



Joshua Teitelbaum

# The Arab Peace Initiative: A Primer and Future Prospects



המרכז הירושלמי לענייני ציבור ומדינה  
Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs

Joshua Teitelbaum

# The Arab Peace Initiative: A Primer and Future Prospects



המרכז הירושלמי לענייני ציבור ומדינה  
Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs

© 2009 Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs  
13 Tel-Hai St., Jerusalem, Israel  
Tel. 972-2-561-9281 | Fax. 972-2-561-9112  
Email: [jcpa@netvision.net.il](mailto:jcpa@netvision.net.il) | [www.jcpa.org](http://www.jcpa.org)

ISBN 978-965-218-071-1

Production Coordinator: Odelia Zaguri  
Graphic Design: Gama Design  
Pictures Credits: AP Photo

Cover photo: Arab leaders pose at the Arab League Summit in Riyadh,  
Saudi Arabia, March 28, 2007.

All photos are from AP and used with permission.

# The Arab Peace Initiative: A Primer and Future Prospects

Joshua Teitelbaum

- In the wake of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, Saudi Arabia was under intense scrutiny since fifteen of the nineteen 9/11 hijackers had proved to be Saudis. In February 2002, Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia gave an interview to *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman in which he proposed to Israel “full withdrawal from all the occupied territories, in accord with UN resolutions, including in Jerusalem, for full normalization of relations.”
- In a flash, Abdullah had transformed the discourse: Instead of focusing on Saudi involvement in terrorism, the Western press was now talking about Saudi peacemaking. However, by the time the Abdullah trial balloon reached the Arab summit in Beirut in March 2002, the initiative had been modified and its terms hardened.
- “Full normalization” became “normal relations” (which still marks significant progress over the Arab League formulation in Khartoum of 1967: “no peace, no recognition, no negotiations”). It called for an Israeli withdrawal from all the territories to the lines of June 4, 1967, in contradiction of UN Resolution 242, and which would bring Syria to the shores of the Sea of Galilee. It also enshrined a Palestinian “right of return” to Israel.
- Several aspects of the Arab Peace Initiative represent significant and positive developments in the official, collective Arab view of the future of Israel in the Middle East. However, Israel should refrain from accepting the initiative as a basis for peace negotiations because it contains seriously objectionable elements. Israel should also reject the “all or nothing” approach of the Saudis and the Arab League. Peacemaking is the process of negotiation, not *diktat*.

- Peace would be best served by Israel going on the diplomatic offensive and presenting an initiative of its own, emphasizing the positive aspects of the initiative, and including an invitation to Arab leaders to a meeting in Israel to discuss the initiative in its entirety.

Born in the aftermath of both the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and the Palestinian-Israeli war which had begun in late 2000 (commonly known as the “second intifada”), the Arab Peace Initiative (API) of 2002 has moved front and center in Middle Eastern diplomacy. It is likely that President Barack Obama and the Quartet (the U.S., EU, UN, and Russia) may take up the API in some form. With that in mind, the Jerusalem Center presents this study, with background, a contextual and textual analysis, and a discussion of future prospects. It concludes with recommendations for diplomacy.

### **Saudi Arabia, Crown Prince Abdullah, and 9/11: From the *New York Times* to the Beirut Arab Summit**

In early 2002, the United States was still reeling from the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. In his State of the Union Address on January 29, 2002, President George W. Bush had called North Korea, Iraq, and Iran the “axis of evil,” and the U.S. had liberated Afghanistan from the Taliban following its invasion in October 2001, but had not yet invaded Iraq, which it was to do in March 2003.

Saudi Arabia, never popular in the U.S., was under intense scrutiny and criticism since fifteen of the nineteen 9/11 hijackers had proved to be Saudis. In the Middle East, the Oslo process had broken down, and Israel and the Palestinians were engaged in a kind of limited war. Palestinian suicide bombing in Israel increased tremendously, and as a result Israel stepped up its incursions into Oslo-designated Palestinian territory.

While perceptions in Riyadh are notoriously difficult to fathom, it was clear that by early 2002 the Saudis were caught between a rock and

## The Arab Peace Initiative: A Primer and Future Prospects

a hard place. Its most significant ally, the U.S., was enraged as details of the connections between Saudi citizens and al-Qaeda became clearer.<sup>1</sup> Connections between members of the royal family and the exporting of religious fanaticism were being revealed.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, there were increasing indications that al-Qaeda, born in Saudi Arabia, was intent on carrying out attacks within the kingdom. Homegrown radicals would not look fondly upon Saudi efforts at reconciliation with the United States, which had invaded one Muslim country and was threatening to invade another. Other pro-American Arab leaders were concerned about rising anti-American sentiment at home, fueled by pictures of Arab-Israeli violence broadcast daily over satellite television.

Before the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, violence between Israel and the Palestinians since the collapse of the Oslo Accords in September 2000 had brought increasing pressure on the Bush administration, notably from Saudi Arabia, which was later to push the API. Palestinian casualties in the Palestinian-Israeli war had grabbed the attention of then-Crown Prince Abdullah, who was afraid of the influence the constant barrage of Palestinian victims was having on the Arab world. It made the Saudi alliance with the U.S., awkward in the best of circumstances, even more problematic.

Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia had been running day-to-day affairs in the kingdom since about 1995, when King Fahd had fallen ill. While often thought to be more conservative, more pan-Arab and less pro-Western than his half-brother Fahd, Abdullah was proving himself a cautious reformer. He initiated several national dialogues involving various previously taboo subjects, such as the status of women, reform, and relations between Shiites and Sunnis.

In August 2001 Abdullah had dispatched Ambassador Bandar bin Sultan to deliver a harsh message to Bush and National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice. Bush responded privately that he believed a solution would include a Palestinian state, but violence had to stop. Eventually, on November 11, he publicly mentioned a Palestinian state for the first time, in a speech to the UN General Assembly: "We are working toward a day when two states, Israel and Palestine, live peacefully together





The World Trade Center in New York on Sept. 11, 2001.

within secure and recognized borders as called for by the Security Council resolutions.”<sup>3</sup> After a meeting with Bush in Washington in early February 2002, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon told reporters that “at the end of the peace process, I believe that a Palestinian state, of course, will be – we’ll see a Palestinian state.”<sup>4</sup> By June, U.S. policy had coalesced into a “vision” for Israeli-Palestinian peace, based on two states and a new Palestinian leadership.<sup>5</sup>

On February 6, 2002, Thomas Friedman, an influential foreign affairs columnist for the *New York Times*, published an imaginary memorandum from President George W. Bush to President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt,

## The Arab Peace Initiative: A Primer and Future Prospects

Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, King Abdullah II of Jordan, Syria's President Bashar al-Assad, and "the rest of the Arab League."

You have an Arab League summit set for March in Lebanon. I suggest your summit issue one simple resolution: "The 22 members of the Arab League say to Israel that in return for a complete Israeli withdrawal to the June 4, 1967, lines – in the West Bank, Gaza, Jerusalem and on the Golan Heights – we offer full recognition of Israel, diplomatic relations, normalized trade and security guarantees. Full peace with all 22 Arab states for full withdrawal."<sup>6</sup>

Less than a week later, Friedman was in Riyadh talking to Abdullah. According to Friedman, the conversation went like this:

"Have you broken into my desk?"

"No," I said, wondering what he was talking about.

"The reason I ask is that this is exactly the idea I had in mind – full withdrawal from all the occupied territories, in accord with UN resolutions, including in Jerusalem, for full normalization of relations," he said. "I have drafted a speech along those lines. My thinking was to deliver it before the Arab summit and try to mobilize the entire Arab world behind it. The speech is written, and it is in my desk. But I changed my mind about delivering it when Sharon took the violence, and the oppression, to an unprecedented level."<sup>7</sup>

Abdullah's response seems to have been double-edged. On the one hand, he was responding to Friedman's prompt, but on the other, he was taking a jab at Sharon for measures the crown prince perceived as extreme, but which Israel deemed necessary to defend Israel's civilian population against suicide bombings. Yet here was a leader of arguably the most important Arab and Muslim country offering Israel "full normalization of relations," although he was already threatening to withdraw it following the violence in the West Bank and Gaza.



This was not the first peace plan offered by a Saudi crown prince through a media outlet. In August 1981, in response to the Arab-consensus-breaking Camp David Accords between Israel and Egypt, then-Crown Prince Fahd offered a similar plan via the Saudi Press Agency, whose point seven seemed to recognize Israel – albeit not explicitly: “All states in the region should be able to live in peace.” But by the time the plan reached the Arab summit in Fez in September 1982, radical Arab countries has forced several modifications, including in point seven, which instead of offering a guarantee on the part of the Arab states that they would let Israel live in peace, left this guarantee up to the UN.<sup>8</sup> There was even less recognition of Israel implied. The Fahd Plan and the Abdullah Plan were released through the media because they were trial balloons. And just as the Fahd Plan was modified by the time it reached the Arab summit in Fez, so Abdullah’s was to be modified – and hardened – by the time of the Arab Summit in Beirut in March 2002.

### **Reactions: U.S., Israeli, Arab**

Abdullah’s interview with Friedman caused quite a stir. The Abdullah Plan’s presentation, in an interview with a Western journalist, was unusual, if not unprecedented, and it seems to have caught most everyone by surprise. Abdullah was proving much savvier than many in the West had predicted. He had read the situation correctly, and in a flash had transformed the discourse: Instead of focusing on Saudi involvement in terrorism, the Western press was now talking about Saudi peacemaking.

The initial U.S. reaction was cautious, with State Department spokesman Richard Boucher terming it a “significant and positive step.” A few days later, Secretary of State Colin Powell called it an “important step,” but cautioned that more details were needed. President Bush “praised” the crown prince’s ideas, calling them a “hopeful note,” though not a breakthrough.<sup>9</sup> A few days later, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice became more specific: “We appreciate the fact that Prince Abdullah was ready to publicly declare that the normalization of relations between Arab countries and Israel is possible.” She essentially rejected, however,

## The Arab Peace Initiative: A Primer and Future Prospects

a quid pro quo in the form of a return to the pre-1967 borders, stressing that borders should be the subject of negotiations. But American interest was certainly piqued, and Assistant Secretary of State William Burns was dispatched to Riyadh to sound out the Saudis.<sup>10</sup>

In his conversation with Friedman, Abdullah stated one principle: Full Israeli withdrawal in exchange for “full normalization of relations.” For Israelis, full withdrawal was a non-starter (and not in accord with UN Security Council Resolution 242), yet Israelis had proven themselves ready to negotiate the depth of a withdrawal. But the key prize was “full normalization of relations,” which implied more than just formal diplomatic relations, but actual acceptance, including tourism, and cultural and economic relations. Coming from the person next in line for the Saudi throne, this was certainly worth a listen.

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres termed the initiative interesting, positive, new and fascinating.<sup>11</sup> President Moshe Katzav invited Abdullah to Jerusalem to discuss his initiative, a move that one leading Saudi paper decried as a “maneuver” and “cheap one-upmanship.”<sup>12</sup> Prince Abdullah himself ruled out visiting Israel, and stated that neither the Israeli president nor Prime Minister Sharon would be welcome in Riyadh.<sup>13</sup> Sharon was more circumspect, only implying that he would be ready to meet Saudi leaders to discuss the plan.<sup>14</sup> The initial U.S. and Israeli reactions were similar, but as time went on they diverged, with the U.S. becoming more interested. Israel, on the other hand, was preoccupied with a horrific series of Palestinian suicide bombings plaguing the Jewish state at that time.

Egypt, Jordan, and several Gulf countries expressed their immediate and full support. The semi-official Jordanian daily *al-Ra'i* was quick to note that Jordan's King Abdullah II had already been working on a similar idea in concert with other Arab states.<sup>15</sup> Importantly, Syria did not have an immediate response. Since the Saudi idea was to have its initiative endorsed at the upcoming Arab summit, it needed Syrian support. Jordanian Foreign Minister Marwan Muasher was the point man in that effort.<sup>16</sup> Lebanon, too, was hesitant, since it wondered what the plan envisaged for Palestinian refugees living there. It was also the host country

for the summit. In late February, the Saudis began putting pressure on both Lebanon and Syria.

On March 5, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad arrived in Jeddah for talks with Crown Prince Abdullah. Before heading to Saudi Arabia, Assad had met on March 3 in Beirut with Lebanese President Emile Lahoud. While avoiding explicit mention of the Saudi initiative, both stated that a solution to the conflict had to include all UN resolutions, implicitly including General Assembly Resolution 194 of 1948, which called for Palestinian refugees to be allowed to return to their homes (in Israel) or receive compensation.<sup>17</sup> This was not a part of Abdullah's plan. While in Jeddah, Assad and the crown prince were careful not to point out differences. The official Saudi Press Agency reported that Assad supported Abdullah's "ideas," and that the talks were positive, successful, and that the two leaders concurred on all subjects. Syria officially expressed its "satisfaction" with the position of Saudi Arabia.<sup>18</sup>

It appeared there was good reason for Syrian satisfaction: Abdullah's plan seemed to be morphing under Syrian pressure as it headed towards the Beirut summit later in the month. A Saudi official, who declined to be identified, told Agence France-Presse that the Saudis had informed Assad that Abdullah's offer included Resolution 194. "This appeased Syria, which gave its support to the initiative," said the official. Moreover, Arab diplomats told AFP that Saudi Arabia had agreed to a Syrian request to drop "complete normalization" with Israel in favor of "complete peace." According to the diplomats, the latter stressed government-to-government relations rather than people-to-people ties.<sup>19</sup> Although API behind-the-scenes man Marwan Muasher tried to put a positive light on pre-summit talks, stating that the summit's plan was "not a detailed laundry list, it is a political vision that deals with overall principles, land for peace, in a way that appeals to Israeli public opinion, to the international community,"<sup>20</sup> the die was cast. As more meat was being put on the bones of Abdullah's initiative, it was becoming more and more unpalatable to Israel.

According to Muasher, in his meeting with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in Aleppo on March 4, Assad did not feel comfortable with the term "full normalization" that Abdullah had used, and wanted "normal relations"



Lebanese President Emile Lahoud, center, at an Arab League Summit in Beirut on March 27, 2002.

instead. Syrian Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shara, whom Muasher met later, insisted on the formulation “full peace” instead of “full normalization.” Assad also insisted on full Israeli withdrawal to the June 4, 1967, borders, which would put Syria on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. Finally, he insisted that the Palestinian “right of return” be explicitly mentioned. Saudi Foreign Minister Sa’ud al-Faysal warmed to having the word “agreed” in the formulation on the refugees and adopted it (see below).<sup>21</sup>

During meetings with Arab ministers on March 24, Shara hardened his position, expressing himself no longer satisfied with “full peace,” and preferring to replace that formulation with “normal peaceful relations.”



Prince Sa'ud agreed. The Lebanese continued to present problems with respect to the refugee issue. They did not accept that Resolution 194 offered the possibility of compensation, and were determined to have a specific paragraph against Palestinian resettlement (in Arabic, *tawtin*) in Lebanon.<sup>22</sup>

On the eve of the summit, the *New York Times* reported that the word "normalization" had been eliminated from the initiative to be adopted. Host country Lebanon lost no opportunity to push the issue of the return of refugees. Foreign Minister Mahmoud Hamoud stated repeatedly that Lebanon expected the "return of Palestinians to their homes and properties and not to naturalize them in the countries that host them."<sup>23</sup> In the event, a formulation was reached that took Lebanese concerns into consideration, and it presents one of the main difficulties in the API.

## Textual and Contextual Analysis

Some scholars and pundits believe that parsing texts often leads to losing the meaning of the gesture. But as Muasher, one of the architects of the API, writes in his book, *The Arab Center*, Arab leaders spent a long time fighting over the text. They obviously attributed meaning to their words, and therefore so should we.

Muasher gave a sense of what he was trying to achieve when discussing what different formulations meant. "We are not talking only about the end of belligerency, we are talking about relations," he told the *New York Times*. "There will be an overall declaration that everybody agrees to, but you can't expect every single Arab country to have the same relations with Israel. Will every country have an exchange of theater groups, for example? I don't know; that is up to negotiation."<sup>24</sup>

By the time the Arab Peace Initiative was announced at the Arab summit in Beirut (March 27-28, 2002), it had undergone significant changes, primarily as a result of pressure from Syria and Lebanon as discussed above. The API was approved unanimously.<sup>25</sup> This is important, because according to Article Seven of the charter of the Arab League, resolutions are only binding on countries that voted for them.<sup>26</sup>

## The Arab Peace Initiative: A Primer and Future Prospects

Two documents were issued at the end of the summit. The first, known in Arabic as the Beirut Declaration (*I'lan Bayrut*) and read out by Lebanese Foreign Minister Mahmoud Hammoud, contains what is commonly referred to as the API. The second and less well-known document is the summit's Final Statement (*al-Bayan al-Khitami*).

Crown Prince Abdullah's speech at the Summit on March 27 is also of importance, since it included an unprecedented direct appeal to the Israeli people:

Allow me at this point to directly address the Israeli people, to say to them that the use of violence, for more than fifty years, has only resulted in more violence and destruction, and that the Israeli people are as far as they have ever been from security and peace, notwithstanding military superiority and despite efforts to subdue and oppress.

Peace emanates from the heart and mind, and not from the barrel of a cannon, or the exploding warhead of a missile. The time has come for Israel to put its trust in peace after it has gambled on war for decades without success. Israel, and the world, must understand that peace and the retention of the occupied Arab territories are incompatible and impossible to reconcile or achieve.

I would further say to the Israeli people that if their government abandons the policy of force and oppression and embraces true peace, we will not hesitate to accept the right of the Israeli people to live in security with the people of the region.<sup>27</sup>



## The Text of the Arab Peace Initiative

The API consists of seven points, and is divided primarily into Arab and Israeli obligations.

### The Arab Peace Initiative (The Beirut Declaration)

The Council of the League of Arab States at the Summit Level, at its 14th Ordinary Session,

- Reaffirms the resolution taken in June 1996 at the Cairo extraordinary Arab summit that a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East is the strategic option of the Arab countries, to be achieved in accordance with international legality, and which would require a comparable commitment on the part of the Israeli government.
- Having listened to the statement made by his royal highness Prince Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz, the crown prince of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in which his highness presented his initiative, calling for full Israeli withdrawal from all the Arab territories occupied since June 1967, in implementation of Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, reaffirmed by the Madrid Conference of 1991, and the land for peace principle, and Israel's acceptance of an independent Palestinian state, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in return for the establishment of normal relations in the context of a comprehensive peace with Israel.

[The establishment of "normal relations" (*'alaqat tabi'iyya*), although not as strong as "normalization" or the "full normalization" of Crown Prince Abdullah's original initiative, marks significant progress over earlier Arab League formulations, such as Fez and particularly Khartoum of 1967, which famously announced "no peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, no negotiations with it."]

- Emanating from the conviction of the Arab countries that a military solution to the conflict will not achieve peace or provide security for the parties, the council:

## The Arab Peace Initiative: A Primer and Future Prospects

1. Requests Israel to reconsider its policies and declare that a just peace is its strategic option as well.

2. Further calls upon Israel to affirm:

a. Full Israeli withdrawal from all the territories occupied since 1967, including the Syrian Golan Heights to the lines of June 4, 1967, as well as the remaining occupied Lebanese territories in the south of Lebanon.

[This formulation is at odds with Resolution 242, which calls for withdrawal from territories, not all the territories. By stipulating that the withdrawal on the Golan must be to the lines of June 4, 1967, the API rejected the international border, which had placed the entire Sea of Galilee in Israeli hands, and effectively placed the Syrians on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, Israel's main water source. Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon in 2000 was certified by the UN as a withdrawal to the international border.<sup>28</sup>]

b. Achievement of a just solution to the Palestinian refugee problem to be agreed upon in accordance with UN General Assembly Resolution 194.

[This resolution is commonly interpreted by the Arabs to enshrine a Palestinian "right of return" to the homes from which they left or were expelled following the Arabs' rejection of the 1947 UN partition of Palestine into two states (UNGA Resolution 181). Israel has always rejected Resolution 194 in principle, since it would undermine Israel's Jewish identity and, eventually, combined with an Arab Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, lead to two Palestinian states, not a Jewish and a Palestinian one. In effect, two states for one people, not two states for two peoples. However, ostensibly, by stipulating that the solution to the refugee problem would be "agreed upon," Israel might have some kind of input into the nature of the refugee solution. Yet even so, this stipulation is rendered inoperable by the stipulations on refugee resettlement in section 3(a).]

c. The acceptance of the establishment of a sovereign independent Palestinian state on the Palestinian territories occupied since the 4th

of June 1967 in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

3. Consequently, the Arab countries affirm the following:

- a. Consider the Arab-Israeli conflict ended, and enter into a peace agreement with Israel, and provide security for all the states of the region.

[This is the first time the Arab states, as a collective, have stated that pursuant to Israel fulfilling its obligations according to the API, they would consider the Arab-Israeli conflict to have ended, without further demands.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, they promise to provide security for all the states in the region, which includes Israel.]

- b. Establish normal relations with Israel in the context of this comprehensive peace.

[Again, while short of Abdullah's original "full normalization," "normal relations" represents significant progress over past resolutions. In Arabic, the term normalization (*tatbi'*) carries with it a connotation of training or house-breaking animals, and in classical Arabic also "filth" or "infection."<sup>30</sup>]

4. Assures the rejection of all forms of Palestinian patriation which conflict with the special circumstances of the Arab host countries.

[If there is a deal-killer in the API, it is this section. If the Arab countries can reject "patriation" (Arabic *tawtin* – read resettlement, but the official translation is patriation) of refugees, then the refugees would have nowhere to go but Israel. Israel, of course, would not agree to this, and therefore this article renders any agreement on the refugees as stipulated in section 2(b) a logical impossibility. Muasher himself realized that the inclusion of this clause would make it very difficult for Israel to accept the API.<sup>31</sup> The Final Statement which accompanied the API was even stronger on the refugee issue, explicitly demanding all of the Palestinians' rights, including "guaranteeing the right of return (*ta'min haqq al-'awda*) for the Palestinian refugees on the basis of the resolutions of international legitimacy and the principles of international law including General

## The Arab Peace Initiative: A Primer and Future Prospects

Assembly Resolution 194,” and rejecting any solutions that involve “resettling [of the Palestinians] outside of their homes (*tatwinihim kharij diyarihim*).”<sup>32]</sup>

5. Calls upon the government of Israel and all Israelis to accept this initiative in order to safeguard the prospects for peace and stop the further shedding of blood, enabling the Arab countries and Israel to live in peace and good neighborliness and provide future generations with security, stability, and prosperity.

[As Crown Prince Abdullah did in his speech at the summit, this article appeals for peace directly to the Israeli people, and promises them a good future together with the Arab countries.]

6. Invites the international community and all countries and organizations to support this initiative.
7. Requests the chairman of the summit to form a special committee composed of some of its concerned member states and the secretary general of the League of Arab States to pursue the necessary contacts to gain support for this initiative at all levels, particularly from the United Nations, the Security Council, the United States of America, the Russian Federation, the Muslim states and the European Union.

### Israel and Arab Reactions to the Arab Peace Initiative

The announcement of the API came on the heels of one of the most horrific terrorist acts carried out against Israel: the suicide bombing of a Passover festive meal, or *seder*, in Netanya on March 27, which killed twenty-eight. Israeli responses were colored by this event, but there was still an effort to stress the positive. Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres responded to the API, saying the Saudi step was an important one, but it had no chance while terrorism was still rampant. “We cannot, of course, ignore the problematic aspects which arose at the Beirut summit and the harsh rejectionist language used by some of the speakers.” Prime Minister Sharon made similar statements, but at the same time announced Operation Defensive Shield,<sup>33</sup> a counter-terrorist operation which sent the

Israel Defense Forces into the West Bank and Gaza into areas previously evacuated under the Oslo Accords in order to put a stop to Palestinian terrorism directed by PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat.

To the Israeli response that the API had positive aspects but also some quite negative ones, particularly with respect to returning Palestinian refugees, Saudi Foreign Minister Sa'ud al-Faysal replied, "This initiative is an indivisible whole and consequently it is impossible to accept one part of it and refuse another." He added that the Arabs "now have a weapon to put pressure on Israel on the international scene and even on public opinion in Israel."<sup>34</sup>

### **Revived U.S. Diplomacy: The Roadmap and the Bush-Sharon Exchange of Letters**

The period between the announcement of the API and its revival in 2007 and 2008 was not devoid of diplomatic activity. For much of this time, Israel was engaged in quite successful counter-terrorist operations in Gaza and the West Bank. Israel carried out a full and unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in August 2005, and was contemplating a similar but less comprehensive withdrawal from the West Bank. This contemplation ended with the Second Lebanon War in the summer of 2006 when it became clear that a unilateral move in the West Bank would only bring Israel's population centers within missile range. The Hamas victory in parliamentary elections in January 2006 also made it clear that Israel could not hand over any territory. In June 2007, Hamas carried out a bloody putsch against the Palestinian Authority in Gaza.

The API continued to have a life, of sorts, through the activities of the Quartet's "Roadmap," issued in April 2003, which listed "the initiative of Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah – endorsed by the Beirut Arab League Summit," as one of the bases for a final settlement.<sup>35</sup> Israel had many concerns about the Roadmap, and detailed them to the U.S. Prominent among these concerns was "the waiver of any right of return for Palestinian refugees to the state of Israel." The Israelis further insisted

## The Arab Peace Initiative: A Primer and Future Prospects

on the removal of all references other than Resolutions 242 and 338, including references to UNSCR 1397,<sup>36</sup> the Saudi Initiative, and the Arab Initiative adopted in Beirut.<sup>37</sup> In response, Washington issued a statement saying that it shared Israel's concerns, and said that the United States "will address them fully and seriously in the implementation of the Roadmap to fulfill the President's vision of June 24, 2002."<sup>38</sup> Once it had received these assurances, Jerusalem accepted the steps set out in the Roadmap.<sup>39</sup>

In 2004, the Israeli position was substantially strengthened by an exchange of letters between Prime Minister Sharon and President Bush. Following the lack of progress in the Roadmap, and continuing terror attacks, Israel decided to embark on a unilateral path. In his letter to Bush, Sharon stated that Israel would disengage from the Gaza Strip and from part of the West Bank, while accelerating the building of the security fence. Included in the Bush reply was an acknowledgment that future borders in the West Bank would have to take into consideration "existing major Israeli population centers" established after 1967, and that a return to the 1949 armistice lines was "unrealistic."<sup>40</sup> This Bush letter was in direct contradiction to the API.

Much of the time since 9/11 has been dominated by concern over Iran's nuclear ambitions. Iran continued to expand its influence in the Middle East by supporting Hamas in the Palestinian territories, Shiites in Iraq, and Hizbullah in Lebanon. In the summer of 2006, Hizbullah crossed Israel's northern border and kidnapped two soldiers, an act which the Saudis condemned,<sup>41</sup> and which led to an Israeli attack and invasion of Lebanon.

Concern on the part of the U.S., Israel, and some moderate Arab leaders about a growing "Shiite Crescent" headed by Iran led the Bush administration to make another effort to bring about Middle East peace. Even though such an outcome was unlikely, it appeared that the idea was that Tehran could be better confronted if the flames of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could be lowered. The Saudis shared these sentiments, and were particularly alarmed since Saudi Arabia competed with Iran for influence in the Persian Gulf. It also had its own Shiite population which was subject to Iranian influence, and its homegrown Sunni radicals expected it to stand up to Iran.



This coalescing of Saudi and Israeli interests following the impressive showing of Hizbullah in the Lebanon war in the summer of 2006 and the election of Hamas in January 2006 brought renewed Israeli interest in the API, and, consequently, secret meetings with Saudi officials. Reports on these meetings began to filter out in September.<sup>42</sup>

Riding the wave of common interest, Israel sought to improve on the API ahead of the Arab summit scheduled for Riyadh in March 2007. Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni was particularly vocal in this matter. She expressed her wish that the Arabs should know that there were parts of the plan acceptable to Israel and parts that were not. According to Livni, there were elements of the plan which contradicted the principle of two states. Instead of returning to Israel, Palestinians should be able to go to a new state of Palestine.<sup>43</sup> Prime Minister Olmert stated at a Cabinet meeting: “We very much hope that at the meeting of Arab heads of state in Riyadh that the positive elements that have found expression in the Saudi initiative will be reaffirmed and that the chances of negotiations between us and the Palestinians will be strengthened.”<sup>44</sup>

The U.S. was also involved in the machinations regarding the API in the lead-up to the Riyadh summit, with both Saudi and Israeli officials visiting Washington in mid-March. Secretary of State Rice followed up with a visit to the region. Her goal seems to have been to bring about some changes in the API before the Riyadh summit, or at least some kind of concrete follow-up that would make it more attractive. She told reporters: “It’s their initiative. But I would hope that the initiative would be offered again and offered in a way that suggests that there might be active follow-up to the initiative, not just to say, here’s an initiative.”<sup>45</sup>

An “active follow-up” that would have certainly caused a sea change in the Israeli attitude towards the API was suggested by Thomas Friedman, the journalist who first brought the Saudi initiative to the public:

What the moribund Israeli-Palestinian talks need most today is an emotional breakthrough. Another Arab declaration, just reaffirming the Abdullah initiative, won’t cut it. If King Abdullah wants to lead – and he has the integrity

## The Arab Peace Initiative: A Primer and Future Prospects

and credibility to do so – he needs to fly from the Riyadh summit to Jerusalem and deliver the offer personally to the Israeli people. That is what Egypt's Anwar Sadat did when he forged his breakthrough. If King Abdullah did the same, he could end this conflict once and for all.

If the Saudi king just wants to score some points, he will hold the Arab summit, re-issue the peace plan and go home. If he wants to make history and make peace, he will hold the Arab summit, re-issue the peace plan and deliver it in person.<sup>46</sup>

Amidst continuing reports of secret Israeli-Saudi meetings,<sup>47</sup> Arab leaders were giving conflicting signals about possible changes in the API at the Riyadh summit. Arab diplomats suggested off the record that the API could be repackaged to make it more palatable to the Israelis,<sup>48</sup> but these hopes were soon dashed. Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Sa'ud al-Faysal told reporters: "There will be no amendment to the Arab peace initiative. We have said this 20 times before in the past and this is the last time I will say this." Sa'ud said that Saudi Arabia had done all it could, and now the ball was in Israel's court. "If Israel refuses, that means it doesn't want peace and it places everything back into the hands of fate. They will be putting their future not in the hands of the peacemakers but in the hands of the lords of war," he said.<sup>49</sup>

Prime Minister Olmert tried to draw a distinction between the more favorable plan originally put forth by Abdullah to Friedman and the API. During a joint press conference with UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon on March 26, 2007, he stated:

We examined the Saudi initiative. The Arab initiative is not identical to the Saudi initiative. I am more in favor of the Saudi initiative. I think that the Saudi initiative is very interesting, is very challenging and it certainly manifests leadership quality and responsibility of King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, and if the Arab countries, moderate Arab countries, will try to advance the process along the lines

of the Saudi initiative, I will look at it as a very positive development.<sup>50</sup>

Olmert also specifically ruled out the return of refugees, an integral part of the API.<sup>51</sup>

At least some in the Arab world realized the futility of this Arab demand. Egyptian academic Mamoun Fandy urged the summit to remove the refugee clause from the API since it gutted the initiative from any chance of implementation. He castigated the Arabs for historically placing the refugee issue as an obstacle to any peace with Israel. Saudi columnist Yusuf Nasir al-Suwaydan, writing in the Kuwaiti paper *al-Siyasa*, blamed the Arab countries for failing to resettle the Palestinians, and termed the “right of return” an illusion. One of his articles on the subject was entitled “The Impossible Return,” and the other – “Resettlement is the Solution” (*al-tawtin huwa al-hall*).<sup>52</sup>

The Riyadh Arab summit, held on March 28-29, 2007, ended with a reaffirmation of the API, and called for “the Israeli government and Israelis to seize the opportunity to accept the Arab peace initiative to resume direct negotiations and show seriousness on all tracks.”<sup>53</sup> In response, Israel was again keen to point out that it was interested in a dialogue with the Arab states, but that the peace process had to be founded upon the existence of “two nation-states, with each state addressing the national aspirations of its own people – Israel for the Jewish people and Palestine for the Palestinian people.”<sup>54</sup>

The two countries most threatened by Iran in the Middle East are Israel and Saudi Arabia. Israel tried to play on this common concern by stressing the positive aspects of the Saudi-initiated API. After the Riyadh summit, it did this even more stridently. It pointed out the common interests Israel had with Saudi Arabia and most of the other countries in heading off Iran, Hizbullah, and Hamas. It described the API – almost always termed the “Saudi-initiated” Arab Peace Initiative – as a positive development and as a vehicle for interaction with Israel. In an article published in the Saudi-owned *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, Livni expressed similar sentiments, emphasizing at the same time that it could not be used to undermine the Jewish nature



**Saudi King Abdullah bin Abd al-Aziz, center, speaks to Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas, left, as Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh of Hamas, right, looks on in Riyadh on March 27, 2007, prior to an Arab League Summit meeting.**

of the State of Israel.<sup>55</sup> For Israel, the two-state strategy had become a way of satisfying Palestinian national aspirations without turning Israel into a Palestinian state as well, via the return of refugees.

By July 2007, it appeared that the Israeli efforts to support the relaunch of the API on its own terms had failed. The U.S. election season, which got an early start, emphasized that any deals would have to take into account a new White House occupant. The political future of Israeli Prime Minister Olmert seemed increasingly uncertain, as he faced investigations over his conduct in the Second Lebanon War and several criminal inquiries as well. Moreover, the Saudis became increasingly concerned with the internal

Palestinian strife following the June coup by Hamas in the Gaza Strip, and with efforts to isolate Hamas since the Mecca Agreement the Saudis negotiated between the PA and Hamas earlier in the year. According to Israeli Foreign Ministry sources, the Saudis were also displeased with the Israeli use of the term “Saudi Initiative” instead of Arab Peace Initiative.<sup>56</sup>

### **Annapolis: The Bush Administration’s Last Push**

Like the Clinton administration in its waning moments, the Bush administration also sought Middle East peace as part of its legacy. But unlike in the Clinton era, President Bush let his secretary of state take the lead, and refrained from robust personal involvement. Even with Hamas ascendant and Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas nearly powerless in the West Bank, the Bush administration pushed forward. To be sure, with near failure in Iraq, and with a nuclear-armed Iran looming on the horizon, an effort to lower the flames in the Arab-Israeli conflict and thereby facilitate a grand coalition of Israel, Turkey, and moderate Arab states against Iran may have seemed worth a try.

To this end, Bush announced a new peace initiative in mid-July 2007. The idea was to strengthen Abbas, draw in the Arab states to normalize relations with Israel, and create a de-facto alliance against Iran. Bush called for an “international meeting” in the fall to discuss Middle East peace.<sup>57</sup>

The Saudis were wary of the meeting. They indicated that they might attend if it dealt substantively with the issues. A State Department official termed the Saudi response a “forward-leaning” answer.<sup>58</sup> In the end, the Saudis did agree to attend. “We are not going for handshakes or a display of emotions,” said Sa’ud al-Faysal. “We are there only to reach a peace which safeguards Arab interests and safeguards the Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese lands. If (the Israelis) are serious, they will be met with seriousness by the Arab side. If they are not, there are no swords hanging over our necks forcing us to agree to whatever is offered.”<sup>59</sup>

At a briefing for reporters, al-Faysal demonstrated how far apart the Israelis and the Arabs were on the refugee issue: “I mean, here’s an issue where

## The Arab Peace Initiative: A Primer and Future Prospects

people not from Palestine come to Palestine, occupied land in Palestine that happened to have people living there, and now they want to consider these people illegal in a purely Jewish homeland.”<sup>60</sup> Al-Faysal even used the term “right of return” during a closed session of the conference, according to an Israeli official.<sup>61</sup>

At the conference, held on November 27, it was clear that the Saudis and the Israelis were speaking past each other. For the Saudis, the conference was about reaching progress on final status issues, not about normalization or recognition of Israel. Prime Minister Olmert made a plea for normalization. With respect to the API, he said:

I am familiar with the Arab peace initiative, which was born in Riyadh, affirmed in Beirut and recently reaffirmed by you in Riyadh. I value this initiative, acknowledge its importance and highly appreciate its contribution. I have no doubt that it will be referred to in the course of the negotiations between us and the Palestinian leadership.<sup>62</sup>

He was rebuffed by the Saudi Ambassador to the U.S., ‘Adil al-Jubayr, who maintained that “normalization happens after there is peace. The Arab Peace Initiative is very specific as to what it requires and it’s very specific as to what the payoff will be. You do not get the fruits of peace before you make peace.”<sup>63</sup> During the closed session, Livni asked the representatives of the sixteen Arab states present: “Why doesn’t anyone want to shake my hand? Why doesn’t anyone want to be seen speaking with me?” The Dutch Minister for European Affairs, Frans Timmermans, who was present, observed, “She was saying, ‘Stop treating me as a pariah.’ They shun her like she is Count Dracula’s younger sister.”<sup>64</sup>

An observer might have been tempted to say that the API was buried at Annapolis at the end of 2007. But the significance of the plan, the fact that it was a reversal of Khartoum, and the fact that all the Arab states had agreed to it continued to make it attractive both to Israel and the Saudis. Former head of Saudi intelligence Prince Turki al-Faysal told Reuters that if Israel accepted the plan, “one can imagine not just economic, political and diplomatic relations between Arabs and Israelis but also issues of



education, scientific research, combating mutual threats to the inhabitants of this vast geographic area.”<sup>65</sup> Olmert, in an interview with *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, stressed that he considered the Arab Peace Initiative to be a realistic component of the foundations of peace (*‘unsuran waqiyy’an min usus al-salam*) along with Security Council Resolutions 242, 338, and the Roadmap.”<sup>66</sup> President Shimon Peres, on several occasions in late 2008, expressed positive sentiments about the API. For example, at the opening of the Knesset’s winter session,

The Arab Peace Initiative of 2002 put an end to the unity of the Arab League states around the policy of Khartoum, that is to say, no to recognition, no to negotiations, no to peace. Now the answer of the Arabs is yes! Yes to peace with Israel! There is no ignoring the positive change even if we do not accept all of the phrasing in the Arab Initiative.<sup>67</sup>

In November 2008, Saudi King Abdullah called a UN conference on interfaith relations. This was another occasion for the revival of the moribund API. That the international community answered his call demonstrated the power of the oil giant, ironic when Saudi Arabia is known to be one of the most intolerant of societies regarding religions other than Islam. Even Shiite Islam often comes under attack from Saudi Wahhabi clerics.<sup>68</sup> In his speech to the conference, Peres again stressed the positive aspects of the API, and this time turned directly to Abdullah, departing from his prepared text: “Your Majesty, the king of Saudi Arabia. I was listening to your message. I wish that your voice will become the prevailing voice of the whole region, of all people. It’s right. It’s needed. It’s promising.”

Peres told reporters afterwards, “the king’s initiative created a U-turn in the policies of the Middle East, because until quite recently the formal Arab position was...based on three ‘No’s’...no recognition, no negotiation, no peace with Israel.” Peres also called the Saudi leader a voice of “frankness” and “understanding.”<sup>69</sup>

During much of this time, Prime Minister Olmert, who remained under a cloud of suspicion and would eventually resign the premiership, and Abbas, who controlled little of the West Bank, were engaged in

## The Arab Peace Initiative: A Primer and Future Prospects

negotiations. Abbas' term was up on January 9, 2009 (it was eventually extended), and the administration wished to shore up Abbas against Hamas. During the months of November and December, advertisements containing the text of the API were placed in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Guardian*, and in Israeli newspapers in Hebrew in a well-orchestrated publicity campaign. These ads were placed by the Negotiations Affairs Department of the PLO. Additional Hebrew ads included the endorsements of prominent Israelis calling on the government to examine the API, and explained the Initiative in a manner that would appeal to Israelis, emphasizing an end to the conflict and that a solution to the refugee problem would require Israeli agreement.<sup>70</sup> The publication of the ads stimulated a debate in the Israeli press about how much progress the API represented. In the Hebrew translation of the API, the proponents translated the word *tawtin* (patriation, or resettlement) as *izruah* (naturalization), which is a considerably softer term. The impression was that they were trying to soft-peddle the API by avoiding the difficult questions.<sup>71</sup>

### Future Prospects

There is no doubt that there are several aspects of the API which represent significant and positive developments in the official, collective Arab view of the position and future of Israel in the Middle East. First and foremost, it is an offer to end the conflict. When compared to the famous "Three Noes" of Khartoum, there can be no doubt about it.

For this reason alone, Israel should present those aspects in a positive light and as important issues in any discussion of Arab-Israeli peace. It should refrain from accepting the API as a *basis* for peace negotiations, because it contains seriously objectionable elements, as discussed above. Israel should also reject the "all or nothing" approach of the Saudis and the Arab League. Peacemaking is the process of negotiation, not *diktat*.

It is likely, particularly after Hamas broke the cease-fire in Gaza in December 2008, leading to a general conflagration and an eventual Israeli incursion into Gaza, that the new Obama administration in Washington will make

a diplomatic push involving the API. At an emergency Arab summit called by Qatar in Doha on January 16, 2009 (and boycotted by Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia), Syrian President Assad said the API was “already dead.”<sup>72</sup> On January 19, Arab leaders met again in Kuwait for a previously scheduled summit on Arab cooperation. While not withdrawing the API, Saudi Arabia’s King Abdullah told the assembled leaders, “Israel must understand that the choice between war and peace will not always stay open and that the Arab peace initiative that is on the table today will not remain there indefinitely.” The same sentiments were repeated by Arab League Secretary-General Amr Moussa.<sup>73</sup>

Other leading Saudis went further, threatening the international community and even the U.S.-Saudi relationship. Foreign Minister Sa’ud al-Faysal, speaking at the UN Security Council, warned the world community: “Either the Security Council deals with our legitimate issues with seriousness and responsibility based on these principles, or we will be forced to turn our backs and consider what options present themselves.”<sup>74</sup> In a widely quoted article in the *Financial Times*, former Saudi Ambassador to Washington Turki al-Faysal sharply cautioned the new Obama administration: “If the U.S. wants to continue playing a leadership role in the Middle East and keep its strategic alliances intact – especially its ‘special relationship’ with Saudi Arabia – it will have to drastically revise its policies vis-a-vis Israel and Palestine.”<sup>75</sup>

But President Obama has already indicated that his view is closer to the Israeli position on the API. In an announcement at the State Department appointing George Mitchell as Middle East peace envoy, he stated that “the Arab peace initiative contains constructive elements that could help advance these [peace] efforts. Now is the time for Arab states to act on the initiative’s promise by supporting the Palestinian government under President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad, taking steps towards normalizing relations with Israel, and by standing up to extremism that threatens us all.”<sup>76</sup> He did not call for the wholesale adoption of the API by Israel nor assume the take-it-or-leave-it attitude Arab leaders evince. Instead, he essentially accepted the Israeli position that the API contained “constructive elements,” and, most significantly, maintained that the

## The Arab Peace Initiative: A Primer and Future Prospects

Arab states had to begin normalization with Israel, which the Arabs have always said would have to wait until Israel accepted the API *in toto*. Obama's position demonstrated a full and nuanced understanding of the complexities of the issues.

Obama should also not be bullied by Saudi threats. Perhaps old warhorses like Turki and Sa'ud think the time is ripe to lean on a young, new president, but they also know, in their heart of hearts, that despite being flush with cash, the House of Saud needs the U.S. much more than the U.S. needs the House of Saud.

### Taking the Initiative

Particularly after the Gaza operation, which led to many civilian deaths despite Israeli efforts to avoid them, peace would be best served by Israel going on the diplomatic offensive and presenting an initiative of its own, thus not leaving the API as the only game in town. This initiative could emphasize the positive aspects of the API, and include an invitation to Arab leaders to a meeting in Israel to discuss the API in its entirety. It would not serve peace for Israel to accept any of the negative aspects of the API (refugees, return to 1967 lines) as a basis for discussion, but certainly they can be discussed. In essence, Israel should call the Arabs' bluff.

As part of its diplomatic offensive, Israel needs to be particularly clear to the Arabs that they must disabuse themselves of the notion of Palestinian refugee settlement in Israel. On the discursive level, one has to begin talking not of return to their homes, as does Resolution 194, but of return to Palestine, as defined by the eventual Palestinian state to exist next to Israel.

There is only so far that repackaging, complementing, and improving atmosphere can go when the parties are so far apart. Any government elected in Israel today cannot make an offer acceptable to the Arabs and still survive. It is equally unlikely that the weak Palestinian leadership, whether it be Hamas or Fatah, would be able to make an offer acceptable to Israel and remain in power.





**A hotel dining room in Netanya, Israel, where a Palestinian suicide bomber blew himself up among guests gathered for a Passover Seder on March 27, 2002, killing 30 Israelis and injuring 140.**

But regional threats, most notably in the form of Iran and Islamic fundamentalism, still remain an area for cooperation between Israel and the moderate Arab states that is not directly related to progress in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This cooperation need not be in the public eye.

Moreover, it may be worth revisiting some of the “normalizing” steps taken in the wake of the Madrid Peace Conference of 1991, which involved several aspects of regional cooperation in the form of multilateral working groups. (The Jerusalem Center is planning a future monograph on the extent of normalization between Israel and the Arabs.) Depending on how a reopening of the multilateral meetings is configured, there is a possibility

## The Arab Peace Initiative: A Primer and Future Prospects

that they would improve the general atmosphere and pave the way for future agreements. A reopening of the multilaterals would be in line with President Obama's call for Arab states to begin normalization with Israel.

Finally, it is imperative that the moderate Arab states use their good offices to encourage their Palestinian brethren to be more realistic about what they can achieve. If the moderates are successful in this, it would go a long way towards lowering the flames of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and focus efforts on the real threats to world peace.

\* \* \*

Dr. Joshua Teitelbaum, Visiting Senior Fellow at the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, is Senior Research Fellow, Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, Tel Aviv University. He is also Richard and Rhoda Goldman Israeli Visiting Associate Professor, Department of Political Science and the Center on Democracy, Development, and the Rule of Law, as well as W. Glenn Campbell and Rita Ricardo-Campbell National Fellow at the Hoover Institution, both at Stanford University. He wishes to thank his assistant, Jonathan Fluger, for his perceptive comments and diligent research.



## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> In a late February 2002 poll, 44% of Americans said that Saudi Arabia was a patron of terror. *Washington Post*, February 26, 2002.
- <sup>2</sup> See Dore Gold, *Hatred's Kingdom: How Saudi Arabia Supports the New Global Terrorism* (New York: Regnery, 2003).
- <sup>3</sup> *New York Times*, October 2, 2001, March 3, 2002; "President Bush Speaks to United Nations," November 11, 2002, online at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/11/20011110-3.html>. Secretary of State Colin Powell made similar remarks in a speech in Louisville, Kentucky, on November 19, text online at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2001/nov/20/afghanistan.israel>.
- <sup>4</sup> *New York Times*, February 8, 2002. On March 12, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1397, which affirmed a "vision" of two states, and welcomed "the contribution of Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah." Text online at <http://www.state.gov/p/nea/rt/11134.htm>.
- <sup>5</sup> "President Bush Calls for New Palestinian Leadership," June 24, 2002, online at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020624-3.html>.
- <sup>6</sup> *New York Times*, February 6, 2002. Marwan Muasher, who was at the time Jordanian ambassador to the U.S., hints that Friedman got the idea from a conversation they had over breakfast on November 28, 2001, when Muasher told Friedman about a similar idea King Hussein of Jordan had developed in 1998. See Marwan Muasher, *The Arab Center: The Promise of Moderation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), p. 114.
- <sup>7</sup> *New York Times*, February 17, 2002.
- <sup>8</sup> For background and documents, see Colin Legum, *et al.* (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Vol. V: 1980-81* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1982), and Colin Legum, *et al.* (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Vol. VI: 1981-82* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1984). In both cases, the crown princes were acting to assert themselves on the world stage and move out from under the shadow of the ruling monarch. In fact, it was reported that Minister of Defense and Aviation, Prince Sultan bin Abd al-Aziz (now crown prince), was deeply angered since he was not consulted (*al-Quds al-Arabi*, February 21, 2008). See also Nawaf Obaid, "The Israeli Flag in Riyadh?," *Washington Post*, March 2, 2002. Both were trying to improve relations with the U.S. In Fahd's case, the AWACS deal was having trouble in Congress; in Abdullah's case, it was 9/11.

## The Arab Peace Initiative: A Primer and Future Prospects

- <sup>9</sup> Washington File, February 19, 2002; AFP, February 25, 26, 2002; *New York Times*, February 22, 2002.
- <sup>10</sup> AFP, March 1, 2002; *Washington Post*, March 2, 2002.
- <sup>11</sup> Statement by Foreign Minister's Bureau, February 19, 2002, published at [www.imra.org.il](http://www.imra.org.il); AFP, February 25, 2002.
- <sup>12</sup> AFP, February 25, 26, 2002.
- <sup>13</sup> AFP, quoting *al-Hayat*, February 28, 2002.
- <sup>14</sup> AFP, February 26, 2002; *New York Times*, February 27, 2002.
- <sup>15</sup> AFP, February 20, 2002; *al-Ra'i*, February 20, 2002.
- <sup>16</sup> AFP, February 28, 2002.
- <sup>17</sup> AFP, March 5, 2002.
- <sup>18</sup> SANA, March 5, 2002; AFP, March 5, 6, 2002; *New York Times*, March 6, 2002.
- <sup>19</sup> *Al-Quds al-'Arabi*, March 13, 2002 (full normalization in Arabic is *al-tatbi' al-kamil*; while comprehensive [or full] peace is *al-salam al-shamil*); AFP, March 6, 10, 2002.
- <sup>20</sup> *New York Times*, March 10, 2002.
- <sup>21</sup> Muasher, p. 119, 123.
- <sup>22</sup> Muasher, pp. 126-128.
- <sup>23</sup> *New York Times*, March 25, 2002.
- <sup>24</sup> *New York Times*, March 24, 2002.
- <sup>25</sup> See Nimrod Rafaeli, "Iraq-Saudi Arabia Rapprochement," *MEMRI Economic Studies*, No. 31, June 17, 2002, online at <http://www.memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=ea&ID=EA3102>.
- <sup>26</sup> Charter of the League of Arab States, online in English at [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/arableag.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/arableag.asp), and in Arabic at [http://www.arableagueonline.org/las/arabic/details\\_ar.jsp?art\\_id=133&level\\_id=114](http://www.arableagueonline.org/las/arabic/details_ar.jsp?art_id=133&level_id=114).
- <sup>27</sup> "Speech by HRH Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud," March 27, 2002, Saudi Embassy, Washington, D.C., online at <http://www.saudiembassy.net/2002News/Press/PressDetail.asp?cYear=2002&cIndex=32>.
- <sup>28</sup> "Security Council Endorses Secretary-General's Conclusion on Israeli Withdrawal from Lebanon as of 16 June," June 18, 2002, online at <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2000/20000618.sc6878.doc.html>.

- <sup>29</sup> Ilai Alon, "The Language of the Arab Peace Initiative," in Kobi Michael (ed.), *The Arab Peace Initiative – An Historical Opportunity: Background, Significance, and Possible Courses of Action* (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, 2007), pp. 33-74, p. 26 cited (Hebrew).
- <sup>30</sup> Alon, p. 52.
- <sup>31</sup> Muasher, pp. 125, 128.
- <sup>32</sup> For the Arabic text of the Final Statement, see *al-Quds al-'Arabi*, March 29, 2002. The word *diyarihim* was chosen because it is the precise Arabic translation of article 11 of Resolution 194. That article resolved that "refugees wishing to return to their homes (Arabic, *diyarihim*)...should be permitted to do so." The official Arabic translation of Resolution 194 is at <http://www.un.org/unrwa/arabic/Roll/Ru194.htm>.
- <sup>33</sup> "Response of FM Peres to the Decisions of the Arab Summit in Beirut," March 28, 2002, online at <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/About+the+Ministry/MFA+Spokesman/2002/Response+of+FM+Peres+to+the+decisions+of+the+Arab.htm>; "PM Sharon's Address to the Knesset," April 8, 2002, online at <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Speeches+by+Israeli+leaders/2002/PM+Sharon-s+Address+to+the+Knesset+-+8-Apr-2002.htm>.
- <sup>34</sup> AFP, March 28, 2002.
- <sup>35</sup> "A Performance-Based Roadmap to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," U.S. Department of State, April 30, 2003, online at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2003/20062.htm>.
- <sup>36</sup> UNSCR 1397 was passed on March 12, 2002, called for two states, an end to violence, and "welcomed" "the contribution of Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah," online at <http://www.state.gov/p/nea/rt/11134.htm>.
- <sup>37</sup> "Israel's Response to the Roadmap," May 25, 2003, online at <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Peace+Process/Reference+Documents/Israel+Response+to+the+Roadmap+25-May-2003.htm>.
- <sup>38</sup> "Statement by Secretary of State Colin L. Powell and National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice," May 23, 2003, online at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/05/print/20030523.html>.
- <sup>39</sup> "Government Meeting about the Prime Minister's Statement on the Roadmap," May 25, 2003, online at <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Communiques/2003/Goverment+meeting+about+the+Prime+Minister-s+state.htm>.

## The Arab Peace Initiative: A Primer and Future Prospects

- <sup>40</sup> “Exchange of Letters between PM Sharon and President Bush,” April 14, 2004, online at <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Peace+Process/Reference+Documents/Exchange+of+letters+Sharon-Bush+14-Apr-2004.htm>.
- <sup>41</sup> The Saudi called the Hizbullah raid a “miscalculated adventure.” *Boston Globe*, August 4, 2006.
- <sup>42</sup> The reports concerned meetings between Olmert and Saudi National Security Adviser Prince Bandar bin Sultan in Amman. BBC News, September 25, 2006, online at [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/5377552.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/5377552.stm); *International Herald Tribune*, September 25, 2006; *Ha’aretz* (English edition), September 25, 2006, March 2, 2006; *New York Times*, September 26, 2006; *Times*, December 3, 2006.
- <sup>43</sup> *Ha’aretz* (English edition), March 2, 2007; *New York Times*, March 13, 2007.
- <sup>44</sup> “Cabinet Communique,” March 11, 2007, online at <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Communiques/2007/Cabinet+Communique+11-Mar-2007.htm>; AP, March 11, 2007; *New York Times*, March 12, 2007.
- <sup>45</sup> *Ha’aretz* (English edition), March 12, 2007; “Press Roundtable Interview,” March 25, 2007, online at <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2007/mar/82158.htm>; *New York Times*, March 25, 2007.
- <sup>46</sup> *New York Times*, March 23, 2007.
- <sup>47</sup> Arab sources told *Ha’aretz* that Bandar had met again with Olmert in March. The meetings were denied by the Saudis, and the Israelis refused to comment. *Ha’aretz*, March 25, 2007; “Prince Saud Denied Secret Meeting between Prince Bandar and Olmert. Saudi Embassy, Washington, D.C., March 26, 2007, online at <http://www.saudiembassy.net/2007News/News/RelDetail.asp?cIndex=7015>.
- <sup>48</sup> AP, March 26, 2007.
- <sup>49</sup> Reuters, March 25, 2007. *Daily Telegraph*, March 28, 2007.
- <sup>50</sup> “Joint Press Conference by Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon,” March 26, 2007, online at <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Speeches+by+Israeli+leaders/2007/Joint+Press+Conference+by+PM+Olmert+and+UN+Secy-Gen+Ki-moon+26-Mar-2007.htm>. See Olmert’s similar remarks to the *Jerusalem Post*, March 29, 2007.

- <sup>51</sup> *Jerusalem Post*, March 30, 2007; *New York Times*, March 31, 2007.
- <sup>52</sup> *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, March 26, 2007, translated in *MEMRI, Special Dispatch Series*, No. 1525, March 29, 2007, online at <http://memri.net/bin/articles.cgi?Page=subjects&Area=conflict&ID=SP152507/>; *al-Siyasa*, March 5, 16, 2007, translated in *MEMRI, Special Dispatch Series*, No. 1540, April 12, 2007, online at <http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=sd&ID=SP154007>.
- <sup>53</sup> "Arab Summit Decisions," Riyadh, March 29, 2007, online at <http://www.mideastweb.org/arabsummit2007.htm>.
- <sup>54</sup> "Israeli Statement on the Arab Summit in Riyadh," March 29, 2007, online at <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/About+the+Ministry/MFA+Spokesman/2007/Israeli+statement+on+Arab+Summit+in+Riyadh+29-Mar-2007.htm>.
- <sup>55</sup> "Behind the Headlines: Israel Receptive to Moderate Arab Peace Plan," Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, May 15, 2007, online at <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/About+the+Ministry/Behind+the+Headlines/Israel+receptive+to+moderate+Arab+peace+plan+15-May-2007.htm>; *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, June 18, 2007.
- <sup>56</sup> Reuters, July 4, 2007; *Maariv*, July 4, 2007, online at <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART1/603/971.html>. Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit and his Jordanian counterpart Abdelelah Al-Khatib visited Israel on July 25 as members of the Arab League Initiative Supervisory Committee.
- <sup>57</sup> "President Bush Discusses the Middle East," July 16, 2007, online at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/07/20070716-7.html>.
- <sup>58</sup> *Washington Post*, August 2, 2007. A "sweetener" in this regard came in the form of a large arms deal with the U.S., valued at around \$20 billion.
- <sup>59</sup> *Arab News*, November 27, 2007.
- <sup>60</sup> *New York Times*, November 27, 2007.
- <sup>61</sup> *Jerusalem Post*, November 28, 2007.
- <sup>62</sup> "Address by PM Olmert at the Annapolis Conference," November 27, 2007, online at <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Speeches+by+Israeli+leaders/2007/Address+by+PM+Olmert+at+the+Annapolis+Conference+27-Nov-2007.htm>.
- <sup>63</sup> AFP, November 27, 2007.
- <sup>64</sup> *Washington Post*, November 27, 2007.
- <sup>65</sup> Reuters, January 20, 2008; Turki also published an op-ed in the *Washington Post* calling on President-elect Barack Obama to adopt the API, December 26, 2008.

## The Arab Peace Initiative: A Primer and Future Prospects

- <sup>66</sup> *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, June 24, 2008.
- <sup>67</sup> "Address by President Peres at the Opening of the Knesset Winter Session," October 27, 2008, online at [http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Speeches+by+Israeli+leaders/2008/Address\\_President\\_Peris\\_Knesset\\_Winter\\_Session\\_27-Oct-2008.htm](http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Speeches+by+Israeli+leaders/2008/Address_President_Peris_Knesset_Winter_Session_27-Oct-2008.htm).
- <sup>68</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Report on Human Rights Practices, 2007: Saudi Arabia*, March 11, 2008, online at <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100605.htm>; Human Rights Watch, "UN: World Leaders Should Press Saudis on Intolerance," November 10, 2008, online at <http://www.hrw.org/en/content/un-world-leaders-should-press-saudis-intolerance>.
- <sup>69</sup> *Washington Post*, November 12, 2008.
- <sup>70</sup> [www.yozmatshalom.com](http://www.yozmatshalom.com); <http://www.peace-security-council.com>.
- <sup>71</sup> This point is made by Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, "A Pebble in the Peace Pond," *Jerusalem Report*, January 5, 2009.
- <sup>72</sup> *New York Times*, January 18, 2009; *Jerusalem Post*, January 18, 2009.
- <sup>73</sup> *Al-Anba*, *al-Hayat*, *Arab News*, January 20, 2009.
- <sup>74</sup> "Prince Saud Al-Faisal's Statement to the UN Security Council regarding Gaza," January 6, 2009, online at <http://www.saudiembassy.or.jp/En/PressReleases/2009/001-Jan/4.htm>.
- <sup>75</sup> *Financial Times*, January 22, 2009.
- <sup>76</sup> *Washington Post*, January 22, 2009.

# About the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs

[www.jcpa.org](http://www.jcpa.org)

The Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs is a leading independent research institute specializing in public diplomacy and foreign policy. Founded in 1976, the Center has produced hundreds of studies and initiatives by leading experts on a wide range of strategic topics. Dr. Dore Gold, Israel's former ambassador to the UN, has headed the Jerusalem Center since 2000.

## Jerusalem Center Programs:

- **Defensible Borders Initiative** – A major security and public diplomacy initiative that analyzes current terror threats and Israel's corresponding territorial requirements, particularly in the strategically vital West Bank, that Israel must maintain to fulfill its existential security and defense needs.
- **Iran and the New Threats to the West** – Preparation of a legal document jointly with leading Israeli and international scholars and public personalities on the initiation of legal proceedings against Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad for incitement to commit genocide and participate in genocide. This program also features major policy studies by security and academic experts on Iran's use of terror proxies and allies in the regime's war against the West and its race for regional supremacy.
- **Institute for Contemporary Affairs (ICA)** – A program founded in 2002 jointly with the Wechsler Family Foundation that presents Israel's case on current issues through high-level briefings by government and military leaders to the foreign diplomatic corps and foreign press, as well as production and dissemination of information materials. The



## The Arab Peace Initiative: A Primer and Future Prospects

program's Arabic language website provides information and articles on Israel and the region for Arabic speakers living in and out of the Middle East ([www.infoelarab.org](http://www.infoelarab.org)).

- **Global Law Forum** – This ground-breaking program undertakes studies and advances policy initiatives to protect Israel's legal rights in its conflict with the Palestinians, the Arab world, and radical Islam ([www.globallawforum.org](http://www.globallawforum.org)).
- **Anti-Semitism After the Holocaust** – Initiated and directed by Dr. Manfred Gerstenfeld, this program includes conferences, seminars, and publications discussing restitution, the academic boycott, Holocaust denial, and anti-Semitism in the Arab world, European countries, and the post-Soviet states.
- **Global Terrorism** – Using previously unpublished documents, JCPA President Dore Gold explored the influence of Saudi Wahhabism on 9/11 in the *New York Times* bestseller *Hatred's Kingdom: How Saudi Arabia Supports the New Global Terrorism* (Regnery, 2003).
- **Jerusalem in International Diplomacy** – Dr. Dore Gold analyzes the legal and historic rights of Israel in Jerusalem and exposes the dangers of compromise that will unleash a new *jihadi* momentum in his book *The Fight for Jerusalem: Radical Islam, the West, and the Future of the Holy City* (Regnery, 2007). Justus Reid Weiner looks at *Illegal Construction in Jerusalem: A Variation on an Alarming Global Phenomenon* (2003). Prominent journalist Nadav Shragai assesses the imminent security threats to Israel's capital resulting from its potential division, and offers alternative strategies for managing Jerusalem's demographic challenges in his monograph *Jerusalem: The Dangers of Division* (2008).
- **New Models for Economic Growth in Israel** – This comprehensive, 10-year project has studied the application of financial innovations in Israel. Sponsored by the Milken Institute, the project includes nine published volumes in Hebrew and English.

## Jerusalem Center Serial Publications:

- ***Jerusalem Viewpoints*** - providing in-depth analysis on changing events in Israel and the Middle East since 1977.
- ***Jerusalem Issue Briefs*** - insider briefings by top-level Israeli government officials, military experts, and academics, as part of the Center's Institute for Contemporary Affairs.
- ***Daily Alert*** - a daily digest of hyperlinked news and commentary on Israel and the Middle East from the world and Hebrew press.
- ***Post-Holocaust and Anti-Semitism*** - a monthly publication examining anti-Semitism after the Holocaust.
- ***Jewish Political Studies Review*** - A scholarly journal founded in 1989.

## Jerusalem Center Websites

- [www.jcpa.org](http://www.jcpa.org) (English)
- [www.jcpa.org.il](http://www.jcpa.org.il) (Hebrew)
- [www.infoelarab.org](http://www.infoelarab.org) (Arabic)
- [www.jcpa-lecape.org](http://www.jcpa-lecape.org) (French)
- [www.jer-zentrum.org](http://www.jer-zentrum.org) (German)
- [www.mesi.org.uk](http://www.mesi.org.uk) (United Kingdom)
- [www.globallawforum.org](http://www.globallawforum.org) (Global Law Forum)



ISBN 978-965-218-071-1



9 789652 180711