



## Role of US in Arab-Israeli conflict in post-cold war period

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### I. Introduction

The Arab-Israeli conflict has been one of the most prolonged known conflicts. There is a serious and academic debate about this prolonged conflict. The conflict, prior was an inter-communal strife but later it transformed to inter-state war. The cause for Arab-Israeli conflict can be best explained as the claim of the Arabs and Jews over the same piece of land since 1948. Since the time of creation of the state of Israel there have been several wars between the Jews and Arabs. Some of these instances include the 1948 war, 1967 war, 1973 war, 1982 Lebanon war and so on. U.S. has always been playing a prominent role in Arab-Israeli conflict. Favouring Israel was always a priority for U.S. Here U.S. playing a diplomatic role to satisfy the great hunger for energy. Sometimes U.S had been supporting to Arab countries but not in the cost of Israeli's security. U.S is very much careful about Israeli's security, which stands core to its foreign policy towards Middle East. U.S is the chief negotiator in the Arab-Israeli conflict. <sup>1</sup>The main focus of my study is to find out the strategic role of U.S in Arab-Israeli conflict and peace process, whether U.S is an active negotiator or just pursuing his national interest. The post-cold war situation was different from that of cold war. The present study will thematically examine the role of U.S. in post-cold war period. The paper will sight two major themes; first one includes the wars, uprisings and conflicts in Arab-Israeli relations. Second one includes all the peace process since the emergence of Arab-Israeli conflict. So the role of U.S. in Arab-Israeli conflict can be examined by looking towards its involvement mostly in Arab-Israeli wartime situations.

The Arab-Israeli conflict permanently became a part of a global ideological conflict. Since the establishment of the state of Israel in the late 1940s, the U.S. government has worked to

<sup>1</sup>Peace Process; American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict since 1967, William B. Quandt, Washington, D.C, 2005, p.p. 245-248.

promote a settlement of the Arab-Israeli dispute.<sup>2</sup> United State has two strategic intentions in mind, Jewish national survival and to access oil reserves of the Arab World. Within these parameters, the U.S. government has been remarkably successful in narrowing the geopolitical scope of the Arab-Israeli conflict and in reducing its ability to threaten global stability. It has so far failed, however, to promote an actual resolution of the dispute.

### II. Background

The starting point of U.S. involvement in Palestine Issue dates back to the early period of 1947 when Britain decided to withdraw its forces from Palestine and let the United Nations to adjudicate the claims of Zionist Jews and Palestinian Arabs.<sup>3</sup> Under United Nations a special Committee was formed, that committee investigated the scenario and proposed that Palestine be divided into a Jewish state and an Arab State. Both the Arab states and the Palestinians flatly rejected the partition plan. In November 1947 the U.N. General Assembly approved partition. The Arabs of Palestine will never submit themselves to partition.

That led a violence conflict between Palestinians and Zionists. In May 1948, the Zionists proclaimed the independent state of Israel, whereupon several Arab countries declared war on the new state. President Harry S Truman and his successor, Dwight D. Eisenhower, were equally unsuccessful in resolving the disputes arising from Israel's creation. Still, by the early 1990s circumstances were pushing Palestinians, Israelis, and Americans toward compromise. The disintegration and fall of the Soviet Union disadvantaged the PLO of a major source of

<sup>2</sup>See Karsh Efraim, The Arab-Israeli Conflict: The Palestine War 1948, Britain, 2002, p.p.73-75.

<sup>3</sup> Britain's involvement in Palestine threatened to undermine its relations with the independent Arab states, and the decision to withdraw from Palestine in 1948 was therefore taken in the hope that this would secure Britain's position in the rest of the Middle East.



material and diplomatic support. Arafat's backing of Iraq in the Persian Gulf War of 1990-91 frustrated wealthy Gulf Arab states, which curtailed their financial assistance to the PLO. In the meantime, Bush had sought Arab support for the Gulf War by promising to revisit the Arab-Israeli issue once the war ended. In October 1991, the United States and the declining Soviet Union co-sponsored a Middle East conference in Madrid joined by Israel, the most important Arab states, and a Palestinian delegation approved by, though not formally affiliated with, the PLO.<sup>4</sup> By arrangement, after limited sessions the conference fragmented up into separate Israeli-Syrian, Israeli-Jordanian, Israeli-Lebanese, and Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. These negotiations resulted in concrete outcomes.

In the summer of 1993, however, Israeli and PLO officials held secret talks in Oslo and agreed on a formula for resolving the dispute: Israel would withdraw from portions of Gaza and from the West Bank town of Jericho. From these bases, the Palestinians would gradually assume responsibility for administering Gaza and unspecified portions of the West Bank. Although the United States played no role in the Oslo talks,<sup>5</sup> the agreement was unveiled on the White House lawn, and the administration of Bill Clinton became the principal mediator for subsequent Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

The Arab-Israeli conflict that emerged after World War II originated in ideological, political and military developments of preceding decades. When Ottoman Empire collapsed during World War I, Britain assumed control of Palestine as a mandate under the League of Nations. The Jews and Arabs of the territory sought political independence, coming into conflict with each other and with Britain. World War II undermines Britain's to govern the mandate and encouraged the Jews and Arabs to fulfil their aspirations diplomacy and force. Traditionally isolated from the politics of Middle East, United States gave immediate attention to this conflict and let the U.N to adjudicate the claims of Zionist Jews and Palestinian Arabs. The modern Arab-Jewish

<sup>4</sup>The Madrid Conference of 1991 held from 30 October to 1 November 1991 in Madrid, hosted by Spain was co-sponsored by both U.S. and USSR. It was basically a peace process.

<sup>5</sup>Oslo talk basically known as Oslo Accord is agreement between PLO and Israel. It was signed in Washington in 1993 and Oslo II was signed in 1995 in Egypt.

conflict over Palestine originated as a clash of ideologies. Before World War II, U.S. diplomats paid little attention to Middle East in general and Palestine in particular. By 1930 some U.S. citizens had begun to press President Roosevelt to endorse Zionism. During World War II however, government officials identified national security reasons for endorsing Britain's anti-Zionist policy. Prior to 1940, U.S. officials counted few political interests in Middle East.

The American government took episodic interests in protecting the fortunes of U.S. merchants and missionaries and passively promoted anti-colonialism but refrained from challenging Anglo-French hegemony in the region. In 1941, Roosevelt encouraged Jewish leaders to trust Britain to defend Palestine's Jews. Many non-Jewish U.S. citizens also sympathised with Zionism. America has a notion that Jews would make Palestine prosper. As we know America's foreign policy mostly guided by national interest, it always seeks to preserve the sole interest. Many considered the role of U.S. in this region is based on double standard morality. To protect allied wartime interests in Arab States, U.S. leaders professed non-Zionism to Arab States. Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud, who established the kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932, emerged as a staunch U.S. partner during World War II. In 1943, Roosevelt declares the kingdom vital to U.S. national security and provided it with generous economic and military aids. Roosevelt considered Saudi Arabia geopolitically so important that it recognized Ibn Saud's anti-Zionist views. Certain patterns in wartime policy regarding Palestine persisted after the war. Public and congressional opinion strongly influenced White House adversaries.

### **The Level of the Analysis of Problem**

In dealing with the roots of wars, it is important to be clear about the level of analysis. J. David Singer, in a famous article, identified the two most widely employed levels of analysis in International Relations: the international system and the national sub-systems. The first level of analysis focuses on the international system and its impact on the behaviour of states. The second focuses on domestic influences on state and on other states. Here we can examine the ideas of Kenneth Waltz. His book "Man, the state and war" is mostly appropriate to this research because it directly deals with cause of war. He identifies three principal images of international relations (1) war as the result of the nature and behaviour of man (2) war as the outcome of the internal organization of



states (3)war as the product of international anarchy. Waltz's analysis is well befits to the outbreak of Arab-Israeli conflict. But here we can made slight change in this framework. This revised version of framework identifies three central issues that contribute to the outbreak of wars in the Middle East: the Arab-Israeli conflict, inter-Arab relations, and the involvement of the Great Powers in the affairs of the region.

The End of World War II marked the period in which US became very aggressive in its foreign policy and it moved forward to establish strategic relationship the world. The impact of these involvements is varied in the sense that the US created several allies and enemies during this period. The country has acquired the status of super power and wanted to assert its influence economically, politically and militarily in the global arena. The present study critically examines the role of United States in the Arab-Israeli conflict in the post-cold war period and tries to explore the United States strategic engagement in the Middle East. The scope of this study covers all the developments in the Arab-Israeli conflict since the end of the cold war. The on-going tension between Arab and Israeli seems unresolved because of the third party involvement like United States. US foreign policy has always contained a powerful idealistic element, and promoting democracy abroad has been one of its goals since the time of Woodrow Wilson. Democracy promotion gained particular salience in the Cold War context under Ronald Regan. It was then re-emphasized in the euphoria of the post-cold war period under Bill Clinton. But after 11 September 2001 the US administration focused on promoting democracy in the Middle East especially.

The Oslo process came to a tragic end in 2000-2001. The Israelis later claimed that, at a July 2000 Camp David summit meeting, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak offered Arafat virtually everything the Palestinians had previously demanded but that Arafat rejected the offer and opted for violence instead.<sup>6</sup> The administration of George W. Bush, which took office in January 2001, was initially sceptical of this approach. Obama displayed an exceptional ability to

inspire confidence in his promises during the 2008 promotion. One such promise was his pledge to actively pursue a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians an issue he did not shy away from on the campaign trail. Although Obama implemented an assertive and logical plan to resolve the conflict early in his presidency the Administration's policies and diplomatic efforts have proven strikingly unsuccessful. Obama addressed the Arab-Israeli conflict with a twofold strategy: restoring America's tarnished image among Muslims and persuading Israel to stop settlement expansion. The apex of Obama's diplomatic outreach to the Muslim world took the form of a much publicized address in Cairo. He laid out the parameters for peace and was fairly adept at presenting the U.S. as an even handed mediator. Perhaps most importantly, the overall tone of the speech was notably more receptive and open minded than that of his predecessor, George W. Bush. Despite these positive indications, it remained unclear at the time how much substance lay behind the rhetoric. As the world dissected the president's speech, newly appointed Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George Mitchell worked energetically in the background, visiting multiple times with Palestinian, Israeli and Arab leaders during 2009. Obama matched Mitchell's diplomatic efforts with a significant policy change in May. During a joint press conference at the White House with recently elected Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Obama set a precondition for negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. He announced that real progress could not be achieved without the Israelis first implementing a settlement freeze. The move was well reasoned, noted Martin Indyk, Kenneth Lieberthal and Michael O'Hanlon in a recent essay. "Restricting settlement activity should have improved the environment for negotiations and reduced Palestinian mistrust of Israeli intentions." In their book 'Bending History: Barack Obama's Foreign Policy' they assessed Obama's foreign policy in his first term. The policies of Obama towards Middle East and the "soft security" agenda is the prime concern of this book.

Unfortunately, the reverse proved more accurate. Although not entirely apparent at first, this shift in policy caused significant problems for the administration, and Obama's ability to negotiator a peace agreement looked less likely as the year wore on. By designating a settlement freeze as a precondition for negotiations, Obama put Netanyahu in a difficult position politically. Due to some of the more right wing partners in his

<sup>6</sup>The 2000 Camp David Summit was held in the month of July, it was a meeting of U.S. president Bill Clinton, Israeli P.M Ehud Barak and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat. It was an initiative to stop the Israeli-Palestine conflict.



coalition, Netanyahu was not able to comply with a full settlement freeze, and the resulting impasse proved problematic for the already weakened Mahmoud Abbas. Thus, within a few months Obama had created an unnecessary obstacle to the peace process. It did not take long for the president to recognize his mistake. Several months after calling for a settlement freeze, Obama pragmatically backed down from the demand, asking that settlement activity be restrained, rather than fully stopped. However, this policy change yielded limited benefits. Obama was able to coax both Netanyahu and Abbas to sit down with him in late September in a three-way meeting the first between Netanyahu and Abbas since the Israeli leader's election. Yet the discussion produced little more than a photograph of Abbas and Netanyahu shaking hands.

Indeed, the Obama administration's efforts not only failed to achieve any real rewards, the September meeting further damaged Abbas' standing as a leader and negotiator. He agreed to meet with Netanyahu despite the lack of progress on a settlement freeze, but walked away with slight to show for it. Shortly thereafter Abbas spoke of resigning. Despite these hindrances, potential progress appeared to be on the horizon by late November 2009 when Netanyahu announced a 10-month freeze suspending new construction and new building permits within the West Bank. The halt was not a complete settlement freeze, however, as the construction of some government buildings would continue. Moreover, construction in Jerusalem would proceed as usual. In essence, Netanyahu's moratorium was no more than a partial freeze for a short period of time in the West Bank only, resulting in a partial compliance with U.S. settlement freeze demands. Although certainly a step forward, the moratorium reaped few rewards. After months of diplomatic pressure, the Obama administration was able to bring Abbas and Netanyahu together for the resumption of direct talks just weeks before the settlement freeze was set to expire in late September 2010. Yet discussion ultimately went nowhere. Despite pleas from the White House, Netanyahu did not extend the moratorium and negotiations floundered as Abbas refused to continue talks without a resumption of the settlement freeze. An inability to push the negotiating teams further was not the only problem troubling Obama: before the direct talks had reached a standstill, U.S.-Israeli relations had begun to grow unusually icy.

A decision in March 2010 to build an additional 1,600 housing units in East

Jerusalem (announced while Joe Biden was visiting Jerusalem) is particularly illustrative of the rift. Furious at both the decision and its timing, the administration criticized the policy, and Obama gave Netanyahu the cold shoulder at a White House visit several weeks later. Some argue that a less tight-knit relationship between Washington and Jerusalem represents a positive change: both countries could benefit strategically from such a development. While there may be some truth behind this argument, the cooling off of U.S.-Israeli relations has not aided Obama in his search for Mideast peace. Indeed, with frustration mounting, the Palestinians further complicated the peace process when Abbas requested U.N. membership for a Palestinian state last September. The move put Obama in an awkward situation. Having called for a Palestinian state while addressing the General Assembly only one year prior the president now stood at the U.N. and argued that the Palestinian proposal should be turned down. He had been willing to strain U.S.-Israeli relations over settlement building, but he was in no position to support Abbas' U.N. bid. Political pressure at home demanded he say no.

In describing Obama's relationship with Jerusalem, Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney went so far as to say that the president had "thrown Israel under the bus." Obama could not afford to give his political opponents further ammunition. As unfair and inaccurate as Romney's statement was, it is still true that Obama's Mideast peace policies have strained U.S.-Israeli relations. But this ultimately misses the point. An impartial mediator which is what the U.S. claims to be and what is typically required to bring about peace is bound to upset both sides of a conflict in the process of successfully resolving any large scale dispute. The administration should be criticized less for upsetting Netanyahu (not to mention Abbas), and more for doing so in an ineffective and unsuccessful way.

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attention to this conflict and let the U.N to adjudicate the claims of Zionist Jews and Palestinian Arabs. The modern Arab-Jewish conflict over Palestine originated as a clash of ideologies. Before World War II, U.S. diplomats paid little attention to Middle East in general and Palestine in particular. By 1930 some U.S. citizens had begun to press President Roosevelt to endorse Zionism. During World War II however, government officials identified national security reasons for endorsing Britain's anti-Zionist policy. Prior to 1940, U.S. officials counted few political interests in Middle East.

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### The Great Game-My argument

As above mention that U.S. is playing dual role in Arab-Israeli conflict, because there is no permanent friend and permanent enemy in international relation. As Martin Indyk, Kenneth Lieberthal, and Michael O'Hanlon hold in their book U.S. foreign policy is becoming pragmatic day by day. Especially in the reign of President Obama, there is a combination of realist pragmatic approach and idealist progressive approach. Sometimes this kind of transformation in U.S. foreign policy open a source of its criticism.<sup>7</sup> Some political analyst claim that despite United States active involvement the Arab-Israeli conflict, the conflict is without an end. United States is betraying not only Israel's but also Sunni Arabs.

As an active negotiator in Arab-Israeli conflict U.S. is facing the difficulties of the Arab-Israeli peace process; the revolt that has been spread across Arab World 2011 to 2012. Since its involvement in this conflict and peace process all tendencies of U.S foreign policy only confined to its national interest. We can sight the example of Machiavelli, the political thinker. Machiavelli advised to prince to play double standard role. The basic intention to sight Machiavelli here is his attitude of his prince is mostly inherent in the United States involvement in Arab-Israeli conflict. The United States is playing both the role of Lion and fox.<sup>8</sup> Always there was a conflict soon after 1948 and there was a hope that

<sup>7</sup>See Bending History: Barack Obama's Foreign Policy, Martin S. Indyk, Kenneth G. Lieberthal and Michael E. O'Hanlon. Washington, DC, 2012, p.200

<sup>8</sup> Machiavelli the eminent political thinker of 15<sup>th</sup> century gave the idea about the attitude of lion and fox. Here lion represents the entity of power and fox represents the cunningness.



the conflict would be resolved, but that doesn't happen. Till 1982, people thought that the conflict could still be solved, but it wasn't. And finally, during the talks from 1993-2000, there were renewed hopes that the conflict would be resolved. It wasn't. With the entry of Iran, rise of Islamic fundamentalism, Hamas-ruled Palestinians who rejecting peace, struggle for power between Arab speaking states and the radical government in Turkey the situation became more complicated. Israel desperately needs peace is because of Arab demographic growth. The main barriers to peace are the Jewish settlements.

Further to know broadly the intentions of United States involvement in Arab-Israeli conflict, I have to discuss all the wars and later all the peace processes here-

Iraqi invasion and occupation of neighbouring Kuwait in early August, 1990 shocked other Arabic countries such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt. They called on U.S. and other European countries to intervene. Immediately U.S. led airstrike began which is known as 'Operation Desert Storm'. After 42 days of bombardments, cease fire has declared. There was worldwide condemnation of this Iraq invasion in Kuwait. United Nations compelled Iraq to withdraw from the land of Iraq. American intervention also come fall under some criticism for its involvement in Gulf War. It was a source of criticism for years. The then president of U.S. was George Bush was elected president in 1988.

Bush leadership was put to a stern test in 1990. On August 2, the army of Iraq invaded the small neighbouring country of Kuwait and quickly took over. Iraq was led by a brutal man named Saddam Hussein who proclaimed he was annexing Kuwait to Iraq and anyone who didn't like it could stuff it. Bush chose not to stuff it. To Bush supporters, his decision to intervene was based on his desire to help the weak. To his opponents, it was to protect U.S. interests in Kuwait's oil production. Whatever the reason, in the weeks following the Iraqi invasion, Bush convinced other world leaders to establish a trade embargo on Iraq. Almost simultaneously, the United States, Britain, France, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and other countries began assembling a massive armed force in case the economic pressure didn't work.

The first intifada was Palestine's revolt against Israeli for its occupation of Gaza and West Bank and East Jerusalem. It has started in 1987 and concluded in 1993 with the signing of Oslo Accords. The First Intifada was a grassroots uprising. Palestinians were frustrated and angry

with Israel's increasingly oppressive and colonialist policies towards them. Palestinians were forced to pay taxes to Israel, while they were subject to army raids, random detentions, and denied basic civil rights. Their collective national aspiration for their own state was also denied. These injustices were compounded by Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem and the construction of illegal settlements on Palestinian land in the West Bank. Palestinians' frustration had been simmering for years and the deaths of the Palestinians in Gaza on 9 December 1987 made it boil over. When that proved to be the case, the United States and its allies launched a gigantic aerial assault on Iraq on January 16, 1991. After six weeks of massive bombardment, the allied forces sent in ground troops. The vaunted Iraqi military turned out to be made of papier-mâché. U.S. casualties were light, and about 100 hours after the ground war started, Iraq threw in the towel. The victory, however, was not all that victorious. Kuwait was free, but the Iraqi dictator Saddam remained in power. Nine years after the war, the United States was still spending \$2 billion a year to enforce a no-fly zone over Northern Iraq, kept an armada of Navy ships in the area, and maintained a force of 25,000 troops in the region.

Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians engaged in a variety of civil disobedience, including: strikes, demonstrations, refusal to pay taxes, and boycotts of Israeli products. Israel responded harshly, closing Palestinian schools, making mass arrests, imposing closure and curfew, and shutting down demonstrations with brutal force. In 1990 former Israeli Defence Minister Yitzak Rabin (who would later sign the Oslo accords with the PLO) famously ordered his soldiers to "break the bones" of the demonstrators. From 1987 to 1991 Israeli forces killed over 1,100 Palestinians, many of who were children, and injured tens of thousands.

The Second Intifada, commonly referred to as the second uprising, began in late 2000 as Israeli always violates the international law and basic human rights of Palestinians. The Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) launched offensive policies towards poor Palestinians for revolt. After United Nation resolution 1322 against Israeli for excessive use of force against Palestine the violence came to an end, but until hundreds of people have died in that conflict. It came to an end in 2005 completely. Iraq War 2003 is also known as Second Persian Gulf War, in March-April of the same year, in which a joint force from the United States and Great Britain invaded Iraq and rapidly



defeated Iraqi military and paramilitary forces. The invasion reduced in 2007 then U.S. called of it army from Iraq completely in 2011. To restrain future Iraqi aggression, the United Nations (UN) implemented economic sanctions against Iraq to hinder the progress of its most lethal arms programs, including those for the development of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons. The Hamas and Fatah, are two largest Palestinian political movements, this conflict has its roots in the 1993 Oslo peace accord with Israel. Hamas rejected all the interim agreements between PLO and Israel. The result is because of the split between Hamas and Fatah. Still reconciliation process is not complete to unify these major political units. This fraction later followed by the Gaza war of 2007, due to the Hamas won the 2006 Palestinian Legislative Election.

As we know Peace process is after conflict resolution, so there are so many peace accords which I will discuss. First in the list is Madrid peace conference which was held in 1992. Here United States play a great role to provide security to Israel and justice to Palestinian. All the parties were invited, but PLO represent with Jordan as a joint delegation. Among all the peace processes this gave a fruitful result. Oslo agreement was signed on 13<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1993 by President Clinton. That was signed between Israel and PLO, but in later period PLO disagrees with this agreement. The main objective of this agreement was establishing a limited Palestinian authority over Gaza strip, Jericho and West Bank and a permanent settlement of resolution 242 and 338. Then the Jordan-Israeli peace treaty of 1994, it was made possible by the optimism created by Oslo. Then the Camp David came in 2000, mainly represented by U.S., Israel and Palestine. The objective was to end the Arab-Israeli conflict. There was a problem of acceptance in Palestine. Palestine was mostly disagreed with the Offers made by Israel. In Taba Agreement of 2001, it was strengthen the status of negotiations to put an end to Arab-Israeli conflict. But this talk was discontinued because of the upcoming Israeli election.

### III. Conclusion and consequences: Perpetuating the Arab-Israeli conflict

Some claim that the Arab-Israeli war is without an end, somehow its seeming right because both the Israel and Palestine are not going to compromise. The Palestinians have good relation with neighbouring Arab states, their doors are always open for Palestinian refugees, while the Jews had no alternative but to triumph or to die.

With the passing of time new problems are emerging in this region. The refugee problems, the rise of Islamic brotherhood further distracting the move towards peace. There is one sentence which I want to derive from the book '*The Arab-Israeli Conflict The Palestine War 1948*' by Efraim Karsh, in the concluding part of his book he mentioned that 'Success has many parents while failure is an orphan'. In the context of Palestine, how Palestine get betrayed by his own brothers of Arab states. The previous notion that Arab doors are open for Palestine is closed because of demographic changes. The scope for the conflict reduction diminished. After analysing the facts, it can be concluded that U.S. have much contribution in keeping alive the conflict to fulfil its national interest.

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