

# The Current Crises in the Middle East

## What can we do?

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*Noam Chomsky gave this lecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. It was transcribed and edited in February 2001 by Angie D'Urso.*

MIT must be relaxing its standards if this many people can show up right on the eve of finals.

Just how dangerous is the crisis in the Middle East? There is a UN Special Envoy, a Norwegian, Roed-Larson. A couple of days ago, he warned that Israel's blockade of the Palestinian areas is leading to enormous suffering and could rapidly detonate a regional war.

Notice that he referred to the blockade. He didn't refer to the killings, and the other atrocities. And he's right about that. The blockade is the crucial tactic. There can be a blockade which is very effective because of the way the so-called 'peace' process has evolved under US direction, meaning hundreds of isolated Palestinian enclaves, some of them tiny, which can be blocked off and strangled by the Israeli occupying forces. That's the basic structure of what's called here the peace process. So, there can be an extremely effective blockade. And a blockade is a sensible tactic for the United States and Israel, and they are always together. Remember that almost anything that Israel does, it does by US authorisation, and usually subsidy and support.

The blockade is a tactic to fine-tune the atrocities so that they don't become too visible, visible enough to force Washington or the West (which means Washington essentially) to make some kind of response.

There have been mistakes in the past and the United States and Israel have certainly learned from them. So, in 1996 for example, when Shimon Peres launched yet another attack on Lebanon, killing large numbers of people and driving hundreds of thousands out of their homes, it was fine, and the US was able to support it and Clinton did support it, up until one mistake, when they bombed a UN Camp in Qana, killing over a hundred people who were refugees in the camp. Clinton at first justified it, but as the international reaction came in, he had to back off, and Israel was forced, under US

orders in effect, to call off the operation and withdraw. That's the kind of mistake you want to avoid. So, for those of you going into the diplomatic service, you can't allow that kind of mistake to happen. You want low level atrocities, fine-tuned, so that an international response is unnecessary. [Laughter]

The same thing happened more recently, just a year ago, last September, when the US-backed slaughter in East Timor, which had been going on nicely for about 25 years, finally got out of hand to such a degree that Clinton was compelled, after the country was virtually destroyed, to essentially tell the Indonesian generals that the game is over, and they instantly withdrew. So *that*, you want to avoid. In this particular case, there is a clear effort to keep killings, which is what hits the front pages, at roughly the level of Kosovo before the NATO bombing – in fact, that's about the level of killings right now – so that the story will sort of fade into the background.

Now, of course, the Kosovo story was quite different. At that time, the propaganda needs were the opposite. The killings were under fairly similar circumstances and the level of Serbian response was approximately like Israel's response in the occupied territories. (Then, in fact, there were attacks from right across the border, so it would be as if Hizbollah was carrying out attacks in the Galilee, or something like that). That time, the propaganda needs were different so, therefore, it was described passionately as genocide. A well designed propaganda system can make those distinctions. So in that case it was genocide, and in this case it's unnoticeable and justified reprisal.

The general idea, and I think you can expect this to continue for a while, is for the tactics to be restricted to: assassination; lots and lots of people wounded (severely – many of them will die later, but that doesn't enter into consciousness); starvation (according to the UN, there are about 600,000 people facing starvation, but again that is below the attention level for client states; and curfews (24 hour curfews, like in Hebron, for weeks at a time, while a couple of hundred Israeli settlers strut around freely, but the rest of the population, tens of thousands of people, are locked in their homes, allowed out a couple of hours a week).

The isolation in the hundreds of enclaves, and so on, is so that suffering can be kept below the level that might elicit a Western response. And the assumption, which is pretty plausible, is that there is a limit to what people can endure, and ultimately they will give up.

Well, there is, however, a problem in the Arab world, which is more sensitive to these massive atrocities, and it could explode, and that's what Roed-Larson is warning about. The governance in the Arab world is extremely fragile, especially in the crucial oil producing region. Any popular unrest might threaten the very fragile rule of the US clients, which the US would be unwilling to accept. And it might, equally unacceptably, induce the rulers of the oil monarchies to move to improve relations particularly with Iran (which, in fact, they've already been doing), which would undermine the whole framework for US domination of the world's major energy reserves.

Back in 1994, Clinton's National Security Advisor, Anthony Lake, described

what he called a paradigm for the post Cold War era, and for the Middle East. The paradigm was what's called 'dual containment': the US contains Iraq and Iran. But dual containment relies crucially on the Oslo process, the process that brings about relative peace between Israel and the Arabs. Unless that can be sustained, the dual containment can't be sustained, and the whole US current policy for controlling the region will be in serious danger. That's happened already. Just two years ago in December 1998, the US and Britain bombed Iraq with outright and very explicit contempt for world opinion, including the UN Security Council. Remember that the bombing was timed just at the moment when the Security Council was having an emergency session to consider the problems of inspection in Iraq, and as they began, they got the announcement that the US and Britain had pre-empted it by bombing. That, and the events before it, elicited a very negative reaction in the Arab world, and elsewhere for that matter, and did lead to very visible steps, particularly by the Saudi ruling monarchy, but also others, towards accommodation to Iran, and indication of some degree of acceptance of an Iranian position that has been around for a while, that there should be a strategic alliance in the region that's independent of Western (meaning primarily US) power. That is something that the US is highly unlikely to accept and could lead to very dangerous consequences.

Furthermore, the countries in the region, Iran and Syria in particular, are testing missiles which might be able to reach Israel. The United States and Israel are working not only on missiles, but also on an anti-missile system, the Arrow anti-missile system. When armaments are at that level, tensions can easily break out suddenly and unpredictably and lead to a war with advanced weapons, which can get out of hand pretty quickly.

How dangerous is that? Turn to another expert, General Lee Butler, recently retired. He was head of the Strategic Command – the highest agency concerned with nuclear weapons – under Clinton, STRATCOM. He wrote a couple of years ago that 'it is dangerous in the extreme that in the cauldron of animosities that we call the Middle East, one nation has armed itself, ostensibly, with stockpiles of nuclear weapons, perhaps numbering in the hundreds, and that inspires other nations to do so,' and also to develop other weapons of mass destruction as a deterrent, which is highly combustible and can lead to very dangerous outcomes. All of this is still more dangerous when the sponsor of that one nation is regarded generally in the world as a rogue state, which is unpredictable and out of control, irrational and vindictive, and insists on portraying itself in that fashion. In fact, the Strategic Command under Clinton has, in its highest level pronouncements, advised that the United States should maintain a national persona, as they call it, of being irrational and vindictive and out of control so that the rest of the world will be frightened. And they are. And they advised further that the US should also rely on nuclear weapons as the core of its strategy, including the right of first use against non-nuclear states, including those that have signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Those proposals have been built into presidential directives, Clinton-era presidential directives, that don't make much noise around here, but

it is understood in the world, which is naturally impelled to respond by developing weapons of mass destruction of its own in self defence. These prospects are recognised by US intelligence and high level US analysts. About two years ago, Harvard professor Samuel Huntington wrote an article in a very prestigious journal, *Foreign Affairs*, in which he pointed out that in much of the world, he indicated most of the world, the United States is considered a dangerous rogue state, and the main threat to their national existence. And it's not surprising, if you look at what happens in the world from outside the framework of the US indoctrination system. That's very plausible even from documents, and certainly from actions, and much of the world does see it that way, and that adds to the severe dangers of the situation.

The recent history of the Middle East provides quite a few further warnings. I'll just mention one example, which is very crucial in the present context right now – that's 1967. In the June 1967 war when Israel destroyed the Arab armies, the armies of the Arab states, Egypt most importantly, and it conquered the currently occupied territories. That set the stage for what's still going on right now. At that time, the Soviet Union was still around, and the conflict there became serious enough so that it almost led to a war – a nuclear war, which would have been the end of the story. Then Defence Secretary Robert McNamara later observed, in his words, 'we damned near had war'. At the end of the June war there were hot line communications, apparently Prime Minister Kosygin warned that if you want to have war, you can have it. There were naval confrontations between the Russian and the US fleets in the Eastern Mediterranean.

There was also another case. There was an Israeli attack on a US spy ship, USS *Liberty*, which killed about 35 sailors and crewmen and practically sank the ship. The *Liberty* didn't know who was attacking it. The attackers were disguised. Before they were disabled, they got messages back to the 6th Fleet Headquarters in Naples, who also didn't know who was attacking it. They sent out Phantoms, which were nuclear-armed, because they didn't have any that weren't nuclear-armed, to respond to whoever was attacking it, and they didn't know who they were supposed to bomb – Russia, Egypt, you know, anybody. Apparently the planes were called back directly from the Pentagon at the last moment. But that event alone could have lead to a nuclear war.

All of this was understood to be extremely hazardous. Most of this probably had to do with Israel's plans to conquer the Golan Heights, which they did after the ceasefire. And they didn't want the United States to know about it in advance because the US would have stopped them, and probably that's what lies behind most of this. Documents aren't out, so we can only speculate, and they will probably never come out. Anyhow, the situation was ominous enough so that the great powers on all sides figured that they better put a stop to it, and they very quickly met at the Security Council and accepted a resolution, UN 242, the famous UN 242 from November 1967, which laid out a framework for a diplomatic settlement.

And it's worth paying close attention to what UN 242 was and is. It's different now from what it was then. The information about this is public technically, but barely known and often distorted, so just pay attention to what it is. You can easily check it if you like.

The basic idea of UN 242 was full peace in return for a full withdrawal. So, Israel would withdraw from the territories that it just conquered, and in return, the Arab states would agree to a full peace with it. There was kind of a minor footnote, that the withdrawal could involve minor and mutual adjustments. So, for example, regarding some line or curve, they could straighten it out, that sort of thing. But that was the policy, and that was US policy – it was under US initiative. So, full peace in return for full withdrawal. Notice that this very crucially, and it's very crucial now, that UN 242 was completely 'rejectionist'.

I use the term 'rejectionist' now in a slightly non-standard sense, in a non-racist sense. It is usually used in a completely racist sense. So the rejectionists are those who deny Israel's right to national self-determination. But, of course, there are two national groups contesting, and I am using the term rejectionist in a neutral sense, hence non-standard, to refer to a denial of the rights of either of the two contestants, including denials of Palestinian rights. That terminology is never used in the United States, and can't be used, because if it is used, it will turn out that the United States is the leader of the rejectionist camp, and we can't have that. So therefore the term is always used in a racist sense. So, you will understand that I'm switching from normal usage now.

UN 242 was completely rejectionist. It offered nothing to the Palestinians. There was no reference to them, except the phrase that there was a refugee problem that somehow had to be dealt with. That's it. Apart from that, it was to be an agreement among the states. The states were to reach full peace treaties in the context of complete Israeli withdrawal from the territories. That's UN 242.

For the local people in the region, the Israelis and the Palestinians, the crisis is obviously extremely grave. It could lead to a regional war that could easily escalate to a global war with weapons of mass destruction with consequences that are unimaginable, and that could happen at almost any time.

Secondly, the US role is highly significant. That's always true throughout the world just because of US power, but it's particularly true in the Middle East, which has been recognised in high level planning for 50 years (and goes back beyond that, but explicitly for 50 years) as a core element in US global planning. Just to quote documents from 50 years ago, declassified documents, the Middle East was described as the 'strategically most important region of the world', 'a stupendous source of strategic power', 'the richest economic prize in the world', and, you know, on and on in the same vein. The US is not going to give that up. And the reason is very simple. That's the world's major energy reserves, and not only are they valuable to have because of the enormous profit that comes from them, but control over them gives a kind of veto power over the actions of others for obvious reasons, which was recognised right away at the time. So, that's a core issue. It's been the prime concern of US military and strategic planning for

half a century. The Gulf region, the region of major energy reserves, has always been the target of the major US intervention forces, with a base system that extends over a good part of the world, from the Pacific to the Azores, with consequences for all of those regions because they are back-up bases for the intervention forces targeting the Gulf region, also including the Indian Ocean.

And this is a big issue right now, in England at least, and much of the world, but not in the United States. The inhabitants of an Indian Ocean island, Diego Garcia, were kicked out and unceremoniously dumped on another island, Mauritius, some years ago, and those who managed to survive it have been fighting through the British Courts (this was a British dependency) to try to gain the right to return to their homes. They finally won a couple of months ago in the High Court in England and were granted the right to return, except that the US won't relinquish the island, where it has a major military base that's used for the Middle East-targeted forces. Just a couple of days ago, they asked for indemnity of about 6 billion dollars, and the US is refusing to pay up, of course. Madeleine Albright commented on it. She said it's just an issue between Britain and Mauritius. We don't have anything to do with it, even though we hold the island and refuse to allow them to return, and refuse to pay indemnities. I think you'll search pretty far to find some discussion of this in the US press, but that's part of the base system for targeting the Middle East.

For years, there was a kind of a public pretext for all of this. The public pretext was that we had to defend ourselves against the Russians. That was the pretext for everything, and the pretext for this in particular. There is a pretty rich internal record which tells quite a different story, however. The story it tells is that the Russians were, at most, a marginal factor, often no factor. But, fortunately, there is no need to debate the matter anymore because it has been conceded publicly. It was conceded, in fact, immediately after the fall of the Berlin Wall, which sort of got rid of the pretext. You can't appeal to the Russian threat anymore.

A couple of weeks after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Bush Administration submitted its annual message to Congress, calling for a huge military budget, and it was a very interesting document. Unfortunately it wasn't reported, but it was very important obviously – the first call for a huge military budget after the fall of the Berlin Wall, when you can't appeal to the Russians anymore. So, therefore, it's revealing and tells you what's really going on. As expected, the Russian threat was gone. We don't need a huge Pentagon budget because of the Russians who aren't around anymore, but we still need it. In fact, it turned out to be exactly as it was in the past, and we needed it for reasons which are now frankly expressed. We needed it because of what they called the technological sophistication of Third World countries, which is a way of saying they pose a danger of becoming independent. And, we need it because we have to maintain what's called the defence industrial base, which is what pays our salaries among other things. The defence industrial base is just a term for hi-tech industry, which has to be funded by the public, which has to bear the costs and risks of development. MIT is one of the funnels for that. That has to be maintained. We

have to keep the source of the dynamic sectors of the economy, which are substantially in the public sector, so we have to maintain the defence industrial base. And we also have to keep the intervention forces that we've always had still targeting the Middle East, the Gulf region. Then it adds the interesting phrase: 'where the threat to our interests that involves possible military action could not be laid at the Kremlin's door' – contrary to half a century, forty years, of lies. Sorry folks, we've been lying to you, but we still need them there because of the technological sophistication of Third World powers, that is, the threat that they may become independent.

Notice that the threat to our interests could also not be laid at Iraq's door at that time because Saddam Hussein was still a nice guy. He had only been gassing Kurds, and torturing dissidents, and that sort of thing. But he was considered obedient, so he was a friend and ally. This is early 1990. It changed a few months later.

So, we don't have to debate the question of the Russian threat. It's now conceded that that was not a significant threat, could not be laid at the Kremlin's door, and the threat, in fact, is what it is all over the world, and has been right through the Cold War, the threat of what's called 'radical nationalism' or 'independent nationalism'. It doesn't make much of a difference where it is in the political spectrum. But, if it's independent, it's a danger and you have to undermine it as a way of maintaining what's called stability, that is, the subordination to the dominant interests that the US represents.

US relations with Israel developed in that context. The 1967 war was a major step forward, when Israel showed its power and ability to deal with Third World radical nationalists, who were, at that time, threatening, particularly Nasser. Nasser was engaged in a kind of proxy war with Saudi Arabia, which is the most important country, that's where all the oil is, in the Yemen. And Israel put an end to that by smashing Nasser's armies and won a lot of points for that, and US relations with Israel really became solidified at that point. But it had been recognised 10 years earlier. US intelligence had noted that what they called 'a logical corollary' to opposition to radical Arab nationalism is support for Israel as a reliable base for US power in the region. And Israel is reliable because it's under threat, and therefore it needs US support, which has another logical corollary, that for US interests it's a good idea for Israel to be under threat. That essentially continues, and a good deal of the relationship is based on the way that context developed.

Anyhow, we can thankfully put the pretext aside at this point, and just look at the reasons which are now on the table – it's the threat of independent nationalism, and in the case of the Gulf region, that's particularly important because that's the world's major energy reserves.

The final consideration, before we move on to the topic at hand, is that the US role – though not the only one, of course; it's one factor in a complicated mixture – is nevertheless a decisive factor, and crucially, it's the one factor that's under our control. We can directly influence it. So, we can bewail the terrible actions of other people, but we can do something about our own actions. That's

a rather critical difference, in personal life and in international affairs. And it's illuminating to observe how much attention is given to the crimes of others, which most of the time we can't do anything about, and compare it with the amount of attention that is given to our own crimes, which we can do a great deal about. That's an instructive comparison, and if you take the trouble to work it out, you learn a lot about the intellectual culture in which we live and to which we're expected to contribute. For that reason alone, and it's far from the only one, we ought to be discussing primarily the US role. And furthermore, that role is little understood. It's often just suppressed, which is another reason to focus on it.

Let me illustrate with some of the things that are happening right at this moment. The *Intifada*, the current uprising, began on September 29th, that was the day after General Ariel Sharon appeared at the Haram al Sharif with a lot of troops. That event alone was provocative, but it probably would have gone by without any reaction. What happened the next day, however, was different. The next day is Friday, the day of prayers, and there was a huge military presence, mostly border guards who are kind of like the paramilitaries, the ones you farm out atrocities to, and they were there in force, and as people came out of the Mosques, it was obviously extremely provocative. Some rock throwing took place. They shot into the crowds, killed four or more people, wounded over a hundred. And after that, it just took off. This is incidentally Barak, not Sharon. It's easy to blame Sharon, and there's plenty to blame on him for fifty years of atrocities, but this happened to be Barak's planning.

Let me just consider one aspect of what has gone on since: the use of helicopter gunships. On October 1st, right after this, Israel military helicopters, meaning US helicopters with Israeli pilots, killed two Palestinians in Gaza. On October 2nd, the next day, they killed 10 Palestinians, wounded 35 others in Gaza at Netzarim, which if you follow this closely, you'll notice is the scene of many of the major atrocities, including the famous photo of the 12 year old boy who was killed. What's Netzarim? Well, the fact is, Netzarim is just an excuse to split the Gaza Strip in two. There's a small settlement south of Gaza, the only purpose of which is to require a big military outpost to protect it, and the military outpost then requires a road, a huge road, which cuts the Gaza Strip in two, so that separates Gaza City, the main population concentration, from the Southern part of the strip, and Egypt, and insures that if any problem arises, Gaza will be imprisoned inside Israel in effect. There are other breaks down farther south, but Netzarim is the main one, and that is where a lot of the atrocities have been. So this October 2nd killing of 10 and wounding of 35 at Netzarim by helicopters is just one of these many incidents.

On October 3rd, the next day, the Defence Correspondent of *Ha'aretz*, which is the major serious Hebrew newspaper, reported the largest purchase of military helicopters in a decade – that means US military helicopters. These were Blackhawks, and spare parts for Apaches. Apaches are the main attack helicopters. These had been delivered a few weeks earlier. They were getting spare parts, also jet fuel.

The next day, October 4th, *Jane's Defence Weekly*, which is the major military journal in the world, the British military journal, reported that the Clinton administration had further approved a new sale of attack helicopters, Apache attack helicopters, because they had decided that upgrading the ones that they had just sent would not be sufficient, so they really had to send new, more advanced ones. The same day the *Boston Globe* reported that Apache attack helicopters were attacking apartment complexes with rockets, again in Netzarim. The international press agencies at that time quoted Pentagon officials as saying, and I'm quoting a Pentagon official, 'US weapon sales do not carry a stipulation that the weapons cannot be used against civilians. We cannot second guess an Israeli commander who calls in helicopter gunships.' Okay, so, the story so far – US helicopter gunships are being used to attack civilians, but they aren't advanced enough, and Israel doesn't have enough of them, so therefore, the Clinton Administration had to move in with the biggest purchase in a decade. Purchase means American taxpayers pay for it in some indirect fashion. And then it had the next day to extend it further, sending them more advanced Apache helicopters, and there's no stipulation going along with them that they can't be used against civilians. That carries us up to October 4th. Then come more and more attacks on civilians.

The first reference in the US press to any of this is on October 12th. There was an opinion piece in the Raleigh North Carolina newspaper, which said they thought this was kind of a bad idea. That's also the last reference to it in the US press, meaning the only reference. It's not that editors don't know about this. Of course they know about it. In fact, it has been explicitly brought to the attention of editors of leading newspapers, as if they didn't know already. And it's not that it's unimportant, because it is obviously very important. It's just the kind of news that's not fit to print. And that's very typical, not only in this part of the world, but everywhere. It's extremely important that the public be kept in the dark about what's being done, because if they know about it, they're not going to like it. And if they don't like it, they might do something about it. So, there's a grave responsibility on the media, and on intellectuals generally, the educational system and so on, to ensure that people are kept in the dark about things that it's better for them not to know, like this for example. And the task is carried out with very impressive dedication. This is not an untypical example.

On October 19th, Amnesty International published a report condemning the United States for providing new military helicopters to Israel. They were also reporting the atrocities. That was not reported in the United States. It was elsewhere.

On November 10th, Amnesty International published a much broader condemnation of the excessive use of force and terror, and so on, that was barely mentioned. So it continues.

Let's turn to the question, what can we do? The answer is we have choices. We can do a lot. So, for example, we can continue to provide helicopter gunships and other military support to ensure that Israel is able to attack civilians, maintain

a blockade, starve them to death, and so on. And we can provide the funding that allows Israel to continue to integrate the occupied territories within Israel proper as it has been doing, settlements, infrastructure, etc. It doesn't matter which government is in office. It goes on under Barak about the same way it did under Netanyahu. And it's anticipated to go on next year. The budget provisions have already been made for next year. So we can continue with that if we'd like. Or, we can act to stop our participation in these activities, which is pretty straightforward. It doesn't require bombing or sanctions. It just means stop participating in atrocities, the easiest thing to do. That's a choice. And, in fact, we may even go further and call them off, as is pretty easily done when a country has the power that the United States has. I gave a couple of examples.

If we decide on the latter choice, which is always open here and elsewhere, there's a prerequisite. The prerequisite is that we know what's going on. So you can't make that choice, say to stop providing military helicopters (and you know the helicopters are just an illustration of a much bigger picture) unless you know about it. Again, the grave responsibility of the intellectual world, the media, journals, universities, and others, is to prevent people from knowing. That takes effort. It's not easy. As in this case, it takes some dedication to suppress the facts and make sure that the population doesn't know what's being done in their name, because if they do, they aren't going to like it, and they'll respond. Then you get into trouble.

The very same applies to the diplomatic record. Let me turn to that. Let's begin with the current phase of diplomacy, which started in September 1993, that's the famous Oslo process. In September 1993, there was a meeting on the White House lawn, very august, with the *Boston Globe* having a headline describing it as 'a day of awe'. The Israelis and the Palestinians agreed, under Clinton's supervision, to what's called a Declaration of Principles. There were at that time a number of issues, and it's crucial to understand how the Declaration of Principles dealt with them.

One issue was territory – what's going to happen with the occupied territories, how they are going to be assigned – that's issue number one.

Number two is the issue of national rights. Now that issue only arises for Palestinians. There is no question in the case of Israel, that's just not in question and hasn't been in question at all. The only question is what about the rights of the Palestinians?

The third question is what about the right to resist? And do the Palestinians, or the Lebanese for that matter, have the right to resist military occupation. That's the third question.

The fourth question, which is kind of a counterpart to that, is whether the occupying power, Israel, (which means the US here) has the right to attack in the occupied territories and in Lebanon? Those are the four main questions.

There were answers in the Declaration of Principles. With regard to territory, the Declaration of Principles stated that the permanent settlement would be on the basis of UN 242, but that raises a question. What does UN 242 mean? Here,

we have to go to the earlier diplomatic record. I'll return to it in a moment.

The second, with regard to national rights, again, is settled in terms of UN 242. And anyone who was paying attention in September 1993 could see exactly where this was going. The Declaration of Principles states that the permanent settlement, long term outcome, you know, the end of the road, will be based upon UN 242 alone. Now for 20 years, the issue in international diplomacy had been the rejectionism of UN 242. Remember, UN 242 says nothing about the Palestinians. For 20 years there has been a series of efforts by the whole world to supplement UN 242 to include Palestinian rights alongside the rights of Israel, which were never in question. That was the issue from the mid-70's right up until Oslo, and the US won flat out on that one. Palestinian rights are not to be considered. It's just UN 242, no Palestinian rights. They are not mentioned, and that's the permanent settlement. So, territories, it's UN 242, which means what the US decides (I'll come back to that), national rights – US wins flat out, the rest of the world capitulates. What about the right to resist?

Arafat agreed at the signing of the Declaration of Principles to abandon any right to resist, and it's taken for granted that in Lebanon the population also has no right to resist. It's called terrorism if they resist. Why did Arafat have to state this? He had actually said it over and over again. You know, he made solemn pronouncements to that effect over and over, but the purpose here was just pure humiliation. You have to make sure you humiliate the lower breeds to make sure that they don't get too big for their britches. George Shultz, Secretary of State, who is considered something of a dove, put it pretty plainly. He said it's true that Arafat has said unc, unc, unc, and he said le, le, le, but he hasn't said uncle, uncle, uncle in a sufficiently submissive tone, and we ought to make sure that he does, over and over again. That's the way you treat the lower breeds. So, once again, Arafat had to say uncle, loudly and submissively, and thank you Massa, and sign a statement saying, you know, once again, we reject the right to resist. Same in Lebanon, it isn't even a question.

What about the fourth question, the right to attack? A counterpart is Israel's right to attack. They've retained that right, and Israel continues to use it repeatedly with US support before and after. Notice that over this period there is virtually no defensive pretext, contrary to what you read in US commentary. That goes way back. But, contrary to propaganda, almost the entire series of US/Israeli attacks, certainly in the occupied territories, but in Lebanon as well, were not for any defensive purpose. They were initiated. That includes the 1982 invasion, and that's no small matter. I mean, it's not considered a big deal here, but during the 22 years that Israel illegally occupied Southern Lebanon in violation of Security Council orders (but with US authorisation), they killed about maybe 45,000 or 50,000 Lebanese and Palestinians. Not a trivial number. This included many very brutal attacks going on after the Oslo accords as well, in 1993, 1996, and so on.

Incidentally, you might again want to compare this with Serbia and Kosovo. The comparison in this case has to be kind of like a thought experiment, because

it never happened. But, imagine if Serbia had been bombing Albania to the extent that Israel was bombing Lebanon, that would be an analogy. It didn't happen, but you can just imagine what the reaction would have been. It tells you again something about our values and of the need to maintain discipline on these issues, so that people don't think it through.

The PLO accepted all this, just abjectly. Israel in return in the Declaration of Principles committed itself to absolutely nothing. You should take a look back at what happened on the White House lawn, on 'the day of awe'. Prime Minister Rabin made a very terse comment, a couple of lines, in which, after Arafat agreed to all of this stuff, he said that Israel would now recognise the PLO as the representative of the Palestinians – period. Nothing about national rights. Nothing. We just recognise you as the representative of the Palestinians, and his Foreign Minister, Shimon Peres, considered a dove, explained why right away in Israel, in Hebrew. He said, well, yeah, we can recognise them now because they've capitulated, so there is no problem in recognising them. They can now become a kind of junior partner in controlling the Palestinian population, which follows a traditional colonial pattern.

Israel and the United States had made a rather serious error in the occupied territories. It's not a good idea to try to control a subject population with your own troops. The way it is usually done is, you farm it out to the natives. That's the way the British ran India for a couple of hundred years. India was mostly controlled by Indian troops, often taken from other regions, you know like the Gurkhas and so on. That's the way the United States runs Central America, with mercenary forces, which are called armies, if you can keep them under control. That's the way South Africa ran the Black areas. Most of the atrocities were carried out by Black mercenaries, and in the Bantustans, it was entirely Blacks. That's the standard colonial pattern and it makes a lot of sense. If you have your own troops out there, it causes all kinds of problems. You know, first of all they suffer injuries, and these are people who don't like to feel good about killing people, and their parents get upset and so on and so forth, but if you have mercenaries or paramilitaries, you don't have those problems. So, Israel and the United States were going to turn to the standard colonial pattern and have the Palestinian forces, who in fact mostly came from Tunis, control the local population – control them economically and politically, as well as militarily. That was the idea, a sensible reversion to standard colonial practice.

Let's move a little back to the earlier diplomatic record, which helps put all of this in context. So, what about the right to resist? The right to resist military occupation in the territories, and in Lebanon? That actually has been discussed in the international community, though you wouldn't know it here. In December 1987, which was right at the peak of all of the furore about international terrorism, you know, the plague of the modern world, and so on and so forth, the UN General Assembly considered and passed a resolution condemning terrorism very strongly: international terrorism is the worst crime there is, and had all of the right wording in it and so on and so forth. The resolution was passed 153 to

2, which is actually pretty normal. The two were the usual ones, the United States and Israel. One country only abstained, Honduras, for unknown reasons, so it was essentially unanimous except for the United States and Israel. Now, why would the United States and Israel reject, and that means veto since it's a US vote against a resolution denouncing terrorism? The reason is because it contained one paragraph which said that nothing in this resolution prejudices the right of people to struggle against racist and colonialist regimes and foreign military occupation and to gain the support of others for their struggle for freedom under these conditions. That, the US won't accept, of course. For example, that would have given the ANC in South Africa the right to resist the South African regime, which is unacceptable. It would have given the Lebanese the right to resist Israeli military occupation and attacks, which can't be accepted, and it would have extended to the occupied territories as well. So, therefore, the US and Israel rejected it, and in fact, as usual, it is vetoed from history. It was never reported here, it was never mentioned, it might as well not exist unless you read dissident literature. It's there, I mean if you go to the UN's dusty records you can find it. But that's the right to resist, which was blocked by the United States in 1987 and is out of history.

What about the right to attack? Well, that exists by US fiat, as I mentioned, during the 22 years of Israeli occupation of Southern Lebanon. With US authorisation, they killed tens of thousands of people, probably 40,000 to 50,000, and there are plenty of atrocities, Peres's terrorist iron fist operations in 1985 for example. But, it's not only there. The right extends much further. So 1985 and 1986 are interesting years. That was the peak of the hysteria about international terrorism. And, in fact, there was plenty of international terrorism in those years. For example, in 1985 Israel bombed Tunis, killing 75 people, Tunisians and Palestinians, with no credible pretext. The United States publicly backed it, although Shultz, then Secretary of State, backed off when the Security Council condemned it unanimously as an act of armed aggression, namely a war crime, with the US abstaining. The US was directly involved. The 6th Fleet in the Mediterranean sort of pulled back so that the Israeli planes would be able to refuel with the 6th Fleet pretending not to notice them, and the United States did not warn Tunisia, an ally, that this bombing attack was coming. So that's a major act of terrorism outside the local area of the Middle East, and there are many others. In fact, the main act of terrorism in that year, sort of garden variety terrorism, was a car bombing in Beirut which killed 80 people and wounded about 200, set off by the CIA, British Intelligence, and Saudi Intelligence, in an effort to kill a Muslim cleric who they missed, but they got a lot of other people. It was a car bombing right outside a mosque, timed to go off right when everybody would be coming out, so you get maximum killing of civilians. That's there, but also not in the annals of terrorism, any more than the bombing of Tunis, or for example, the US bombing of Libya the next year, which is another act of armed aggression, but considered okay.

I should say that Arab opinion in the Middle East, and here too, is very misled

about all this in my opinion. It very consistently, if you read it now or in the past, claims that the United States overlooks Israeli terrorism because of the Jewish influence or Jewish lobby, or something like that. And this is simply untrue. It's missing the fact that a much more general principle applies to this case and to many others. The principle is that the United States has the right of terrorism and that right is inherited by its clients, and it doesn't matter who they are. So, Israel happens to be a US client, so it inherits the right of terror.

And you can see this very easily in other parts of the world. Just to give one illustration from a different part of the world at the same time, 1987. The State Department conceded what anyone paying attention knew that the US terrorist forces attacking Nicaragua were being directed, commanded, and trained to attack what were called 'soft' targets, meaning defenceless civilian targets, like agricultural co-operatives and health centres and so on. And they were able to do this because the US had total control of the air, and surveillance, and was able to communicate the position of the Nicaraguan army forces to the local terrorist forces attacking from Honduras, so that they could attack somewhere else, and so on. That was all conceded publicly, but nobody paid much attention except those who are interested in these things. But the human rights groups did protest. Americas Watch protested against this, and said this was really awful.

And there was a response – an interesting response, that you should read – by Michael Kinsley, who was a kind of representative of the dovish left in mainstream commentary, and still is. He had an article in which he pointed out, speaking from the dovish left, that it's perfectly true that these terrorist attacks against undefended targets, in his words, 'caused vast civilian suffering' but they may nevertheless be sensible and legitimate. The way we decide this is by carrying out 'cost benefit analysis', namely, and I'm quoting all through this, we have to measure 'the amount of blood and misery that we will be pouring in' and compare it with the outcome, you know, democracy in our sense, meaning rule by the business world with the population crushed. And if the cost benefit analysis comes out okay, then it's right to pour in blood and misery and cause vast suffering. In short, aggression and terror have to meet a pragmatic criterion, and we are the ones who decide whether it's met, not anybody else, and US clients inherit that right – and it doesn't have to be Israel. It can be anybody else. So, it can be Arabs for example. Saddam Hussein is a striking case. In 1988 remember, Saddam Hussein was still a loyal friend and ally, and that's when he committed his worst crimes; the gassing of the Kurds, and so on. The US thought that was okay and they continued to support him. They downplayed it, and provided him with dual use technology that could be used for military purposes and weapons of mass destruction, and also sent agricultural assistance which he badly needed. The Kurds were in an agricultural region, so Iraq was short of food, so the Bush Administration moved in with agricultural exports, a boon to US agribusiness as well, and that continued. In fact, Iraq, an Arab state, was allowed to do something that up until then only Israel had been allowed to do, namely, attack a US ship and kill sailors. Iraq was permitted to attack the USS

*Stark*, the destroyer, and kill 37 crewmen with missiles, and didn't even get a tap on the wrist. You're really privileged if you are allowed to do that. Up until then, the only country that had been allowed to do that was Israel in 1967 in the case of the USS *Liberty*. And remember, this is an Arab state. That was important. Again, nobody pays much attention here, but in the region people paid attention. In particular, Iran paid attention. This was part of what convinced Iran to capitulate to Iraq as the US wanted. The other major event that convinced Iran that the US was really serious was the shooting down of an Iranian airliner, killing 290 people in Iranian airspace. But that wasn't even a problem. Again it's kind of sloughed off here, not very important, but for the Iranians, that was important, and they understood from these acts that the US was going to go to any lengths to ensure that Saddam Hussein won, so they capitulated, not a small point in the politics of the region. Here, people don't want to think about it, but elsewhere in the world they do.

So, I think the thing to be recognised is, contrary to a lot of the Arab commentary abroad and here, Washington really is an equal opportunity employer. That is, it adheres pretty well to a policy of non-discrimination in advocacy of terror and war crimes, and so on. Other issues are involved, not, you know, who you are.

Let's go a couple of steps back further, to 242. Remember that UN 242, the basic document and the permanent settlement according to the current process, was strictly rejectionist, nothing for the Palestinians. It was taken really seriously. There was a threat of war at the time, nuclear war. It called for full peace in return for full withdrawal. There was a deadlock. Israel refused full withdrawal, the Arab states refused full peace. That deadlock was broken in 1971, when President Sadat of Egypt, who had just come into office, offered to accept the official US position. So, he said, yeah, he'll accept full peace with Israel in return for partial withdrawal, didn't even go as far as 242, namely withdrawal from Egyptian territory. So, if Israel would withdraw from the Sinai, Sadat would agree to full peace. Didn't say anything about the Palestinians, nothing about the West Bank. Israel recognised that officially in response as a genuine peace offer. Rabin in his memoirs later called it a 'famous milestone' on the path to peace.

Internally in Israel it was understood that they could have peace at this point, general peace. One of the leading Labour Party officials, a retired general, Haim Bar-Lev, wrote in a Labour Party journal at the time that with this offer we can have full peace. The conflict's over, if we decide it's over, but I think we should refuse, because if we hold out, we can get more. This would require us to withdraw from the Sinai, and I don't think we have to. So therefore, we should hold out and abandon peace, and that's what Israel did. Its response was that it would not withdraw to the pre-June borders.

The US was then in a dilemma. Should it continue with its official policy, the policy which in fact it had initiated, UN 242, and that means siding with Sadat-Egypt against Israel, or should it abandon its policy and side with Israel against

Egypt, but that means rescinding UN 242 in effect? And there was an internal conflict. The State Department was in favour of keeping to this policy. Kissinger, National Security Advisor, wanted what he called stalemate, meaning no diplomacy, no negotiations, just force. And in the internal conflict, Kissinger won out. The US effectively rescinded UN 242, which no longer exists. And people should understand that.

UN 242 now means what the United States says it means, as do other things, that's the meaning of power. It means withdrawal, insofar as the US and Israel determine, and that's what it's meant ever since. So when Palestinians or Arab states now complain that Israel isn't living up to 242, they are just choosing to ignore the historical record, and blindness is not a helpful position in world affairs. You might as well have your eyes open. UN 242 since February 1971 does not exist. It exists only in the Kissingerian sense. Now, here you have to be a little nuanced, because officially the US continues to endorse UN 242 in its original sense. So you can find statements by Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan, or speechwriters, and George Bush, saying yeah, we insist on 242 in its original sense. You can't find statements by Clinton. Clinton, I think, is the first president not even having given lip service to it. But the fact is that the lip service is pure hypocrisy, because while they are adhering to it for public purposes, they are also providing Israel with the wherewithal, the funds, the military support, the diplomatic support, to violate it, namely to act to integrate the occupied territories within Israel, so the endorsement of it is hypocritical and you should compliment Clinton on having the honesty simply to withdraw it, in effect.

That brings us up to February 1971. The United States has also blocked other UN resolutions, though it did continue to support UN resolution 194, December 11, 1948, which called for the right of return of refugees, or a compensation. That was technically endorsed by the United States, like they voted for it at the UN every year, but pure hypocrisy. And again Clinton overcame the hypocrisy. He withdrew support for it. So the last vote was unanimous with Israel and the United States opposed, and the Clinton Administration also declared all other related UN resolutions null and void. It will now only be the Oslo process, so that's honesty again.

Sadat in 1971 made it very clear, and continued for several years, to make it clear that if the United States refused to accept a negotiated settlement, he would be forced to go to war. Nobody took him seriously. A lot of racism here, it was assumed that Arabs didn't know which end of the gun to hold and that sort of thing. Finally war came in 1973, and it turned out to be a very close thing, and it scared everyone. There was another near nuclear confrontation and Israel was in deep trouble for a while. And it was understood that Egypt can't just be written off. They're not just a basket case. So, Kissinger moved to the natural fall back position, namely exclude Egypt from the conflict. It's the only Arab deterrent, so we can't just ignore it, so exclude it from the conflict. Then follows shuttle diplomacy. In 1977 comes Sadat's famous trip to Jerusalem, where he was hailed as a kind of a saint for being the first Arab leader to be willing to talk to Israel.

In fact, in Jerusalem, if you look at his speech, it was less forthcoming than his offer in February 1971. In February 1971, he offered full peace, with nothing about the Palestinians. In his trip to Jerusalem, he insisted on rights for the Palestinians. But that's allowed to enter history. February 1971 is out of history. I mean you often can't even find it in the scholarly literature. But, the trip to Jerusalem is in history because at that time the US was compelled to accept the offer, whereas in February of 1971 it was able to reject the offer. So one is out of history, the other is in history. Sadat is a secular saint because of his trip in 1977, not because of his more forthcoming offer in February 1971.

That goes on to Camp David in 1978 and 1979, under Carter, and it's considered a grand moment of the peace process. Israel did agree to withdraw from Sinai as Egypt had offered seven years earlier, and the US at this point had no choice but to agree. The result, however, was understood very clearly in Israel. One leading Israeli military strategic analyst, Avner Yaniv, pointed out right away that the Camp David settlement eliminates the only Arab deterrent and therefore allows Israel to continue at will to integrate the occupied territories into Israel and to attack its northern neighbour, to attack Lebanon, with massive US support in both cases. The Carter Administration rapidly increased support to more than half of the total US aid overseas, making sure that these ends could be achieved.

While all this was going on, there was another current. The international consensus on the issue had shifted. In 1967, there was nothing for the Palestinians, no Palestinian rights. By the early 70s that was changing. By the mid-70s there was an extremely broad international consensus, including just about everybody, calling for Palestinian national rights, alongside of Israel. It included the Russians, it included Europe, it included Asia, Latin America, virtually everyone.

That came to a head in January 1976, another very important event, crucial for understanding what's happening now, but out of history, because it tells the wrong story. You can find it, but you know, it's out of history, again even out of scholarship. In January 1976, the United Nations Security Council considered a resolution calling for a two state settlement. It included all the wording of UN 242, so everything about Israel's rights and so on, but it added national rights for the Palestinians in the territories that had been occupied, from which Israel was to withdraw according to the original understanding of 242. What happened to that? That resolution was actually brought by what are called the confrontation states, Syria, Egypt, and Jordan. It was strongly supported by the PLO, though they may have forgotten that. In fact, I suspect they have. But, in fact, according to Israel's UN representative, Chaim Herzog, later President, the resolution was actually prepared by the PLO. I don't think that's likely, but that's what Israel perceives, at least. Anyhow, it was certainly supported by them, and by the confrontation states, and indeed, by virtually the entire world. Maybe Khaddafi didn't support it, I don't remember. But essentially the whole world supported it.

And Israel and the United States had to react. Israel reacted in a typical way,

by bombing Lebanon. It bombed Lebanon, killing 50 people in some village that was chosen at random. That was reported here, but considered insignificant. It was retaliation against the United Nations, in effect. The United States reacted in a simpler way, namely by vetoing the resolution, and that means vetoed from history. Remember, it's very common for the US to veto Security Council resolutions. In fact, it's the champion of the world by a long shot. But they disappeared from history as well. Carter did the same thing in 1980, same resolution. But, meanwhile, the international consensus persisted.

Here you can begin to understand the significance of the fact that the Declaration of Principles in September of 1993 referred to UN 242 and nothing else. Because by then there is a whole raft of resolutions calling for Palestinian national rights, and they were not to be part of the permanent settlement under the US version of the peace process. The General Assembly had votes year after year, I won't run through the details. Their wording varied a little bit, but they were more or less the same, you know, kind of a two state settlement, national rights for both groups. The votes were 150 to 2, or something like that. Occasionally the US would pick up another vote, from El Salvador, or somebody, but that was year by year, essentially never reported. They will, in fact, probably never report it.

The last vote was December 1990, 144 to 2, and the date is important. Shortly after that, a couple of weeks after, the United States and Britain bombed Iraq. Saddam, remember, had shifted from loyal friend and ally to reincarnation of Hitler, not because of any crimes, the crimes were fine, but because he had disobeyed orders, or maybe misunderstood orders, and that's not permitted, so that's a standard transition, and therefore, you had to get rid of the beast of Baghdad, and it's obvious where the power was, so that worked. During the bombing, George Bush announced proudly the coming of the New World Order. He defined it very simply: 'What we say goes,' certainly with regard to the Middle East. The rest of the world understood that. Everybody backed off. Europe disappeared, the Third World was in disarray, Russia was gone.

At this point, the US could simply ram through its own extreme rejectionist position, and it did. The Madrid conference took place a few months later, and then you go straight on to Oslo. Then come successive agreements and the integration of the territories continues right through the Oslo period. The various agreements authorise this, the US funds it, it protects it diplomatically, which brings us up to Camp David and the year 2000.

Regarding the public discussion about Barak's remarkable offers – you know, forthcoming, willing to give away everything – there is absolutely no basis for any of that.

There was a focus on Jerusalem, and for good reasons. Jerusalem is probably the easiest of all of the problems to solve, and for Clinton and Barak it made good sense to focus on Jerusalem because then you would divert attention away from what's important, namely what's going on in the occupied territories, the settlements, the infrastructure development, the enclaves, and so on. For Arafat

it also made good sense to focus on Jerusalem because he is desperately eager to get support from the Arab states, and the Arab states don't give a damn what happens to the Palestinians. Their populations may, but certainly not the leaders. On the other hand, they will find it difficult to abandon control over the religious sites, because if they do that, their populations will blow up. So, by focusing on the religious sites, it's kind of a negotiating ploy for Arafat, so they all focused on that, neglecting the crucial problem, what's going on elsewhere.

I have a couple of Israeli maps with me. These are final status maps, you know, what it's supposed to look like in the long term. Briefly, what's called Jerusalem extends almost all the way to the Jordan river, so that splits the West Bank in two, with a substantial city, Ma'ale Adumim, in the middle and extension all the way. There is another break in the North right through Samaria, includes towns that are settled there. Israel keeps the Jordan Valley, for the time being at least. Jericho is isolated. You end up with four Palestinian cantons, separated from one another, separated from Jerusalem. There's some hint that in the long term, some meaningless connection will be established between them, but they are essentially completely controlled and surrounded. What's called Jerusalem extends north of Ramallah, and south of Bethlehem. If you look at the map, that's the area which splits the northern and central and southern settlement areas. It's kind of modelled on South Africa's policies in the early 60s. The population concentrations should be under local administration, but everything else is taken over by the dominant power, the resources, the useable land, and so on. And there are massive infrastructure developments that sort of lie behind this.

The US is paying for all of it, of course. That's the marvellous offer that was given a few months ago at Camp David. And apart from what's talked about, what actually counts, of course, is what's happening on the ground. And what's happening on the ground has been implementing this. You can't spend half a day driving through the West Bank without seeing it. It's a little harder to drive through Gaza, because it's usually closed off, but essentially the same thing is happening there.

And the situation is extremely serious. Right through the occupation from 1967 to 1993, Israel was making sure – and again, when I say Israel, I mean the United States – was making sure that there would be no development in the occupied territories. So, right after 1993, when Israeli journalists who had covered the territories were finally able to go to Jordan, they were shocked by what they saw and they wrote about it in the Hebrew press. Jordan is a poor country, and Israel is a rich country. Before the 1967 war, the populations in Jordan and the Palestinian populations were pretty comparable, in fact, there was more development in the West Bank. By 1993, it was totally different. In the poorer country Jordan, there were agricultural development, universities, schools, roads, health services, all sorts of things. In the West Bank there was essentially nothing. The people could survive by remittances from abroad, or by doing dirty work in Israel, but no development was allowed, and that was very shocking to Israeli reporters, and it is also backed up in the statistics. The most

important work on this topic, if you want to learn about it, is by Sara Roy, a researcher at Harvard who has lived in the Gaza Strip and done the basic scholarly work on it. Just to give you a couple of her figures, current ones, in 1993 electric power usage in the West Bank and Gaza was two-thirds that of Egypt, half that of Jordan – and those are poorer countries, remember. Israel is a rich country. Sanitation in housing in the West Bank and Gaza was about 25 percent, 50 percent in Egypt, and 100 percent in Jordan, and the figures run through that way. GDP per capita, and consumption per capita declined further after 1993. GDP per capita, and consumption per capita have dropped, according to her, about 15 per cent in the West Bank and Gaza since 1993 – that’s even with large foreign assistance pouring in, from Europe, mostly.

It’s gotten worse in other respects. Up until 1993, the US and Israel permitted humanitarian aid to come into the territories. UN humanitarian aid was permitted into the West Bank and Gaza. In 1993, that was restricted. This is part of the peace process. After Oslo, heavy customs duties were imposed, lots of other restrictions were imposed, you know various kinds of harassment. Now, it’s blocked. Right now, humanitarian aid is blocked. The UN is protesting, but it doesn’t matter. If the UN protests the blocking of humanitarian aid, and it doesn’t register here, it doesn’t matter. And it doesn’t register here because it’s not reported. So they can say, yeah, the Israelis are stopping humanitarian aid from coming in, and people are starving, and so on, but what does it matter as long as people in the United States don’t know about it. They can know in the Middle East, they can know in Europe, but it makes no difference. These are our choices again.

For the Palestinians themselves, they are under a dual repression, very much like the Bantustans again, the repression of Israel and the United States, and then the repression of the local mercenaries who do the work for the foreigner, and enrich themselves. It’s again a standard, colonial pattern. Anyone who has ever taken a look at the Third World sees it.

As for the goals of Oslo, they were stated very neatly by one of the leading Israeli doves, who was the Minister of Security in the Barak Government, and a temporary foreign minister, known as an academic dove, Shlomo Ben-Ami. In an academic book, 1998, so before he got into the government, he described the goals of Oslo as to impose what he called a permanent neo-colonialist dependency in the West Bank and Gaza. And that’s pretty much accurate, that’s what the US has been aiming for through the peace process – period.

As for the population, it’s kind of hard to improve on a description by Moshe Dayan about 30 years ago. He was in the Labour Party, and among the Labour Party leaders. He was one of those most noted for his sympathetic attitude towards Palestinians, and also his realism. And he described what Israeli policy ought to be, US policy as well. He said the Palestinians should live like dogs and whoever wishes may leave, and we’ll see where this leads. Reasonable policy, and that’s US policy as well, and it will continue that way as long as we agree to permit it.