian requirements really have been, and this is across the political spectrum.

So my own sense is that I do think there will be an agreement. I don't know if that makes me an optimist or a pessimist. I think the sides have too much at stake not to have an agreement. But I think the agreement will be deeply troubling, deeply troubled, and deeply destabilizing for both sides.

DR. PERETZ: My perception is that both Barak and Arafat went as far, or maybe even further, than their respective constituencies would permit them to go; neither could go further. The purpose of the American so-called bridging proposals was to close the gap, although it didn't work. Part of this problem is due to the completely different historical narratives of each side. The Israeli historical narrative differs from the Arab historical narrative generally and from the Palestinian historical narrative in particular; what Israelis call their war of liberation, Arabs and Palestinians call the Nakba [catastrophe in Arabic]. While Israelis consider the Temple Mount their holiest site, Arabs often disregard this claim and consider it as their third holiest site. I don't think I've ever met an Arab Zionist. Arabs don't accept Israel's historical narrative. The narratives are so different that they are impossible to bridge.

DR. SEALE: In my estimation, the Arabs have certainly accepted Israel, its right to exist and so forth, within its 1967 borders.

DR. PERETZ: It's right to exist?

DR. SEALE: Absolutely. Within its 1967 borders. They have not accepted its conquests, nor have they accepted Israel as the dominant power in the region. They've accepted Israel as an important player in the Middle East system, but not as a dominant player.

What we are witnessing now is an attempt by the Arabs to reduce Israel to what they consider to be its natural size. They think it's too big: it has to be shrunk a little bit. But this is not an existential problem anymore. Israel is not in danger of extinction, except perhaps by its own actions. But certainly, the Arab world as a whole has accepted Israel within its 1967 borders.

DR. PERETZ: I doubt that the average refugee in a refugee camp would say that Israel has a right to exist. They're there, we accept it, but not by right.

DR. SEALE: I'm talking, of course, of Arab governments. The immediate victims of the creation of Israel are unlikely ever to accept it. That is why they have to be treated fairly. That is why we talk of the need to acknowledge the suffering and misery they have endured. And of course the need for compensation. The matter of compensation is an extremely important subject. The international community should create a special body, a fund of several billion dollars, to be handled with great transparency. But nothing of the sort has happened. We hear of compensations for other victims, but not for the Palestinians.

DR. ROBINSON: There's been a huge bru-ha-ha over the phrase "right to exist," and I think it is unfortunate because it's nonsensical. Does any state have a right to exist? Does the United States have the right to exist? I mean I don't know what that means. It's a moral plaint that has to do with the discourse and the sort of stories people tell about themselves and their own history. The question is not the right to exist; the question is does it accept existence. In other words, do states accept the existence of other states and their right to live in security, as opposed to their right to exist, if you will. And so to get caught up on the phrase "right to exist" I think is misleading. I think Patrick is absolutely right that Arabs as a whole have accepted that Israel exists, will continue to exist, and has some expectation to exist within secure boundaries that are recognized by the international community. Don is also right that Palestinian refugees and Palestinians as a whole, and Arabs as a whole, when they write their history in a hundred years, 200 years, will never suggest that the establishment of Israel in 1948 was somehow just, moral, and legitimate. It will always be seen as a colonial conquest by Europeans of an indigenous population and their subsequent expulsion. Palestinian history will always be written that way because that is the way Palestinians view their history. And so you have to differentiate the stories that people tell and the history they tell about themselves with the political context and the acceptance by governments of other governments and other states and that sort of thing. So don't get caught up in the word "right" here.

MR. RUEBNER: I'd like to add something about this notion of the perceptions of what a final status agreement would look like. And I'd like to respectfully disagree with what Mr. Miller said earlier this morning, that both sides went voluntarily to Camp David. In the weeks leading up to Camp David, there were reports that it was very much a Barak initiative. Some analysts speculated that it was very much Barak's idea to get Arafat in this kind of situation where they could meet face-to-face with Clinton supporting Barak's version of what a final status agreement would look like. On his part, Arafat was widely reported to believe that neither side had bridged the gaps enough to go to a summit like this and that it was bound to fail and/or provoke a violent reaction because they weren't going to reach an agreement with the gaps so wide–as in fact happened. In this interpretation, Arafat's perception of the time frame for actually getting an agreement done appeared more realistic.

Mr. Hof, Hizballah's looking pretty good right now, sitting pretty with four Israeli soldiers. How do you foresee the negotiations that are likely to take place? Are they likely to take place? And what is Hizballah looking for in these negotiations?

MR. HOF: I believe what Hizballah's looking for is the final plank of the Lebanese position concerning the complete withdrawal of Israel from Lebanese territory, which is to say the return of Lebanese prisoners, members of the so-called Islamic Resistance, who have been in Israeli jails…some of whom for many, many years. I think this is what Hizballah's looking for, and it was obviously in search of some trading material. In terms of how this will work out, who knows. I suspect there will be a deal. I don't think we'll see anything like a Cold War exchange at Checkpoint Charlie with one group of people headed in one direction and another group headed in the other. I think there will be a time lag built into the exchange that will enable some people not to have to make a big political sacrifice up front.

And I would like to comment just briefly on the issue of summit diplomacy. I think Aaron said something this morning that is really worth focusing on. I won't put quotes around this but this is the gist: only Arafat and Barak knew before the summit what their positions were on Jerusalem. In the State Department where I once worked, that would be an insufficient basis to convene a summit. Something similar happened, I think, back in March in Geneva involving the President of the United States and the President of Syria. Having been in government, I'm used to people on the outside trying to give me rudder direction, trying to tell me what to do, and critiquing me through the rear-view mirror, so I'm very sensitive to that. But I think in dealing with summit diplomacy, a great deal of caution has to be used. A great deal of homework has to be done. In my personal experience, when I was a military officer in the Pentagon, just getting ministers of defense together required that these agendas be coordinated. And quite frankly, the principals were not left with a whole lot of room to be extemporaneous. You can't nail down a hundred percent in advance, but 95 percent isn't a bad target. I'm just a little bit concerned, and I know I don't have all the facts, but to the extent that a summit conference becomes an extemporaneous bull session, you know, let's talk it out, let's see if we can do this…I don't like it. I have a strong prejudice against it. I don't think that's the way to do business.

DR. SEALE: Could I ask Frederic Hof a question? In his excellent presentation, his motto was that others would decide Lebanon's future. I'd like to ask him this: isn't Hizballah now taking the initiative? Hizballah has emerged as the representative

of the single largest community in Lebanon. It has forced Israel out. It has established a deterrent capability vis-à-vis Israel. By kidnapping four Israelis, it is almost certainly going to secure the release of its own leaders who were kidnapped in Lebanon by the Israelis. Isn't this Lebanon deciding?

MR. HOF: Yes, in my comments I lumped Hizballah into the general category of "others." I do want to acknowledge that Hizballah is, for all intents and purposes, a Lebanese movement. It obviously has connections outside the country, connections to Iran, connections to Syria. These are important connections, but I think most of the academic and policy community has come to the conclusion that Hizballah is pretty much a Lebanese institution. The question I would ask about the future of Lebanon is what's going to happen if we get past all of this current turmoil. What sort of role will Hizballah play then? And I think that for the foreseeable future, one would have to say that Hizballah would run into the same obstacles of Lebanese sectarianism and confessionalism that have bedeviled everyone since the beginning of the Lebanese Republic. But I would also keep in mind that in terms of "others will decide" the majority of the Lebanese are basically along for the ride here. It may be that Hassan Nasrallah and his executive directorate are making some decisions and are dragging the Republic along. But bear in mind, most Lebanese played no role in the ouster of the Israelis in the south. Most Lebanese are playing no role in events that are taking place now.

QUESTION: [Paraphrase] To what extent have recent events reversed the tide toward regional economic integration and will that make the Middle East less of a priority among global policymakers?

DR. ROBINSON: Let me take the first crack at that because I think that's a fantastic question. The way I would answer it is that the countries in the region are undertaking parallel but not integrated paths. The thing that's striking about Jordan, Israel, Palestine, and to some degree Syria, is that they're really following a very similar kind of path that you outlined. Over the last 20 years, each of these countries has moved to—and people use different words—socialist, capitalist, state-center to private sector marketization, what is the term the IMF uses, structural adjustment. In various ways, each of these states has moved toward a state business alliance, if you will, with private sector development. Peace can be seen in many ways. I mean obviously things like the end of the Cold War and the Gulf War played into it to a large degree. The Middle East peace process in many ways can be seen as an outgrowth of this marketization in the region of the state-business alliance because obviously peace is good for business, and if you're talking about private sector development, what's good for business is good for the country. So peace in effect has followed this change in the political economy in every one of these countries. Syria, less so, but the other three are very clear. And as a result, again, if you follow the logic or agree with the logic of my argument, it's undermined either democratization in the case of Jordan, the West Bank, and potentially in the future Syria, or in the case of a consolidated democracy like Israel, it's undermined the stability of the democracy where the people that brought you the business, state-business alliance or marketization, what have you, were voted out of office, if you will, and may well again in the near future.

This has all gotten played out, at least on the Arab side, in resistance to normalization. Resistance to normalization with Israel. Be that trade, trade agreements, labor unions, professional associations, exchanges, and all of these sorts of things. In Jordan, for example, this is the way that the very strong anti-peace sentiment gets expressed–through an anti-normalization campaign. So I think you've seen these countries take parallel paths, but they're not integrating. They're just following the same steps side-by-side with each other, at different rates.

QUESTION: Professor Robinson, you had mentioned the switch theory. That was actually a very interesting comment because CNN several days ago, they actually had one of the lead negotiators from Israel and one of the lead negotiators from Palestine, Palestinians, hoping to meet at the same time. And the lead negotiator from Israel actually tended to believe the switch theory. I think actually some Members believe it as well, that, you know, Arafat has the ability to stop the violence in the Middle East, and nothing will happen…nothing further will happen unless he does. And in fact, the negotiator from Israel suggested that if Arafat can't stop the violence, perhaps they're talking to the wrong people. Maybe they should talk to somebody else. I was wondering if you had any comments about that, and in fact perhaps they should be talking to somebody else instead of Arafat to have peaceful results.

DR. ROBINSON: Yes, it's such an interesting question, frankly. And it was really epitomized...there was an interview with Shlomo Ben-Ami, the acting foreign minister of Israel, this morning on CNN. And in the course of two sentences, he advocated this contradiction, if you will, without I think recognizing that he was saying things that are contradictory. On the one hand, he said, and this has been very commonly reported in the Israeli press, the switch theory. That Arafat controls it and it's his decision, and it's been organized by Arafat. And he said that, when the moment of truth had come, the Americans were going to make these proposals to bridge the final gaps that Camp David left, and Arafat didn't want to be faced with that so he organized this violence to make sure that these American proposals would never get off the ground. In the very next breath, he used the phrase—as he's been using for three weeks now—that Arafat was riding the back of a tiger that he doesn't control. That here's a tiger that's going very different ways, very strongly, and he's holding on for dear life. Well, you can't have it both ways. And that is the tension. It's clear that there's not a political switch, and it's also clear that Arafat's authority has eroded deeply.

Israelis are the most polled people in the world. And since Oslo, Palestinians have become the second most polled people in the world. And even before these last three weeks, the level of approval for Arafat in these various Palestinian polls undertaken by CPRS and JMCC, they're both respected and U.S.-supported institutions, have shown that Arafat's approval rating had dropped to about 31 percent. Well here's a guy that won 88 percent of the vote for the presidency in 1996, who's been Mr. Palestine, has worn all the institutional hats, has an enormous sort of gravitas and legitimacy because of his history. And yet because of the peace process and corruption and authoritarianism and all these problems, less than a third of the Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza thought he was doing a decent job.

So there is no switch, and he is kind of riding a tiger, I wouldn't want to be in his position right now. He is, on the one hand, trying to maneuver the Palestinian

public to accept what I think will be signed eventually. But at the same time, he can't be seen as forcing an agreement that is unacceptable down the throats of his people because that's probably not good for life expectancy, and it's certainly not good for political legacy. So he's in a very difficult predicament now, and for the press and others to say that here's a guy that just flips the switch on and off, it's just utterly ridiculous, frankly.

MR. RUEBNER: Let me pose a follow-up question to all the panelists that goes to the heart of what we've been talking about all morning. Is Israel miscalculating in its approach to the peace process? And by miscalculating, I mean expecting that Arafat has this level of control. Or that Bashar al-Asad can suddenly not adhere to the line that his father did? Or that Syria and/or Lebanon will rein in Hizballah? Are they miscalculating?

MR. HOF: I'll start on the Hizballah part. I don't think that there is any expectation in Israel that the Lebanese government will rein in Hizballah. And to that extent, the Israelis are not miscalculating.

MR. RUEBNER: It certainly seems to be a pre-condition for holding a donor's conference for the reconstruction of Lebanon.

MR. HOF: I don't expect there's going to be a donor's conference for the reconstruction of Lebanon. I spoke with a group of Lebanese journalists about this last week. Lebanese tend to see this in terms of a heavy-handed threat by the United States, by Europe, and by the international financial institutions. What I tried to explain to these journalists is that it's really a matter of dollars and cents. If you want to mobilize several hundred million dollars to go into the south of Lebanon, you're going to have to take control of that region. And you're going to have to take control of the borders. Otherwise, you can't ask American, Japanese, British, French, Italian taxpayers to put up that kind of money. So even if there is a donor's conference, I would predict it would have the conditionality along the lines I just mentioned, that there would be no disbursements until the south is governed by the Lebanese government.

DR. SEALE: I would argue that Prime Minister Barak did miscalculate. As you will recall, he came to power with a very strong personal mandate. He was the most decorated soldier: no one could question his military decisions. Although his position was very strong, he acted very slowly. He was slow to form his government, slow to make the moves that were required. He refused to endorse Rabin's "deposit in the American pocket"–the commitment to withdraw from the Golan to the June 4, 1967 line. He has been very cautious in implementing agreements with the Palestinians. On the contrary, he has approved settlement building at a faster rate than under the Netanyahu government. So he has made a lot of mistakes.

It's instructive, I think, to look for a moment at the crucial summit between Clinton and Asad in Geneva in March. Why did Barak and Clinton imagine that Asad would break at the last minute? Some people must have persuaded Clinton that Asad was very sick–which he was–and that the Syrian economy was on its knees. I think Barak and Clinton were also influenced by Henry Kissinger's account of his negotiations with Asad. He wrote that Asad was a very tough negotiator, that he

would go to the very edge of the abyss, even over the edge and cling on with his finger nails, but would then yield when he felt he could not get better terms. I think this, too, was a miscalculation, a failure to understand Asad's mind-set, and that of his successor.

Could I take half a minute to answer a question about the Barcelona process, which I don't think we've properly answered? This was essentially a European initiative, taken because the Europeans were worried about two things. They were worried that violence in the Middle East–from North Africa and from the Arab-Israeli conflict–would be imported into Europe. They were also worried at the prospect of large-scale immigration from countries to the south of the Mediterranean.
So the Barcelona process was launched to settle the population issue.

I don't think Americans understand what a difficult problem immigration has become in Europe. Let me give you an example. So far this year, some 250 Moroccans have been drowned trying to cross the Straits of Gibraltar in little boats to get to Spain. You may have read in the press of how 50 Chinese died of asphyxiation in a container lorry coming into Britain. In Germany, there are already over 2.5 million Turks, quite a few of them of Kurdish origin.

So the idea was to spend money south of the Mediterranean to create jobs and settle the population there and reduce the flow of immigrants into Europe. But it hasn't really worked.

The need in capital alone is enormous. Billions of dollars are required to fund water, energy, telecommunications and other projects in all the countries concerned. Only private money can meet the need. But private investment will not go in unless there is more democracy, more transparency, less corruption, a better and a friendlier investment climate. There also has to be a bigger market. The Arab countries need to create a common market so as to attract foreign investment to their region. They have a project to do so, but progress has been slow. Many problems remain to be solved. In my view, the Barcelona process has more or less failed to deliver what it promised.

MR. RUEBNER: Dr. Peretz, do you think that Prime Minister Barak miscalculated at Camp David? Do you think that he believed Arafat would buy into his vision of a final status agreement?

DR. PERETZ: My impression is that Barak went to Camp David with that calculation in mind. He thought Arafat would agree to what he considered major concessions. But again, coming back to the historical narrative, what Israelis consider concessions, Palestinians and Arabs don't consider concessions at all. Israel said we're willing to give up 60, 70, 80, 90 percent of the West Bank or Gaza, Palestinians say what do you mean give up! It belonged to us in the first place. So you're not giving up anything, you're giving back what belonged to us in the first place. This leads to miscalculation on both sides.

DR. ROBINSON: I'd like to share something very quick on the last question. I think it really has to be answered at two levels, and the first level is sort of the tactical decisions that are made, mistakes that are made, strategy going into Camp David and out of, etc., etc., that the players themselves have made. And I think the

colleagues on both sides of me have made that point very, very well. But there's a second level, a bigger level if you will, a structural level, and it's not helpful in my mind to talk about good guys and bad guys, white hats and black hats. And this gets to this notion I mentioned earlier of a hegemonic peace and my pessimism is more structural, and that is it really makes no sense for Israel as the power that it is to make concessions that it really doesn't have to. The Palestinians and the Arabs have no power to compel it to make concessions, above and beyond what perhaps the domestic constituency in Israel will accept. I mean just logically it wouldn't make a whole lot of sense for them to do it.

At the same time, the Palestinians being so weak by comparison just don't have the power to compel Israel to do things that it doesn't want to do. I mean the peace process as a whole has been basically internal Israeli decisions about how much to give back at what rate on what issues. The Israelis have been the ones, since they hold all the cards, that have been making these decisions, and the Palestinians, as the weak party, have had to accept them, as they go along. I think that is just a predicament of their power and balance, and it's not because one side's the good guys and the other side's the bad guys. It has to do with the strength of one party and the weakness of the other.

MR. RUEBNER: Does the new intifadah change this power balance?

DR. ROBINSON: No. At the end of the day when things calm down, you're still going to have a powerful Israel and a very weak Palestine. And that's really not going to change very much. I think Patrick Seale was right, though, in that the biggest impact is in how the various authoritarian governments in the Arab world respond to their own populations. These governments, by and large, are not particularly legitimate; by and large were not popularly elected. And by and large, they take positions on this issue that are more accommodating than their publics would want. I think this, in effect, radicalization of the Arab street, if you will, is going to be a problem for a number of Arab governments in the region.

QUESTION: We've had peaceful transitions in Jordan and Syria and arguably in Lebanon lately. So the next play obviously is in the Palestinian area. Could you paint some scenarios of possible Arafat successors and where they would stand on the peace process?

DR. ROBINSON: Again, it's not so much a matter in my mind of individual players, and there are people we can talk about–Mahmoud 'Abbas and Marwan al-Barghouthi and others–it's more a matter of the factors that go into this succession. And there are a number of factors that have to do with the timing of when it happens, the circumstances under which it happens, things like the inside/outside cleavage of Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza and those that have returned, the hundred thousand or so that have returned from the outside after Oslo. And who basically hold all the key power positions in the PA. You know, the sort of foreign power interference, there's going to be a lot of interested parties—Israel, Jordan, Egypt among them—trying to influence succession. So there are a lot of questions, if you will, that go into it.

My sense, though, is I ask the question a little bit differently, not so much who is going to come into power, but will Palestinian politics look a whole lot different under a successor to Arafat? And my answer to that is no. That I think the kind of creeping authoritarianism that you're seeing in Palestine is pretty durable. I think it's pretty durable for a number of reasons, again, having to do with the political economy of Palestine, how revenues are raised by the government, for example. I think it has to do with the social basis of power, that again the police and security forces (the *mukhabarat*), the state bureaucracy that's a source of patronage, and the *a'yan* is still sort of an old notable class, that are the pillars of the regime, they're not particularly open to democratization. I think the logic of the peace process also, as I've argued, suggests an enhancement of authoritarianism. My own sense is that Palestinian politics, by and large, at the regime level, are not going to look a whole lot different ten years from now than they do now.

QUESTION: Any parallels to Algeria, do you think?

DR. ROBINSON: You know, that's an interesting question. And the Palestinians themselves use Algeria, the women's' movement, in particular, as an example. Can that kind of authoritarian regime in effect last against a society that has a long democratic tradition? By Arab world standards, Palestine perhaps has the strongest civil society and certain traditions of democracy. So in effect, who wins in the end…does the authoritarian state…is it able over a number of years to withstand societal pressures having to do with democracy and corruption and other issues, or is it…does it cave in. Do you have popular riots after some number of years that bring down the government? My own short answer to that would be as long as international rents, strategic rents, outside sources of money continue to flow into the Palestinian treasury, I suspect authoritarianism in Palestine is durable and not temporary.

DR. SEALE: May I add a word to what Dr Robinson has said? Of course there is an imbalance of power, a huge imbalance. But, nevertheless, I think one of the lessons of recent events is that force cannot solve these problems. Indeed, the use of force arouses fierce passions, which are very, very difficult to control. What is striking in recent events is the readiness of the perpetrators of these events on the Arab and Palestinian side to sacrifice themselves, to face death. I think President Clinton called the attack on the Cole cowardly, and Secretary Cohen described it as senseless. Well, whatever we may think of their action, the men who carried it out showed great courage. Apparently they stood to attention before blowing themselves up. The stone-throwers are also showing great courage in the Palestinian territories. I think we have to accept this.

We should perhaps also understand that Hizballah's victory in Lebanon created a model, which many, many Arabs relate to and want to follow. There has been a change. Of course, Israel remains supreme in conventional military power. It also has a monopoly of unconventional weapons, of weapons of mass destruction. But can it face a guerrilla movement? The Palestinians can make life very difficult for the Israelis. They can make life very difficult for the settlers. Stone throwing and violent attacks can be very potent weapons in those societies, and Israel is vulnerable to them. Israel does not want to take casualties. Israel has, to some extent, lost the will to fight.

Let me tell you an anecdote, which I heard in Israel. During the 1991 war, when Iraq was firing scuds at Israel, Yitzhak Rabin in Tel Aviv noticed that several of his neighbors had fled the city. He realized then that Israel was no longer the same Israel as before. It was no longer ready for the sacrifices of the past. This was one of the reasons he converted to a more "dovish" position. So I think things are not quite as straightforward regarding the balance of power as Professor Robinson would have us believe.

MR. RUEBNER: I'd like to thank all of our panelists very much, and we're very appreciative that they've contributed their wonderful expertise and insights into what was I think an excellent discussion. Thank you very much.