

Why Palestinians and Israelis Are Not Ready For Peace

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Following the 1991 Gulf War, with the Madrid Peace Conference and the start of the Oslo process, the concept of a 'New Middle East' came to express a new vision of economic integration, regional cooperation and globalisation.¹ The Gulf War aftermath and the commitment of both the first Bush and the Clinton administrations to a successful Arab–Israeli peace process seemed to make it possible. A diplomatic solution to the Arab–Israeli conflict was expected both to foster and to be sustained by an economic revolution. Oslo's architects enthusiastically predicted a peace dividend with both political and economic dimensions. Arab–Israeli reconciliation would help 'change the face of the region and its ideological climate'.² In the Oslo world, peace would produce freedom and prosperity. This process would lead, in Shimon Peres' words, to 'the creation of a regional community of nations, with a common market and elected centralised bodies, modelled on the European Community'.³ If Europeans had managed to overcome centuries of hatred, enmity and warfare to build a united and peaceful Europe, so could nations of the Middle East.

Even the most ardent enthusiasts of this vision recognised the difficulties: in particular, how the interplay between cultural differences and economic disparities might undermine it. Yossi Beilin worried that the significant income and technological gaps between Israel and its neighbours, exposed once borders opened, would create new tensions.⁴ The consequences of peace entailed potentially dangerous spill-over effects for an Arab world beset by poverty and economic backwardness. Nevertheless, Beilin thought that these obstacles could be overcome.⁵ Not only did he believe that Israel could be a discreet midwife in the birth of Middle East economic prosperity, he was also convinced that this role

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would foster a healthy sense of mission for Israel and prevent its society from wallowing in materialism, consumerism and individualism.⁶

This was the grand vision. Was it realistic? Was it feasible to expect that fervent national identity and the claims to which it gave rise would quickly recede in the wake of economic prosperity? If Western Europe provided one positive example, the war in Yugoslavia – contemporary to Oslo – might have offered a warning of how national identities and ancient animosities could override economic self-interest. The real experience of European integration should also have given pause to Oslo's architects. No nation has joined the European Union before having met strict economic parameters and a sufficient level of democratisation. Those economic and political standards are the preconditions for access to the EU, not its desired outcomes. The vision of a new Middle East thus inverted this sequence, in the untested assumption that integration between vastly unequal economies, against the background of profound inequalities in rights and freedoms, would produce integration rather than a bitter contest for hegemony.

The region has since reverted to its old ways. The Israel–Palestine dispute regained its prominence – and its primordially brutal character. Following the failure of the Oslo process, the new US administration briefly disengaged from the area. Meanwhile, new winds of radicalism swept the Arab world, as in the 1950s and 1960s. Though today's radicalism is religiously inspired – whereas the radicalism of yesteryear was secular, nationalist and socialist – their destabilising effects are similar.

Palestine has always elicited strong emotions in the Arab and Muslim worlds, and it is tempting to see a direct causal relationship between the region's ideological turmoil and the Israel–Palestine conflict. Such is perhaps the operating assumption of some in the second Bush administration, which has deemed it necessary to re-engage in the diplomatic process through the promulgation of the 'Road Map' – much as the first Bush administration energised its Middle East diplomacy after the Gulf War of 1991. Certainly some of the international enthusiasm for the December 2003 Geneva initiative is expressed in a vocabulary that equates *jihadist* terrorism with its supposed 'root causes' in Israel–Palestine.

There is, however, scant evidence for the proposition that regional ills are produced and sustained by the persistence of the Palestinian–Israeli conflict. Nor is there convincing evidence for the related assumption that recent turmoil constitutes a temporary setback to the project of peace, and that it will not be long before Israelis, Palestinians and the Arab world can be cajoled back into dialogue, negotiation and compromise. On the contrary, perhaps the main shortcoming of the Oslo project was the failure to fully appreciate the power of intangibles – collective memory and

identity, justice and dignity. Obviously conflict needs to be managed, suffering on both sides alleviated, and peace – for the long run – sought. But it could be a long time before Western visions of territorial compromise and economic cooperation can regain the upper hand.

Is Palestine the core problem?

Since the outbreak of the second *intifada*, and especially after 11 September, proponents of two very different approaches have vied to shape Western policies in the Middle East. These approaches reflect radically different understandings of the nature of the region's problems and, most critically, different answers to a simple question: is Palestine the core issue in the region? According to the first view, solving the Palestinian question will pave the way for the reduction of regional tensions and lead to the rise of civil society, democratisation, economic growth and stability. The contrary argument – the one espoused in this essay – is that the causal correlation between the Palestinian–Israeli conflict and other regional problems is tenuous at best. Other urgent problems demand resolution, and the intractability of the Palestinian–Israeli dispute might suggest giving them greater priority.

After 1991, Saddam Hussein's defeat seemed to create a window of opportunity for peace in the region. The project of Arab–Israeli detente was predicated on two assumptions: first, that solving the Palestinian problem – seen as the core issue – was possible; and second, that moderate Arab regimes would help. Most peacemakers harboured no illusions about these regimes, but considered them preferable to the available alternatives. The Arab world offered, in Fouad Ajami's words, either prison or anarchy; the alternative to the repressive regimes would be either state failure and civil war, or the rise of a fundamentalist republic.⁷ An alliance of convenience emerged between Israel and these moderate Arab regimes. To contain Saddam and confront the looming threat of radical Islam, that alliance needed strengthening – but Palestine stood in the way.

If Palestine is central to the region's ills, then solving it should reduce grievances, anti-Western resentment and feelings of injustice, and make other problems easier to solve. This reasoning leads to a first important operational assumption: the centrality of the issue not only makes its solution paramount, but it makes the alternative impossible even to fathom. Because it needs to be solved, it can be solved. This argument has variations, but it is less important to focus on details than to emphasise how a vision that puts Palestine at the centre – a Palestine-first approach – will accept just about every element of the regional status quo, except Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory. A Palestine-first

policy will dictate working with Arab regimes towards a peace agreement. It will assume that the conflict is the source of their internal instability as well as the motive for the export of radical Islam outside the Middle East.

The second approach does not depend on denying the importance of Palestine – but looks at it as one of many issues, perhaps not even the most pressing one. It identifies only an indirect relationship between Palestine and such problems as explosive demographic growth, poverty and repressive regimes throughout the Middle East. It considers Palestine both a symbol and a scapegoat for regimes that use it as an excuse to avoid democratisation, reform and change. As Michael Scott Doran has argued,

Arab political discourse revolves around Palestine and ... a great many Arabs hold the United States responsible for Palestinian suffering. But ... although Palestine is central to the symbolism of Arab politics, it is actually marginal to its substance.⁸

The substance of discontent is the Arab political status quo.⁹ The West has largely supported it – and it is out of this support that emerged anti-Western sentiment and a promise of revenge. To quote Doran,

To call for justice in Palestine is to decry the debasement of the entire Arab world in the modern period, to long for a more just and authentic political order in the Middle East, and to demand a change in the balance of power between the Arabs and the West, represented today chiefly by the United States.¹⁰

The Palestine-first notion guided American foreign policy in the 1990s. While a weakened and impoverished Iraq could be contained through disarmament, sanctions and military presence, the Palestinian problem had to be – and could be – ‘solved’. This could be achieved by working with the Arab powers and with an Israeli administration committed to

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territorial compromise. This assumption had been the cornerstone of US policy in the 1991 Gulf War, after all, and US intervention against Saddam had been driven by a resolve – supported by most Arab regimes in the area – to restore a status quo that Saddam had upset.

Yet the strategy that emerged from the 1991 Gulf War – containment of a defeated Iraq – failed. Saddam’s repression of the uprising of 1991 had shown that fear would keep him in power. A sanctions regime meant long-term suffering for the Iraqi people – and another potent symbol for the Arab street. Only direct military intervention could topple the tyrant. And in Palestine, the attempted solution only produced more conflict. Out of this double failure emerged a second option: if Iraq

could not be contained, it had to be solved. If Palestine could not be solved, it had at least to be contained – until such a time as a new opportunity for real peacemaking might arise.

The question is how to help this new opportunity arise. One option is to press Israel and the Palestinians for more negotiations and more concessions. Yet a second option is to change some of the circumstances surrounding the conflict in such a way that the failed solutions of the 1990s could work in the future. Europe wanted Palestine solved before Saddam could be neutralised. The United States, wounded by 11 September, now thought otherwise: new conditions could emerge only by addressing the larger pathologies of the region. This view has been reiterated in nearly every speech US President George W. Bush has given on the subject of the Middle East since 11 September. As he said in May 2003,

In an age of global terror and weapons of mass destruction what happens in the Middle East greatly matters to America. The bitterness of that region can bring violence and suffering to our own cities. The advance of freedom and peace in the Middle East would drain this bitterness and increase our own security.¹¹

In Bush's view, the region suffers from largely self-inflicted wounds and its readiness to blame them on others is a reflection of its inability to solve them.¹² This judgement now applies to Palestine as well, as clearly shown by the American emphasis on the need to end terrorism and reform Palestinian institutions and leadership as a prerequisite for meaningful progress in the dispute. While a Palestine-first approach dictated seeing the region through the prism of the Palestinian–Israeli dispute, a Palestine-last approach assumes the dispute can only be understood – and perhaps solved – once the region's overarching evils are addressed.

There is no doubt that Palestine features prominently among Arab grievances, especially given US support for Israel and what the Arab world sees as US one-sidedness in the conflict. But that is only a small part of the reason why the Western-supported status quo has become the target of Islamic fundamentalism. Attacks on the West reflect a shift of the radicals' strategy. Fundamentalists by and large lost their battle against the regimes. Persecuted and defeated, they fled their countries to other sanctuaries, regrouped, and changed strategy: rather than the regimes (their main foes), they now attack those who ensure the regimes' survival. Their targets on 11 September were not only New York and Washington, but also an Arab order they see as corrupt and un-Islamic. As for Palestine, it is doubtful that anything short of Israel's destruction would satisfy the extremists.¹³

This does not mean that legitimate Palestinian grievances should be ignored, or that Palestinian aspirations should be put on hold indefinitely.

Equally, there is no doubt that peace would be beneficial for the region: in the 1990s, at the height of the Oslo process, several Arab countries established commercial and diplomatic ties with Israel and gradually lifted the economic boycott (though such limited openings were quickly rescinded once the new *intifada* got under way). Moreover, the objection that a Palestine-last approach is not sustainable in the long term is a valid one – the Palestinian terrorist guerrilla war is not going to abate, nor the daily humiliations of ordinary Palestinians, nor the brutality of occupation. When it comes to the Palestinian–Israeli dispute, these factors are more direct than the undoubted humiliation of the Arab world’s economic and cultural confrontation with the West in general and Israel in particular. They are also more pressing. Therefore, a Palestine-last approach might not be sustainable in political, humanitarian and even military terms.

But it does not logically follow that because a solution to the conflict is urgent, a solution is available. In the current predicament, a Palestine-last approach simply recognises the vast gap between what is desirable and what is presently possible. In any event, the claim that the West has not done enough to address Palestinian grievances looks absurd in light of the Clinton administration’s unprecedented commitment to a negotiated settlement. And beyond Clinton’s efforts to bring peace to the region and statehood to the Palestinians, the West had been continually engaged in Middle East peace-making for over 50 years, without success. If so much effort had yielded so much failure, perhaps the root causes of the present predicament are located at least partially outside Palestine.

Part of the Palestine-last approach was to go first through Baghdad: regime change in Iraq would be a springboard for change in the rest of the region. An Israel–Palestine peace is still the goal, but peace could come to the region only after the establishment of democracy and freedom and the defeat of terrorism: as their consequence rather than their source. As President Bush said,

The hateful ideology of terrorism is shaped and nurtured and protected by oppressive regimes. Free nations, in contrast, encourage creativity and tolerance and enterprise. And in those free nations, the appeal of extremism withers away.

Free governments do not build weapons of mass destruction for the purpose of mass terror. Over time, the expansion of liberty throughout the world is the best guarantee of security throughout the world. *Freedom is the way to peace* [author’s emphasis].¹⁴

Middle East, old and new

With Saddam’s defeat and the start of Oslo, the Middle East in the early 1990s looked like a place of positive change. But slower and more insidious

processes were also at work. High demographic growth produced very young societies; oil wealth and free education produced an ever-expanding number of graduate job-seekers, whom stagnating economies could not accommodate.¹⁵ As the *Arab World Competitiveness Report* stated, the region is characterised by '[H]igh rates of marriage, a predominantly young age at marriage followed almost immediately by pregnancies that are too closely spaced; relatively high population growth rates; a large, young population; and, consequently, a high burden of dependency'.¹⁶ The average population growth rate is currently set at 2.7% and,

With the average age having fallen, the labour force in most countries has expanded even faster than the population, and it is estimated that in some countries real output needs to grow by 5 percent and more in order to prevent unemployment from rising.¹⁷

Nepotism rather than talent dominate public administrations and economies, where lack of freedom and equality stifles free enterprise – with the consequent lack of upward mobility that complicates socio-economic tensions. Those left out are most likely to grow angry and seek alternative ways to access power, providing a natural pool of volunteers for recruitment in Islamic movements. Repressive regimes compound the above problems, narrowing the space for participation, access to services and resources, and expression and redressing of grievances.¹⁸

The Arab world emerged weakened and battered from the 1991 Gulf War, with bitter recriminations between Arab regimes. The Palestinian problem had somehow kept these divisions out of sight; its rhetoric had concealed the weaknesses. Now the proposed peace only heightened the humiliation of the vanquished. As Ajami wrote,

This peace of Oslo could not win over the Arab intellectual elite. It was not their peace but their rulers' peace, they insisted, made at a time of Arab disarray and weakness, in the aftermath of a season of discord in the Arab world. In the Persian Gulf War of 1990–91, Arab had fought Arab and an Iraqi state that had presented itself to the intellectual class as the new bearer of their political truth had been stripped of its delusions and made a pariah in the world of nations. There was no honour in this unequal peace.¹⁹

The economic dimension of Oslo made this humiliation all the more evident:

The Zionist political enterprise had been vindicated ... Israel's success intersected with the collapse of the Arab world's economic growth that oil revenues had made possible. A period of growth had come to an end in the Arab world. By the early 1990s, the time of the Arab–Israeli peace, the region provided a spectacle of economic failure.²⁰

Oslo enthusiasts unconsciously poured salt on the open wounds of Arab pride. Instead of offering a way out of the Arab predicament, Oslo meant 'a world that held out nothing but the promise of cultural alienation'.²¹

Beilin and Peres thought that wealth and prosperity would be the recipe for stable peace. But to their Palestinian interlocutors, this proposition may well have implied that globalisation meant Western hegemony, while economic integration meant Israeli hegemony. Not only had the Jews conquered Muslim soil and repeatedly humiliated the Arabs on the battlefield, now they would also conquer their markets. Ultimately, the hope that modernity and prosperity could take over the region in a peaceful invasion of McDonald's, Microsoft, democracy and free trade enthralled only Israel's globalisation enthusiasts, but hardly managed to win hearts and minds beyond Israel's burgeoning coastal plain and its secular, educated, middle-class, Westernised elites. The mountain ridge that divides the Judean desert from the coastal plain is more than a geographic obstacle to cold fronts coming from Europe. Beyond that ridge lie primordial calls, for Jews and Arabs alike, which make justice and pride, honour and dignity, identity and loyalty a much stronger currency than material riches. For those who – spiritually and geographically – dwell beyond that ridge, Oslo was a threat: it might have meant better living conditions, but it cost too much. Prosperity demanded a loss of identity and dreams. For Arab nationalists and Islamists, that very hope implied surrender, exposed weaknesses and posed vexing questions of identity. For Jewish settlers and their ideological brethren, giving up the heartland of Biblical Israel and the settlement project which symbolised the return to the cradle of Jewish history was equally daunting. And while Israel's predicament is pushing even formerly staunch supporters of settlements and of Greater Israel to face reality, the extent of Israeli withdrawal advocated by its right-wing politicians today, though painful, will be clearly far too short of minimal Palestinian territorial ambitions.²²

The Arab world views Israel as a Western implant, a bridgehead of Western imperialism in the region. The 'peace of the brave', which many Arab spokesmen advocated throughout the 1990s, was not supposed to expose Arab weakness, to open Arab markets to Western penetration, to strengthen its bridgehead to the point of subduing the region to Israel's political and economic hegemony. While Israelis talked about land for peace, Arabs wanted to trade peace for justice and dignity. Arabs hoped that peace would restore their world to its former glory. The complaint arose that Oslo failed because Palestinians were not on equal par with Israel. Yet it was precisely the imbalance of power between the two sides in the early 1990s that had made diplomacy possible at all. Had the Arab world and the Palestinians felt that armed struggle and conflict still offered a chance, diplomacy might have had to wait even longer. The Palestinians accepted Oslo because they had lost their struggle, not because they had

renounced their dreams: it was those dreams, more than anything else, that had kept them together for decades and forged them into a nation.

That is why, at the moment of truth – Camp David and Taba – it was easier for the Palestinians to revert to their former intransigent posture than to take a bold step towards normalisation. When peace was within reach, peace was rejected. Oslo had threatened the ways of old, and with them the pillars of Arab and Palestinian identities. Conflict left the Palestinians in a dire predicament – but it would spare the humiliation, defeat and loss of identity the abandonment of dreams would entail.

At Camp David in summer 2000, Israel and the Palestinians got as close as possible to reaching a deal. Soon after, conflict erupted. The Palestinian popular uprising quickly subsided and was replaced by full-fledged guerrilla warfare, brutally focused on the slaughter of civilians.²³ Israel responded ruthlessly and the stalemate continues to this day. The Palestinian–Israeli conflict again became the most potent mobilising political myth in the Arab world. As the rallying cries for battle echoed in the Arab street, Israel’s role as demon was revived. The old Middle East had proven more resilient to change than conflict-resolution scholars and global-village enthusiasts had expected.

Israel’s role as demon was revived

Camp David was not quite the ‘tragedy of errors’ suggested by Hussein Agha and Robert Malley.²⁴ The errors listed by Agha and Malley – including lack of chemistry between the leaders, poor groundwork by the Americans, Arafat’s character defects – were aggravating elements, not the crucial factors in failure. The deeper tragedy was the existential nature of at least some of the issues at stake, and the challenge they posed to notions of justice, identity and memory for both sides. That is evident in the problem of the Palestinian refugees, one of the deal-breaking issues. This is the most intractable and the most emotionally charged of the issues requiring solution in the framework of a negotiated settlement, because it goes to the heart of both sides’ identity.

As Karma Nabulsi, a former PLO representative and adviser at the 1991–93 peace talks, made very clear, nothing short of the full return of Palestinian refugees will bring an end to the conflict. Israel’s willingness to make peace at Camp David was met by an uncompromising Palestinian stand based on what Nabulsi correctly identifies as the core element of Palestinian national identity:

The issue of return is vital because it represents the essence of what it means to be a Palestinian. It is much more than a legal right or a property right or an individual and collective right (although it is also all these things). It remains the touchstone of

shared Palestinian historical identity. It has shaped us completely. It is why we have stayed refugees for so long.²⁵

To expect Israel to comply with this condition and allow for their 'return' within its pre-1967 borders is to demand the Jewish state also to give up its collective identity as well as its future aspirations, for the absorption of four million refugees into Israel would turn its current Jewish majority into a minority and would mean the end of Israel as a Jewish state. True, territory is also central to the conflict, but it is precisely its inextricable link to national identity for both sides that makes a territorial compromise so unpalatable for many and makes territory a symbol, a value-laden asset riddled with primordial links. It is not just a matter of real estate.

Oslo's moment of truth exposed this problem.²⁶ Camp David failed because at stake was not this or that settlement, not how many warning stations Israel would get, but Israel's very existence, and the Palestinians' identity and collective memory. The *intifada* did not erupt because Israel did not offer enough – but because it could not offer more. And Arafat failed to stop it not because he lacked power to do so – but because the *intifada* represented a challenge to his perceived willingness to forgo Palestinian dreams in exchange for a truncated Palestine.²⁷

To presume that a change of US policy can extinguish the fire is an illusion. To presume that the parties can pick up negotiations where they left them in early 2001 is to ignore the impact that 3,000 dead and thousands of maimed, terrorised, impoverished and indoctrinated citizens across the divide will have on their leaders' ability to make concessions. To presume that all the dispute needs is a road map, a goodwill lakeside gesture and additional benevolence to achieve what an all-too-similar process could not achieve *before* the violence is to ignore the reasons for failure and condemn the belligerents and their Western mediators to repeat it.

Managing expectations

That Israelis and Palestinians would consider their conflict to be the core issue of the Middle East is understandable. But at present, to either side, the solution looks like national suicide. Israel is being asked to choose between living by the sword or giving up its century-old project of Jewish nationalism, in which case the sword is a foregone choice as long as Jews define themselves overwhelmingly as a nation. Palestinians are also being asked to choose – giving up their dream of return or living forever under occupation or in exile among their not-so-welcoming Arab brethren.

The world at large, however, need not accept this stark choice. Outside players – the US in particular – can work to change the outside

parameters of the dispute while at the same time more or less leaving the parties to their own devices. The West may wish to reconsider the policy implications of that almost missionary zeal that leads Western diplomacy to seek peace in the region. A drastic reduction of expectations might be healthy: instead of conflict resolution, conflict management. This might involve a number of measures aimed at de-escalating violence, separating forces and peoples and reducing friction points, all the way to a permanent truce and interim agreements, which would run short of a full peace deal and leave the thorniest issues out of reach for the time being. Oslo's failure did not stem from its procedural shortcomings; Oslo failed because it exposed the gap between the two sides and revealed that the gap is unbridgeable. Persistently trying to bridge it – the aim of countless plans since September 2000 – ignores the effects of the second *intifada* on both Israeli and Palestinian societies. Trying to reduce the violence is already ambitious enough.

Israel's proposal to unilaterally withdraw from part of the territories in the near future might bring about a reduction in Palestinian violence, as evacuation of settlements would include dismantling of checkpoints and the lifting of curfews. Though this kind of disengagement might jeopardise a comprehensive political solution for the foreseeable future, it could still bring about a significant reduction of tension and violence.²⁸ The operational consequences of such unilateral actions – the reduction of friction between the two populations, Israeli withdrawal behind defensible positions and the development of Israeli security measures that are less draconian in their effects on Palestinian civilians – might actually help steer the two sides towards negotiating a truce. Such a truce, a partial and, no doubt, imperfect agreement, would reflect the reality that central issues such as Jerusalem and refugees might need another generation to be solved.

Under the Bush administration, American Middle East policy has now mutated: the US has turned from a status quo power into a revisionist power bent on fostering radical change. This mutation is not without dangers, as the difficulties in post-war Iraq demonstrate. Yet America's stakes in Iraq are so high that success there will make engagement on other regional issues secondary. Crudely put, while America can afford to absorb many more setbacks on the arduous road to Palestinian–Israeli reconciliation, it cannot afford to fail in Iraq. Most of its energies and attention will be directed towards that mission.

While the US will continue its engagement with the Palestinian–Israeli dispute, the new US approach to creating the conditions for a peaceful

A drastic lowering of expectations might be healthy

resolution of the Palestine question is to foster broader change in the Arab world. Deposing Saddam Hussein and his regime of terror – a regime that threatened its neighbours while fanning the flames of Arab and Palestinian radicalism – was one such needed change. But Saddam's removal from power does not automatically hold the promise of democracy, freedom, prosperity and moderation. Nor does it automatically create the conditions for a new Middle East of the kind dreamed by Shimon Peres and his associated visionaries. To change the 'Arab predicament' will take more time, imagination, blood and resolve. Until that happens, the parameters of the Israeli–Palestinian dispute will remain largely unchanged.

Notes

- ¹ See Shimon Peres and Arieh Naor, *The New Middle East* (Shaftesbury, UK: Elements Books, 1993); and Yossi Beilin, *Touching Peace* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1999).
- ² Peres & Naor, *The New Middle East*, p. 61.
- ³ *Ibid.* p. 62.
- ⁴ Beilin, *Touching Peace*, p. 195.
- ⁵ *Ibid.* p.196.
- ⁶ *Ibid.* p.197.
- ⁷ Fouad Ajami, *The Arab Predicament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 27.
- ⁸ Michael Scott Doran, 'Palestine, Iraq, and American Strategy', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 82, no. 1, January/February 2003, p. 20.
- ⁹ *Ibid.* p. 24.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 21.
- ¹¹ President George W. Bush addressing the Commencement Ceremony for University of South Carolina's Class of 2003 at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/05/20030509-11.html>.
- ¹² Ajami, *The Arab Predicament*, p. 3.
- ¹³ 'Americans and Arabs nurture such different conceptions of what constitutes a just solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that it is hard to imagine Washington ever adopting a policy toward it that would be truly popular in the Arab world'. Michael Scott Doran, 'Palestine, Iraq, and American Strategy', p. 20.
- ¹⁴ <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/05/20030509-11.html>
- ¹⁵ The United Nations Development Programme, *The Arab Human Development Report 2002*, Amman, Jordan, September 2002.
- ¹⁶ Peter K. Cornelius (ed.), *The Arab World Competitiveness Report 2002-2003*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 35.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 6, 36
- ¹⁸ Fouad Ajami, *The Arab Predicament*, p. 19. Ajami identifies two main sources for radical Islam: one economic; the other Islam's difficult encounter with modernity: 'The turning toward religious symbols is in very small measure explained by doctrine itself, by Islam's classical teachings and its scripture; above all, it is rooted in the failure of secular elites, in the lack of alternative channels of expressing socio-economic and political grievances'.
- ¹⁹ Fouad Ajami, *The Dream Palace of the Arabs* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), pp. 274-5.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.* p. 275.
- ²¹ *Ibid.* p. 276.
- ²² Discussing Israel's unilateral withdrawal, Israeli Minister of Industry and Trade and Vice-Prime Minister Ehud Olmert declared that, 'The whole world will be aghast because my plan entails sizable annexations to Israel. So how will we overcome its opposition? By having it witness the enormous internal crisis that evacuations [of settlements] will involve. When the world sees what it means to evacuate even a single settlement – even a single family – it will grasp the limits of the game'. Amotz Asa-El and Ruthie Blum's interview with Ehud Olmert, 'Ehud Olmert and his Plan', *The Jerusalem Post Up Front*, Friday Supplement, 12 December 2003, p. 11.
- ²³ As Yezid Sayigh says, 'The term *intifada* (uprising) is used by Palestinians to describe their confrontation with Israel since Autumn 2000. I not regard it as an accurate or appropriate description, given the marginality of civilian resistance and unarmed mass protests', 'Arafat and the Anatomy of a Revolt', *Survival*, vol. 43, no. 3, Autumn 2001, p. 59.
- ²⁴ Hussein Agha & Robert Malley, 'Camp David: The Tragedy of Errors',

The New York Review of Books,
9 August 2001.

- ²⁵ Karma Nabulsi, 'No peace without an end to exile', *The Guardian*, 18 September 2002.
- ²⁶ Fouad Ajami, *The Dream Palace of the Arabs*, pp. 263–4.
- ²⁷ Fouad Ajami, 'The Uneasy Imperium', in James Hoge Jr and Gideon Rose (eds), *How Did This Happen? Terrorism and the New War* (New York: The Council on Foreign Relations, 2001), p. 26.
- ²⁸ Israelis advocating unilateral withdrawal argue that it is precisely

the impossibility of reaching an agreement at present, and what they see as the lack of a credible Palestinian partner, that dictate the desirability of such action. Thus, to the objection that unilateral steps might thwart peace agreements, they reply that no peace agreements are possible, hence they cannot be thwarted by unilateral action. See Amotz Asa-El and Ruthie Blum's interview with Ehud Olmert, 'Ehud Olmert and his Plan', *The Jerusalem Post Up Front* Friday Supplement, 12 December 2003, p. 11.