The Palestinian Strategic Report 2005

Edited By

Dr. Mohsen M. Saleh

Dr. Basheer M. Nafi

Al-Zaytouna Centre For Studies & Consultations

Chapter Two

The Israeli-Palestinian Scene: Launching the Journey towards the Green Line

E-mail: info@alzaytouna.net   Website: www.alzaytouna.net

You can contact us and view the center's pages by clicking on the applications below:

The Israeli-Palestinian Scene: Launching the Journey towards the Green Line[1]

Introduction: The Israeli withdrawal from Gaza Strip (GS) and the foundation of the Kadima (Forward) Party, led by Sharon, were the most significant events in the Israeli-Palestinian scene in 2005. On the other hand, Israel continued to argue that there is no appropriate Palestinian peace partner, and, thus, acted unilaterally and enforced its dictates. Neither the election of Mahmud 'Abbas as the leader of the Palestinian Authority (PA), nor the period of calm announced by the Palestinian factions, had tangible effect towards a compromise; freeing the captives, halting the Israeli settlement expansion in the West Bank (WB), or mitigating the intensity of the Israeli campaign to give Jerusalem a Judaic identity. Moreover, the drive to build the Separation Wall in the WB escalated, and the Israeli authorities continued their campaigns of economic blockade, closure of the crossings, assassinations and arrests. Meanwhile, on the Israel's side, the management of the conflict became relatively easy because of the Palestinian declared Hudna (truce), recession of the resistance operations, across the Green Line in particular, and the substantial amelioration of the Israeli economy, in addition to the unlimited American support for Israel, and the apathy of the Arab nations. The Israelis managed to engage the world in monitoring their withdrawal from. This weakened the ability to activate current political initiatives, and, thus, helped the Israelis to impose the general framework of their political agenda. However, whether the Israelis liked or not, the year 2005 marked the beginning of their oblivion drive towards the Green Line.

The Israeli Scene: In the year 2005, Israel was still officially establishing itself on an area of 20,770 km², which amounted to 76.9% of the historical land of Palestine, besides the annexed Syrian Golan Heights (1,154 km²), the occupied areas of the WB (5,876 km²), GS (363 km²), and the Lebanese Shab'ah farms.

The Demographic Scene: According to official Israeli statistics, the Israeli population by the end of 2005 totaled about 6 million & 988,000, amongst whom were 5 million & 309,000 Jews; i.e., about 76% of the population. The Arab population totaled 1 million &

376,000, including the inhabitants of East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, which constituted about 19.7% of the population. Meanwhile, about 300,000 did not declare their religions (4.3%),[2] who are most likely immigrants from Russia and Eastern Europe whose Jewish identity has not yet been established. About 452,000 Jewish settlers stayed in the WB, including East Jerusalem, and 20,000 in the Golan Heights, while 8,500 settlers were transferred from GS in August 2005 (see table 1/2).

22,818 Jews immigrated to Israel during the year 2005, which is slightly higher than the 22,500 immigrants of 2004. Thus, Jewish immigration maintained a relatively low pace compared to that of the last decade of the twentieth century (1990 – 1999), which witnessed an influx of approximately 825,000 Jews.[3] This decline may be linked to the depletion of immigrants from Russia and States of the Former Soviet Union, in addition to the negative impact of the Palestinian *Intifadah* on the economy and security of Israel (see table 2/2).

Table 1/2: Population of Israel 1997 – 2005
(Population estimates do not include foreign labor)[4]

| Year	Gross population number	Jews	Arabs (including the population of Eastern Jerusalem and in the Golan Heights)	Others
1997	5,899,900	4,701,600	1,069,400	128,900
1998	6,041,400	4,785,100	1,105,400	150,900
1999	6,209,100	4,872,800	1,143,900	192,400
2000	6,369,300	4,955,400	1,188,700	225,200
2001	6,508,800	5,025,000	1,227,500	256,300
2002	6,631,100	5,094,200	1,263,900	273,000
2003	6,748,400	5,165,400	1,301,600	281,400
2004	6,869,500	5,237,600	1,340,200	291,700
2005	6,988,300	5,309,400	1,376,300	302,600

Population of Israel for 1997 & 2005
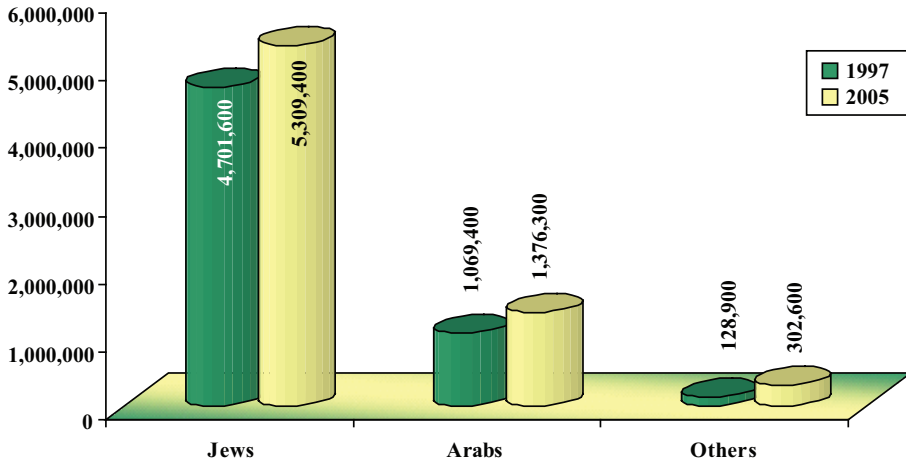
Undoubtedly, the demographic conditions in occupied Palestine were a major concern for the Israeli project of settlement, and had been a factor for their withdrawal from GS (though not as important as the pressures of the *Intifadah* and the resistance). Demography was also behind the Israeli endeavors to implement projects based on the concept of preservation of the Jewish character of the state, and on the policy of "more lands, less Arabs." Nonetheless, it is important to mention that the number of Palestinians in Palestine with its historical-geographical borders reached, by the end of 2005, approximately 4 million & 920,000 (48.1% of the population),[5] and is likely to be by 2010 equal to that of the Jews in the whole of Palestine.

Table 2/2: Number of Jewish Immigrants to Israel by Year[6]

Year	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Number of immigrants	24,300	200,170	176,650	77,350	77,860	80,810	77,660	72,180	67,990

Year	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Total
Number of immigrants	58,500	78,400	61,542	44,633	35,168	24,652	22,500	22,818	1,203,183

## Number of Jewish Immigrants to Israel 1989 - 2005
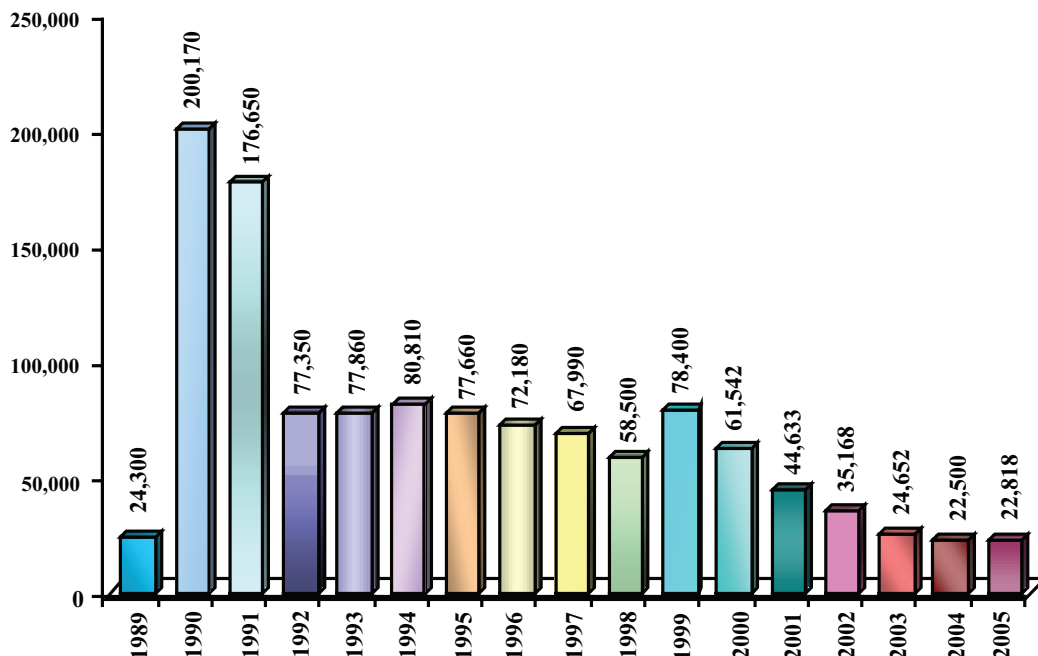
The Economic Scene: Official Israeli statistics indicate that the Israeli economy began to recover from the economic crisis caused by the *Intifadah of al-Aqsa,* and that it achieved an economic growth of 5.2% in 2005, compared to 4.4% in 2004 and of 1.7% in 2003. However, economic growth was negative in 2001 (-0.3%) and 2002 (-1.2%). The Israeli Gross Domestic Product (GDP) rose from (523 billion & 851 million shekels), i.e., $116 billion & 879 million, in 2004[7] to (555 billion & 26 million shekels), i.e., $123 billion & 674 million, in 2005 (see table 3/2).[8]

Table 3/2: Israeli Gross Domestic Product 2002 – 2005

Year	Gross domestic product (million shekel)	Gross domestic product (US$ million)	Current exchange (according to Israel Central Bank)
2002	493,747	104,214	4.7378
2003	502,343	110,446	4.5483
2004	523,851	116,879	4.4820
2005	555,026	123,674	4.4878

**Israeli Gross Domestic Product 2002 - 2005**
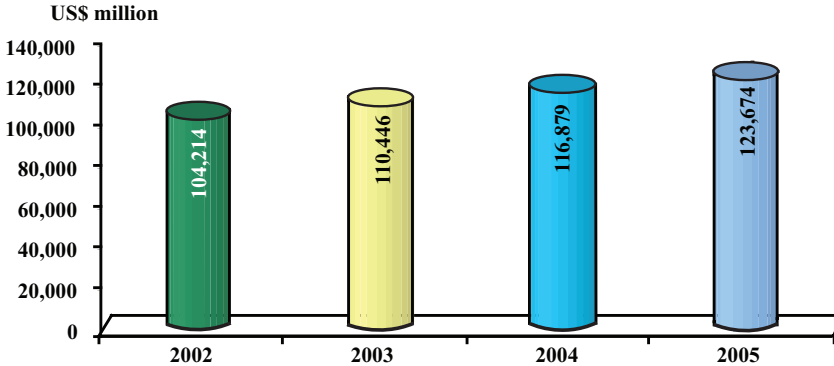
The revenue of the 2005 Israeli budget totaled $53 billion & 820 million, while the expenditure was $58 billion & 40 million.[9] Statistics of the Israeli Ministry of Finance reported a reduction in budget deficit at the end of the year to $2,290 million.[10] Israel suffers from heavy debts of about $74 billion.[11] Israeli exports, amounted to $42 billion 588 million & 100,000 in 2005, while they were $38 billion 618 million & 400,000 in 2004, i.e., an increase of $3,969 million & 700,000 (about 10.3%). Imports, on the other hand, amounted to $44 billion 942 million & 700,000 in 2005, while they were $40 billion 968 million & 700,000 in 2004, i.e., an increase of $3,974 million (about 9.7%) (see table 4/2).[12]

Table 4/2: Total Israeli Exports and Imports 2002 – 2005 [13]
(US$ million)

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005
Exports	29,347.2	31,783.3	38,618.4	42,588.1
Imports	33,106.3	34,211.8	40,968.7	44,942.7

Total Israeli Exports and Imports 2002 - 2005
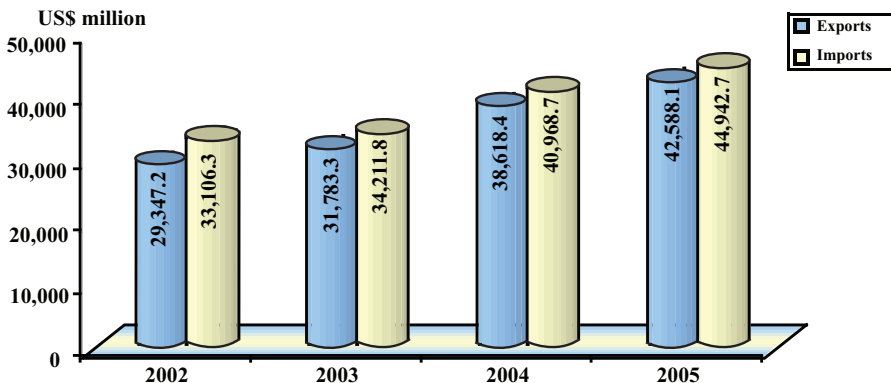
There is a great disparity of income between the various sectors of the Israeli community, and the government pursues at different levels discriminatory racial policies against the Arabs inside the Green Line. This leads to poverty and negligence of their towns and villages. Poverty is widespread in Israel as the number of the poor at the end of 2004 (beginning of 2005), according to a report published by the governmental Institution of National Insurance, totaled 1 million & 534,000, amongst whom 714,000 are children. Moreover, nearly half the Arab population is living below the poverty line.[14]

The United States provides huge annual assistance to Israel, about $3,160 million, of which $1 billion is for military assistance. However, it is important to note that Israel has become less dependent on this aid, and is no longer at the mercy of the US, thanks to the doubling of national income 9 times more than that of the past 22 years. While these grants constituted 25% of the national income in 1983, the figure was sharply reduced to less than 3% in 2005. We, however, should indicate that this direct financial aid constitutes only part of the whole American aid. Indirect American financial aid comes in various forms: exemption of the grants provided by American Jews to Israel from taxes, purchases of Israeli bonds, and various international agreements that give Israel many privileges, in addition to a considerable American pressure on Arab and other countries to cooperate with Israel economically and commercially, e.g. the Qualified Industrial Zone (QIZ) Agreement with Egypt. The United States also provides huge assistance to Israel in the field of military industries, which develop in the Hebrew state at rates that are totally incompatible with the means of a small country.

Israel, on the other hand, largely depends on its economic relations with the United States, its imports to and exports from the United States in the year 2005 respectively reached $6,099 million & 100,000, which represents 13.6% of the total imports, and $15 billion 497 million & 600,00, i.e., 36.4% of the total exports (see table 5/2).[15]

It is important to note that Israel is vastly exhausting Palestinian resources, and it controls its water sources. This made the Palestinian economy in the WB and GS to be almost wholly dependent in its imports and exports on Israel. Israel also turned these territories into a market for its products, and obstructed their normal growth. Besides, is the Israeli systematic work to frustrate (and even destroy) Palestinian agriculture, industry, and the whole infrastructure.

Table 5/2: Israeli Exports and Imports to Some Countries (US$ million)

Year	Israeli exports to				Israeli imports from			
	2005	2004	2003	2002	2005	2004	2003	2002
America	15,497.6	14,175.1	12,088.5	11,712.2	6,041.5	6,099.1	5,330.8	6,134.1
Belgium	3,679.1	2,898.1	2,320.9	1,863.2	4,557.6	4,130.8	3,179.9	3,028.3
Germany	1,353.2	1,361	1,123.3	1,026.5	2,894.7	3,090.2	2,731.1	2,347.8
Britain	1,643.3	1,447.8	1,224.5	1,164.5	2,552	2,482.8	2,283.4	2,226.8
Hong Kong	2,372.7	1,907.7	1,495.4	1,373.2	1,277	1,178.3	892.7	1,194.1
Holland	1,249.4	1,232.8	1,085.1	909.1	1,626.7	1,483.8	1,196.5	1,177.9
India	1,224.2	1,037.9	717.8	613.7	1,276.3	1,107.7	888.8	653.2
Switzerland	898	782.3	504.9	384.6	2,464.9	2,682.1	2,062	2,075.2
Italy	877.8	810	772.5	693.7	1,733.4	1,565.7	1,398.2	1,530
China	743.2	786.9	612.6	426.6	1,888.2	1,418.4	1,008.1	793.3
France	882.8	764	684.6	649	1,203.7	1,248.9	1,182.9	1,186.9
Russia	415.8	319.1	220.5	210.5	1,055.7	688	618.2	519.9
Japan	792.4	782.3	626	649.8	1,278.1	1,197	843.7	782
Spain	704.6	616.2	525.4	399.7	613.7	625.3	624.6	637.8

Israeli Exports to Some Countries in 2005 (US$ million)
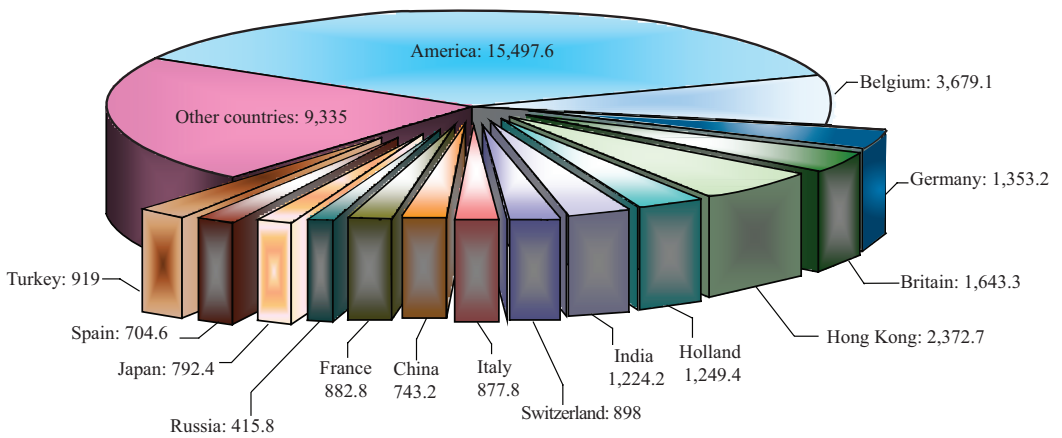
Israeli Imports from Some Countries in 2005 (US$ million)
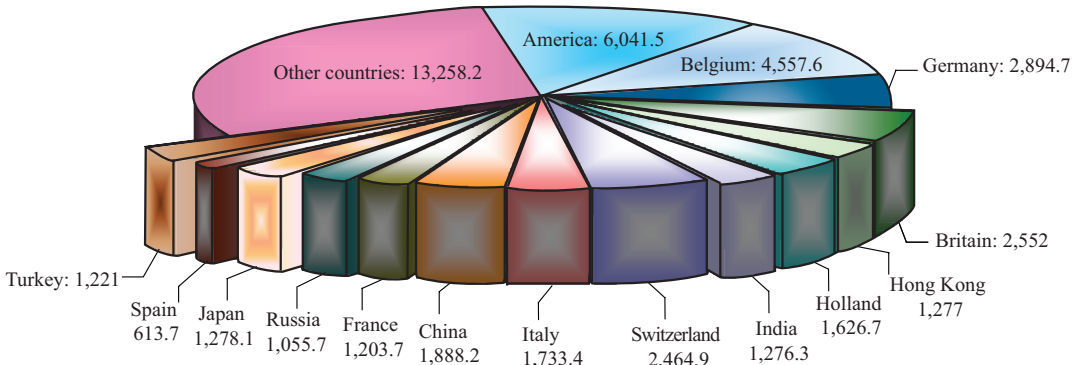
The Military Scene: The Israeli military strategic structure depends mainly on building a formidable and striking military force that can defeat the Arab countries collectively; supported, of course, with its strategic alliance with the United States, which guarantees the absolute supremacy of the Zionist state. Therefore, Israel laid down its military strategy upon the following principles:

1. The militarization of the Zionist society in Palestine, and the promotion of the competence of the fighters as well as the weaponry.
2. Precautionary war.
3. Deterrence.
4. Military predominance.
5. Moving the battlefield into the enemies' lands.
6. Ensuring strategic positions and building security zones.
7. Flexibility: easy movement and quick decisions in the battlefield.
8. Reduction of loss of life as far as possible.
9. Imposing tight control on the armament of the possible opposing parties (Arab and Muslims) that keeps it at minimum levels.

The Israeli security theory is based on the possibility of war at any time, and on offensive and defensive strategies, surprise attacks, quick movement and pre-emptive strikes.

Moreover, Israel spends a huge part of its budget on the army, security, and military industries. However, a great deal of the money assigned for military expenditure, as well as the income of arms deals is concealed for security reasons. The 1999 official budget for military expenditures, for instance, was $8,700 million, though the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), in London, estimated the figure for the year 1997 as $11 billion & 700 million.

In 2004, the military balance approved by the government and the Knesset reached 46 billion & 800 million shekels, but in late August 2005, the State Observer disclosed that Sharon and his Minister of Defense, Mofaz, deposited a great deal of the income derived from arms deals and the like in the military budget without informing the government or the Ministry of Finance. These sums, estimated at 11 billion & 700 million shekels (about $2,600 million), had actually led to an increase in the budget to reach 58 billion & 500 million shekels (about $13 billion).[16]

The official balance assigned for military expenditure for the year 2005 reached almost 18% of the total budget, which is estimated at $10 billion & 450 million. However, it is most likely that the income of weapons transactions had been transmuted, as in 2004, to the military balance, because these transactions are handled with absolute confidentiality, complete privacy and are not included in the budget.[17] The number of soldiers in the Israeli army is approximately 186,000 soldiers; while those of the reserve forces are about 430,000. The latter can be fully and effectively mobilized within four days only. There has been no significant change in the size of the Israeli army for many years.[18] However, we should point to some new indicators that undermine the fighting capability of the Israeli army as follows:

1. Israeli soldiers spare no effort to suppress the Palestinian fighters and to severely punish their supporters. They also carry out strictly non-militarily operations to assassinate the Palestinian military and political leadership. It is very well known that involvement in such operations in particular and in the suppression of civilian uprisings and liberation movements in general reduces the military capability of regular soldiers, and diminishes their morale. Israeli newspapers had recently published reports about the exposition of some disbanded Israeli soldiers to nervous breakdowns, while others who migrated to India in quest for peace of mind in its oriental religions.

2. The Israeli military institution persuaded the youth to willingly recruit themselves in the army on the plea that wars had been imposed against the country, and that it has no option except to defend itself against the Arab aggressors. But the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, its brutal suppression of the first and the second Palestinian *Intifadahs*, and its ruthless defense of Israeli settlers in the WB have clearly shown that the wars of the Zionist state were, to a large extent, not defensive. Hence, the zeal to fight gradually debilitated among the Israeli youngsters, and some refused or escaped from the military service.

3. Secular societies are characterized by their tendency to seek salvation through self-realization, which in essence lead to a rise in consumptionand the gratification of desires. Israeli youth are no exception, thus their patriotic zeal is on the wane.

In 2005, the Israeli army possessed a huge arsenal consisting of 820 warplanes (470 of them in service), 3,910 tanks (3,630 in service), 70 aircraft for transportation, 283 helicopters (181 in service), 1,948 batteries (1,348 in service), 3 submarines and 15 warships, and so on.[19] The importance of these arms does not lie in their numbers, but, rather, in their quality, as they represent the latest in international military technology. Therefore, they have the capacity to easily deal with the "scrap metal and stocks" of arms in the Arab countries.

Moreover, Israeli forces possess the third generation of the Merkava MK III tanks, and the fourth Merkava MK IV, have just been commissioned to service. Recently, Israel purchased 52 F-16 I warplanes, which have been gradually delivered since 2004, and are scheduled to be received in full in 2008.[20] By early April 2005, Israel began receiving the first freight of the latest military helicopters, the Apache Long Bow, as well as the first three out of twenty planes from a new generation of warplanes.[21] The number of Israeli nuclear heads, or what we may call "The Silent Eloquent" is around 200, though Israel adamantly refuses to officially disclose the true size of its nuclear arsenal.

It is worth mentioning that the military industry is one of the most important industries in Israel. It is closely related to the hostile and occupational nature of the Zionist state, which is based on the principle of power. Furthermore, there are numerous developed factories for building fighter jets, tanks, rockets, and light weapons. Estimations point to the existence of about 120,000 workers employed in this field, and that about half the scientists and engineers are somehow related to this industry. The amount of weapons that Israel exports annually is estimated to be worth of $2 billion, which makes it occupies the fourth or fifth position among the weapon exporting countries, just after the US, Russia, France, and China.[22] But the Israeli military industry, as mentioned before, could not have secured such a position without the massive support it receives from America.

The Political Scene: Sharon's dissent from the Likud Party and his formation of Kadima was the most significant development, indeed an "earthquake", in Israeli 2005 political life. However, this had not been the first time for leading figures to quit their parties and form their own ones. For example, David Ben-Gurion, the former Prime Minister of Israel, dissented from the Mapai Party and formed the Rafi Party that competed for the sixth Knesset elections in 1965. Likewise, less prominent leaders have

dissented from the Likud, such as David Levy (the former Foreign Minister), who established the Gesher Movement in 1996. Another example is Itzchak Mordechay (the former Minister of Defense), who established the Center Party in 1999. Nevertheless, these Parties failed to command public support, contrary to the Kadima Party, which, according to opinion polls, took the top position of all Israeli parties by the end of 2005.

However, the establishment of Kadima should not be separated from a number of general phenomena that characterize the party system in Israel, of which the most prominent are the multiplicity of political parties, and the rapid frequency in which new parties are formed and old ones are spirited, besides the numerous party coalitions. In short, Israel has a history of forming and dissolving parties.

Moreover, the security role in the process of decision-making should not be overlooked, particularly because retired military generals frequently turn into political activists and leaders. Most of the large parties are not political parties per se; they also play extensive role in the socio-economic, educational and health issues. Besides, many Israeli parties are characterized by their ability to coexist and compromise. Almost everything is open for bargain between secularists, religious groups, leftists, and rightists.

There are traditional differences among Israeli parties, be it rightist, leftist, or the religious parties, but these are not necessarily based on adherence to different social and liberal theories. Rather, their essence stems from three main issues: the destiny of occupied Arab territories (peace settlement), the economic system, and the relation between religion and the state. The colonial drive of Israel and its essential contradiction with the historical and legitimate rights of the Palestinian people remains the main element that governs the behavior of Israeli political parties.

Indeed, in recent years, especially after the outbreak of *Intifadat al-Aqsa* (September 2000), political differences between the bi-polar of Israeli political life, the Labor and Likud Parties; have considerably abated. The Labor Party has taken such a tougher line towards the Palestinians that it appeared as a pale shade to the policies adopted by the Likud Party during their coalition in the government formed by Sharon (March 2003 – November 2005).

However, the Likud Party found it inevitable to handle matters realistically in the light of the escalating Palestinian resistance, and the political stalemate

facing its extreme views, namely "The right of the Jewish people to have all the land of Israel." Therefore, Likud leaders accepted the "Road Map" (though with 14 reservations) and the establishment of a Palestinian state, and they adopted a unilateral separation plan that led to the Israeli withdrawal from GS and the establishment of the discriminatory Separation Wall in the WB. Indeed, the latter is an implicit admission of the inability of Israel to continue the occupation of all the land of Palestine. However, these policies resulted in sharp divisions and partitions inside the Likud Party, which had finally forced Sharon to resign and form a new party.

By the end of 2005, the Israeli voter did not find essential differences between the leading political parties, in particular Kadima and the Labor Party. They were largely dominated by personal concerns, to the detriment of political vision and stand. These are the whys and wherefores that triggered the Israeli writer Alouf Benn to sarcastically say that the Israeli voter is required to either choose Sharon's white hair or Amir Peretz's black moustache![23] Mr. Eitan Haber, who regretted the absence of political and ideological commitment, bitterly stated that: "In the Spring of 2006, we will go to the polls with anti-disgust tablets"[24]!!

By 2005, there were sharp differences in Israel on the issue of withdrawal from GS. Though a large majority of the public backed this move, a solid body inside the Likud Party defiantly opposed it. On 2 May 2005, Natan Sharansky, the Minister of Jerusalem Affairs, resigned from the government in protest of the expected withdrawal.[25] The overt struggle for power between Ehud Olmert (the then vice Premier) and Netanyahu (the Minister of Finance and an aspirant for the leadership of the Likud and the post of the Premier) impelled the former to dismiss the latter as a dirty and corrupt Minister who masterminds cheap and filthy political intrigues. In response, Netanyahu accused his adversary of suffering from an inferiority complex that he wanted to compensate by highlighting himself on the headlines of the noisy yellow newspaper, Netanyahu had, furthermore, equated Olmert with Ceausescu, the former oppressive Romanian President.[26]

On 7 August 2005, Netanyahu resigned in protest against the withdrawal plan from GS that was approved by the Israeli cabinet on the very same day. It was clear that the Likud Party was at the threshold of a crisis around the orientation and the leadership of the Party. Public opinion polls fluctuated between Ariel Sharon and Netanyahu.[27] At the same time, Sharon realized more than at any

time before that he would not be able to implement his policies with such a strong and troubling opposition within his own Party, that threatens him with dismissal at any moment. Meanwhile, his plan received wide support from the Israeli public.

News began to leak that Sharon may withdraw from the Likud and form a new party supported by the Israeli middle and right. Indeed, the majority of Sharon's political advisors, known as the "Farm Forum", supported this step because they felt that it would be very difficult for Sharon to win the leadership of the Likud. Even if he does, the advisors argued, the Likud candidates to the next elections would be from the extreme orthodox and religious right, thus it would be extremely difficult for Sharon to implement his program.[28]

On 30 August, Netanyahu announced his candidacy to lead the Likud Party to fight corruption. He accuses Sharon of damaging the Likud Party and undermining its principles through his insistence to force thousands of the Israeli people to abandon GS.[29] On the other side, Sharon accused Netanyahu of suffering from tension and distress, and argued that Israel has specific problems that require cool nerves and the ability to view matters in a balanced manner, qualities that Netanyahu lacks.[30]

When Sharon delivered his speech before the United Nations on 15 September 2005, there was general agreement among observers that he had realized a swing in the mood of the Zionist public towards "the middle." His speech was, in fact, addressed to this segment from which he hoped to have his "new voters." Implicitly, he severed relations with his traditional orthodox voters from the Likud through speaking of the Palestinian national rights, and of his readiness to concede to them some "painful concessions."[31]

On 26 September, Sharon achieved a difficult, but temporary, victory over his adversary, Netanyahu. 51.4% of the Likud center members supported Sharon's motion not to advance the preliminary internal election for the choice of the Party's leadership, while the rest, 47.7%, backed Netanyahu's counter motion.[32] It was obvious that Sharon and the Likud Party were confronting critical decisions concerning the future orientation of the Party at large. Will it be a pragmatic rightist party close to the pulse of the Israeli street as Sharon intends? Or will it be an orthodox religious rightist party similar to the Settlement Council, as Netanyahu, Uzi Landau, and others desire? According to Helmi Musa, Likud members found themselves in a real dilemma due to their

closeness to the middle, and not because of their rightist attitudes. They wanted to punish Sharon for his policies, corruption, and his despise for the Party's institutions. However, they feared that such a measure might bring failure to all of them.[33]

On 21 November 2005, Sharon finally announced his withdrawal from the Likud Party, which, in his words, is no longer suitable to rule Israel, and formed the Kadima Party. Soon many ministers, Knesset members and members of the Labor and Likud Parties joined the new Party, of whom the most important were Ehud Olmert, Tzipi Livni, Meir Sheetrit, Gideon Ezra, Abraham Hirchson, and Shaul Mofaz. Similarly, Shimon Peres, the historical leader of the Labor Party, as well as two of its Ministers Haim Ramon, and Dalia Itzik, joined Kadima. Likewise, Uriel Reichman, the founder of the Shinui Party, joined the new Party. Soon, the newborn Kadima stole the limelight and, according to the opinion polls, became the strongest party in Israel. By the end of 2005, public opinion polls gave the new Party a third of the total votes of Israel, i.e., 40 of the Knesset's total seats, while Likud's popularity sharply declined to 12 – 16 seats. At the same time, the Labor Party oscillated between 22 – 27 seats. Thus, the emergence of Kadima constituted a severe blow to the Likud, in which the ultra-orthodox had, however, remained. The Labor Party also suffered considerable losses, while the Shinui Party lost to Kadima most of its traditional constituency in the middle. Shinui received a deathblow when public opinions cast doubts on its ability to overcome the threshold needed to enter the Knesset, though it had captured 15 seats in the last elections (of 2003).[34]

Sharon's charisma and strong character was the cornerstone of the new Party. This development had also shown the prevalent desire among the Israeli public to reach a solution with the Palestinians, under the leadership of a powerful figure like Sharon, and, at the same time, their disappointment in the policies and performance of the Israeli parties on internal issues.

On 28 December 2005, Kadima issued its political program which was based on the premise of "the national and historical right of the Israeli people in the whole land of Israel." However, in order to protect the existence of Israel as a homeland for the Jews, Kadima agreed to a Palestinian state, and to recede part of "the land of Israel" for this purpose on condition that this state would bear no arms and be free from "terrorism". Besides, the Palestinians should forgo their claims on Jerusalem and large parts of the WB, and to give up the right of return

to the land occupied in 1948.[35]

It was obvious that these so-called "painful concessions" were only offered under the pressure of the *Intifadah*. However, they did not include, or rather were determined not to include, Palestinian legal rights, and even refused to recognize their full rights in part of their historical homeland, i.e., the WB and GS. They looked down upon the Palestinians, who were arrogantly viewed as people without national honor and right of sovereignty over their land. Therefore, the Palestinians had still a long way to go, and a lot of sacrifice and hardship to undergo in order to secure the minimum rights accepted by only some of their factions, and approved by the international community.

There is no doubt that the year 2005 was surely "the year of Sharon." He managed to impose his agenda and to reshape the political map of Israel. Moreover, he announced his intention to get rid of the proportionate electoral system, which had been adopted by the Zionist state since its establishment, because it gives the small parties more weight than they deserve, and expose the larger parties to their political extortion. Furthermore, it leaves the gate wide open to corruption and bribery. As an alternative, Sharon proposed a system similar to that of the Americans, which is based on constituencies and the direct election of the president (the prime minister in the case of Israel).[36] However, Sharon did not sail safely through the storm he had created. His health deteriorated, and was afflicted on 18 December 2005 with thrombus, and later, on 4 January 2006, by brain damage. He then entered in a long coma.

Meanwhile, the Labor Party was exposed during 2005 to internal squabbling, and its leaders were increasingly concerned that the Party may wane under the cloak of Sharon. This profound fear triggered the Party's youth to organize on 17 October 2005 a demonstration against the leader of the Party that shouted "Shimon Peres is the humble dog of Sharon."[37] Contrary to expectations, Amir Peretz defeated, on 9 November 2005, Shimon Peres in the bid for the Party's Presidency, with a small margin (42.35% to 39.96%), while Ben-Eliezer got 16.82%. The victory of Amir Peretz revived hopes within the Labor Party that it may restore its place in Israeli politics, and win new voters, especially among the eastern Jews to whom Peretz belongs (from Morocco). In fact, he was the first eastern to occupy the Presidency of this Party. However, the rising popularity of the Labor Party was short-lived. The formation of Kadima twelve days later turned things upside down. Many of the Labor Party's historical leaders, headed by Shimon Peres, soon joined the new Party.

To recover from the strong blow that it suffered by the formation of Kadima, the Likud Party organized on 19 December 2005 its presidential election, in which Netanyahu easily won. For the first time, Netanyahu realized that the battle for the leadership of the Party was not necessarily the same for the Prime Minister's office, and that the Likud Party had still a long way to go before it regains its position in the streets of Israel, as it had already lost more than half of its supporters. However, dominance of the ultra-orthodox over the Likud does not for sure mean that the Party will follow an extreme line. The fears that the Party may wane and be marginalized, and the existence of some pragmatic elements within its ranks, triggered it to follow a "reasonable" line and to accommodate the new changes in the orientation of the Israeli voters. Hence, the Party's program for the 17th Knesset elections in March 2006, deleted the article that rejects the recognition of a Palestinian state.[38]

However, the electoral program of the Labor Party was basically the same as those of Kadima and other main Israeli parties. It regards Jerusalem, east and west, as the eternal capital of Israel, and denies Palestinians the right of return. Nonetheless, it tries to mitigate this extremism by offering immediate negotiation to conclude a final settlement with the Palestinians, and the continuation of the Jewish settlements in the WB in return for a long lease of at least 99 years. In the same context, it suggests the exchange of land between the PA and Israel, i.e., the Palestinian state will incorporate some lands inside the Green Line, but forgo the large settlement blocks such as Ghush Etzion and Ariel, to Israel. However, the program refused Hamas participation in the legislative elections and to hold talks with it.[39]

Therefore, the most prominent feature of the Israeli political scenario in 2005 was the increasing tendency within the "right" and the "left" towards the "center", which implies a growing conviction of the inability of Israel to impose by force its hegemony and dominance over the Palestinian people. Besides, there has been a rapid escalation in the political influence of the eastern Jews, while the formation of the powerful Kadima Party made it clear that Israeli politicking no longer depended on a two-party system, the Labor and the Likud.

Aggression and Resistance: Throughout the year 2005, the Israeli authorities continued their aggression against the land and people in Palestine. Tanks and bulldozers continued to impose new realities on the ground, and to oppress the Palestinians and confiscate their properties. At the same time, the Israeli media pursued a vocal propaganda campaign (echoed by the western media), which asserted the lack of a genuine Palestinian partner for peace. Indeed, this is part of the "surrealist" scene which the world has become accustomed to, and dealt with, namely, the occupation force that is armed to the teeth and usurped the land of another people by force be the party that should be supported and assured. Israeli fears have to be placated, while the Palestinian people, "the victims", have to prove their good intentions and peaceful orientation.

During the year 2005, *al-Aqsa Intifadah* had abated, because of the developments that followed the death of Yasir 'Arafat, and the election of Mahmud 'Abbas as President of the PA. Besides, the Palestinians were preoccupied with the municipal elections and the preparations for the forthcoming legislative election. Moreover, the Palestinian factions announced on 22 January a unilateral truce that was followed, on 8 February, by a ceasefire between the Authority and Israel. In fact, the little of the resistance during 2005 took the shape of some vengeful and retaliatory operations against Israeli aggressions. According to the Palestinian National Information Centre, Israeli violations during the period that followed the pronouncement of a ceasefire, from 8 February 2005 to 2 January 2006, amounted to 23,427, including 2,366 shooting operations (see table 6/2).[40]

Table 6/2: Israeli Violations of the Ceasefire from 8/2/2005 to 2/1/2006

| Arrested	Injured	Killed	Shooting	Total violations
3,932	1,161	165	2,366	23,427

Formal Palestinian statistics indicate that during 2005, there were 286 killed Palestinians, including 68 children and 56 victims of Israeli assassination operation, and 1,700 injured,[41] while the numbers for the year 2004 were 963 killed and 5,964 injured (see table 7/2).[42] Conversely, according to the Prime Minister's office and the statistics of the Shein Beit (General Security Service), 2,990 resistance operations were carried out during the year 2005 that resulted

in 45 Israeli killed and 406 injured, while in 2004, 117 Israeli were killed and 589 injured (see table 8/2).[43] The resistance carried out seven "self-immolation" operations during 2005, that left 23 Israeli killed and 213 injured, which five were carried by Islamic Jihad Movement and the rest two by Hamas.[44]

Table 7/2: The Palestinians Killed and Injured during 2004 – 2005

Year	Killed	Injured
2005	286	1,700
2004	963	5,964

The Palistinians Killed and Injured during 2004 & 2005
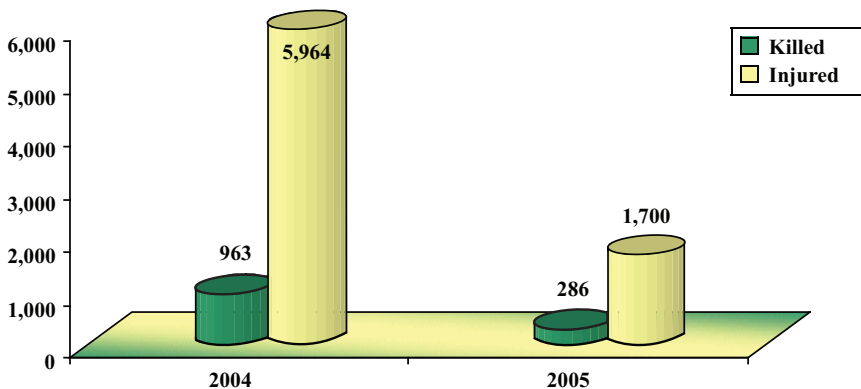
According to statistics prepared by *Haaretz* newspaper, 3,333 Palestinians and 1,330 Israelis were killed during the five-years of the *Intifadah* (29 September 2000 – 28 September 2005), of whom 425 Palestinians and 56 Israelis were killed during the fifth year alone.[45] However, according to Palestinian estimation, 4,172 were killed (including 783 children and 269 women) and 45,718 were injured during the five years of the *Intifadah*. Moreover, 139 were killed due to the Israeli obstruction at the barricades.[46]

Table 8/2: The Israelis Killed and Injured during 2004 – 2005 [47]

Year	Killed	Injured
2005	45	406
2004	117	589

Table 9/2: Resistance Operations 2004 – 2005[48]

	"Self-immolation" operations	Rocket launches	Other operations	Total
Resistance operations 2005	7	377	2,606	**2,990**
Resistance operations 2004	15	309	3,547	**3,871**

Table 10/2: Assassinations of Palestinians According to their Membership during 2005 [49]

Organization	Fatah	Islamic Jihad	Hamas	Popular Front	Indefinite	Total
Number	23	14	13	1	5	**56**

Israeli policy, during the year 2005, on Palestinian detainees and prisoners of *Intifadah* was basically the same as in previous years. It was essentially a vicious circle. Soon after releasing some (after exhaustive efforts or by the end of the imprisonment terms), the Israeli authorities arrest many other Palestinians in order to keep the prisoners' issue a constant weapon of bargain and pressure on the other side. The Israeli government pledged in the Sharm el-Sheikh agreements (8 February 2005) to release 900 Palestinians. On 21 February, 500 were released, and on 2 June, 398 others were set free. However, though the Palestinians had announced a truce and the *Intifadah* abated, the number of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons increased day by day. In the beginning of 2005, there were about 7,800, but their numbers increased to 9,200 at the end of the year. During the year 2005, Israel arrested 3,495 Palestinians, of whom 1,600 remained in jail.[50]

Indeed, the year 2005 witnessed an increasing growth of Zionist settlements in the WB, which synchronized with the building of the Separation Wall, the confiscation of land and the lumping of the Palestinian people in congested and isolated buildings in order to impose the Israeli vision of the final shape of the peace settlement. For example, the Israeli authorities confiscated 39,800 donums (1 donum (dunam) = 1,000 square meters).[51] A comparative reading of the statistics from various sources indicates that the number of Jewish settlers in the WB increased from 440,000 at the end of 2004 to 452,000 by the end

of 2005, including 200,000 in East Jerusalem. Similarly, many evacuated settlers from GS were resettled in the WB. In addition to 160 "formal" Israeli settlements, there are 102 other settlement points, including 52 established after March 2001. During the year 2005, wide scale building operations were carried out, and by the end of its first half 4,207 housing units were built.[52] *The Guardian* newspaper of 18 October 2005 recorded a further 4,000 housing units in the process of building.[53]

The year 2005 had, moreover, witnessed the intensification of the Israeli campaign to Judaize Jerusalem and to isolate it through the building of the Separation Wall around the town, along with excessive settlement processes, the confiscation of Arab real estate properties in old Jerusalem, and the enactment of laws that make life of the Arab population in the city extremely difficult.

Some Jewish extremists declared 2005 as "The year of the Temple." *Al-Aqsa* Mosque was subjected to several attacks undertaken by Jewish settlers, conducted from the Palestinian point of view, in connivance with the occupation government. The most infamous was the one called for by the extremist group "Revava" on 10 April 2005, which had been aborted by Palestinians who rushed to defend the sanctity of the Mosque. They tried again on 6 June, but also failed. Nonetheless, their attempts continued, though at a lower pace. Meanwhile, the preparation for the construction of the presumed Temple continued, and a solid 25 meters skeleton for it was build in Kiryat Shmona settlement in the north of Palestine. In addition, was the final tailoring of the clothes intended to be worn by the so-called "Chief Rabbi of the Temple" and their displaying to the audience.

The attempts of the Israeli authorities continued throughout 2005 to control and dominate *al-Aqsa* Mosque. On 20 April, the Israeli government constructed a bridge in the area of *al-Buraq* Wall, by which they intended to facilitate, through *al-Magharibah* Gate that they control, the entry of Jews and tourists to the Mosque. It has also been revealed that the occupation authorities have finished the building of a greater part of the tourist religious city that lies 14 meters under the Mosque.

The year 2005 also witnessed the scandal of the sale of the properties of the Orthodox Church, an infamous act unveiled on 18 March. Through a secret deal concluded between two Jewish settler groups and the Greek Orthodox Patriarchy, the former bought the land on which the Imperial and al-Batra hotels

were constructed, in addition to 27 shops possessed by the Greek Orthodoxy in 'Umar bin al-Khattab square in *Bab al-Khalil* zone within the old city of Jerusalem. This scandal brought on 5 May the downfall of Patriarch "Irineos I" who proved to be a culprit. The holy synod of the Orthodox Roman Patriarchy elected on 22 August "Theophilos III" as a new bishop of the Orthodox Church. Since then, the Israeli government has subjected the new bishop to blackmail by refusing his appointment and delaying his formal investiture, until he endorses the deal of selling the properties of the Greek Church in Jerusalem.

The Separation Wall:

Using words like "separation", or "racial separation", to label the Wall is but a diluted description of the heinous crime that has been committed against the Palestinians. Actually, it would be more accurate to describe this forced segregation as an "unjust deracination", or "evil embankment", for it sabotages the life of the Palestinians and expropriates their land and water resources. However, our adoption here of some commonly used terms to describe this Wall should not be interpreted as a tendency to mitigate the intensity of the atrocity it represents.

This racial Wall, built by Israel around the WB, reflects part of the Zionist isolationist mentality that emanates from their security concern and fear of the original inhabitants, the Palestinians. Undoubtedly, this mentality is very much similar to that of the white settlers in all colonial settlements. Thus, this Wall reminds of the racial discriminatory policies adopted by the white Afrikaner racists in South Africa during the Apartheid era, whose nature and orientation is similar to that of the Zionist movement. For the latter had established an isolated foreign body that surrounded itself with religious, political, cultural, and linguistic barriers which are alien to the prevailing milieu, but found itself cornered in a hostile environment. This Wall stands as a tacit confession of their failure to become a welcomed state within the region. By its construction in the WB, Israel has, thus, a number of goals and concerns that are enumerated below:

1. **The Security Dimension**: It is represented in the Israeli drive to prevent the infiltration of Palestinians from the WB into the occupied territories (since 1948), and to stop the "self-immolation" operations.
2. **The Political Dimension**: In this respect, Israel wanted to impose its vision

of a final settlement on the Palestinians, to demarcate borders unilaterally, to annex lands, on which it would erect settlements that would make the establishment of a Palestinian state impossible, and to spread Israeli authority over the Palestinian lands, especially Jerusalem.

3. **The Economic Dimension**: This is represented in the Israeli drive to expropriate the cultivated lands and water resources of the Palestinians, to hamper their ability to work and to place them under severe hardships that would compel them to emigrate from their land.

4. **The Social Dimension**: The erection of the Wall disrupts the social fabric of the Palestinian society, as it isolates a large number of districts, villages, and cities from each other, and impedes their social and familial connections. In addition, is the negative effect of the Wall on the health and educational services needed by hundreds of thousands of victims.

After the outbreak of the first *Intifadah* in 1987, the Israeli government built a fence around GS. Subsequently, in 1992, Yitzhak Rabin won the presidential elections on the basis of his program that claims: "We are here, they are there."

In April 2002, the Israeli government decided to establish a separation barrier in the WB, and duly began the project on 16 June 2002. It officially approved, in October 2003 and June 2004, its length to be 652 km. Moreover, Ariel Sharon, the Prime Minister, announced in March 2003 the government's plan to build another wall in the Jordanian Valley, east of the WB, with an average length of 132 km. In May 2005, an Israeli ministerial committee stated that the Wall should include Ma'ale Adumim, east of Jerusalem. This actually adds another 48 km to the Wall, bringing its full length to 832 km, i.e., double the length of the Green Line (the borders of the WB with the Israeli controlled area since 1948), which stretches 320 km only.

If constructed according to plan, the Wall would bring 47.6% of the WB under Israeli authority, and directly affects 680,000 Palestinians, while about 250,000 others will be sandwitched between the Separation Wall and the Green Line. Moreover, 330,000 Palestinians will remain isolated from their land and places of vocation. In addition, 101 villages, cities, and inhabited territories would remain isolated by the barrier, of which 19 would be in the western part of the Wall without any access to other Palestinian in the WB. Moreover, 53 villages and cities would find themselves surrounded by the fence from three sides. This would, in effect, place hundreds of thousands of Palestinians under

dire conditions that may compel them to emigrate from their homelands. Part of this sinister plan was that the Wall would include the largest number of Israeli settlements in the WB. It was, in fact, designed in a manner to incorporate 55 settlements with 322,000 Jewish settlers, who represent most of the WB's colonists.

The Israeli authorities attempted to muster international support to the barrier by claiming that it is just a "fence." But a close observation of its plans and structure would demonstrate that it is, in reality, a highly complicated military line. This is evident in the spiral barbed wire that runs along the length of this "fence", followed by a five meter deep and 4 meter wide trench, then a blacktop street (12 meters in width), followed by another soft sand matted street (4 meters in width), then a high cement wall (8 meters), on top of which are iron and electronic fences, equipped with cameras, searchlights, and military watch towers.[54]

Perhaps the most important goal of this Segregation Wall is to continue the process of the Judaization of Jerusalem, and to confiscate its lands and encircle it with walls and colonial settlements that would isolate it from the Arab and Islamic world. The length of the racial Wall around Jerusalem is estimated to be about 181 km. It demarcates Jerusalem, starting from Northern Bethlehem, and encompasses *Rahel's* tomb and isolate the two villages of Abu-Dis and al-'Aizariyah from Jerusalem, then it turns left to include the settlements of Ma'ale Adumim, then west to isolate 'Anata, Shu'fat camp, Hazma, al-Ram, Kafr 'Aqib and Rafat from the holy city (Jerusalem). Bir Nabala and al-Jib, which have abruptly found themselves behind the Wall, will be blockaded by another one that deprive them from direct contact with the sacred city of Jerusalem, having access only through Ramallah.

Moreover, Beit Hanina will find itself facing the western part of the Wall, which, with the settlements, will surround it from three directions, leaving it with only one access through the gate of Bir Nabala opposite Ramallah. According to some estimates, the Separation Wall will isolate 18 Palestinian villages and municipalities, inhabited by 220,000 Palestinians, from Jerusalem. They constitute a natural extension to the sacred city, fall within its domains and depend economically, socially (as well as religiously and politically) on their relationship with it. The Wall would, thus, deprive these areas from their main

source of revenue, and consequently depopulate Jerusalem by about 60,000 out of its total population of 230,000.

Accordingly, the establishment of this Wall will lead to the loss of 90% of Jerusalem's lands. Furthermore, the settlement enclosure around the city will be completed, from the settlement of Abu Ghuneim (Harhoma), in the south of Jerusalem, Ma'ale Adumim in the east through the settlements of Pisgat Ze'ev and Giv'at Ze'ev to the north of the city. Thus, Israeli plans to reduce the ratio of the Arabs in Jerusalem from 33% to 22% will practically materialize. Moreover, the establishment of this dangerous enclosure around Jerusalem will effectively isolate 617 of the city's sacred and civilizational sites from their Arab and Islamic surrounding.

An example of the hardship that the Wall will inflict on the inhabitants of Jerusalem and its suburbs is that it separates the 25,000 population of the village of al-Sawahra into two parts, 10,000 living to the east of the Wall and 15,000 to its west. Moreover, the Wall cuts the village of Abu-Dis into two, thus separating Umm al-Zarazeer and Khillat 'Abd quarters from the rest of the village. The Wall also splits al-Salam suburb to the west of 'Anata into two halves and divides the village of Beit Hanina into two parts. Besides, it denies the inhabitants' of the latter free access to the village except through gates or tunnels, and separates it from 7,000 donums of its cultivated lands. The Wall also surrounds the village of al-Jib and expropriates 85% of its lands, leaving to the indigenous Palestinians only 1,770 donums out of 9,000 donums.[55]

Nonetheless, the Security Council failed to condemn the Wall because the United States vetoed, in October 2003, a draft proposal that condemned Israel and asked it to stop the building. Subsequently, an alternative proposal was placed before the UN General Assembly which confined itself to calling the Israeli government to freeze its building plans. It is worthwhile to note that this non-binding decision received the approval of 144 members against four and 12 abstainees.

On 9 July 2004, the International Court of Justice issued an advisory decision which considered the Wall illegal and against the principles of international law. Furthermore, it called for the cessation of this project, and demanded that Israel compensate all the Palestinian victims. The Court ruled that the Wall obstructs

the Palestinians' right of self-determination, and effectively annex their lands. It also considered the establishment of Israeli settlements on Palestinian lands a violation of international law.

According to official Israeli sources, by December 2005, the total of 275 km of the Wall had been built and another 150 km are in an advanced stage of construction. Moreover, construction works will begin soon for another 83 km while 250 km are under planning and "legal" consideration by the Israeli authorities. As for the Wall that surrounds Jerusalem, it will be established by the end of 2005 and the beginning of 2006.[56]

The Peace Settlement Track:

The Road Map has been scheduled to reach its final phase and bring the Palestinians and Israeli sides to a final agreement before the end of 2005. But the year 2005 elapsed without even initiating the implementation of this plan. Moreover, it was postulated that the two parties would reach a final agreement within five years after the Oslo Accords, but to no avail. Instead, the successive series of failures resulted in the outbreak of *al-Aqsa Intifadah* in September 2000.

Since the signature of Oslo Accords in September 1993, Israel has effectively succeeded in affirming Yitzhak Rabin's statement that says: "Dates are not sacred", which has subsequently become central in Israeli politics, and one of its means for coercive pressure and extortion. The two parties failed - from the very beginning - to reach an agreement concerning the feasible details of the first phase agreement (Gaza – Jericho), and the period specified for Israeli withdrawal from this region had elapsed even before starting the process. This, however, was the dominant feature that overwhelmed the following agreements: Cairo (4 May 1994), Taba or Oslo 2 (28 September 1995), Hebron Agreement (15 January 1997), Wye River Plantation (23 October 1998), and Sharm el-Sheikh (4 September 1999).

In fact, Israel was not in a hurry to pursue the peace process as the local, regional, and international developments were in its favour. Besides, the Palestinian partner had been rushing to reach to results, though it lacked leverage. This gave Israel the opportunity to impose its conditions and to bring down the level of Palestinian expectations. Meanwhile, Israel organized an active settlement campaign that doubled the numbers of Jewish settlers in the WB, and it moved quickly to Judaize East Jerusalem. By then, Israel was reaping the

profits of the so-called "peace", particularly by normalizing its relations with a number of Arab, Islamic, and international countries with whom it established diplomatic representation.

Meanwhile, the outbreak of the *al-Aqsa Intifadah* manifested the failure of the Oslo peace process, and the state of frustration that overwhelmed the Palestinian people. After 7 years of self-government, the PA extended its security and administrative authority to only 18% of the WB. Actually, Oslo's biggest predicament was that it entailed the seeds of its own failure, as it did not address right from the beginning the fundamental issues, but occupied itself with procedures and details. Moreover, it placed the Palestinians under the mercy of the Israeli "good intentions", while it did not oblige the aggressor to evacuate the 1967 occupied territories, or to abide by the edicts of international law. Rather, Israel, the opponent and the enemy, has simultaneously become the judge. Everything is dependent on the Israeli "goodwill" and mercy towards the Palestinians.

Israel reoccupied the regions under the PA and destroyed its infrastructure. Moreover, it besieged Abu 'Ammar in his headquarters for two and a half years until he passed away, in mysterious circumstances on 9 November 2004. But the *Intifadah* had inflicted heavy damage on the Zionist state, shattered its security and economic infrastructure and disclosed the ugly face of its occupation. Ariel Sharon, who became the Premier on 6 February 2001, failed throughout his four years of Premiership to provide security for the Israelis, and to crush the *Intifadah* in hundred days, as he promised.

Sharon, had, in fact, represented the ultra extreme of the Israeli leadership. He superceded his predecessors in massacring the Palestinians, in encouraging the construction of the Jewish settlements, that earned him the title "The Father of Settlement", and in expropriating Palestinian lands. Moreover, he voted against the Camp David Accords with Egypt and the Oslo Accords with the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), and expressed reservation towards the peace agreement with Jordan. Indeed, Sharon tried to pull the clock back and to impose his whims on others. He reiterated the claim that the Oslo Agreement had died, and described it in 2005 as "the biggest blunder committed by an Israeli government", as reported by the American magazine, *Time,* in May 2005.[57]

On his assumption of power, Sharon's project was essentially security – focused. It just offered the Palestinians self-government on only 40 – 45%

of the WB, but refused to enter into negotiations with them before the end of the *Intifadah*, and by the end of November 2001, he even tried to sell them the notion of "Gaza first." Sharon ignored the recommendations of Tenet and Mitchell, and was not for cooperation with the PA. All that he intended was to unveil its weakness before its people, and to demonstrate that it has no role to play except to be a police in the service of the occupation. Meanwhile, Sharon spared no effort to destroy the Authority's infrastructure and security forces.

When signing Oslo Accords, the Palestinian side believed that this agreement would be the prelude to the establishment of the Palestinian state on the lands of the WB and GS. The PA was therefore obliged to carry out suppressive measures against the resistance factions, particularly Hamas, that were subjected to fierce attacks in the Spring of 1996 in order to prevent them from carrying out operations against the Israelis.

Unfortunately, the PA did not have many options in their struggle against Israeli decisions, or in dealing with their de facto policy. Furthermore, the American side, that patronized the peace process, was not an impartial or neutral partner. In addition, internally in Palestine, the positions of various groups varied between supporting the peace process and insisting on the resistance. Moreover, the corruption and the flaccidity of the PA had adversely affected its potentialities, and distanced the public and the professionals from it.

After ten years, the Israelis were still far away from meeting the minimum demands of the pro-peace groups. Moreover, there was almost a consensus among major Israeli political factions that denied the Palestinian refugees the right to return to the occupied territories of 1948, insisted that Jerusalem, with its east and west parts, be the eternal capital of Israel, and that the main settlements in the WB remain intact. Furthermore, the Israelis strove to seek guarantees that would undermine the sovereignty and freedom of the Palestinian state, e.g. security guarantees.

However, the failure of the July 2000 Camp David shuttle negotiations had actually, brought the peace process to a deadlock. The outbreak of *al-Aqsa Intifadah* and the rising popularity of the resistance groups were among the most prominent forms of public discontent and protest against the entire peace process.

The Road Map:

During the year 2005, Israel had obviously succeeded to marginalize the Road Map project, even though it

was heavily biased towards it, and to rally local, regional, and international support for its agenda of unilateral withdrawal from GS. Nonetheless, the PA had no way but to cooperate. The Road Map remained a reference invoked by all parties, and a subject for political debates, and establishing positions as well as a means of pressure on the Palestinians.

In his speech on 24 June 2002, George Bush explained his vision for peace in the Middle East. This speech, which constituted the core of the Road Map project, was soon adopted by the "Quartet", which is composed of the United States of America, the European Union, Russia, and the United Nations. This project, formally published on 30 April 2003, called for an end of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the conclusion of a final settlement through a specific program that ends in 2005. It is based on establishing a Palestinian state in conformity with Security Council Resolutions 242, 338 and 1397, while taking into consideration the Saudi Initiative adopted by Arab leaders in Beirut in March 2002. The Road Map falls in three phases, and is based on measures of building confidence between the two parties: the Palestinians and the Israelis.

Like the scores of decisions and projects on the Palestinian issue, the Road Map does not present a definite and final concepts on some core issues (Jerusalem, refugees, Jewish settlements, borders, and sovereignty). Likewise, it does not offer any real mechanism obliging the concerned party, the Israeli occupation, to fulfill its commitments. In other words, it gives the occupation the opportunity to manipulate and use delaying tactics to impose realities on the ground. Moreover, rather than securing the safety of the victims of the occupation, the Road Map occupies itself with guaranteeing the security of the occupier and the aggressor.

On 25 May 2003, the Israeli government approved the Road Map tentatively and with 14 reservations that had practically made the project void of content and heavily pro-Israel. The first reservation alone obliged the Palestinians side to end the *Intifadah*, and restructure their security organs that should do their best to prevent "violence." Moreover, as a pre-requisite for engagement in the first phase, the Palestinians should dismantle the "terrorist" organizations (Hamas, Islamic Jihad, the Popular Front, the Democratic Front (*al-Jabha al-Dimuqratiyyah*), al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, and so on) and destroy their infrastructure, collect unlicensed weapons and prevent their smuggling, and stop all hostile calls against Israel. Nonetheless, the Americans expressed their serious understanding of these reservations.

This first reservation sufficed to paralyze the Road Map for years, as the Israelis were practically the ones who will give the "testimony of success" for the implementation of these measures. The other reservations required a new Palestinian leadership, which practically negated the time limit laid out in the Road Map, and made it virtually impossible to settle the final issues in the year 2005. They also marginalized the Saudi-Arab Initiative and the Security Council Resolution 1397 as a reference for the project. Moreover, these reservations stipulated that the Palestinians acknowledge the right of Israel to exist as a Jewish state, and abandon the right of return to their homes and villages whom they were driven from in 1948 war.

On their side, the PA assembled the security organs in three, and created the post of Prime Minister, which was occupied by Mahmud 'Abbas and by Ahmad Qurei' consecutively. On 9 January 2005, after the death of Yasir 'Arafat, the Palestinians in GS and the WB elected Mahmud 'Abbas to the Presidency of the PA, which, on its part, made several reforms, especially in the financial and economic field, to ensure transparency. The Authority also persuaded the Palestinian factions to announce a truce with Israel. Municipal elections were held in phases, and the Authority made the necessary arrangements for the legislative elections, which were delayed to 25 January 2006.

However, the Israeli side, which considered the Road Map to be still in its initial phase, was not convinced by these measures. They insisted that the PA dismantles and destroys the infrastructure of Hamas and other resistance movements before Israel embarks on any positive steps. Their pretext, repeated almost daily, is the lack of a real Palestinian partner; and that Abu Mazin has not done enough to fight "terrorism". Meanwhile, the Israelis continued throughout the year 2005 their policy of political assassination, expanding the settlements, demolishing houses and taking captives and detainees, which were all incompatible with the first phase of the Road Map.

Abu Mazin met Sharon on 8 February 2005 in Sharm el-Sheikh, where they agreed on a ceasefire and to activate the Road Map. Hence, Israelis had to withdraw from a number of the WB cities that should be handed to the Palestinian security (Jericho, Bethlehem, Tulkarm, Qalqilya, Ramallah) and to release 900 Palestinian prisoners. Meanwhile, Abu Mazin continued his reform of the security organs, which was commended by the American coordinator of security in the Palestinian territories, Mr. William Ward.[58] Nonetheless, Israel continued its pressure on the PA. On the other side, Sharon got, during his visit

to the US in the middle of May, more American support for his policies. Abu Mazin visited the United States of America during the period 26 – 28 May 2005, where George W. Bush promised him direct support to develop GS after the Israeli withdrawal.

On 21 June 2005 Sharon had a stormy meeting with Mahmud 'Abbas, after which the latter appeared was quite turbulent. 'Abbas left the meeting disappointed and tense. Many issues, the Separation Plan, the Road Map, the Separation Wall, the prisoners, and Israeli withdrawal from Palestinian cities were discussed in this meeting, as well as Israeli protraction and retreat from their commitments. Though admitting some progress on the security issue and that a positive climate was founded by the truce, Sharon considered this to be insufficient. According to some Israeli sources, 'Abbas told Sharon: "We have to work together. Every rocket launched against you is as if it is directed at me. I want to perform, but my ability is limited." He added: "My position is so difficult and Israel requires much from the Authority, while most of the operations against it are sprung from territories under Israeli dominance."[59]

The Israelis repeatedly attempted to use the security commitments, pledged by the PA in the Road Map, to prevent the participation of Hamas in the legislative elections. They were so persistent in this demand that they publicly declared that they will not facilitate any election in which Hamas takes part. Likewise, they declared their boycott to any government led, or is affiliated, with Hamas, and launched a campaign to gain international support to their position, which was, however, publicly endorsed by a number of American officials. Sharon conditioned the participation of Hamas in the elections on the Movement's disarmament, and threatened to stop the implementation of the Road Map if it did not.[60]

Likewise, Mr. Shimon Peres, the deputy Prime Minister, declared that Israel would help Mahmud 'Abbas, since a Hamas victory would mean "the end of the peace process."[61] Netanyahu, the Minister of Finance, also declared that both Tel Aviv and Washington do not want Hamas to come to power even through legislative election.[62] Yuval Diskin, the head of Shabak, admitted that a victory of Hamas would place Israel in an embarrassing situation; for, if Hamas becomes a partner in the Authority and continued its operations, our position would be difficult and complicated.[63]

However, Abu Mazin maintained that the issue of elections is an internal issue, and insisted on Hamas's participation. His second meeting with Bush,

on 20 October 2005, seemed to have promoted this line, Hamas's participation in the political process was expected to weaken its ability to impede the peace process, and would transfer it in the long run into a political party. Moreover, it was generally believed that Fatah would win the elections, which would give it the necessary legitimacy to represent the Palestinian people as a whole, and confine Hamas into the position of an opposing faction. This very same forecast was behind the Israeli restrain on the issue of Hamas' participation in the general elections. It issued some noisy political statements that objected to this participation, but took no concrete measures to prevent it, though it arrested some of the cadre of Hamas to weaken the movement.

Unilateral Separation and Withdrawal from Gaza Strip:

The idea of unilateral separation was not Sharon's brainchild per se, though the policy was actually implemented during his rule. Discussions never ceased, since the occupation of the WB and GS, on the proper way to maintain the Jewish identity of the Zionist state, the land required for the waves of settlement, and the Palestinian demographic dangers. They also discussed the possible land that Israel may concede if a final settlement is reached. However, this debate gained momentum after the huge losses that the occupation forces suffered as a result of the resistance operations, most of which were carried out inside Israel. Furthermore, the Israelis have increasingly felt that the time for a settlement was approaching.

The theory of separation had first appeared after the "self-immolation" operation in Beit Leid on 22 January 1995. By then, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin commanded the formation of a security team to study the idea of separating the Palestinians from the Israelis. Moshe Shahal, the Minister of Internal Security, undertook this task. In October 2000, after the outbreak of the *al-Aqsa Intifadah*, and in consultation with the relevant authorities, Shaul Arieli and Moti Kristel tabled a separation plan to Ehud Barak, as a possible alternative to the failure of the negotiations with the Palestinians. Sharon was not at the time inclined to the idea, especially because it would ultimately compel him to concede what he considered to be part of "the land of Israel." Moreover, the idea was initiated and articulated by his rival party, the Labor Party. However, the increasing escalation of the *Intifadah* forced him to take the matter seriously, in particular, after a new plan of separation was prepared by the Ministers of Defense, Binyamin

Ben-Eliezer, and Security, Uzi Landau, that was tabled to Sharon on 6 June 2001. Since September 2001, this idea occupied the top agenda in the Israeli debate.[64] On 18 December 2003, Sharon declared in the Herzliya Conference his endorsement of the idea of unilateral separation, and by early February 2004, he presented his proposed separation plan. The plan entails the preservation of six settlement communities in the WB, in addition to the Israeli settlement zones in East Jerusalem. The plan was officially and strongly supported by America, as manifested in a joint press conference held by Bush and Sharon in Washington on 14 April 2004. Contrary to the previous formal American position towards the issue, and in contrast with international law, Bush preceded the outcome of the final negotiations to declare America's commitment to guarantee the security of Israel and its Jewish identity. Moreover, he declared, Israel can retain in the talks of final status control over the settlements in the WB. He stated that in the light of the new facts on the ground, including the main settlement blocks, it is unrealistic to expect, in the final status negotiations, a total return to the Truce Line of 1949.

The separation plan, which had been ratified by the Israeli government on 20 February 2005, provided for the Israeli withdrawal from GS and four isolated settlements in the WB. However, the phraseology of the plan entailed what would practically turn GS into a huge prison. For, it stipulated that Israel would police and supervise the external borders of GS, control its airspace and have continuous security activities on its shores.[65] Thus, GS would be, in effect, and by the terms of international law, under Israeli occupation.

The Israeli pretext for selling the separation plan was their rough claim of the lack of a real Palestinian partner with whom negotiation may be held. However, in reality this meant that Israel wanted to impose its own concept with regard to the final settlement. As long as there was no Palestinian who could accept Israeli demands and dictations, then, according to Israel, there is no Palestinian partner that Israel can negotiate with. Even if such a partner exists, the yardstick is whether he would be able to meet the standards set by the Israeli specifications. As Sharon puts it, "The conventions signed by the Arab leaders do not deserve the paper on which they are written."[66]

In fact, the PA tried to make the Israeli withdrawal part and parcel of the negotiation process, but the Israeli side refused, and, instead, restricted itself to

asking the Authority to do its best to impose peace and tranquility so that the Israeli withdrawal would not appear as a surrender to the Palestinian resistance. Minister Sa'ib 'Uraiqat accurately depicted the difficult state of the PA by stating:

> We do not know what will occur after the implementation of the separation plan … no one answers our questions. They demand that we coordinate the separation process without knowing the course it takes. Indeed, we are tired of transitional conventions … Everything has been destroyed during the years of the *Intifadah*. You shackle our hands and throw us into the sea. Unless we know how to swim, we are not your partners according to your view! However, if we are good at swimming, we are still not a good partner. It is time you clarify what you want from us.[67]

While, on one hand, too weak to apply pressure on Israel, the PA did not, on the other hand, find comfort in the repeated changes that it made, nor in the visit of Abu Mazin to Washington in May 2005. He returned so empty handed, that he bitterly declared that the Americans were satisfied and "fascinated" by Sharon's initiative of unilateral withdrawal from GS. They also agreed to the preservation of the large settlements and to the denial of the Palestinians' right of return, he added. [68]

Al-Aqsa Intifadah played an important role in pushing the Israelis to withdraw from GS that has become a great security and economic liability.[69] In accordance with statistics published in *Haaretz* newspaper, the total number of Israeli casualties in GS, since its occupation, was 230, including 106 only killed over a period of 33 years, since the occupation of 1967 and until the end of September 2000. However, during the five years of the *al-Aqsa Intifadah*, 124 Israelis were killed.[70] The elaborate process of protecting 8,000 settlers was extremely costly and tiring, for it necessitated the deployment of thousands of soldiers in an area inhabited by 1 million & 400,000 Palestinians.

Nevertheless, the Israeli government tried to utilize this withdrawal to achieve as much political and material gains as possible. First of all, it tried to get rid of the huge population burden in GS, which impedes the Israeli drive to preserve the Jewish identity of the state. In addition, it maintained, the withdrawal will reduce the material and security burdens, facilitate the redeployment of the Israeli army in a way that guarantees the end of actual friction with the population of GS, and decrease its vulnerability to attacks. Besides, it will deny the resistance in GS all excuses for military operations against Israel, at least in the view of the international community. The Israeli government also hoped

that the withdrawal will provide a cover and an understanding for any military operations, assassinations, or onslaughts that they may launch in response to possible attacks by the resistance. Moreover, the Israeli government strove to by pass the Road Map project and rule the WB single handedly, implement its plans to Judaize Jerusalem, construct the discriminatory Separation Wall, confiscate lands, and maintain the settlement communities in any coming political settlement. It, on the other side, tried to improve its image in the eyes of the international community by posing as the party that advocates peace and is willing to make "painful concessions" for this purpose. Moreover, Israel wanted to restore its previous warm relations with Egypt, Jordan and some other Arab countries, and to penetrate into the Muslim world, especially Pakistan.

Israel announced that it will begin the withdrawal in July 2005, but it soon delayed this to mid August. The actual withdrawal began in the midst of a strong propaganda campaign that stressed the "great concessions" made by Israel and the "pain" and "suffering" that the Jewish settlers experienced as a result of this withdrawal, to the extent that it would be difficult to imagine that any future Israeli withdrawal will ever take place. However, it was then leaked that the Israeli government had financed and supported the settlers' publicity and protest campaigns.[71] Moreover, each family that left received a compensation of $250,000; which may be raised to $400,000.[72]

On 11 September, the evacuation of the settlements was completed, and Israel pronounced a unilateral end of its occupation of GS. This evacuation was, so to speak, a "five star" one that could not possibility be compared with the cruel Israeli demolition of Palestinian houses that threw their occupants in the open air, nor with their banishment and confiscation of properties from which about 57% of the Palestinian population had suffered during the 1948 catastrophe, (800,000 out of 1 million & 400,000 Palestinians).

Israel maintained control over the borders of GS with Egypt until an agreement was concluded with the PA on 15 November 2005, through American mediation led by the Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice. It provided for European supervision at the crossing point, and for the installment of monitoring cameras that directly transmit all occurrences to Israel. Furthermore, Israel was given the right to deny entry or exit and to detain whoever it may suspect. However, the European supervisors were to decide on the viability of the detention within 6 hours from its start. The PA celebrated on 25 November the opening of the crossing and the start of implementing the convention. However, this joy did

not last long, as Israel declared a part of Northern GS as a security area to which Palestinians were denied entry. This was done under the guise of preventing the firing of rockets on Israeli settlements.

Conclusion: Throughout the year 2005, Israel did not send any formal signal to show its keenness to conduct negotiations on the final settlement with the Palestinians and Arabs, neither in accordance with the Arab initiatives nor with the decisions of the international community. Instead, it kept hammering on the pretext of "the absence of a Palestinian partner" that enabled it to impose its concepts and conditions, and to achieve new realities on the ground. Israel also neglected the gestures of the elected President of the PA, and disregarded the truce pronounced by the Palestinian factions. It implemented unilateral withdrawal from GS without negotiation or coordination with the PA. This demonstrates that the mentality of the Israeli ruling elite has not absorbed, understood or accepted the idea of a real Palestinian state in the WB and GS that meets the Palestinian minimum demands, and which has already been accepted by the PA, and backed by the international community.

Thus, the problem lurks in Israel itself and not in any other party. From the very beginning, Israel has, indeed, been "an absent partner," because it never looked for a real partnership. Rather, it wanted a defeated party to sign the terms of surrender.

Indeed, the changes that had taken place within the Israeli parties, and the formation of Kadima, along with the overwhelming Israeli support to the unilateral separation and the withdrawal from GS, reveal the crisis of the Zionist project. It also demonstrates the failure of the submission strategy that Israel pursues against the Palestinian people, as well as the frustration of its attempts to crush their *Intifadah* with a minimum loss in Israeli lives and property.

The Zionist crisis is expected to eventually escalate if the Palestinian party continues to insist on its legal rights, and actively rallies the Arab, Muslim, and human support behind its cause. However, no significant escalation is expected in the short run, as the Arab and Muslim apathy and weakness is continuing and the European-American support for Israel is ongoing.

Endnotes:

1 Dr. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh: Associate Professor of Palestinian Studies and Contemporary Arab History, General Manager of al-Zaytouna Centre and ex-head of department of History and Civilization, International Islamic University – Malaysia.

2 For the Israeli official statistics of the population in 2005, see: Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics: http://www.cbs.gov.il\yarhon\b1_e.htm

3 For the numbers of Jewish immigrants, see the site of the Israeli Ministry of Immigrant Absorption: http://moia.gov.il\english\netunim\sikum.asp

4 Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics: http://www.cbs.gov.il/yarhon/b1_e.htm.

5 The number of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (including Eastern Jerusalem) totaled about 3 million & 762,000. This estimation is after the deletion of the replicate in the number of Palestinians in Eastern Jerusalem. See the site of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics: http://www.pcbs.org/portals/pcbs/populati/dem1.asp

6 The Israeli Ministry of Immigrant: http://moia.gov.il/english/netunim/sikum.asp

7 The CIA's annual World Fact Book gives different figures: $129 billion in 2004 and $139 billion in 2005. See: http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/print/is.html

8 Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics: http://www.cbs.gov.il/indicators/ind_tab1e.shtml

9 See: World Fact Book, Last updated 10 January 2006: http://www.odci.gov/cia publications/factbook/geos/is.htm1#econ

10 Press Release, 8 January 2006: http://www.mof.gov.il/beinle/press222.htm

11 See: World Fact Book, Last updated 10 January 2006: http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/is.htm1#econ

12 Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics: http://www.cbs.gov.il/fr_trade/td1.htm

13 *Ibid.*

14 Site of Arabs48, 8 August 2005: http://www.arabs48.com/display.x?cid=16&sid=66&id=30295

15 Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics: http://www.cbs.gov.il/fr_trade/td1.htm

16 *Asharq Alawsat* newspaper, London, 1 September 2005.

17 JSCC - Jafee Center for Strategic Studies, Vol.8, No.3, November 2005: http://www.tau.ac.il/JCSS/sa/V8N3P4Tov.html

18 JCSS, 11 September 2005: http: //www.tau.ac.il/jcss/balance/Israel.pdf

19 *Ibid.*

20 *Ibid.*

21 *Al-Ayyam* newspaper, Palestine, 4 April 2005.

22 See: Fadel al-Naqib, *"Al-Iqtisad,"* (Economy), *Dalil Israel al-'Am 2004* (Israel's General Guide 2004), p.197, 205 and 206; Muhammad Zuhir Dyab, "*Al-Muasasa al-'Askariyyah*," (Military Institution), *Dalil Israel al-'Am 2004* (Israel's General Guide 2004) (Beirut: Institute For Palestine Studies, 2005), p.206; and see also: *al-Hayat*, 18 September 2005, as it mentioned according to a report presented to the American Congress, the Israeli arm sales rank in the fourth place world wide after US, Russia and UK.

23 *Alittihad* newspaper, United Arab Emirates, 3 December 2005.

24 *Al-Quds al-'Arabi*, 4 July 2005, quoted from *Yedioth Ahronoth*, Israel, 3 July 2005.

25 *Al-Hayat*, 3 May 2005.

26 *Asharq Alawsat*, 15 May 2005.

27 According to a public opinion poll, published on 12 August 2005, Netanyahu superceded Sharon inside the Likud, 53% to 38%. Another poll conducted 10 days later showed that

Sharon superceded Netanyahu, 36% to 28%. See the site of Arabs48, 12 and 14 August 2005.

28 Site of Arabs48, 25 August 2005.

29 *Al-Hayat*, 31 August 2005.

30 *Albayan* newspaper, United Arab Emirates, 31 August 2005.

31 Site of Arabs48, 16 September 2005.

32 Site of Arabs48, 27 September 2005.

33 *Assafir*, 23 September 2005.

34 Site of Arabs48, 29 December 2005.

35 Site of Arabs48, 28 December 2005. Also, it is published by *Ma'ariv* newspaper, Israel, 26 December 2005

36 Arabic Media Internet Network (AMIN), 27 November 2005.

37 Site of Arabs48, 18 October 2005.

38 Palestine News Agency: WAFA, 6 February 2005, quoted from *Ma'ariv*, 6 February 2005.

39 *Al-Quds al-'Arabi*, 29 December 2005.

40 Palestinian National Information Centre, 2 February 2006:
    http://www.pnic.gov.ps/arabic/quds/arabic/viol/22006-1-.html

41 Palestinian National Information Centre, 9 February 2006; and International Press Center, 10 February 2006:
    http://www.ipc.gov.ps/ipc_new/arabic/studies/details.asp?name=12744

42 Palestinian National Information Centre:
    http://www.pnic.gov.ps/arabic/alquds/arabic/irid/irid-48.html

43 http://www.pmo.gov.il/pmoeng

44 See:http://www.terrorism-information.com/act=articles&id=211&sid=19&ssid=0

45 *Haaretz* newspaper, Israel, 29 September 2005; and the report prepared by Shabak and published by *Ma'ariv*, also translated and published by *Assafir*, indicates that 1,513 Israeli died and 3,380 were injured.

46 Palestinian National Information Centre, October 2005:
    http://www.pnic.gov.ps/arabic/quds/arabic/viol/quds_viol_092005-.html

47 The Israeli Foreign Ministry report, 2 January 2006:
    http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Terrorism-+Obstacle+to+Peace/Terrorism+and+Islamic+Fundamentalism-/2005+Terrorism+Review.htm

48 *Ibid*.

49 The schedule is prepared by using the list of names of the Palestinian National Information Centre:http://www.pnic.gov.ps/arabic/quds/arabic/shohada_aqsa/shohada_aqsa_killing.asp

50 The report of the Ministry of Prisoners Affairs for the year 2005:
    http://www.pnic.gov.ps/arabic/social/prisoners/2005.html; and according to Israeli security and the Army sources, the detained were 7,838 at the beginning of 2005, but the number reached 8,238 at the outset of 2006.
    See: http://www.btselem.org/arabic/statistics/detainees

51 http//:www.arij.org/whatsnew/index.htm

52 See, for example, the report of "The Peace Now Movement" published by *Haaretz*, 6 February 2006: http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/679476.html

53 Chris McGreal, "Israel Redraws the Roadmap," *The Guardian*, London, 18 October 2005.

54 Tens of reports and studies had been written about the Separation Wall, the data included in this text was driven from different sources. It's noteworthy to refer to: Peter Lagerquist, "Fencing the Last Sky: Excavating Palestine after Israel's Separation Wall**,**" *Journal of*

Palestine Studies, Beirut, Issue No.58, Spring 2004, pp.28-58; see also: http://www.btselem.org/arabic/Separation_Barrier/Jerusalem.asp; and B'tselem – The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, Under the Guise of Security Routing the Separation Barrier to Enable the Expansion of Israeli Settlements in the West Bank, December 2005: http://www.btselem.org/arabic/Publications/Index.asp?TF=15

55   On the suffering caused by the Wall in Jerusalem, see: 'Umar al-Karmi, "*Judran al-Fasl fi al-Quds al-'Arabiyyah: Manfa Thalith Lishsha'b al-Filistini*," (Segregation Walls in Arabic Jerusalem: A Third Exile for Palestinians), *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Issue No.62, Spring 2005, pp.137-146.

56   Status report, 8 December 2005: http://www.securityfence.mod.gov.il/Pages/ENG/news.htm#news42

57   As quoted in*: Alquds* newspaper, Palestine, 17 May 2005.

58   *Al-Mustaqbal* newspaper, Beirut, 18 May 2005.

59   *Al-Ayyam*, Palestine, 22 June 2005; and an article written by Helmi Musa, *Assafir*, 22 June 2005.

60   *Al-Khaleej* and *al-Quds al-'Arabi*, 4 May 2005.

61   *Al-Hayat al-Jadidah*, 19 April 2005.

62   *Al-Khaleej*, 19 April 2005.

63   The Palestinian Information Center, 19 May 2005: http://www.palestine-info.info/arabic/palestoday/dailynews/2005/may055_18_5//details3.htm#13

64   For more information about the separation plan, see article: "*Shi'ar al-fasil wa Insha' al-Judran al-'Aliyah yusaytir 'ala 'uqul al-jami' fi Isra'il*," (Segregation Slogan and Erecting High Walls Dominate Minds of Everyone in Israel), *Asharq Alawsat*, 9 June 2001; and Hani Habib, "*Khuttat al-Fasil: Jidar min al-awham al-sha'ikah*," (Separation Plan: A Wall of Complicated Illusions), *Ru'yah* magazine, Palestine, Issue No.12: http://www.sis.gov.ps/arabic/roya/12/page6.html

65   http://disengagement.pngo.ps/BG.php

66   *Al-Quds al-'Arabi*, 25 May 2005, quoted from AFP.

67   *Yedioth Ahronoth*, 13 April 2005; and *al-Quds al-'Arabi*, [13] April 2005.

68   Report of Shakir al-Juhari, *al-Sharq* newspaper, Qatar, 6 June 2005.

69   Sharon confessed this in an interview with *Yedioth Ahronoth*, 12 August 2005, see the site of Arabs48, 12 August 2005.

70   *Haaretz*, 23 August 2005: http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/615867.html

71   Aloni's Interview in *Kul-Alarab*, Palestine, 29 July 2005; *al-Khaleej*, 30 July 2005; and report of The Center for the Protection of Democracy in Israel, about deception and misleading perpetrated by Israeli media in covering the withdrawal, its summary was published by *Assafir*, 3 August 2006.

72   *The Guardian*, 17 August 2005; and Martin Asser, "Gaza Settler Got Golden Farewell," BBC, 15 August 2005, in: http://www.news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4151742.stm

The Palestinian Strategic Report 2005

This Palestinian Annual Strategic Report explains, discusses and analyses the events that took place during 2005, and pursues their developments. The primary objective of this Report is to assess the Palestinian situation on a regular basis through a rigorous study of its various aspects, i.e., internal political affairs, economic development, the educational system, demographic indicators, the Arab-Islamic and international positions and the Israeli attitudes and policies.

The chapters of this academic exercise were commissioned to distinguished meticulous specialists. These chapters were submitted to further scrutiny by another high caliber specialist in the Palestinian issue. Then, the two editors edited the texts and incorporated what may have been overlooked. Hence, it is important to note that this project is essentially a product of team work.

Al-Zaytouna Centre For Studies & Consultations