

Elements of Confidence Building in the Middle East Peace Process

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Introduction

The present situation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is marked by increasing upheaval. There is rising anger, fear and mistrust. Each party to the conflict assumes the worst about the other. There is a growing crisis of confidence and an apparently increasing lack of good faith. Initially limited-scope confrontations between Palestinian demonstrators and Israeli security forces grow alarmingly into uncontrollable forms of open conflicts, constantly generating violent actions and non less violent responses. Clashes between Israeli settlers and Palestinian civilians frequently burst into open confrontations. Multiple bomb explosions in widely populated Israeli areas create understandable feelings of insecurity and non-controllable attitudes of anger. Continued ground occupation of Palestinian territories and massive destruction of civilian homes and property worsen a deeply rooted refusal of injustice and cultivates constant searches for revenge. A vicious circle of reciprocal hatred seems to have deeply established itself in the area. A growing failure of both parties to exercise self-restraint is clearly and openly established.

While limited contacts are maintained, evident signs of growing confrontation are adamantly developing. The increasing hatred which progressively builds in the area, as a result of continually unsolved sources of confrontation, will inevitably reach non controllable dimensions if these are not properly met and contained. There is an urgent need for both sides to “**end the violence and return to the process of shaping a sustainable peace**” (1).

The two peoples of Israel and Palestine are in all cases bound to live as neighbours. They must therefore elevate themselves to trustworthy neighbours. The half a century era of conflicting claims, mutual refusal and constant escalation of tension must ineluctably give way to a new era of tolerance and mutual understanding. “**When we see the shattered bodies of children, we know it is time for adults to stop the violence**” (2).

Both nations have to demonstrate a high standard of maturity. Their respective leaders publicly claim their adhesion to the conclusions of the Mitchell Plan. Yet they still behave otherwise. The Mitchell Plan, also called “Report of the Sharm El Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee”, offers indeed a sound platform for any serious peace seeking effort. Its five authors (3) have supplied the international community with a valuable instrument for fostering peace in the Middle East. Along with other sources, its proposals have proven to be relevant, and enormously helpful, for the present analysis. The constant observation of daily escalation of the conflict in the area, as well as recurrently declared attitudes of various regional political leaders have also influenced many aspects of its content.

There is no intention whatsoever to reinvent the wheel. Most issues have already been properly and adequately addressed by past and present diplomats, scholars and regional political leaders and thinkers. What has been lacking, however, is a real will among the pressing extremists of both sides and, to a certain extent, the opinion leaders and decision makers, to go ahead with a basis of mutual trust and equitable reciprocity.

A trivial but nonetheless meaningful comment was once made to me by an Israeli official. As Governor of Casablanca, I was in charge of welcoming at the Mohamed V international airport the participating delegations to "The Middle East North African Economic Summit" held in Morocco in 1994. The Israeli delegation was then headed by late Prime Minister Itzhak Rabin and former Prime Minister Shimon Perez. A multitude of high ranking officials were part of that particularly oversized delegation. Chatting with one Israeli official, I gently questioned him for his intentions and expectations from that first historical meeting which brought together Israeli officials and most of the Arab leaders of countries from the Middle East and North Africa. Great was my surprise when he bluntly, but nonetheless jokingly, stated: "I am here with my colleagues to liquidate the bankrupt firm I have been working for: the West Bank". Needless to comment on such a vision.

There definitely is a need for reciprocal respect and trust; but that need has to be constantly cultivated. But, although the mainly concerned parties are definitely bound to take the affirmative steps themselves, diverse forms of foreign assistance and monitoring still need to be deployed. They will finally prove to be crucial.

Thus, **the shaping of sustainable peace through a confidence building approach**, needs the deployment of an extraordinary effort from both parties to overpass the present phases of non-conciliatory conflicting claims towards a long lasting era of trustful cooperation (4). It may start by mutual efforts of **implementation of some preliminary measures [I]** and furthermore face the sensitive issue of **trading security concerns for political concessions [II]**.

1. I. Implementing Preliminary Measures

Stating ideas and defining approaches may be a relatively easy task. Putting them into practice and translating them into tangible reality might however prove to be more awkward. There has been so much fear and frustration in the area that the presently prevailing attitude is that of mistrust. The regional opponents are mutually accusing each other of bellicose intentions.

In this context, one might simply wonder: how can trust be brought back, assuming it already prevailed before? It might not be impossible to bring the belligerents back to the negotiation table. But, will they come in with a real will to go ahead with bringing peace to the region? Who can then be effectively invested with this sensitive mission of generating the adequate atmosphere and appropriate "ambiance" that can facilitate the implementation of the necessary peace generating measures? Will it be the belligerent parties themselves? Will they be able to transcend their current confrontation? Why not? Can it be the international community? Who, then, in this uncertain transitional era of escalation will dare step in? What would be the adequate timing for such initiatives? And what can be an acceptable calendar to which the reciprocally sovereign partners can accept to abide? Is America still a credible intermediary? Or, isn't it time for Europe to add its convincing arguments to the apparently breathless routine of U.S. peace initiatives in the region? Will Israel's persistent attitude of refusing Europe's timid peace moves be continuously everlasting. Many Arab observers start questioning even America's objectivity in handling the issue and progressively develop a recusant attitude towards its initiatives.

These questions and many more impose themselves as preliminaries. But, whatever approaches are deemed appropriate, the conflicting parties will necessarily need to return to the process of shaping a sustainable peace **(A)**. They will also need to stand up and accept implementing their anterior mutual agreements **(B)**.

1. A. Returning to the process of shaping a sustainable peace

Despite the ongoing hostilities, the parties to the conflict have no other strategic choice than that of returning to the negotiation table. More so, and despite the unequal balance of force, the cost of a permanent state of belligerence is much too high even to the presently favoured party: tax payers and other fund providers cannot indefinitely support unjustified expenditures. There always has been a time for cooling off even in major conflicts. And there is no objective justification whatsoever to the current argument of refusing negotiation while violence is going on. In all major conflicts, negotiations went on while war was outrageously bursting.

In the Middle East conflict, a credible return to the search for a long lasting peace needs to stem from a few confidence building preliminaries: the parties need to make a special effort of transcending their conflicting attitudes in order to help restore confidence and generate a progressive decrease of violence.

1. Transcending conflicting attitudes

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The Middle East peace process has been suffering so far from a persistent attitude of mistrust among the parties to the conflict: there has been a biased belief that the other party supports terrorism. The Israelis persistently decry the Palestinian Authority's passivity and its limited efforts in jugulating violence towards Israeli civilians. For their part, the Palestinians constantly denounce what has commonly been referred to as "State Terrorism" applied by Israel against Palestinian civilians.

Time has probably come to overcome these biases, mostly now that there is a pressing necessity to bring about an urgent and equitable peace. Not long ago, both parties were flatteringly using the expression "Peace of the Braves". Isn't it time for it again to be established? It surely is! But ongoing styles of strategic negotiation tactics won't allow it. Putting the bar too high in order to finally push the others to accept less than what they initially came out for won't generate the desired confidence renewal. There should be a mutual effort of clearly established, straightforward and reasonably defined positions. Before handling the multiple and complex issues confronting them, the concerned parties can tentatively start with the more sensitive and urgent aspects. The regained confidence will probably and hopefully pave the way to even larger scope aspects and more complex issues. The resumption of security cooperation will un-doubtedly cool the turbulence off and help put an effective end to violence.

2. Putting an end to violence

On a basis of reciprocity, and without prejudice to its fundamental rights, each party may publicly, as a move of good will, declare its intention to exercise self restraint. There isn't much for any party to lose in adopting such a pacific attitude. Of course, it will be later called to move ahead and put its oral declaration into execution. But in its non bidding position, it will be free to keep its entire latitude to pull gently back should its opponent fail to put its declaration into practice.

Evidently, self restraint not only implies a sensible reduction of aggressiveness but it also calls upon each party to avoid any disproportionate retaliatory measures. Any temptation to further escalate the tension will definitely be pointless. An era of emerging tolerance might progressively burst into mutual acceptance. Protest may no longer be assimilated with terrorism. The resulting effects will, slowly but ineluctably, help restoring the so badly needed reciprocal confidence.

3. Restoring Confidence

There is a definite need for the future partners of peace in the Middle east to start regarding each other as credible partners. Such a respectful attitude toward one another will certainly imply a readiness to compromise. Flexibility may turn out to be a key word in the newly established relationship. Building strong personal relations may also prove to be a determining factor in rapport building between the officials invested by their respective hierarchies with the mission of handling and carrying out this highly sensitive mission: they all need to make special efforts to recreate and sustain an atmosphere of confidence. Along with this germinating new spirit of mutual trust, the parties will evidently need to constantly abstain from incitement and/or hostile propaganda. There will of course be a moral obligation for them not to offend the sensitivity of each other, thus compromising the fragility of the newly emerging process.

Adequately managed and carefully monitored, all the previously mentioned measures will hopefully help create a favourable "ambiance" for the resumption of promising negotiations. However, it will be naturally expected of them that, beforehand, they respect and start or resume implementing their previous commitments.

B. Standing up to previous mutual commitments

The Madrid talks and the Oslo negotiation process brought along with them, for both parties, many new and previously unthinkable positive acquisitions. Further beyond mutual recognition and acceptance, numerous concurring views astonishingly stemmed out from their direct talks. Agreements were reached. Documents were signed. A peace process was finally launched after many decades of grief and sorrow. Even the international community started shaping a cradle for the newly born baby. Multiple ways and means for economic support were set forth (5). Yet, the process has somehow been blocked. It is presently at a standstill. Late Prime Minister Itzhak Rabin's peace expectations suddenly dwindled into a speck. Numerous changes in the Israeli leadership have occurred since. But one of the main craftsmen of the Oslo process, Mr. Shimon Peres, is still in the Israeli decision making inner circles. One might rightly wonder if these recurrent changes in the

Israeli political leadership are not part of a carefully planned scheme. In any case, they alarmingly favour the positions of the “hawks” on both sides. Most of the Palestinian partners of the Oslo negotiations are still around Chairman Yasser Arafat. The Palestinian leadership has not changed so far. And neither has the Palestinian position on most issues despite the continuous mistreatment and violence its people is daily suffering from. Yesterday’s architects of the Oslo Round are all still around: their historic role in that phase imparts on them the obligation to speak out and give a new impulse to the ailing peace process. Yet, they all need to draw decisive lessons from the recent past and reinsert the force of wisdom in replacement of the power of weapons. For such a purpose, expressed good intentions will need to be put into practice. A long term vision of global peace will need to take over the present faltering linked with the uncertain choices of interim style accords. Third party implication can also prove to be extremely useful in these difficult phases of fragile relations between the regional opponents.

1. Putting expressed good will into practice

- Presently, there is no real expression of good will. Reciprocal escalation has sensibly reduced the chances of such an occurrence. The persisting occupation of Palestinian territories by the “Tsahal” and the insistently reiterated declarations of hostility by Prime Minister Aryel Sharon towards the Palestinian Authority, and particularly towards its leader Yasser Arafat, won’t favour any reduction of tension. Chairman Arafat will durably recall the humiliation of being trapped in Ramallah, lacking all capacity to move out unless his opponents decide so. These negative aspects will weigh enormously on any future contacts.

The sake of peace imparts on Israel the historic obligation to immediately halt its aggression, renew its moribund peace initiative and effectively put its declared intentions into practice. Both parties will anyway have to give peace a chance. They will also have to build their new relationship on a clear approach that precisely defines a global peace strategy.

2. Defining a Global Peace Strategy

- There has been a lot of Israeli hesitation on whether the ultimate national interest of Israel is better served by a search for a global peace, thus adopting the “all or nothing approach” or whether it would be more rewarding to adopt a “step by step” approach through the formula of interim accords. Many Arab observers have finally come to the conclusion that Israel wants neither of both: every time that a glow of hope peeks in the horizon and that a seeming progress appears to be achieved, unpredicted events ruin it all, trailing the caravan back , further complicating the situation and finally delaying the ultimate deliverance. The apparently implied scenario for the Palestinians appears just like if they were indirectly told that it is too bad if they don’t like the situation: shouldn’t they like it, they will anyway have to lump it so long as they are not ready to comply with and abide to the conditions set forth by Israel from its position as a provisional winner.

There will be time for the conflicting parties to commonly define the newly accepted peace strategy and mutually agree on the means to achieve it. At this point, third party implication will prove to be extremely crucial.

3. Third party implication

- There was a time when the Middle East peace process followed the path of an international conference. The aborted Geneva multilateral meetings under the auspices of the United States of America and the Soviet Union once held promising hopes. But they were suddenly halted, ceding the way to the sole U.S. arbitration of the conflict. The aftermaths of the "Perestroïka" effectively stressed the important role of the U.S. as a unique partner of the peace efforts. Even the European Union felt somewhat confined into playing a meagre role in the ongoing peace seeking process.

Nevertheless, third party implication should necessarily integrate various actors of the international community in the structuring of a certain monitoring mechanism. At the beginning of the Oslo negotiations, Israel adopted a negotiation strategy which invested Late Prime Minister Itzhak Rabin with the bilateral aspects of negotiations with an assisting role imparted on his Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Shimon Peres, while the latter had to take charge of the multilateral aspects, with the full support of his Prime Minister (6). At that time, Israel itself seriously considered the important participation of the international community.

But, all these intentions seem to have completely disappeared nowadays despite the fact that the international community can bring a lot to the process. America's concerned vision of the peace process will necessarily integrate other funding sources when it comes to planning future development means. The solicited parties might rightly then show reluctances if their contributive input is not integrated from the outset. The call upon international organizations as well as individual nations or groups of nations can prove to be extremely relevant both to the process monitoring mechanism and to the structuring and functioning of a peace keeping force. Israeli-Palestinian combined observation patrols can also positively integrate foreign elements to future exercise of their daily routine. Development projects will also draw necessarily from international funding sources.

But beforehand, the parties will have to show enough willingness to concede to each other sufficient political requisites and substantially reinforce the badly needed security guarantees.

2. II. Trading Security Concerns for Political Concessions

The Middle East strategic importance is undeniable. Its fate and history have always been linked with expressed interest in the area by powers from other areas of the world. Not only does it represent a holy land and a junction point of all monotheist faiths, but its multiple wealth origins and its strategic commercial position have at all times increased its attractive effect (7). Almost all foreign powers from the ancient Greek and Roman antiquity up to now have repetitively expressed deep interest in the area. Needless to further point that peace in the region is capital. It bears considerable value not only to local residents but also to many individuals and groups from other parts of the world.

Multiple source pressure will have therefore to be exercised over the belligerents to bring them to finally compose as faithful and trustworthy partners. Conflicting claims will ineluctably find their issue in equitable solutions. So have they in all other major conflicts. Decision makers in the area will have to deploy their genius skills to turn yesterday's confrontation into new possible challenges for the present, thus hopefully seizing all of tomorrow's opportunities. Their reciprocal concerns about security measures and political earnings can then prove to be conciliatory.

For that purpose, the Palestinian Authority should exercise more effective security measures and work on banning all forms of armed attacks on civilians (A). Israel will also have to make more perceptible and relevant political concessions (B).

1. A. Effective Application of Security Measures

- The Israelis expect Chairman Yasser Arafat to put an effective and immediate end to all armed incursions of gunned Palestinians into Israeli territory. The Palestinian Authority's support and assistance for maintaining calm and quietude in the area seems perfectly reasonable. It is part of the minimal responsibility put on any organized political entity. More so, it stands for a valuable preparation for undertaking state like duties. It can effectively be undertaken by a clearly established Palestinian State. Both parties will need to work seriously toward that.

Bearing that perspective in mind, and along with other ongoing negotiations aiming at investing the Palestinian Authority with State prerogatives, Chairman Arafat will need to coach his intelligentsia towards a clear exercise of command on their subordinated hierarchy, an effective reprehension of all forms of armed attacks on civilian targets and, more generally, towards a more thorough assumption of all state-related security obligations.

1. Exercise clear command on the hierarchy

- Among the security measures which implementation is immediately expected from the Palestinian authority, are such evident missions as these normally required from any military corps: a clear and precise control on all armed personnel operating under its banner. Codes of conduct need to be stated and applied. Disciplinary procedures have to be defined. Prosecutions also ought to be engaged whenever necessary. This stands, of course, for both sides of the conflict.

Furthermore, and given the multiple implications of various civilian PLO leaders in the ongoing turmoil, the necessary cooling off period needs to coincide with an adequate application of the required discipline by the respective hierarchies of these leaders. Self restraint in these crucial phases is a key attitude. It is mostly so that the concerned leadership is furthermore invested with the overall responsibility of follow up and control over all active organizations operating within the Palestinian territory, including the dissident and/or more virulent organizations. Such a control does not only imply permanent domestic intelligence follow up but also an "a priori" reprehension of all forms of armed attacks on Israeli civilian targets.

2. Reprehend all forms of armed attacks on civilian targets

- The parties to the September 1999 Sharm El Sheikh Memorandum collectively pledged to combat threats or acts of terrorism and violence. The Mitchell Plan defines terrorism as an activity “involving the deliberate killing and injury of randomly selected non combatants for political ends”. It further states that terrorism “seeks to promote a political outcome by spreading terror and demoralization throughout a population” (8).

Such actions are effectively immoral and need to be universally condemned. Whatever their motivation is, whoever they may stem from and whatever form they take, they only carry with them the same feelings of betrayal, sorrow, grief and injustice.

On September 11th 2001, America has experienced a traumatizing form of terrorism. All civilized nations have then jointly associated their mourning to the American people and have unanimously condemned such atrocities. Solidarity with the people of the United States of America in that ordeal has openly been expressed and loudly reiterated by all Arab leaders, governments and opinion makers. Yet, for many Arab intellectuals, the innocent victims of the perpetrated acts of terrorism at the New York Trade Center have been subjected to the same style coward aggression as that to which had previously been submitted before them the innocent civilians of Sabra and Shatilla, or to which are continuously been submitted the martyred children and teenagers of Gaza and the West Bank. They profoundly consider that various forms of organized terrorism touch the Israeli victims of Hamas kamikazes attacks as well as the suffering Iraqi children. Not that they condemn one form of terrorism and make the apology of the other. But that a profound introspection has to be undertaken by all in order to stop the evolving mechanics of violence and terror.

In all cases, the close scrutiny of the deployment styles and motivations of these mentioned acts puts them all within the scope of the Mitchell Plan definition of terrorism.

As a concerned party, the Palestinian Authority has the moral obligation, along with all other qualified and/or seemingly indicated sources of terrorism, to take a clearly defined position on such a plea of modern times. More effective security measures need to be applied. And all authors of unjustified violence against innocent civilians have to be brought to justice.

3. Assume all other state-related security obligations

- The establishment of the Palestinian Authority’s full governance over its territories will also imply the necessary organization of its civilian administration. Various sources of technical assistance can be made available either from other member states of the Arab League or from the international community. Even Israeli assistance can, over a certain period of time, carry relevant and positive results. If both neighbours agree, later in the process, to form joint border control patrols, these can prove to be somewhat positively awarding aspects of cooperation.

In all cases, the future Palestinian State will need to maintain a state of the art system of security organization. It will also be expected to exercise permanent security control on its civilian population and, further, inspect more closely all border crossing civilians.

These are minimal moves for it if it were to expect some Israeli political concessions.

2. B. The Israeli Political Concessions

When they entered the peace process, the Israelis bore clearly in mind that somewhere at the end of the tunnel there should necessarily be a rewarding token for both parties: positive achievements and a right to existence both for the them and for the Palestinians. A peace of the braves can in no way be a profit making operation for just one partner. A giant leap has already been made by both parties when they accepted to conduct direct talks. A heavier and more meaningful decision has also been made when both parties agreed on mutual acceptance, thus allowing the PLO, whose decision making leadership was still based in Tunis, to become universally recognized as the sole representative of the Palestinian people: such a reconnaissance conferred more legitimacy to the PLO mostly that Chairman Yasser Arafat had been given a few years earlier the opportunity to address the General Assembly of the United nations.

What is really left that cannot be overcome?

- A “de jure” recognition of the Palestinian State? It already enjoys a “de facto” acceptance by most countries of the world. And such a path that leads to a legal reconnaissance is certainly worth exploring.
- Putting an end to the occupation of Palestinian territories? It can surely prove to be a winning choice for Israel.
- Solving the settlement question? A lot can still be certainly said about this issue.

1. Put an end to occupation within the agreed time framework

Gone are the times when Arab leaders like Choukaili preached no less than the elimination of the State of Israel. The Balfour Act of 1917 also seems so far away now that the reversed roles put the then legally existing Palestinian entity in the position of a recognition seeker from a people who then was dreaming of a home land. Since the 1948 creation of the State of Israel in the aftermath of British colonial occupation of Palestine, a lot of progress has been achieved in terms of Israel's recognition as an effective Middle East State. Israel is no longer in need for perpetuating its occupation of Arab territories, unless hidden objectives underlie their current strategic choices.

Progress of the peace initiatives, if any, needs a paved path of tranquillity and quietude within the freedom enjoying territories of Gaza and the West Bank. The status of Jerusalem also needs to be clearly dealt with, although both parties claim the holy city to be the capital of their sovereign states.

2. Recognize a Palestinian State

- This issue is in line with the natural evolution of events. Even Israel's superior interests are better served with a neighbouring state which complies with its international obligations than with a non responsible and uncertainly defined entity. There are a lot of benefits for both parties from an attribution of a full sovereignty status to the State of Palestine, hindered if need be with a specially defined interim military status. Two sovereign neighbours can better define all forms of their future partnership and be a lot readier to handle the sensitive settlement issue with the necessary wisdom.

3. The sensitive question of Settlements

- Along with violence and terrorism, the settlement question is probably the most sensitive and intricate issue in the Middle East crisis. Most of the U.S. envoys to the region have made the same observation about settlements: they seemed to have always been welcomed by Israel on each one of their trips to the area by the announcement of a new settlement activity. On the other hand, and above all other sources of preoccupation, their Palestinian counterparts always made a point on raising this issue as a priority matter (9). Senator George J. Mitchell and his four partners of the Sharm El Sheikh Fact Finding Committee made the same remark about the settlements (10).

It is worth mentioning here that the U.S. Government has had a long standing opposition attitude to the Government of Israel on the settlement issue (11). The European Community and most countries have been critical of Israeli settlement activities which they consider otherwise as illegal under international law.

Therefore, Israel needs to review its "natural growth" policy if it were to give peace a chance: an important part of its international credibility is at stake. Should it decide to renew with the peace process and "bring an end to the violence and terrorism, (it) must announce an end to construction in the settlements" (12).

Conclusion:

Needless to say that these remain only modest ideas the practical implementation of which depends solely on the concerned parties. The pressure of their respective public opinions as well as the potential impact of cross-community NGO's can also prove to be positively crucial in paving the way for such an implementation.

Outside implications for framework outlining and for gap-bridging can also prove to be valuable. But they will necessarily imply a lot of care as well as subtle knowledge of human attitudes and behavioural patterns of the target populations and their political leadership. Managing people's acceptance of change or of initially refused positions needs a lot of tact and diplomacy. Getting the concerned decision makers to adopt and furthermore defend these positions also calls upon loads of patience and stubbornness.

The time, the effort and the human price to be paid along with such a long run initiative might appear to be costly; but the authentic value of the forsaken objective and its potentially positive impact on the populations of the region ineluctably imparts the joining of efforts for its implementation. Thus, the carefully implemented confidence building measures will pave the way to regional stability and mutual trust, potentially generating cultural and economic partnership through “Energy Integration”. Assuming a constant prevailing of the generated attitudes of good will, likely chances are that the region will then move from an economy of confrontation to an era of cooperation and mutually supportive economic development.

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NOTES:

- (1) - Page 5 of the Report of the “Sharm El Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee”, presided by former Senator and Majority Leader of the United States Senate, George J. Mitchell.
- (2) - Idem. Page 12.
- (3) - The five authors of the report are :
 - DEMIREL, Suleyman: 9th President of the Republic of Turkey
 - JAGLAND, Thorbjørn: Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway
 - MITCHELL, J. George: Former Member and Majority Leader of th U.S.Senate
 - RUDMAN, B. Warren: Former Member of the United States Senate
 - SOLANA, Javier: High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union.
- (4) - Hassan Rahmouni, “Energy Integration in the Middle East: from an culture of confrontation to an era of cooperation”, Paper presented at the Istanbul Meeting on “Mideast Regional Security in a Transitional Era”, jointly organized by the UCLA Burkle Center for International Relations and the Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV), January 6th – 9th 2002.
- (5) - Cf. “The New Middle East: A Framework and Processes Towards an Era of Peace”, by Shimon Peres, Arabic edition, Dar Annahda Littibâa oua Annashr, Annasera, p.19-21.
- (6) - Mr. Shimon Peres develops these aspects in detail in his book, “The New Middle East: A framework and Processes Towards an Era of Peace”, op. cit. p. 19.
- (7) - Cf. Bernard Lewis “Rethinking the Middle East”, Foreign Affairs, Vol. 71, 4 (Fall 1992), 11, p. 101.
- (8) - Page 13 of the Mitchell report, op. cit.
- (9) - In one of his testimonies before the United States House of Representatives Committee on appropriations, former Secretary of State James A. Baker declared: “Every time I have gone to Israel in connection with the peace process, on each of my four trips, I have been met with the announcement of a new settlement activity.(...) It is the first thing that Arabs raise when we talk to them. I don't think there is any bigger obstacle to peace than the settlement activity...” (May 22, 1991).

- (10) - Page 15 of the Mitchell Report, op. cit.
- (11) - Among the most relevant declarations of U.S. officials on this issue:
- Secretary of State Cyrus Vance (March 21, 1980): “U.S. policy toward the establishment of Israeli settlements in the occupied is unequivocal...We consider it to be contrary to international law and an impediment to the successful conclusion of the Middle East peace process”.
 - President Ronald Reagan (September 1, 1982): “The immediate adoption of a settlements freeze by Israel, more than any other action, could create the confidence needed for wider participation in these talks. Further settlement activity is in no way necessary for the security of Israel and only diminishes the confidence of the Arabs that a final outcome can be freely and fairly negotiated”.
- (12) - Ha'aretz, English Language Edition, April 10, 2001, p. 5.