

The top half of the image features a black and white photograph. It shows the silhouettes of several soldiers positioned on top of a structure, likely a military base or a border fence. The most prominent figure is a soldier in the center, crouching and talking on a handheld radio. To his left and right, other soldiers are visible, some sitting and some standing. The structure they are on is topped with multiple layers of barbed wire. In the background, several tall, thin antennas or poles rise against a bright, cloudy sky. The overall mood is somber and suggests a theme of conflict or surveillance.

RASHID KHALIDI

**BROKERS
OF DECEIT**

**HOW THE U.S. HAS UNDERMINED
PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

Purchase a copy from
one of these retailers

amazon.com[®]
and you're done.[™]

BARNES & NOBLE
BOOKSELLERS

INDIE
BOUND[™]

BEACON
PRESS

 **iBooks**

kobo

INTRODUCTION

DISHONEST BROKERS

The slovenliness of our language makes it easier for us to have foolish thoughts. . . . If thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought. A bad usage can spread by tradition and imitation, even among people who should and do know better.

—GEORGE ORWELL, “POLITICS AND THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE,” 1946

In politics and in diplomacy, as in much else, language matters greatly. However debased political discourse may become, however disingenuous diplomacy often is, the words employed by politicians and diplomats define situations and determine outcomes. In recent history, few semantic battles over terminology have been as intensely fought out as those concerning Palestine/Israel.

The importance of the precise use of language can be illustrated by the powerful valence in the Middle East context of terms such as “terrorism,” “security,” “self-determination,” “autonomy,” “honest broker,” and “peace process.” Each of these terms has set conditions not only for perceptions, but also for possibilities. Moreover, these terms have come to take on a specific meaning, frequently one that is heavily loaded in favor of one side, and is far removed from what logic or balance would seem to dictate. Thus in the American/Israeli official lexicon, “terrorism” in the Middle East context has come to apply *exclusively* to the actions of Arab militants, whether those of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Hamas, Hizballah, or others. Under these peculiar terminological rules, the actions of the militaries of Israel and the United States cannot be described as “terrorism,” irrespective of how many Palestinians, Lebanese, Iraqi, or Afghan civilians may have died at their hands.

Similarly, in this lexicon, “security” is an absolute priority of Israel’s, the need for which is invariably described as rooted in genuine, deep-seated existential fears. “Israeli security” therefore takes precedence over virtually everything else, including international law and the human rights of others. It is an endlessly expansive concept that includes a remarkable multitude of things, such as whether pasta or generator parts can be brought into the Gaza Strip, or whether miserably poor Palestinian villagers can be allowed water cisterns.¹ By contrast, in spite of the precarious nature of their situation, Palestinians are presumed not to have any significant concerns about their security. This is the case even though nearly half the Palestinian population have lived for more than two generations under a grinding military occupation without the most basic human, civil, or political rights, and the rest have for many decades been dispersed from their ancestral homeland, many of them living under harsh, authoritarian Arab governments.

This book is concerned primarily, however, not with the misuse of language, important though that is, but with an American-brokered political process that for more than thirty-five years has reinforced the subjugation of the Palestinian people, provided Israel and the United States with a variety of advantages, and made considerably more unlikely the prospects of a just and lasting settlement of the conflict between Israel and the Arabs. This is the true nature of this process. Were this glaring reality apparent to all, there might have been pressure for change. But the distortion of language has made a crucially important contribution to these outcomes, by “corrupting thought,” and thereby cloaking their real nature. As we shall see in the pages that follow, language employed in the Middle East political context—terms like “terrorism” and “security” and the others mentioned above—has often been distorted and then successfully employed to conceal what was actually happening.

Where the Palestinians are concerned, time and again during their modern history, corrupted phraseology has profoundly obscured reality. The Zionist movement decisively established a discursive hegemony early on in the conflict with the Palestinians, thereby significantly reinforcing the existing power balance in its favor, and later in favor of the state of Israel. This has placed the Palestinians at a lasting disadvantage,

as they have consistently been forced to compete within a field whose terms are largely defined by their opponents. Consider such potent canards as “making the desert bloom”—implying that the six hundred thousand industrious Palestinian peasants and townspeople who inhabited their homeland in the centuries before the relatively recent arrival of modern political Zionism were desert nomads and wastrels—and “a land without a people for a people without a land,” which presumes the nonexistence of an entire people.² As the Palestinian literary and cultural critic Edward Said aptly put it in 1988: “It is by no means an exaggeration to say that the establishment of Israel as a state in 1948 occurred partly because the Zionists acquired control of most of the territory of Palestine, and partly because they had already won the political battle for Palestine in the international world in which ideas, representation, rhetoric and images were at issue.”³

In this book I attempt to pierce one aspect of a carefully constructed realm of obscurity, a realm in which the misuse of language has thoroughly corrupted both political thought and action. I will do so by focusing primarily on three sets of events, each to be treated in a subsequent chapter, which constituted moments of relative clarity in the fog of obfuscation that has surrounded US policy on Palestine for more than three decades. These are crucial junctures when unusual circumstances worked to draw back a veil masking underlying realities, underlying structures. The eminent French historian Fernand Braudel noted that even a minor event “could be the indication of a long reality, and sometimes, marvelously, of a structure.”⁴ I am arguing that these three moments likewise signify beyond themselves, however relatively minor they may have been in and of themselves.

The veil I am most concerned with in this book, however, does not primarily conceal basic verities about the situation in Palestine per se—although it is certainly true that the unpleasant realities of this situation are carefully hidden from the American public.⁵ Having dealt with historical dimensions of the situation in Palestine in earlier works, I want to examine here instead the veil that conceals how the policy of

the United States toward the Palestine question has actually functioned to exacerbate rather than resolve this problem.⁶ My primary objective is to reveal how closely entwined have been the respective policies of the United States and Israel toward the Palestinian people over recent decades. Logically, this should have disqualified America from playing the role of intermediary between the two antagonists: needless to say, it did not. This aim is thus quite limited: my purpose in what follows is *not* to chronicle or analyze the entirety of American diplomacy in the Middle Eastern arena, or to provide a comprehensive history of efforts to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict in all its aspects. A number of books attempt to do this: this is not one of them.⁷ Although I will necessarily touch on the larger American role in the Middle East, and will consider the issue of Palestine against the context of the broader dispute between Israel and the Arabs, my focus throughout will be on how the United States has dealt with the Palestine question.

A second objective of this book is to examine how constant have been certain key elements in US policy on Palestine over many decades. Much has changed in this policy over time. However, there are underlying continuities that have allowed the United States and Israel—whose overwhelming might enables them to dominate the entire Middle East—to control and shape outcomes in Palestine. The three revealing sets of events I focus on in this book show how central the support of the United States was for the enduring system of control of the millions of Palestinians living under military occupation, a system that was conceived, constructed, and maintained by Israel. In June 2013, this complex but largely invisible structure, consistently upheld and defended by the United States, will enter its forty-seventh year. The Israeli occupation has been made so (politically) invisible in the United States that then presumptive Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney apparently could not, or would not, see it while in Jerusalem on a campaign visit in July 2012.⁸ The existence of this structure explains in large part why the Palestinians have not been able to achieve their national objectives of liberating themselves from occupation, unifying the scattered segments of their people, and exercising self-determination.⁹ It also helps to explain why the continued survival

of the Palestinians as a people has been in question since at least 1948, and remains so today.

The assertion that the continued existence of the Palestinians as a people is endangered requires some explanation, in light of the ubiquitous invocation of the precarious existence of Israel in American and Israeli public discourse. Since memory of the most somber chapter in all of Jewish history, the Nazis' genocidal destruction of much of European Jewry, is still vivid, it is understandable that existential fears are often evoked where Israel is concerned. This tragic past notwithstanding, the state of Israel has in fact been a resounding success story throughout its sixty-four-year history. But the fears provoked by this grim recent history obscure the fact that as Israel has gone from success to success, victory to victory, the Palestinian people have been repeatedly shattered and dispersed as a social and political entity. This sequence of tragedies for the Palestinians was most often a result of these very Israeli successes and victories. Thus it is understandable that the Palestinians confront profound existential anxieties as a people, for very real reasons rooted in their experiences over more than three quarters of a century.¹⁰ Nonetheless, in American public discourse it is the existential angst of the Israelis that is continually emphasized, and their anxiety-driven quest for security that is consequently paramount, never that of the Palestinians. This is a matter of political realities, of course, which allow one people to be highly visible and another to be virtually invisible, but it is another instance where flawed political ideas are powerfully reinforced by the employment of subtly distorted language.

Examining how American objectives were achieved in the three instances I will focus on provides insight into some of the reasons why a just, lasting, and comprehensive peace, which would satisfactorily and finally resolve the problem of Palestine, has never emerged. Although other crucial aspects of the Arab-Israeli conflict were settled, via peace treaties between Egypt and Israel in 1979 and between Jordan and Israel in 1994, peace has not been achieved between Israelis and Palestinians. There is no peace in spite of decades of futile initiatives that were ostensibly directed at achieving this aim, under the Orwellian rubric of a "peace process." I place this ubiquitous term in quotation

marks in my text because whatever concrete effects this process may have had—whether it marginally ameliorated a colonial status quo in the occupied Palestinian territories or exacerbated it, and whether it has improved the strategic position of the United States and Israel in the region or harmed it—it is manifestly clear that it has not brought peace to the Palestinian and Israeli peoples, nor has it resolved the conflict between them.

Looked at objectively, it can be argued that American diplomatic efforts in the Middle East have, if anything, made achieving peace between Palestinians and Israelis even more difficult. These endeavors go back to the US-brokered 1978 Camp David Accords between Egypt and Israel, which constituted the first American attempt following the 1967 war—indeed the only serious effort since soon after the 1948 war—to address the Palestinian-Israeli component of the larger conflict. They encompass initiatives of the Carter, Reagan, George H. W. Bush, Clinton, George W. Bush, and Obama administrations. These initiatives were necessarily affected by the prior policies of the Johnson, Nixon, and Ford administrations, which, like most of their predecessors, never attempted to deal in a fundamental manner with the Palestine problem.

The first of the three moments of clarity I propose to focus on came in the late summer of 1982 when it briefly appeared as if there might be an opportunity to put into effect the unimplemented provisions of the 1978 Camp David Accords relating to Palestinian autonomy. As mentioned, those accords, which had been incorporated into the 1979 peace treaty between Israel and Egypt, amounted to the only serious American effort since the Truman administration to address the question of Palestine and the Palestinians, and constituted the first effort to address certain of its political dimensions. However, in a series of follow-up negotiations that took place between the 1978 Camp David Summit and 1982, the three parties to the accords, Israel, Egypt, and the United States, had been unable to agree on the interpretation of their provisions relating to the Palestinians.

In the latter year, Reagan administration policymakers perceived an opportunity to address this impasse in the wake of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. After two months of bombardment of besieged West Beirut,

an American-brokered cease-fire on August 12 finally halted the carnage, which had produced nearly fifty thousand casualties.¹¹ This cease-fire was linked to the evacuation of the leadership, civilian cadres, and military forces of the PLO from the Lebanese capital, which took place at the end of August.¹² Washington viewed this dramatic change as reinforcing the American position regionally and globally. It was thus considered the appropriate occasion for the release of a US proposal later known as the Reagan Plan, which was publicly announced by President Ronald Reagan on September 1, 1982.

Particularly revealing in this context is a recently declassified confidential memo, most likely written by a senior officer of the Central Intelligence Agency, which predicted that Israeli prime minister Menachem Begin would react with extreme inflexibility to the Reagan Plan.¹³ This US intelligence analyst predicted that in response to President Reagan's effort to resolve the conflict via reframing the Camp David autonomy accords more objectively and more favorably to the Palestinians, Begin would adamantly refuse to budge from his own narrow, reductive interpretation of these accords. This assessment proved to be highly accurate. Equally revealing was the eventual unwillingness or inability of the US administration in the subsequent weeks to hold firm to the positions publicly enunciated by the president, or to overcome Begin's strongly worded objections to any change in the American posture supportive of Israel on the issues in contention with the Palestinians. As we shall see, this was not the first time that American policymakers were to acquiesce unwillingly in the Israeli position on Palestine, nor was it to be the last.

The second set of events to be examined occurred during the nearly two years of bilateral negotiations between Israeli and Palestinian delegations in Washington that followed the October 1991 Madrid Peace Conference. These talks were ultimately rendered moot by the secretly negotiated Oslo Accords, which were signed on the White House lawn in September 1993 by Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin, PLO chairman Yasser 'Arafat, and US president Bill Clinton. Nevertheless, the confidential documents and public statements produced by the Palestinian delegation to the pre-Oslo Madrid and Washington negotiations—to which I had access as an advisor to this delegation—expose

much about the fundamental positions of the United States and Israel. These documents, especially minutes of meetings with the American and Israeli sides, are revealing in showing the high degree of coordination between the positions of the two countries. Most striking here was the unmistakable continuity of the restrictive Israeli position on Palestinian autonomy—which in its essence remained unchanged from the time of Begin though the governments of Yitzhak Shamir, Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres, and all of their successors. Equally importantly, these documents reveal the acquiescence of American policymakers in this position. Just as little noticed in the euphoria over the signing of the Oslo Accords was the utter unreliability of what appeared to be unequivocal American commitments made to the Palestinians at the outset of the Madrid talks. One can contrast this with the faithfulness of Washington to its pledges to Israel regarding the question of Palestine, and its unremitting responsiveness to Israeli demands in this regard.

The third moment is much more recent. It emerged during the latter part of the Obama administration's first four years in office. Over this period President Barack Obama faced relentless pressure from Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, acting in concert both with the Republican leadership in Congress (newly energized after its Tea Party–fueled victories in the 2010 midterm elections) and with the potent congressional lobby for Israel. The latter is composed of an archipelago of organizations rooted in the older, more affluent, and more conservative sectors of the Jewish community and headed by the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), allied with a range of right-wing Christian evangelical groups passionately supportive of Israel.¹⁴ The tripartite pressure of Netanyahu, the Republicans, and the Israel lobby forced Obama into humiliating retreats from the positions he had staked out during his first two years in office. Notable among these positions, all of which had been standard fare for most of the preceding administrations, were his stress on halting the expansion of Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank as a precondition for Palestinian-Israeli negotiations; his assertion of the necessity for the rapid achievement of full statehood by the Palestinians; and his insistence that a return to the 1967 frontiers with minor modifications, as

per Security Council Resolution 242, was the only suitable basis for negotiations between the Palestinians and Israel.¹⁵

In the fall of 2011, the embarrassing abandonment of all these positions culminated in a major campaign led by the United States to obstruct a Palestinian bid for recognition of a Palestinian state as a full member of the United Nations. In this context, Barack Obama in October 2011 delivered perhaps the most pro-Israeli speech any US president has ever made to the UN General Assembly, adopting an unprecedented range of standard tropes in Israeli discourse on the conflict. Thereafter, Obama received Israeli prime minister Netanyahu at the White House in early March 2012, for a discussion of several hours that was mainly focused on Iran.¹⁶ So little attention was devoted to the Palestine issue, Israeli settlements, the “peace process,” or related matters which had been the central topic of all their previous meetings, that there was barely a mention of them in the official White House statement on the meeting.¹⁷ An Israeli analyst wrote in amazement: “When [Netanyahu] came back his adviser was asked what was new about this meeting. And his adviser said, ‘This is the first time in memory that an Israeli Prime Minister met with a US president and that the Palestinian issue was not even mentioned, it never came out.’”¹⁸ Indeed, matters related to Palestine had been central to virtually every previous meeting between a US president and an Israeli prime minister for many decades. It was not these issues, on which the president had focused almost entirely during his first two years in office, but the question of Iran’s nuclear program, Netanyahu’s preferred topic of discussion, that predominated.¹⁹ Obama’s climb-down was complete, and was only confirmed in the succeeding months of 2012, as the presidential election campaign gathered steam and both candidates pandered shamelessly to win the approval of fervent supporters of Israel.

My approach to the sets of events that provided these three moments of clarity will be based on an examination of declassified US government records and of confidential documents produced before, during, and after the 1991–93 Madrid and Washington negotiations that are in my possession. It will include as well a survey of public statements and actions taken by the American and Israeli governments with respect

to these three instances over a period of nearly thirty-five years. Such an examination provides a clear sense of the long-term core policies of both sides. These policies are thoroughly, and in some cases intentionally, obfuscated in much of the superficial writing on the subject. Here again, language has played a crucial role. Since the Camp David Accords in 1978, and especially since the Madrid Peace Conference in 1991, the incessantly repeated American mantra, whether in official statements or writing that is policy-oriented, academic, or journalistic, about a “peace process” has served to disguise an ugly reality: whatever process the United States was championing, it was not in fact actually directed at achieving a just and lasting peace between Palestinians and Israelis.

A real, just peace that would bring the conflict between the two peoples to a final conclusion on a fair basis would have had very different requirements from those the United States has pursued for most of this period. It would necessarily involve the following: a complete reversal of the Israeli military occupation and colonization of Palestinian land in the West Bank and East Jerusalem that was seized in 1967; national self-determination for the Palestinian people; and a just resolution for the majority of Palestinians who are refugees or descendants of refugees made homeless by the establishment and expansion of Israel in 1948–49 and its further expansion in 1967. If seriously undertaken at any stage over the past four and a half decades, an effort to achieve these ends would by now long since have resulted in Palestinian sovereignty and statehood on the 22 percent of the territory of former Mandatory Palestine that comprises East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip.

Instead of trying to achieve these goals, the process actually undertaken by the United States was aimed primarily at pressuring the weaker Palestinians into conforming to the desiderata of their much stronger oppressor. Israel’s main objectives were to maintain permanent effective control of Jerusalem and the West Bank and to prevent the Palestinians from achieving any of their own national objectives. The Palestinian leadership was eventually forced to acquiesce unwillingly in much of this as a result of its own feebleness and the impact of American-supported Israeli pressure. A subsidiary objective of US

policy often seems to have been the avoidance of lasting differences with its potent and inflexible Israeli ally on the hot-button Palestine issue. Such differences were seen as highly undesirable by one administration after another since well before the thirty-five-year period I will focus on. This reluctance to engage in disputes with Israel over the Palestine issue occurred for reasons ranging from crass domestic politics to serious strategic considerations. They included the fact that the Palestine issue was not considered very important by most policymakers and politicians, and was certainly not as important as avoiding antagonizing the Israeli government and its influential and prickly supporters in Washington.

William Quandt, who dealt with this issue on the National Security Council staff during the 1970s, puts it thus: “One must frankly admit, the American political system makes it difficult for a president to tackle a problem like that of the Palestinians. Presidential authority in foreign affairs is theoretically extensive, but in practice it is circumscribed by political realities. And the Palestinian question has proved to be so controversial that most presidents have been reluctant to get deeply involved in it.” He adds that “the Palestinians had no domestic constituency.”²⁰ A deep and carefully cultivated American cultural and religious affinity for Israel and the growing closeness of the two countries in various fields were also crucially important factors in the background. What the United States therefore ended up doing over several decades was actually most often conflict management, and thus amounted to conflict perpetuation. It was emphatically not conflict resolution or an effort to bring about a real, lasting, sustainable Palestinian-Israeli peace.

Although I will focus most closely on episodes from the “peace process” over the past thirty-five years, the core dynamics at work in American policymaking toward Palestine have been remarkably stable for much longer. In these dynamics, domestic political calculations have generally taken precedence, while occasionally being balanced or overridden by strategic considerations. It is striking how rarely the United States was forced by such considerations to modify its policy on Palestine over

many decades. This left the growing closeness between the United States and Israel in a variety of spheres a chance to play an increasing role. We can see the basic outlines of this procedure from a brief examination of the earliest phases of American involvement in the question of Palestine, under President Harry Truman from 1945 until 1948. Three basic patterns were laid down during this period.

From the time of President Woodrow Wilson onward, many American politicians had shown strong sympathy for the Zionist movement.²¹ This was based on deep cultural and religious affinities rooted in the Bible and in a shared “frontier ethos.”²² Except in the financial realm, however, the United States had little or no impact on events in Palestine before World War II because of its relatively low profile in the Middle East until that point.²³ The political influence of the United States in the region began to grow measurably, however, as a result of the massive World War II American military presence stretching from North Africa to Iran, starting in 1942. Meanwhile, Washington’s recognition of the vast strategic importance of Saudi Arabia ensured that President Franklin Roosevelt took pains to meet with that country’s monarch, ‘Abd al-‘Aziz ibn Sa‘ud Al Sa‘ud (hereafter Ibn Sa‘ud), while the American leader was passing through Egypt on his way back to Washington from Yalta in March 1945.

By the time of this meeting, Saudi Arabia, which in 1933 had negotiated an exclusive deal with American companies for oil exploration and exploitation, had been found to contain what were believed to be the world’s largest oil reserves, was producing considerable quantities of oil in support of the Allied war effort, and was the site of an important US air base, at Dhahran. It is today the world’s largest oil producer and largest exporter, and continues to hold the world’s largest proven reserves of oil.²⁴ Meanwhile, developments during World War II had decisively proven the role of oil in facilitating attempts to achieve global mastery. Indeed, a State Department report in 1945 noted that Saudi “oil resources constitute a stupendous source of strategic power, and one of the greatest material prizes in world history.”²⁵

During their March 1945 meeting on the deck of a US cruiser, the USS *Quincy*, only a few weeks before Roosevelt’s death, the Saudi ruler

stressed to the president the great importance of the issue of Palestine to him and to the Arab peoples. He received a promise from Roosevelt, set down in a subsequent letter, to the effect that the United States would not act in Palestine in any way that was “hostile” to the Arabs of that country, or without first consulting with the Arabs, as well as the Jews.²⁶ These were clearly far-reaching commitments and were never kept by Roosevelt’s successors. It cannot be stressed enough that had these pledges been scrupulously respected by subsequent US presidents, events in Palestine might have transpired very differently.

If the war had suddenly revealed the United States as the greatest global power in human history, Roosevelt’s death brought to the presidency a man whose experience of the world was relatively limited. Harry Truman had served in combat in France during World War I as an artillery officer, but his career thereafter as a farmer, as a clothing salesman, and in Missouri and national politics had poorly prepared him for some of the international duties he would face. He had little sense of the strategic importance of oil, unlike Roosevelt, who had served as assistant secretary of the Navy during World War I, and who had approved the 1943 order to the United States Army Air Forces to focus its strategic bombing effort on German oil resources.²⁷ However, Truman was a man with a strong personality and a mind of his own, and he was an experienced and canny politician. He had a clear understanding of what it would take to help his party’s chances in the hotly contested 1946 midterm elections, and then to get elected as president in 1948, which he succeeded in doing against all odds.

Where Palestine was concerned, Truman demonstrated his acute political instincts from the outset of his presidency. He strongly supported the pressure that the Zionist movement was placing on Britain over Jewish immigration to Palestine and other issues that were of deep concern to American Zionists and to a broad section of the president’s liberal political base. Truman had in October 1945 denied publicly that Roosevelt had made any wartime promises at all to Ibn Sa’ud, and only grudgingly later acknowledged them when the State Department eventually produced the relevant correspondence.²⁸ But in his policy on Palestine thereafter he resolutely ignored Roosevelt’s pledges, as well as the

advice of the State Department, the Pentagon, and the US intelligence services. He did instead mainly what his instincts and his closest advisors told him was politic in American domestic terms.²⁹

Thus, while meeting with four American diplomats serving in Arab capitals on November 10, 1945, Truman received them cordially, but responded to the concerns they expressed over American policy on Palestine by saying bluntly: "I'm sorry, gentlemen, but I have to answer to hundreds of thousands who are anxious for the success of Zionism; I do not have hundreds of thousands of Arabs among my constituents."³⁰ The president told the four envoys that the question of political Zionism "was a burning issue in the domestic politics of the United States," and added frankly that it had caused him and his secretary of state "more trouble than almost any other question which is facing the United States."³¹

On the advice of his counselors, Truman had kept these senior diplomats—who had been called back from the Middle East by their superiors at the State Department specifically to meet with the president—waiting for weeks. One of Truman's confidants, Secretary of State James F. Byrnes, noted that "if the President should see them it is certain that the newspapers would suspect that the conversations were being held here as a result of the promise [to Ibn Sa'ud] as to consultation. Certainly the President is not going to see them before November 6 [which was Election Day], and I think it would be equally unwise for me to do so."³² Byrnes and the president's other advisors clearly felt that any perception of contact, however indirect, with representatives identified with the Arab position, even in this case with *American* diplomatic envoys to Arab countries, might leave the administration politically vulnerable. They were particularly concerned that such a meeting might harm the Democratic Party's chances in what was expected to be a hotly contested 1945 mayoral election in New York City,³³ and later in key districts in the 1946 midterm elections. The president apparently concurred, and the meeting with the envoys was postponed for weeks, until after the election. In the event, although the Democrats won the 1945 New York mayoral election, they were trounced nationwide in the 1946 midterm elections, losing one of New York's two Senate seats, as well

as control of the House, in their biggest congressional defeat since 1928. Presciently, Truman concluded his meeting with the four diplomats by saying that “Palestine would probably be an issue during the election campaigns of 1946 and 1948 and in future campaigns.”³⁴ He could not have known just how far-sighted he was in making this statement.

The 1946 midterm congressional electoral defeat only reinforced Truman’s favoring of domestic political calculations over those of strategy and diplomacy where Palestine was concerned. Truman was the last American president without a college education, a plainspoken, self-made man who resented the way the State Department’s well-bred Ivy League-educated personnel looked down on him. Unlike many diplomats, some of whom he suspected shared the casual anti-Semitism of their moneyed peers, Truman had a number of close Jewish friends.³⁵ He felt keenly the moral imperative of saving European Jews who had survived the Holocaust.³⁶ Nevertheless, in earlier years neither Truman nor most other American politicians, from Franklin Roosevelt on down, had done anything to save those Jews who could have been saved before they were murdered by the Nazis. This apparent callousness can be explained in large part by the pervasive anti-Semitism that afflicted many sectors of American society in the 1930s and early 1940s. At that time, it was simply not politic to favor massive Jewish immigration to the United States.³⁷

However, after World War II, and particularly after the horrors of the Nazi death camps had been revealed, there was no political cost and much benefit to calling for the surviving Jews to be liberated from the displaced persons camps where they languished and sent elsewhere, specifically to Palestine, to obtain a state of their own there.³⁸ Truman was strongly influenced by a coterie of advisors and friends like Eleanor Roosevelt, Clark Clifford, Max Lowenthal, and David Niles, all of whom were deeply committed Zionists.³⁹ In addition, he tended to listen most carefully to those like himself whose political lives had been primarily spent making domestic and electoral calculations rather than decisions about strategy or foreign policy or the national interest. Truman thus felt comfortable appointing as secretary of state James Byrnes, a South Carolinian who had spent fourteen years in the House, eleven in the

Senate, a year as an associate justice of the Supreme Court, and four more mainly in wartime domestic policy positions under Roosevelt.⁴⁰

The final outcome regarding Palestine was thus overdetermined. Truman, supported by the strong pro-Zionist sentiments of those closest to him and of a set of core Democratic constituencies, and driven by fears that showing insufficient zeal for the Zionist cause might contribute to electoral defeat for the Democrats, in essence imposed support for Jewish statehood in Palestine from 1946 until 1948 on a reluctant Washington bureaucracy. Over the opposition of most of his permanent officials, the president thus pushed through a 1946 proposal for an Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry in Palestine, mandated support of the 1947 partition resolution, and immediately recognized the new state of Israel in May 1948. These officials opposed this policy essentially out of fear of the possible damage to American strategic interests in the Middle East that would result.⁴¹ Truman took positions supportive of Zionism notwithstanding the entirely accurate warnings of senior figures in the State Department, the Pentagon, and the new Central Intelligence Agency that this would provoke decades of strife, create profound anti-American sentiments among Arabs, and involve the United States in lasting support of an isolated Israel. A 1945 State Department memo noted presciently regarding the Palestine question: "Unless our attitude in regard to it be clarified in a manner which will command the respect and as far as possible the approval of the peoples of the Middle East, our Middle East policy will be beset with the greatest difficulties."⁴²

In the end, however, although every one of these dire predictions by the experts eventually came true, Truman proved more far-sighted about one crucial matter than his diplomatic and military advisors. He and his successors in the White House could afford to ignore completely Roosevelt's promises to Ibn Sa'ud to consult with the Arabs before taking any decision on Palestine and to take no action there that was "hostile" to them. They could do this, moreover, without fear of losing the considerable strategic and economic advantages provided by the American-Saudi relationship. For although the Saudi king occasionally protested privately against the growing anti-Arab and pro-Zionist trend

of American policy in Palestine from 1945–48, and regarding Truman’s betrayal of Roosevelt’s pledges to him, he was manifestly too dependent on the United States for support against regional rivals and the British to do anything about it. Ibn Sa‘ud’s dissatisfaction was so muted, in spite of the Truman administration’s overtly “hostile” policy over Palestine, that Secretary of State George Marshall in 1948 wrote to thank him for the “conciliatory manner in which [he] has consistently approached Palestine question.”⁴³

The explanation for this Saudi passivity was simple. Saudi Arabia needed the external backing of the United States and its expertise in oil exploration and exploitation too much to break or even significantly modify their relationship, even at this early stage of a connection between the two countries that went back to 1933. In subsequent decades, Saudi Arabia was exceedingly careful to maintain its close ties with the United States, irrespective of the nature of American policy on Palestine. In the last analysis, over time it has become clear that these ties were far more important to that country’s ruling family than was their proclaimed attachment to the Palestinian cause. Truman was proven right, at least insofar as ignoring Roosevelt’s pledges to Ibn Sa‘ud over Palestine was concerned.

Thus was established what became a solid Middle Eastern pattern that has endured virtually unaltered for more than three quarters of a century. In light of this pattern, the close relationship with Saudi Arabia can be seen as the first and most central pillar not only of the entire US position in the Middle East, but of American policy on Palestine, and indeed the *sine qua non* of all that followed in this regard. For this relationship precedes that with Israel by over a dozen years, and is even more fundamental than that with Israel to global US interests because of this Arab state’s extraordinary economic and strategic importance.⁴⁴ However, it must be understood that appearances notwithstanding, these two relationships, and the alliances that have emerged from them, are not contradictory in any essential way, thanks mainly to the extraordinary complaisance of Saudi Arabia’s rulers toward the United States’ unflagging support of Israel, combined with its unconcern in practice for the rights of the Palestinians. The United States has in consequence

been able to align itself firmly with the basic Israeli desiderata where the Palestine question is concerned without seriously jeopardizing its far-ranging vital interests in Saudi Arabia and the other oil-producing Arab monarchies of the Gulf. The ability of the United States to have it both ways was thus an essential precondition, and indeed the groundwork, of a policy that has not changed significantly since the days of Harry Truman. This policy has consisted of providing strong support for Israel, while paying no more than lip service to the publicly expressed concerns regarding Palestine of oil-rich Arab Gulf rulers, and generally ignoring the rights of the Palestinians.

What sustains this unequal equation, which on the face of it may seem strange? In the first place, for many decades vital American strategic and economic interests in the oil-producing Arab states of the Gulf have determined Washington's continued support for their ruling families. These monarchs in turn were in pressing need of American support, given their countries' military weakness and inability to defend themselves against external enemies. Even more important was the fact that most of them lacked any form of democratic or constitutional legitimacy (the conspicuous exception was and is Kuwait, which for over fifty years has had a constitution, a parliament, regular elections, and a free press). The United States thus helped to protect these rulers not only against external enemies, but also against the significant range of discontented elements among their own peoples. In consequence, even anomalous episodes like the economic upheaval caused by the Saudi-engineered Arab oil embargo in the wake of the 1973 October War did not change this basic equation. Thus, writing of the embargo, Henry Kissinger stated: "The rhetoric of Saudi diplomats on behalf of the Arab cause was impeccable and occasionally intransigent but, behind the scenes, Saudi policy was almost always helpful to American diplomacy."⁴⁵

It should therefore not be surprising that at the end of the day, the massive support extended by the Nixon administration to Israel during and after the 1973 war in the form of weapons, aid, and diplomacy did not in any way affect the close American bond with the Saudi ruling family. This and many other similar episodes have proven that the United

States could do as it pleased regarding Israel and the Palestinians, and still retain its privileged relations with the governments of Saudi Arabia and other Arab Gulf oil producers. This pattern, which flowed directly from the internal weakness and lack of democratic legitimacy of these regimes and their resulting heavy dependence on the United States, was the first and most crucial one involving Palestine to be established as early as the Truman administration. It obtains down to this day.

The complaisance of the Arab Gulf states with respect to the Palestine issue constitutes further evidence that for all its influence, it is not primarily the Israel lobby that drives US Middle Eastern policy. Rather, since there is no contradiction between the vital American strategic interests involved in an alignment with Arab oil-producing despotisms and American bias in favor of Israel, the cost of the latter is relatively small to policymakers. Public opinion in the Arab world naturally abhors that bias. However, since most states in the region are not democracies, and their rulers are heavily dependent on American favor, Washington can safely ignore the peoples of these countries. It follows, however, that when—and if—fundamental and lasting democratization takes place in the key Arab states, there will necessarily ensue a day of reckoning for US policy on Israel and Palestine. This is another major reason for the long-standing US policy of upholding the fiercely antidemocratic Saudi monarchy.

The period between 1945 and 1948 reveals at least two more patterns in American policy over Palestine that also proved to be enduring, and which were grounded firmly in the fact that the United States could easily afford to ignore the feeble protests of its key Arab Gulf allies over the question of Palestine. The first was the pattern already mentioned of presidential solicitude for domestic constituencies generally taking precedence over other considerations, including ordinary foreign policy concerns, and sometimes even long-term American strategic interests. This was especially the case during presidential and midterm election years (and with monotonous regularity, these seem to coincide every two years with a crucial American decision on Palestine). We have seen the first instance of it with Truman's handling of the Palestine issue in 1946 and 1948. This pattern operated with more

or less force in different administrations and under different circumstances, but it has obtained consistently in repeated cases from the time of Truman down to the present.⁴⁶

For all of its importance, however, the basic pattern of presidential solicitude for domestic political considerations was often disrupted by the intrusion of Cold War issues during Arab-Israeli crises, when larger strategic interests momentarily came into play. One of the first examples constituting an exception to this pattern is the well-known episode of President Eisenhower firmly opposing Israel and its British and French allies during the Suez War in 1956. He did so in spite of the fact that 1956 was a presidential election year. However, this tripartite adventure was launched in secrecy without any consultation with Washington, took place simultaneously with the Soviet invasion of Hungary, and drew attention away from Soviet misbehavior and toward Western neocolonialism. For all these reasons, it infuriated the president. Thus Eisenhower showed absolutely no patience for Israel's foot-dragging in the aftermath of the war, when it tried to delay the evacuation of the occupied Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip.⁴⁷ Although his administration was by no means as close to Israel as later ones were to become, Eisenhower took this firm position almost entirely because of Cold War considerations, which in 1956–57 militated strongly against Israel.

By comparison with 1956, the situation was very different before, during, and after the June 1967 War, by which time circumstances had changed considerably. Starting with events around the Yemen Civil War of 1962–67, President Lyndon Johnson and his successors had come to see the leading "radical" Arab states, notably Egypt under President Gamal 'Abdel Nasser, in increasingly adversarial terms.⁴⁸ This occurred as what Malcolm Kerr described as the "Arab Cold War" between radical nationalist Arab regimes on the one hand and US allies like Saudi Arabia, the other Arab Gulf states, and Jordan on the other, coincided more and more with the larger American-Soviet Cold War.⁴⁹ In consequence, Middle Eastern polarization between Arab nationalist and pro-American regimes tracked more and more with Cold War polarities. With Israel's resounding victory over the Soviet-armed Egyptian and Syrian militaries in 1967, Israel could increasingly be seen in

Washington as a major Cold War strategic asset, and its Arab rivals as Soviet proxies. Partly in consequence, after 1967, the United States did not even attempt to force Israel to evacuate the territories it had occupied during the June 1967 War, as it had done in 1957. It has never tried to do so since.⁵⁰ This fact is an indication of how crucial the Cold War was in shaping American views of Israel as a strategic asset.⁵¹

Pursuit of Cold War advantage over the Soviet Union in the Middle East was so important, moreover, that at times it took precedence over all else, including even peacemaking. This was the case notably in 1971 when President Richard Nixon and his then national security advisor, Henry Kissinger, reacted indifferently to Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's explicit offer of a peace deal with Israel.⁵² Sadat had told Secretary of State William Rogers that he was seeking a "peace agreement" with Israel, and made it clear that this was meant to be a separate peace, independent of what happened on Israel's other fronts with the Arab states. This marked a notable change from the position of Sadat's predecessor, Gamal 'Abdel Nasser, who had accepted Security Council Resolution 242—which entailed a "land for peace" bargain. However, 'Abdel Nasser had never explicitly referred to a peace treaty with Israel, and he had always linked any settlement involving the return of Egypt's occupied Sinai Peninsula to similar Israeli withdrawals from the occupied territories of Israel's other neighbors. Although Sadat's far-reaching offer failed primarily because of rejection by the Israeli government of Golda Meir, Nixon and Kissinger were uninterested essentially because such an initiative would not also have entailed the complete expulsion of the Soviets from Egypt, which was their primary objective in the Middle East.⁵³

Kissinger had noted in his memoirs that an off-the-cuff remark he made to journalists in 1969 that the "administration would seek to 'expel' the Soviet Union from the Middle East . . . accurately described the strategy of the Nixon White House." The zero-sum, Cold War-derived logic behind the icy White House reception of Sadat's 1971 peace offer was implicit in Kissinger's further comment: "We blocked every Arab move based on Soviet military support."⁵⁴ This clearly included Sadat's offer of a separate peace with Israel, which Rogers and his advisors at the

State Department had considered highly promising, and which they had believed would lead to a diminution of Soviet influence in the Middle East. Nixon and Kissinger, however, were unenthusiastic, both because there was no explicit linkage to the expulsion of the Soviets from Egypt, and because Soviet military support for Egypt might be perceived as the reason Egypt was able to obtain Israeli withdrawal. The two inveterate Cold Warriors could not allow the USSR to obtain credit for an Egyptian success, even one brokered by the United States.⁵⁵

Another example of how the Cold War intruded on the tendency of domestic politics to determine American Middle Eastern policy was President Nixon finally reining in the rapidly advancing Israeli forces on the West Bank of the Suez Canal at the end of the 1973 war.⁵⁶ This advance was in blatant violation of a cease-fire that Secretary of State Kissinger had just negotiated in Moscow. In response, the Soviet Union had threatened to intervene unilaterally if the Israeli advance was not halted immediately. It had backed up this threat by taking menacing military actions that included preparing to ship nuclear-armed missiles to the Middle East and mobilizing paratroop divisions for deployment to the region. This in turn provoked the United States to announce a nuclear alert, DefCon 3, and thereby produced “possibly the most serious international crisis of Nixon’s presidency.”⁵⁷ Incidentally, all of this happened after Kissinger had surreptitiously given Israeli leaders a green light for their tanks to keep rolling deeper into Egypt in spite of solemn assurances to the Soviets a few hours earlier in Moscow that the Israeli advance would be stopped.⁵⁸ Kissinger told Golda Meir and her colleagues during a meeting in Tel Aviv after his Moscow visit and just before returning to the United States: “You won’t get violent protests from Washington if something happens during the night, while I’m flying.” That very night, Israeli forces surrounded the Egyptian Third Army on the West Bank of the Canal, precipitating the crisis. However, while the United States has always strongly favored Israel,⁵⁹ major Cold War considerations, and grave issues of war and peace, invariably took precedence over the American-Israel relationship and domestic politics, albeit almost always in a way that further abetted the Israeli cause.

In a similar exception, over a six-year period, Nixon and Kissinger, and later Carter and his secretary of state, Cyrus Vance, pushed through a series of three disengagement agreements with Egypt and Syria from 1974 until 1975, and a peace treaty with Egypt from 1977 until 1979. In so doing, they repeatedly overrode the passionate objections of deeply reluctant Israeli governments to make what they saw as “concessions.” They were willing to put up with the vociferous protests of Israeli leaders, and the outrage of the Israel lobby in Washington, who saw the United States as acting in a way that was inimical to Israel, for one reason: the immense strategic advantage that was afforded to the United States in the Cold War equation by “winning” Egypt away from the Soviet Union.⁶⁰ In consequence of the bold initiatives of these two American administrations, the United States for all intents and purposes achieved victory in the Middle East theater of the Cold War, thereafter reducing the Soviet Union to a subsidiary regional role. It goes without saying that in spite of the intense objections of Israeli leaders and their American supporters at the time, all of these actions, from the eventual outcome of the 1973 war and the 1974–75 disengagement agreements to the 1979 peace treaty, proved highly advantageous to Israel strategically. They were also very beneficial to it in terms of unprecedented new commitments for several billion dollars annually in American military and economic assistance.

These were the most important exceptions to the pattern of domestic factors predominating in policymaking regarding Israel and Palestine, exceptions that generally arose in moments of high crisis with the Soviet Union, where vital American interests necessarily took precedence over all else, including domestic politics. Much more frequently, however, during the three decades from the early 1960s onward, Cold War considerations militated unequivocally in favor of strong American support for Israel against the “radical” Arab states, which were increasingly seen in Washington as proxies of the USSR.⁶¹ For this entire period, Israel benefited greatly from the perception in Washington that it constituted a major Cold War strategic asset. This factor was at least as important as domestic politics, and the significant impact of Israel’s increasingly formidable lobby in Washington, in explaining the extent of Washington’s military, intelligence, economic, and diplomatic support

for Israel, and the high degree of cooperation between the two countries in all these spheres.

Finally, there were a few other illuminating cases, such as the deals to sell Saudi Arabia F-15s during the Carter administration and AWACS aircraft during the Reagan administration, where a coalition of formidably powerful American domestic economic interests like the oil lobby or the aerospace industry, combined with the overwhelming strategic importance to the United States of Saudi Arabia, overrode the strong opposition of Israel and its American supporters. It should be noted that the shrill warnings of the Israel lobby notwithstanding, these deals had a minimal impact on the military capabilities of Saudi Arabia, which have always been, and remain, extremely limited. Moreover, these arms transactions, which had no effect whatsoever on the situation in Palestine, in no way impinged on Israel's insurmountable military superiority over the Arab "confrontation" states. Barring exceptional situations like those just enumerated involving major American strategic or economic interests, US policy on Palestine and Israel has been made almost exclusively with an eye to those who, in Truman's words, "are anxious for the success of Zionism." Certainly this was the case wherever the Palestinians were concerned.

A third and final pattern, since the time of President Truman, has been an almost complete unconcern about the fate of the Palestinians, by contrast with a consistent and solicitous devotion to the welfare of Israelis. Unlike his predecessor, Truman does not seem to have been concerned about what might happen to the Palestinians as a result of his support for partition of their country and for the establishment of Israel. He never attempted to secure for them the political and national rights, like the right of self-determination, that had been denied them under the British Mandate and then again as a result of the 1948 war. He could have done so, for example, by insisting on the establishment of the Palestinian state envisioned by the 1947 UN Partition Plan, which called for a smaller Arab state alongside a Jewish state. Instead, the United States and the Soviet Union, the main sponsors of the 1947 partition resolution, stood by impassively while Israel and Jordan (with British approval and acquiescence) strangled the infant Palestinian state

even before it could be born, and together with Egypt occupied the entirety of the territory allotted to it.⁶²

This result should not be a surprise. For while the 1947 UN partition resolution ostensibly provided for self-determination for two peoples, that is not what happened, nor indeed was it what was intended to happen by its two main sponsors. Instead, only one people, the Israelis, obtained self-determination, or was meant by them to do so. Had the United States and the Soviet Union truly desired the universal application of this principle, they could have at least tried to see to it that that did take place. However, in the wake of the Holocaust, in view of the budding Cold War competition between the superpowers, and given the realities of American domestic politics about which Truman was so frank, the partition resolution was actually primarily intended by both of its main sponsors—the United States and the Soviet Union—to do precisely what it did. It was meant by both superpowers to result in the establishment of a Jewish state. Palestinian national rights did not seriously concern policymakers in Washington (or in Moscow, London, or Paris for that matter) in 1947 and 1948, or for long afterwards.

As far as other rights are concerned, in December 1948 the United States voted at the United Nations together with a large majority of states in favor of General Assembly Resolution 194, which promised the approximately 750,000 Palestinian refugees who had been driven from or fled their homes the right to return to them and to be compensated for their losses. Thereafter, however, in the face of Israeli obduracy regarding return or compensation for the refugees, whose land and property were confiscated and whose homes were demolished or handed over to Jewish immigrants to Israel, the United States never made a serious effort to see to the implementation of this important resolution.⁶³ There was also no serious American effort then or afterwards, only empty gestures, to ensure Israel's withdrawal from the largest part of the territories allotted to the Palestinian Arab state under the partition plan. This was land that Israel's armies had occupied in 1948–49, expanding its territory from the 55 percent of former Mandatory Palestine granted it under the partition plan to 78 percent. In this matter as in so much else, Truman established a precedent followed by his successors of occasional

declaratory positions ostensibly favorable to the Palestinians, combined with active policies strongly supportive of Israel.

Typical of such supportive policies was the Tripartite (American-British-French) Declaration of 1950, which ostensibly blocked arms transfers to any of the countries of the region. Consecrating the military superiority Israel had established on the battlefield during the 1948–49 war, this declaration did not prevent subsequent secret French and British arms shipments to Israel, which it employed to great effect during the 1956 Sinai campaign. The clandestine transfer of French nuclear technology also enabled Israel surreptitiously to develop nuclear weapons. Through this declaration, therefore, the United States and its Western allies ensured Israel's considerable long-term military advantage over the Arab states. It thereby effectively consolidated in Israel's favor both its considerable territorial expansion during the 1948–49 war, and its concomitant forced removal of 750,000 Palestinians from its newly enlarged territory.

The policy of guaranteeing Israel's regional military supremacy is one that the United States has pursued with unstinting generosity down to the present day, with similar effects. It consolidated a status quo on the ground in Palestine that is massively favorable to Israel and disadvantageous to the Palestinians. In the words of one of the most incisive observers of the Middle East, the late Malcolm Kerr:

The pre-1973 record of American initiatives . . . indicates a pattern of too little too late, of grossly inadequate political support from the White House, and of a curiously persistent misconception that America must bring together Arab and Israeli governments that really want peace and successful negotiations, rather than that America should crack their heads together. Intended or not, the consistent effect has been to buy time in behalf of the status quo, which is to say, in behalf of the Israeli accumulation of *faits accomplis* and the Arab accumulation of resentment.⁶⁴

As we have seen, a distorted set of American priorities—largely directed at catering to the demands of Israel and of its vocal American supporters rather than doing anything substantial to resolve the struggle over Palestine, which is the core and the origin of the Arab-Israeli conflict—has contributed significantly to producing a broad range of intractable outcomes. One of the weightiest of these outcomes has been the increase since 1990 of the Israeli settler population in the West Bank and Arab East Jerusalem from under two hundred thousand to nearly six hundred thousand. These and other “facts on the ground” were largely created by Israel in the years following the 1978 Camp David Accords and have been considerably reinforced since the 1993 Oslo Accords. They constitute daunting obstacles to the prospect of a two-state solution, obstacles that, in the view of most objective observers, are now well nigh insuperable. The establishment of the settlements was intended by Israeli planners to produce precisely this result. The stunning success of their approach, which by now seems to be a virtual certainty, continues to be blithely ignored by most proponents of a two-state solution. This is the case although perceptive analysts like Meron Benvenisti have been arguing for nearly three decades that the option of a two-state solution has been systematically closed off by Israeli settlement activity and the consolidation of the occupation.⁶⁵ Indeed this activity has for decades undermined the possibility of any equitable peace between the dominant Israelis and the colonized, occupied, and dispersed Palestinians, whether this peace takes the form of a one-state, a two-state, or any other solution.

These and other hard, cold realities of how US policy affects the Palestinians (not to speak of the actual situation inside Palestine) are largely screened from the American public.⁶⁶ It is bombarded instead with dishonest and debased rhetoric about what is described as “progress” in a “peace process.” This process ostensibly consists of negotiations between near-equals under the impartial gaze of a disinterested American intermediary, and is supposedly intended to create an independent Palestinian state, which is far from what is actually happening. Such corrupt language in fact successfully disguises the continuation

and intensification of the dispersal, occupation, and colonization of the Palestinians. We shall see how this specific form of terminological dishonesty originally developed in Chapter I, which relates the first of the three episodes to be dealt with, that which took place in the wake of the Camp David Accords of 1978 and in the lead-up to the Reagan Plan of 1982.

Thereafter, I discuss the 1991–93 Israeli-Palestinian negotiations in Madrid and Washington in which I participated. During this period the deceitful description as “progress” of what was in fact significant movement *away* from a just, equitable solution reached its fullest and most complete form, and this was when the term “peace process” took on its most distorting effect. The subsequent chapter covers the dispiriting experience of the Barack Obama presidency between 2009 and 2012, when the so-called “peace process” was used to screen further the consecration of a status quo that is deeply harmful to the Palestinians and that renders the possibility of peace ever more distant.

What I intend to convey in this book is a sense of how the United States has never really operated as an honest broker between the Palestinians and Israel. Instead, it has ended up acting as “Israel’s lawyer.” These are the apt words of Aaron David Miller, who as one of the lead US negotiators with the Palestinians for many years was a key participant in this charade.⁶⁷ Together with senior colleagues like Dennis Ross and Daniel Kurtzer, he features repeatedly in the pages that follow. From Camp David in 1978 onward, the United States posed as an unbiased intermediary between Israel and the Palestinians, but in fact it operated increasingly in defense of Israel’s interests, and to the systematic detriment of those of the Palestinians. All of this dissembling was cloaked in high-sounding but dishonest language.

Again and again, the three patterns previously identified prevailed: there was no real pressure on the United States from the oil-rich Arab Gulf states, far from it; there was an exaggerated attention to domestically driven political concerns as these were ably articulated by the Israel lobby; and in spite of occasional sympathetic noises from policymakers, at the end of the day there was little or no concern for the rights of the Palestinians. This meant that while Israel usually got what it wanted, a

peaceful and just resolution of the conflict between the two peoples was certainly not the result. In consequence, American policy under a succession of presidential administrations has served neither the long-term US national interest—insofar as that would be well served by a lasting resolution of this conflict—nor the interest of international peace and stability, nor the true interests of the peoples of the Middle East, including both Palestinians and Israelis. It took a great deal of corrupt language to conceal these manifest realities, especially, in Orwell's words, “among people who should and do know better.”