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US Policy on the Middle East Peace Process

Speaker: Dr. William Quandt, Edward R. Stettinius Professor of Government and Foreign Affairs, University of Virginia

Discussant: Mr. Afif Safieh, PLO Delegate to the UK and the Holy See

Place: Ambassador Hotel, Jerusalem
([See Photos](#))

Summary

Dr. Mahdi Abdul Hadi: Allow me to welcome you to the PASSIA Forum. We are planning to hold a PASSIA Forum once every six weeks or so in order to activate the Jerusalemite community and to bring people together to think about current issues by inviting experienced scholars and academics from here and abroad to share their ideas. You all know more that we have a big wound in Jerusalem: it is not only a divided, occupied city but is also becoming a deserted city. People are leaving, not because they want to live somewhere else but because the Palestinians in Jerusalem have become weak and isolated because of the daily political closure, the security closure, and the other attempts to ignore the rights of the Palestinian Moslems and Christians of Jerusalem, including our right to develop our lives, our societies and our institutions. Consequently, we demand the protection of our city, its holy places, its institutions, and we need your support.

I do not think that any of us can truly envisage the future of any Palestinian Authority, leadership or state without Jerusalem. I am talking here not only about the part of Jerusalem that was occupied in 1967, but also the part that was taken in 1948. We have rights in West Jerusalem, which will be discussed in the final status talks. I am hoping that our speakers today will give us some hints regarding their perspectives, whether we are talking about US foreign policy or about American perspectives, with regard to the peace process in general and Jerusalem in particular. Afif, I know is a very loyal Jerusalemite and I am very proud to have him here with us again in the city. He is a scholar, a diplomat, and a long-time Palestinian activist. William Quandt, meanwhile, is a scholar and a professor who used to work with the Carter Administration in the Security Council and who was the architect of Camp David. He published several studies and other publications and is now teaching in a Washington university.

The PASSIA Forum has been made possible with the support of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), the German institute that has been our partner for many years. It was FES, which has supported various PASSIA activities, that came up with the idea of not limiting the Palestinian-European dialogue and contact only to research studies but instead, to open an effective forum here in Jerusalem. I am very happy and honored to have developed this kind of relationship with FES.

I will now leave the floor to William Quandt who, I hope will give us an American non-official perspective on US policy concerning the Middle East Peace Process.

Dr. William Quandt: I have been at PASSIA several times and have always regarded my visits as an interesting opportunity to exchange views with Palestinian friends and colleagues. This time around, I have had the opportunity to speak to a large number of people and I can really feel the Palestinian State in the making. I think that one of your greatest assets is institutions like PASSIA and others that encourage the free exchange of different opinions; compared to many of your neighbors, you are doing very well in this respect and I hope that it continues because the fact that you tolerate the views of others and talk to one another reflects well on the Palestinians as a people.

Having said all that, there remains, of course, the continuing frustration of seeing how much remains to be done. I have been coming to this part of the world since 1970 and each time I come I see more settlements and more encroachment on the land, which means that sometimes it is hard to see how all of that can easily be reversed to allow for a viable state to emerge. However, that is not the primary focus of my remarks tonight. Instead, I am going to concentrate on a topic that I have thought and written about over the years, namely the role that the United States has played historically and can play in the search for a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace. I want to stress that my own vision of what we look at as peace is a comprehensive one - I have never thought that a partial agreement was the end of the road. Ultimately, the Syrian front, the Lebanese front and the Palestinian front all need to be addressed if there is going to be a solid foundation for peace in the region and I sense that we are at one of those intriguing moments when expectations are again being raised because of political changes in Israel. Perhaps there is an opening, perhaps there will be a new opportunity after several very difficult years, and I share the hope that we are on the verge of a new phase of serious negotiations. One thing is clear. If this round fails, it is going to be very difficult to develop another serious effort to find a political

solution in the near future. There are too many uncertainties, but I will try to give you an assessment of what kind of role the United States might be able to play if negotiations do get underway.

I emphasize the American role for several reasons. First, I am an American and I want to see my own government contribute to peace in this region. I think that we bear a certain responsibility; we certainly contributed to some of the problems, and I think that we now have an obligation to contribute to some of the solutions. We have, I believe, demonstrated that it is in the American national interest to have peace in the Middle East, which is a central element for the stability, development, and progress of the region. So, I do not think that there is any question about the desirability of peace in this region or the fact that the United States can play some kind of role because of its unique relationship with Israel.

Now, let me say a few words about the kind of role - at least in theory - the United States could play based on recent history, particularly the negotiations that took place between Egypt and Israel. Those were the negotiations that I know best; I participated in them and I got a glimpse of why sometimes, parties to negotiations actually need a third party to play a role in helping them to solve their differences. The United States played the part, after 1973, of setting a kind of an agenda for Egypt and Israel through a whole series of things. Sometimes the President would simply pick up the telephone, call either the Prime Minister of Israel or the President of Egypt, and start a discussion about some issue in order to try to push the situation forward. Sometimes there would be meetings and that would generate some forward movement, and of course, the shuttle diplomacy that Kissinger followed and the Camp David Summit that Carter used were ways of, in a sense, forcing decisions from parties who were hesitant, who were interested in peace but who found it difficult to take the kind of big decisions that were necessary. That is the kind of thing that we have seen a lot of in the recent years but without any real results, just endless numbers of meetings that do not produce any real outcome.

The United States has also on occasions made big proposals to the parties to get them to react and although any given number of those proposals may be rejected, sometimes the ideas become the central focus of subsequent discussions. I can remember that in 1968-69, something called the Rogers Plan was put forward in a bid to secure peace between Egypt and Israel and at the time was rejected by both parties. It called for Israel to leave all of occupied Sinai and it called for Egypt to make peace with Israel. Ten years later, those principles were incorporated into the peace treaty, so sometimes

an initial rejection of an American proposal is just the beginning of what becomes a prolonged discussion, which eventually begins to bring the parties closer to agreement. I think that we should expect at some point in the future to see the United States trying to push things forward by making specific suggestions. In addition, the United States can offer reassurances, incentives, pressures, guarantees, etc. You can call this whatever you like - side payments, bribes, etc. - but, at some stage in diplomacy, the promises of aid can help make decisions easier for one side or the other, and since the United States has the resources as a major world power, I think that it is expected that it will use some of these resources to help facilitate the conclusion of negotiations. On security issues, particularly if we think about the Syrian front, there have already been promises made saying that given the right circumstances, the United States would play a role, perhaps even providing troops for the security of the Golan Heights with the agreement of both sides. I understand that both sides accepted the idea in principle, so there are many different kinds of conceivable roles that can be played.

Let me give you another example of why it is sometimes helpful to have a third party present. In my early experience in government, I became acquainted with Moshe Dayan - an intriguing character to say the least - and at one point he took me aside and said: "You know, the Egyptians are asking us to do something" - I forget what it was right now - "but at long as this is an Egyptian proposal, it is very difficult for us to accept it because we are still enemies. I can tell you, however, that we do not have a problem with the content of the proposal; the problem is that it is an Egyptian proposal. If you Americans could take the same ideas and present them to us, then our political leadership could say 'We have to accept it, it is an American proposal and we cannot always say no to the Americans.' So, why don't you take the Egyptian idea, make it an American proposal and then bring it back to us for us to say 'yes'?" It is not so difficult to understand this in political terms. It is going to be difficult for Yasser Arafat to say "Yes" to proposals that come directly from Ehud Barak and vice versa, and sometimes it will be easier for a third party to take ideas and present them in a creative manner, not to trick anybody, but to make it possible for people to say "Yes, we will accept it."

The Syrian track is getting a lot of attention right now because of the recent public statements. Hafez Al-Assad who hardly ever says anything complimentary about anyone has recently made some positive statements about Barak and Barak has reciprocated, so something is going on. We can see the signals, and there is reason to believe that this track of negotiations will get attention quite rapidly, which is something that I think the United

States would encourage. The United States was involved through 1993 to 1996 with the Rabin government and Peres in exploring the possibilities of a deal between Syria and Israel and we now know that they came quite close to a general understanding - not every detail, but fairly close; the Syrians say about 75 percent of the deal was agreed upon, the Israelis two thirds. The hard issues, particularly those concerning territory, seem to have been more or less resolved, or at least nearly resolved. The Israelis agreed that they would leave Syrian territory if they could get certain things on security and political relations. There was some change with Nethanyahu, who stepped back from that, but I think that it is clear that those negotiations will resume, the United States will most likely be the intermediary and President Clinton will want to push that process forward as quickly as he can.

As far as Clinton is concerned, time is now important. He is approaching the end of his political term with a very mixed legacy: he is still a very popular president, despite all the scandals, but he does not have, with regard to foreign policy, an absolutely clear legacy that people will necessarily remember. It is going to be difficult to portray Kosovo as a huge American success and I think that we are into the phase of his presidency where he is looking for things that will reflect well on his presidency in the foreign policy arena. He cannot do much now on domestic politics; the economy is doing fine, the Congress is under the control of the Republicans, so foreign policy is the area where he can now make his mark. He cannot save the Russian economy - nobody can do that - and he cannot do anything dramatic with the Chinese, so this is one part of the world where surprisingly enough he might be tempted to intervene, particularly on the Syrian-Israeli track where things could move fairly quickly.

What about the Palestinian-Israeli track? Can you expect similar treatment? I think that the answer will be yes. I do not think that there will be an attempt to divide, to say we can only deal with the Syrian track and we will have to leave the Palestinian track aside. I think that the outset is that Americans would want to see an effort made with both sets of negotiations, but there is a difference. I do not say this to discourage anyone or to demoralize you, but out of a desire to be realistic. First, unlike the Syrian-Israeli front, there are direct channels for communicating between Palestinians and Israelis: you do not need the Americans to pass messages back and forth whereas on the Syrian-Israeli front, it is still likely that that will be the main means of negotiations at the outset. Secondly, Oslo proved that negotiations can take place without American involvement, in addition to which it may be that there is another mediator that both Israelis and Palestinians would prefer. I think

that for the issues that are on the agenda, it is going to be hard to imagine who could be more helpful because the hard issues are ones where the Israelis are going to have to make major concessions if there is going to be agreement. The third reason is that I think that it is different on this front as we have been through a rather long period now, really most of the 1980s and 1990s where the American approach to the issues on this front has been a very cautious one, a kind of 'process-oriented' approach. In a number of meetings, we promoted the idea of building confidence between the parties, emphasizing small steps that could be taken and frankly, I do not think that this approach was very successful. I sense today that there is less confidence between Palestinians and Israelis than there was three or four years ago. The so-called Interim Period that was supposed to be a period in which trust developed and problems were solved turned into a period where frustrations mounted and accusations of ill-will were commonplace and right now, I think that one has to seriously question whether this American-preferred approach was a wise approach after all. If the so-called final status issues are really the heart of the conflict - Jerusalem, refugee rights, settlements, statehood, security, coexistence between two people in this land - all of those have to be addressed head-on, no more little games of trying to design clever solutions that avoid the hard problems.

Now, is the American President likely to shift gears from this process-oriented approach to a sudden switch whereby the single most sensitive issues in the entire Arab-Israeli conflict are tackled? Can we expect to hear an American President, if asked, "What is the American position on Jerusalem?" answer frankly? There is actually an American position on Jerusalem - you'd be surprised to hear it since it is rarely mentioned – and it is actually not very far from the position that many of you have adopted. The only legal position that we have ever taken is the vote in 1947 for UN Resolution 181 which said that Jerusalem should not be the capital of either Israel or a Palestinian state, but a separate city under international administration. That, of course, is no longer going to be said by any American President as facts have been overtaken by events, but legally we have never taken another position of saying that Jerusalem belongs to one party or another; we have said that Jerusalem should not be physically divided with a Berlin Wall, we have also said that Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem should not determine the outcome of the negotiations, and you also find a document in the Camp David Peace Treaty. Frankly, you are going to need to cling to these occasional scraps of American statements to boost your position. President Carter wrote a note under his signature to both President Sadat and Prime Minister Begin saying: "The American position on Jerusalem is that East Jerusalem is occupied

territory subject to the Fourth Geneva Convention.” It has not been said very often since then, except by President Bush. Bush also said that from the American standpoint, East Jerusalem is considered to be occupied territory, which at least means that there is something to be negotiated about in Jerusalem, that there is a legitimate issue on the agenda.

I am not sure, however, that you are going to find this President standing up and repeating those clear American positions. There are, nonetheless, positions on the right of return, on settlements, etc. For example, I was shocked to hear President Clinton say that settlements are destructive as far as the peace process is concerned; that is a very strong statement, and the implication is that the building of settlements should stop, not only that, but that the ones that exist should be removed. However, as we get further and further into the year, I am not sure how many more times you will hear that statement. Why? Not because I think President Clinton is a coward who is afraid to say these things, but because he is a politician and he very much wants his Vice-President to be the next President. Vice-President Gore is very close to the Jewish community and to the Israelis and he will not want controversial positions taken by the President that he might disagree with, so I think that he will urge the President to remain silent and, if he is asked about the settlements, to say that this is one of the issues for the parties to negotiate. This is the old line that we have been using for years and years - anything that comes up that is controversial and we say: “That’s for the parties to negotiate in the final status negotiations.” Well, the final status negotiations are about to begin and I think that it is going to be a problem for the Americans to keep saying “It is up to the parties” because then 90 percent of the outcome will reflect what the Israelis want and I do not think that that kind of imbalance can result in any kind of peace.

The second constraint on the President is that it is very likely that his wife is going to be running for the Senate in New York, a place where Middle East issues are taken very seriously in some parts of the community. Although Mrs. Clinton has stated her own personal view, i.e., that there should be a Palestinian state - and I admire her willingness to say that and I think that it is the President’s view as well as her own - I have not heard her say it recently as she prepares for her New York campaign. Again, I think that you can see this kind of political caution making it harder and harder for an American President at this stage to play the kind of assertive role that I think could be helpful.

Now, I hope that I am wrong, that it will first prove easier for Palestinians and Israelis to bridge the gaps between them on their own. As I listen to

Palestinians describe the future that they want, there is a picture that comes through very clearly, but it is not the picture that I see when I talk to Israelis; the image that moderate Israelis who I think are willing to coexist with Palestinians reminds me very much of the bantustans in South Africa, little fragments of territory divided by Israeli roads and Israeli settlements with no viability, no territorial integrity and certainly no part of Jerusalem. So, if this is going to be resolved, I think that a lot of parties - the United States, the Europeans as well as other friends - are going to have to make a major effort to help the parties narrow the gap.

Let me conclude by saying that I would expect - I hope I am wrong - the Syrian-Israeli track to go more smoothly and quickly toward an early agreement on the basic principles than this track. It is going to be very frustrating and there will be moments when the parties get stuck; this perhaps requires a belief in miracles, but we are talking about a land where miracles have happened before. If the basic problems can be resolved through peaceful means, then the United States has another role to play, not as negotiator, but as a friend of the new Palestinian state with a goal of making it not just a weak appendage of the Israeli economy, but a viable entity. It certainly has that potential, but enormous things remain to be done in terms of investment, development, providing people with opportunities. It is very important that people be provided with jobs that do not necessitate them enduring the humiliation of rising at 2 a.m. each morning and going through checkpoints to work in the Israeli economy, building settlements on Palestinian land; that is something that cannot continue if a state of peace is to exist. I believe that if peace comes to this region, the United States will see that it is in its own interests to make this peace one that works, i.e., that it is not a peace talked about on a piece of paper, but a peace that benefits the people of this region. Having made all this effort to find a political solution to one of the most difficult conflicts that we have known since the World War I period, I do not think that anyone wants to see it start all over again in the 21st Century. I would like to think that the next century will be one where issues of this sort are resolved peacefully and a real effort is made to use the human potential for development, for progress and to recognize that we are living in a new world where there are incredible opportunities, what with the information revolution, the economic revolutions, and an improved understanding of and respect of basic human values.

There is really a lot we can hope for, but it requires a peace agreement and it requires, as far as the Israelis are concerned, that they offer a generous

peace, not a grudging peace to their Palestinian neighbors, and I think that to reach that point, the Americans have to try to persuade the Israelis to change their way of thinking. It is necessary, however, that we understand the depth of fear. The peace with Egypt and Jordan should reassure people, but they still talk the language of fear. It is my belief that if the Israelis could overcome their fear and look at their neighbors as human beings, then there would be an enormous potential for peace in this region. Given the right circumstances, I think that a lot of ordinary Americans would be supportive of any American attempt to bring about peace. I do think that the negotiations are going to be extremely difficult, but I hope that people will come to their senses and realize that there is an opportunity for real peace in this region, not the kind of bantustans that unfortunately seem to be now in the making.

Dr. Mahdi Abdul Hadi: Thank you very much. Although we do not have a strong presence and influence in Washington in order to build public opinion in regard to the issue of Jerusalem, we are not ready to make concessions when it comes to the city – the people of Palestine will never compromise when it comes to Jerusalem. And now to Afif.

Mr. Afif Safieh: I would like to start by thanking Mahdi Abdul Hadi for inviting us and to express our gratitude regarding the existence of PASSIA in Jerusalem. We must struggle through the different channels to maintain this economic, political, spiritual, intellectual centrality in Jerusalem and I am happy to see today that friends have come from Bethlehem, Ramallah, and even Nazareth to be with us this evening, showing that Jerusalem is still the center of our intellectual life. I would like also to pay tribute to the other speaker, Professor William Quandt, who played an important role during the era of the Carter administration. Some of us remember the Carter administration for various reasons, yet we should remember that President Carter in 1977 was the first American President to talk about a Palestinian homeland in terms that were almost identical to the ones used by Clinton in December 1998 some 20 years later. I personally believe that had Carter had a second mandate and not been defeated, he would have moved forward.

I am supposed to be serving as the discussant for William Quandt, but I wish to say that I do not know how this peace will be equitable, lasting, and durable. It is up to us to prove to the Israelis and others that what they think is Palestinian resignation is a determined Palestinian realistic approach and that Arab indifference will give way to another situation that will link to a future normalization with a satisfactory equitable solution for the issue of Jerusalem and the other issues of the final status negotiations.

The Israeli political establishment - left, right and center - seems to want a final outcome for this negotiating exercise that will reflect 1) Israeli intransigence, 2) an American alignment on the Israeli preference, 3) Russian decline, 4) European abdication, 5) Arab impotence, and 6), as a result, Palestinian resignation. How such a peace can be qualified as lasting, durable, final and permanent, I fail to comprehend. And I do not date utter the words fair, equitable, just or even just acceptable.

The American society is fascinating to study, and there is a variety of schools of thought. If one takes the one that reflects the two political cultures that coexist in the American society, one could view American society as a colonial society that was built at the expense of the Red Indians, who were exterminated and put into reservations preceding the emergence of the United States at Mexico's expense. One can also view American society as a result of widespread anti-colonial feeling. The American society is the result of widespread immigration from European countries, from the Old World to the New World, involving mainly Catholics from predominantly Protestant countries and Protestants from predominantly Catholic countries, Republicans from monarchies, etc., all of whom ended up in America, a new promised land that in the 20th Century helped many Third World countries to obtain their independence. These are the two Americas and it is up to us Palestinians to appeal to the second America, the America of freedoms and liberties.

Now, concerning the Middle East and the Arab-Israeli conflict, one could say that in the past there were those in America whom we used to refer to as the globalists and the regionalists. The globalists saw the Arab-Israeli conflict through the prism of global competition - American-Soviet rivalry - and Israel was seen as a strategic asset and America's regional ally. The regionalists, meanwhile, were saying that Americans should position themselves concerning the local and regional merits of the different parties and refrain from always looking through the global prism of the superpower whilst asking themselves if their being favorable to Israel means that they were sacrificing the network of their relationships in the Gulf, North Africa and elsewhere.

What I want to say is that there is another distinction between the two schools of thought - those that say that we are witnessing an American Israel and those who say that we are witnessing an Israeli America. Some say that since Israel is the junior partner, America is dictating to Israel concerning the regional strategies and approaches it should adopt. Another school says, no, unfortunately, yes, America is the superpower, but in the Middle East, it has relinquished this role in favor of Israel and America adopts Israeli preferences, strategies, and tactics and integrates them in its global approach. I personally

believe that America is a society that is a nation of nations and that the domestic factor is important in the American social national tissue. I also believe that today, non-alignment in American foreign policy is a battle that we Palestinians can win. In contemporary international relations, with the demise of the Soviet Union and the emergence of this new system, Palestinians and Arabs working within the American society is a must, a major priority; I am sure that you will agree that working in Alabama, Nebraska, Carolina, Arizona, is almost more important than working in Zambia, Namibia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Indonesia. We need a massive public relations operation in the American arena. I would note at this point that if we look at opinion polls of the American society, from the '70s onwards, you can find a majority of people who support Palestinian self-determination and statehood.

I believe that George Bush Junior has a very good chance of winning, especially because of the fact that he is married to an Hispano-American and has a good chance of gaining 50 percent of the votes of the Hispano-Americans, a rising community whose members usually vote for the Democrats and not the Republicans. His slogan of 'Compassionate Conservatism' appears very attractive. He is also the son of his father and he knows that Bush Senior's position on the Middle East was among the many reasons behind his defeat in the elections. We should not forget that besides his criticized war initiative in the Gulf, on the Palestinian problem, Bush was the first President since Eisenhower to link American aid to American advice to Israel. I think that our aim in Palestinian politics is to convince the Americans to again link American aid with American advice.

Today, two schools of thought are engaged in a kind of battle in which one considers Israel a strategic asset, an ally, the other, a strategic burden and liability. I personally believe that Israel has become a strategic burden and a strategic liability to American interests in the Middle East, unlike in the '50s and '60s when it helped American foreign policy in the Middle East because it helped in confronting emerging Nasserism and the possibility of Communist expansion. Today, whether one likes it or not, the entire regional state system is very pro-Western and conservative, and the Israeli Government, by its intransigence and non-flexibility is defying, destabilizing and delegitimizing the profoundly pro-Western regional system. We have all seen in recent contemporary history how the policy code of dual containment by the Americans was put in disarray. Why? The answer, according to the Arab perception, is that there was a missing link; it was never a triple containment policy because we, the Arabs and Palestinians, were more concerned with the containment of Israel.

In summarizing all the debates on the American-Israeli relationship, I would say that the first school of thought speaks of an American Israel and the other of an Israeli America. Today, the United States is the only remaining superpower in the world, yet when it comes to the Middle East, it has abdicated that role to its regional client, protégé or junior partner, Israel. While the first school of thought says that the United States, as the senior partner, imposes upon its regional ally and junior partner its regional policy, which conforms with its global approach and interests, the other school of thought says no, because of a special relationship the Americans adopt the Israelis' regional strategy and integrate it into their global framework. So the difference is does America impose on Israel its policy, or does America solely adopt American policy and integrate it in its approach. The reality is somewhere in the middle as there clearly exists an influential pro-Israeli lobby, which is a major player in the formulation and elaboration of American foreign policy pertaining to this region.

I believe that what is democratically accepted for the Israelis on the issues related to the final status is not democratically accepted for us Palestinians and that over the next seven years, between the River Jordan and the Mediterranean, there is no room for two democracies because of this. The Israelis believe that we, the Palestinian society, should abandon our minimum demands concerning final status issues - settlements, refugees, etc. - and that our National Authority will repress us and force us to accept the unacceptable. I think that they should get the message that we in the Authority are not willing to repress the people and are still ready to pay the price for seeing our hopes become reality.

Until now, we have constantly been obliged to negotiate at the mercy of the balance of power. Israel has three kinds of superiority vis-à-vis the results: it has the monopoly of the nuclear option, it has conventional superiority vis-à-vis any possible combination of Arab states - its aviation is equal to the French plus the British numerically - and I suspect that on the operational level, it has more frequent opportunities to exercise. Number three, Israel has a non-written alliance with the only superpower, the United States, and I believe that a non-written alliance with the only remaining superpower is even better than a written one because an unwritten alliance does not imply responsible behavior of the junior actor vis-à-vis the senior actor. So, Israel has three major kinds of superiority vis-à-vis the Arab environment and also negotiates with us without there being an international role as a guiding compass and as I said earlier, what states consider acceptable for Israel is considered unacceptable for us.

I always say to Israeli sources that peace is too important to be left to the Israelis to decide upon and peace with us Palestinians and Arabs is not a compromise formula between Likud and Labor, peace is halfway between our historical demands and their historical ambitions. I would like to tell Barak the Palestinians' feelings: in a pluralistic democracy, one can either have the strategy but no unanimity or unanimity but no strategy. We saw that Barak, after his victory, was seeking to have as broad a coalition as possible so as to give himself the pretext that he cannot withdraw from I do not know where or dismantle the settlements etc., so, what I want to say is that we have to launch a big international campaign that clarifies what is unanimously perceived by us Palestinians as historically acceptable. We have to make it clear that we believe in the following historical compromise: In exchange for a complete withdrawal from the 1967 expansion, we recognize your pre-1967 existence and we offer to meet you in Jerusalem and nowhere else but in Jerusalem.

To conclude, in spite of all the odds, I believe that we can remain optimistic.

Mr. William Quandt: As Afif said, the United States is a large complex society where it is possible for the Palestinian voice to be heard more thoroughly today than ever before, but I also think that it is going to take a lot of time. Americans a bit older than I am and even my generation are almost instinctively sympathetic with the victims of the Holocaust, which, of course, is unfair to the Palestinians who paid the price for this. I am just telling you that emotionally that was the context in which our initial commitment to Israel was made. For my students today, that is ancient history - it is terrible what happened, but they encountered Israel on CNN beating up young Palestinians during the *Intifada* and that represents their first memories about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. They have always seen Israel as the stronger power, not as the victim. Yes, there is some commitment to Israel, but ordinary Americans are much more open now to reading what I think is a more objective history of this conflict than their parents.

That does not suggest that there is going to be a sudden change because Congress is extremely hard in its views, which are very different to those of the American public. The people in Congress want to be re-elected, they look at the public opinion polls and they pay attention to these things. A Congressman has to run for office every two years and there is a lot of money that comes from the community, money on which Congressmen have become very dependent, and that is the hard note to break. It is really much easier to begin to change American public opinion and I think that many Palestinian spokesmen who have come to America have actually done a remarkable job

of presenting the Palestinian and Arab point of view in a serious and eloquent way, but that does not deal with Congress immediately, that deals with a kind of general public sentiment - that there is a Palestinian people that have a cause and that we need to understand both sides of this issue. Changing the views of people in Congress requires a separate strategy. I do not think that the Arab Americans can compete with the Jewish Americans in terms of mobilizing resources for Congressional elections, so I think that the average public opinion will be easier than the Congress, particularly at times like these. You have seen the role that potentially the US Congress can take in passing a resolution on the issue of moving the American Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem; the Presidential waver has to be renewed every six months, and although President Clinton decided this time to exercise his will, the next time this comes up, it is going to be increasingly difficult as you get into the election campaign and Congress mobilizes for this not to be postponed.

As to the issue of George Bush Junior, his father put national interests first - whether the son would do the same, I do not think that any of us can know. He is very popular, but there is no way of knowing if he would live up to our expectations or not. Politicians have a way of disappointing the people. President Clinton is a man who is obsessed with public opinion polls - what is going on and how popular he is today - and you can see that he has been very successful at that, but you have to think if this kind of politics is at the expense of principles. It has been a while since we have had American politicians who are prepared to do the unpopular thing because it is actually right for the country. I hope that you also look to those kinds of politicians, not those who look good on television and who have good supporting public opinion polls.

A point that Afif made that I was intrigued by was the nature of the unwritten alliance with Israel, but I think that he is right. Israel can count on the United States and that is what an alliance is all about. The United States does not get much in return, partly because of the ambiguity concerning the basis of the relationship. Years ago, I thought that since we have a de facto alliance it would make sense to try to get something for it and I proposed, when I was in the government and later, that we should say to the Israelis "If you are prepared to withdraw from all of the Occupied Territories and live in peace with your neighbors, then the United States will formalize its relationship with you in the same way that it has with NATO factions - you will have an American guarantee of your security, but only within the 1967 boundaries." Unfortunately, I do not think that the Israelis want to pay the price for security. Moshe Dayan who was, I am convinced, aware of the fact that Israel's long-

term survival liability requires a very close relationship with the United States was willing to consider making a very big concession for that, whereas Begin was totally against the idea. Begin's view was that we could not trust the United States entirely no matter what kind of alliance we have. He also realized that the bargain involving this idea of a formalized alliance would also involve the evaporation of the security rationale of keeping the Territories, leaving only this kind of historical, religious, ideological frame that, quite frankly, most Americans do not have much sympathy with; they are much more sympathetic when it comes to the idea of Israel as a security interest that needs to be protected. So Begin rejected the idea of a real binding security alliance with the United States because he realized that it would be expected to result in the giving up of the Occupied Territories and he was not going to do that. Perhaps if these negotiations go forward it would be possible to bring up this idea again of the United States doing a lot for Israel's existential security in return for withdrawal, but quite frankly, I think that the peace with Jordan, the peace with Egypt, and the potential peace with Syria are enough to satisfy the Israelis' desire for territorial agreement.