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The 1991 Madrid Peace Conference: U.S. Efforts Towards Lasting Peace in the Middle East Between Israel and its Neighbors

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The 1991 Madrid Peace Conference:
U.S. Efforts Towards Lasting Peace in the Middle East Between Israel and its Neighbors

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
History

by

Fernando Rodriguez

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Table of Contents

Abstract	v
Introduction.....	1
Unsustainable Status Quo: The First Intifada	4
The Intervening Years: A First Attempt at Peace and the Gulf War	7
A New Opportunity: The End of the Persian Gulf War.....	11
“Don’t let the cat die on your doorstep”: The Long Road to Madrid	12
Israeli Obstacles	14
Palestinian Negotiations.....	22
Syria and Assad.....	27
Choosing a Host City	32
The Invitations	33
Letter of Assurances	34
The Madrid Peace Conference.....	36
Conclusion	44
Bibliography	48
Appendices.....	52
Appendix A: Map of the Middle East.....	53
Appendix B: Map of Israel and the Occupied Territories.....	54
Appendix C: Delegates of Madrid Peace Conference	55
Appendix D: President Bush speaks at Madrid Conference	54
Vita.....	56

Abstract

Over the years the Madrid Peace Conference has been relegated to paragraphs within history books and the importance of the conference seems to have been all but forgotten. While this may be due to the perceived failure of the talks to produce tangible peace negotiations, what one must take into consideration is the fact that neither the Oslo Accords nor the more recent “Road Map” to peace would have been possible if it were not for that first steps taken in Madrid. One must also not forget the diplomacy and countless man hours that were put forth with tireless effort to achieve the goal of a peace conference that would be attended by all desired participants. When studying the Madrid Conference, one must look not only at the conference itself and the rhetoric conveyed by the delegates but also at their personalities and relationships with each other.

Keywords: George H.W. Bush, James A. Baker, Yitzhak Shamir, Hafez Al-Assad, Madrid, Peace Conference, Israel, Syria, Jordan, Palestinian, West Bank, Gaza, Jerusalem, *intifada*.

“Yet by every reasonable barometer, Madrid was a resounding triumph. Its enduring legacy was simply that it happened at all. After forty-four year of bloody conflict, the ancient taboo against Arabs talking with Israelis had...been dramatically consigned to the back bench of history.”

- Secretary Of State James A. Baker¹

Introduction

On the morning of October 30, 1991, in the Salon de las Columas at the Royal Palace in Madrid, Spain, U.S. President George H.W. Bush stood before a gathering of delegates from the Middle East, in an unprecedented meeting that many hoped would help resolve a conflict that had been in existence since 1948. President Bush, in his opening remarks, stated the “objective must be clear and straightforward. It is not simply to end the state of war in the Middle East and replace it with a state of nonbelligerency. This is not enough. This would not last. Rather, we seek peace, real peace. And by real peace, I mean treaties, security, [and] diplomatic relations.”² These words spoken by an American President would mark the beginning of a new policy of open dialogue between Israel and its Arab neighbors, which had been elusive since the creation of Israel in 1948. More importantly, it allowed for open dialogue with the Palestinians, which up to this point in time had been non-existent. The Madrid Conference would be that first step in direct talks and hopefully peace in the region.

The purpose of the conference, as stated by the White House, was to create a “just, lasting and comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, to be achieved through a two-track approach of direct negotiations between Israel and the Arab States and Israel and the Palestinians

¹ James A. Baker and Thomas M. DeFrank, *The Politics of Diplomacy: Revolution, War & Peace, 1989-1992* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1995), p. 512

² Remarks at the Opening Session of the Middle East Peace Conference in Madrid, Spain, October 30, 1991, Public Papers, George Bush Presidential Library. http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=3566&year=&month= (accessed 25 Feb. 2010). It is important to note that while the Madrid Peace Conference was by no means the first peace conference organized to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict, it was the first to successfully have all sides agree to and attend the conference.

based upon U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338.”³ U.N. Security Council Resolution 242, which was adopted unanimously on November 22, 1967, emphasized the inability for a country to acquire territory by war and the need to work for a just and lasting peace in which every state in the area can live in security. The resolution also demanded the withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories it occupied in the recent conflict.⁴ U.N. Security Council Resolution 338 was issued October 22, 1973, to correspond with the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War.⁵ The resolution calls for the immediate implementation of the U.N. Security Council Resolution 242 after a cease-fire is established.⁶

Convincing all parties to agree to these stipulations was difficult and often times tedious. The negotiations were filled with people’s prejudices and larger than life personalities. Both Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir and Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad proved the most difficult for Secretary of State James A. Baker to get to agree to attend the conference, but nonetheless persuaded both to do so. To better understand the rationale and mindset brought forth throughout the negotiating process as well as at the conference itself, I reviewed various memoirs of those in a position to influence the negotiations. Memoirs by President Bush, Secretary Baker, Prime Minister Shamir, Palestinian negotiator Hanan Ashrawi, and U.S. State Department diplomats and Middle East experts Aaron David Miller and Dennis Ross, give insight to the types of negotiations and personalities that were behind this historic conference as well as the struggle that it took to see it come to fruition.

³ Statement Announcing the Middle East Peace Conference, October 18, 1991, Public Papers, George Bush Presidential Library. <http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=3519&year=&month=> (accessed 25 February 2010).

⁴United Nations Security Council Resolutions, 1967, U.N. Security Council Resolution 242. <<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/240/94/IMG/NR024094.pdf?OpenElement>> (accessed 24 Feb. 2010).

⁵ As with the Six Day War, people have used other names to describe the Yom Kippur War. These names include the Fourth Arab-Israeli War, the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, the Ramadan War, and the October War.

⁶ United Nations Security Council Resolutions, 1973, U.N. Security Council Resolution 338. <<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/288/65/IMG/NR028865.pdf?OpenElement>> (accessed 24 Feb. 2010).

While some time has passed since the end of the Bush Administration, finding primary documents proved to be a challenge. While the George Bush Presidential Library provided valuable material for this paper, many documents have been categorized as classified and have yet to be released. Those documents that have been released have been heavily redacted, making it difficult to fully understand certain cables. Still, the George Bush Presidential Library and the database website, Declassified Documents Reference System, proved to contain sufficient resources to begin the process of a historical analysis of the Madrid Conference.

Over the years the Madrid Conference has been relegated to a few paragraphs in history books and the importance of the conference seems to have been all but forgotten.⁷ While this may be due to the perceived failure of the talks to produce tangible peace negotiations, what one must take into consideration is the fact that neither the Oslo Accords nor the more recent “Road Map” to peace would have been possible if it were not for that first steps taken in Madrid. One must also not forget the critical role Secretary of State James Baker played in the process. The diplomatic skill displayed and countless man hours that he and his staff put forth, would make the difference in achieving the goal of a peace conference that would be attended by all desired participants.

When studying the Madrid Conference, one must look not only at the conference itself and the rhetoric conveyed by the delegates but also at their personalities and relationships with each other, specifically those doing the negotiating such as Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, Secretary of State James Baker, and Syrian President Assad. By reviewing their memoirs, one

⁷ An example of this can be read in the widely renowned U.S. foreign relations book, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776*. Author George C. Herring mentions the Madrid Conference briefly by writing, “The conference held in Madrid’s Crystal Pavilion in late 1991, produce no substantive results, but it was enormously significant. For the first time, Palestinians spoke for themselves in an international forum. Ancient foes sat around a common table to discuss issues that long divided them. The Madrid conference revived a peace process suspended for more than a decade”, see George C. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U. S. Foreign Relations since 1776* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 923.

can see the thinking and reasoning of not only the negotiations, but also what they thought about each other. Each personality both advanced and hindered the talks.

In order to better understand the reasoning for the formation of the conference and the eventual perceived failure of the talks, one must look at the events that preceded it. While the origins of the conflict could potentially be traced as far back as 19th century Zionist immigration into Palestine, and possibly even further, for the purpose of this paper, December 9, 1987, which is the day that many see as the start of the *First Intifada*, will be discussed as the starting date of the events that led to Madrid. What started out as a minor incident would balloon into a much larger movement. From that day forward, Israel would come to realize that the status quo that had lasted from 1967, with the capturing of the West Bank, Gaza, and the Golan Heights, until 1987, was slowly becoming unsustainable.

Unsustainable Status Quo: The First Intifada

At the conclusion of the 1967 Six-Day, Israel had captured territory from Egypt, the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip, from Jordan, the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and from Syria, the Golan Heights.⁸ As a result of these actions, Israel had also acquired a substantially large Arab population living within the occupied territories. It has been estimated that about 950,000 Palestinians were now under Israeli rule.⁹ The dilemma that Israel faced was what to do about

⁸ The Six-Day War has been described by the use of multiple names over the years such as the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, the Third Arab-Israeli War, and the June War. For a comprehensive look at the Six Day War, see Michael B Oren, *Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

⁹ Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, (Bolder: Westview Press, 2000), p. 354. This number does not, however, take into account the Egyptian population in the Sinai and the Syrian population in the Golan Heights. The Sinai would eventually be returned to Egypt under a separate peace treaty which would be the first such treaty between Israel and an Arab state.

this population, which, if accepted by Israel as citizens, would dilute Israel's Jewish identity.¹⁰

The 1973 Arab-Israeli war would only solidify the Israeli hold on these occupied territories.

There were Israelis, especially members of religious organizations, which saw the territories, and specifically the West Bank, as an integral part of a Greater Israel.¹¹ And, there were other Israelis who saw the occupation of the territories as a way to gain peace through the land-for-peace proposal.¹² However, with the election of the right wing Likud party, under the leadership of Menachem Begin in 1977, the Israeli government removed the option of a land-for-peace deal. Instead, the Likud government advocated for a policy of a Greater Israel. This policy sanctioned the idea that the West Bank (Judea and Samaria), were an integral part of *Eretz Yisrael* (Land of Israel). The Likud policy denied Jordan had any claim to the territory and the Palestinians the right to self-determination.¹³ This policy would become the official government stance for years to come. It would become the unofficial status quo in the region.

This status quo would eventually be challenged as a result of a roadside accident in Gaza, which would explode into a much larger movement. This movement would come to be known as the *First Intifada*. The *intifada*, which means to "shake off", would lead to a renewed call for Israel to relinquish its control over the occupied territories.¹⁴

The incident that sparked the *intifada* occurred in Gaza, on December 9, 1987. An Israeli military truck, passing by the town of Jabalya killed, whether on purpose or on accident, four

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid. The West Bank is referred to as "Judea and Samaria", which reflects the biblical names of the territory. East Jerusalem however is not included in this definition. This is due to the Israeli interpretation that East Jerusalem is part of an undivided Jerusalem, Israel's "eternal capital."

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Avi Shlaim, "Prelude to the Accord: Likud, Labor, and the Palestinians," *Journal of Palestinian Studies*, vol. 3, no. 2 (Winter 1994), 4. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2538227?origin=JSTOR-pdf>> (accessed 19 March 2010).

¹⁴ Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, p. 459.

local Palestinian residents and injured seven others.¹⁵ As word of the incident spread throughout Gaza, many frustrated Palestinians, especially Palestinian youths, began to protest the Israeli occupation. During this time, the Palestinians made a conscious effort not to use guns and knives in any protests. However, the use of rock throwing was prevalent.¹⁶ Many incidents of teenagers and other youths throwing rocks and Molotov cocktails at soldiers were reported throughout Gaza. In response to these events, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres proposed demilitarizing the Gaza Strip area while maintaining Israeli supervision of some sort. Peres felt that the dangers of hostility presented to Israel from the 650,000 Palestinian residents outweighed any benefit on holding Gaza. However, this proposal was quickly criticized by Jewish settlers as well as Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir.¹⁷

The objectives of the *intifada* were presented by the protesters in a fourteen-point plan. Major points in the plan demanded that Israel stop building settlements and confiscating Arab lands. It also called on Israel to recognize the independence of a Palestinian state under the leadership of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). To achieve these objectives, the Palestinians created tactics that tried to make the occupation a financial burden on Israel.¹⁸

The *intifada* caught the United States and Israel off guard. Even PLO leader Yasser Arafat was taken by surprise. This was due to the fact that this was a youth movement, with youths in the territories organizing themselves and not taking orders from the PLO. Not to be left behind,

¹⁵ "Israeli Troops Kill Arab in Gaza," *New York Times*, December 10, 1987, A10
<<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdlink?did=115220827&sid=4&Fmt=10&clientId=19872&RQT=309&VName=HNP>>
(accessed 14 April 2010).

¹⁶ Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, p. 460. As time went by, the *intifada* became more violent. Not only were Israelis being targeted but Palestinians fell victim to the *intifada* as well. Those Palestinians that worked for Israel as informants, if revealed became targets and were known to have been not only harassed, but even killed.

¹⁷ *New York Times*, December 10, 1987, A10.

¹⁸ Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, p. 460. The tactics used by the Palestinians revolved around civil disobedience, such as general strikes, shop closures and refusal to pay Israel taxes. The Palestinians also boycotted Israeli goods coming in the territories as a way to prove that they were self-sufficient. Many people preferred to buy Palestinian made goods and produce.

Arafat would eventually gain the initiative the following year when he and the PLO renounced terrorism and would recognize U.N. Security Council Resolution 242 as a basis for a peace settlement.¹⁹ In a press conference in Geneva, Switzerland, on December 14, 1988, Arafat confirmed that the PLO would undertake to live in peace with Israel. By accepting Israel's right to exist, the United States allowed for open dialogue with the PLO.²⁰

The *intifada* would eventually spread from Gaza to the West Bank. It would take five years for the uprising to settle down and revert to the status quo. However, the lessons of the *intifada* were very clear. It had become known to Israel and the world that Israel had a Palestinian "problem" that could not be resolved through the use of force.²¹ It also caused Israelis to see the cost the occupation was having on Israel's global image. Israel's military, the Israel Defense Force (IDF), once thought of as a strong force against Arab aggression, was now seen as an oppressive force. Internally, IDF soldiers hated the idea of having to fire upon Palestinian youth, who attacked with stones rather than guns and bombs.²² The occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, it was realized, could not be sustained in its present format.

The Intervening Years: A First Attempt at Peace and the Gulf War

From the beginning of the Bush Administration, Secretary Baker and the State Department, while wanting to see a comprehensive peace deal in the Middle East, did not have a detailed protocol on the Arab-Israeli peace process. The progression of the *intifada*, however, led to a renewed push for peace negotiations. This compelled the Bush Administration to try its hand at

¹⁹ Michael B. Oren, *Power, Faith, and Fantasy: America in the Middle East, 1776 to the Present* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007), p. 562.

²⁰ Douglas Little, *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East since 1945* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008), pp. 296-7.

²¹ Aaron David Miller, *The Much Too Promised Land: American's Elusive Search for Arab-Israeli Peace* (New York: Bantam Books, 2008), p. 55.

²² Ross, *The Missing Peace*, p. 49.

the peace process. with Secretary Baker taking the lead. With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and Communism rapidly crumbling in the Eastern Bloc, President Bush's focus was primarily on the ending of the Cold War, which left him little time to focus on other foreign policy issues, especially in dealing with the Middle East. It was then agreed that Secretary Baker would take the lead in conducting talks in the region.

From the beginning of the Bush Administrations, Secretary Baker had a rule of not involving President Bush in the process unless concrete agreements were in place. From 1989 till the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Secretary Baker pushed for a peace agreement between Israel and its Arab neighbors. However, these talks led nowhere. The process would be bogged down with points and counter-points, conditions, and other competing plans from the region. Secretary Baker knew that none of these plans would be approved by all sides. It was doomed to fail from the start.²³ With Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990, peace negotiations were placed on hold while Bush Administration and the world dealt with this new aggression from Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

After repeated attempts to negotiate with Saddam Hussein, President Bush took the lead in persuading the U.N. Security Council to pass a resolution authorizing the use of all possible measures, including force, to expel Iraqi forces from Kuwait. Using U.N. Security Council Resolution 678, President Bush assembled a coalition of thirty-four nations, which included Iraq's Arab neighbors, to push the invading Iraqi army out of its southern neighbor, Kuwait.²⁴

²³ When studying the Arab-Israeli peace process under President George Bush, Secretary Baker's pre-Gulf War attempt should be acknowledged. However, for the purpose of this paper, while significant, the first attempt will not be discussed in detail. The basis for the Madrid Peace Conference was one that was born out the Gulf War, in which the playing field had changed and a new order had been put in place, leaving the United States in a better position to forge negotiations in 1991 than they were able to do in 1989-1990. For further reading, see Miller, *The Much Too Promised Land*, Baker, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, and Ross, *The Missing Peace*.

²⁴ "United Nations Security Council Resolution 678," Security Council Resolutions 1990, <<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/575/28/IMG/NR057528.pdf?OpenElement>> (accessed 14 April 2010).

It is worth noting that one of the few Arab nations that did not join the coalition was Jordan, a country considered by Washington to be a staunch ally in the region. In a move that placed Jordan at odds with the United States, King Hussein of Jordan condemned the intervention and refused to join the coalition. King Hussein's condemnation was mainly due to the pressure he received from the large Palestinian population living in Jordan.²⁵

Another notable exception to the coalition was the United States' main ally in the region, Israel. The Bush administration purposely requested Israel not to participate in the coalition. In order to keep the Arab nations on board, the United States could not risk the perception that the purpose of the invasion was anything other than to remove Iraqi troops from Kuwait. Even if Israel was attacked by Iraqi missiles, President Bush asked Israel not to retaliate.²⁶ In exchange for taking no action in case of aggression, the United States provided Israel with Patriot missiles to target and shoot down any Scud missiles that were launched from Iraq. The Patriot missiles would later prove to be ineffective in shooting down the Scud missiles and were intended mainly for show.²⁷

As the Gulf War began to loom over the horizon, the PLO took a stance in the matter. Hoping Iraq's Saddam Hussein would fill the void left open by Egypt's peace treaty with Israel, the PLO, headed by Yasser Arafat, threw their support behind Iraq. This support would cost the PLO the

The resolution set a deadline of January 15, 1991 for Iraqi forces to leave Kuwaiti territory. If the Iraqi army did not comply, then all options were on the table, including the use of force, to achieve this objective.

²⁵ Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, p. 466.

²⁶ Baker and DeFrank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p.385. Even though this request went against everything Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir believed in when it came to attacks on Israel, Shamir understood the request in a practical way. As stated by Secretary Baker, Shamir knew that the "Israeli air force could not match the resources the coalition would bring to bear against Saddam. Shamir understood that becoming involved could cause the coalition to splinter, and result in the loss of Israel's larger strategic objective-the destruction of Saddam's military capabilities."

²⁷ While the Israelis agreed not to retaliate if attacked by Iraqi Scud missiles, Prime Minister Shamir did have a red line when it came to Israel's defense. As stated his memoirs, Shamir expressed in a letter to President Bush that "Defense Minister Moshe Arens [had] warned that the entry of Iraq's forces into Jordan" would be the tipping point for Israel's immediate action, see Yitzhak Shamir, *Summing Up: An Autobiography*, (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1994), p. 219.

diplomatic gains made during the Reagan Administration between them and the United States.²⁸ President Bush immediately cut off all ties and talks with the PLO. This would prove costly to the PLO when the coalition of nations, successfully expelled Iraqi forces from Kuwait, thereby ending the Gulf War. Arafat's standing plummeted in the international community and his place at the table of future peace negotiations would now be non-existent.

The Gulf War started with an aerial campaign on January 15, 1991 which targeted Iraqi military infrastructure. When the ground assault began on February 23, 1991, within a matter of hours, the coalition forces, headed by the United States, quickly expelled the Iraqi army from its position in Kuwait and gave chase in Iraqi territory. The coalition however did not seek regime change therefore did not march on to Baghdad. A cease-fire was declared 100 hours after ground operations commenced. Major operations had ended and coalition victory was quickly declared.

With the Persian Gulf War behind him, and unparalleled popularity and influence, President Bush began to turn his attention to the broader issue at hand: the Arab-Israeli conflict. President Bush and Secretary Baker believed that they could ride a wave of goodwill that was achieved in the Arab community and bring about a lasting peace to the Middle East. The main obstacle however, would be for the leaders in the region to agree to meet.

Many of Israel's Arab neighbors had their prejudices with participating in talks with them. The one neighbor that had the most reservations about any form of peace talks was Syria. Syrian President, Hafez Al-Assad wanted nothing more than to see the Golan Heights returned to Syria. However in Israel, Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir of the Likud party insisted on continuing the 'Greater Israel' policy of former Prime Minister Menachem Begin scuttling any possible peace

²⁸ The Reagan Administration attempts to engage the PLO in dialogue produce very few results. At no point, before the outbreak of the intifada, was the PLO willing to recognize Israel's right to exist. The intifada quickly changed Arafat's stance due to his perception that he would be left out if he did not act quickly to co-opt the movement.

deal with Syria. Still, the only way that these two sides could come to any type of settlement would be to meet and discuss their grievances at the proposed Madrid Conference.²⁹

A New Opportunity: The End of the Persian Gulf War

On February 27, 1991, at 9:02 p.m., U.S. President George H.W. Bush announced from the Oval Office in an address to the nation that Kuwait had been liberated and that “exactly 100 hours since ground operations commenced and six weeks since the start of Desert Storm, all United States and coalition forces [had] been ordered to suspend offensive combat operations.”³⁰ This would be followed by the more formal announcement by President Bush in front of a joint session of Congress on March 6, 1991. In this address he declared that “as Commander in Chief, I can report to you our armed forces fought with honor and valor. And as President, I can report to the Nation aggression is defeated. The war is over.”³¹

President Bush, recently empowered with a massive amount of goodwill and political capital, decided to use it not only to further the Middle East peace process, but also to help ensure an electoral victory in the November 1992 elections.³² On that same night, he announced a new initiative by the United States to bring a lasting peace to the Middle East. With this, the United

²⁹ While it was said that former Prime Minister Menachem Begin advocated for a ‘Greater Israel’, the definition of the phrase, ‘Greater Israel’ is disputed, in particularly by Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir. This will be discussed further in this paper.

³⁰ Address to the Nation on the Suspension of Allied Offensive Combat in the Persian Gulf, February 27, 1991, Public Papers, George Bush Presidential Library. <http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=2746&year=&month=> (accessed 12 April 2010). While this address marked the suspension of offensive military operations, the suspension was conditional on Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and his military accepting the political and military terms of a cease-fire set out by the United States and the coalition. Such terms were the release of all coalition prisoners of war, release all Kuwaiti detainees, inform the Kuwaitis of all land and sea mines, and for Iraq to comply with all United Nations Security Council resolutions. As stated in the address, “This suspension of offensive combat operations is contingent upon Iraq’s not firing upon any coalition forces and not launching Scud missiles against any other country. If Iraq violates these terms, coalition forces will be free to resume military operations.”

³¹ Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the Cessation of the Persian Gulf Conflict, March 6, 1991, Public Papers, George Bush Presidential Library. <http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=3566&year=&month=> (accessed 25 February 2010).

³² Kathleen Christison, *Perceptions of Palestine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), p. 265

States, as the sole superpower, embarked on an almost impossible task, to bring together Israel and its Arab neighbors. This would take the form of a peace conference, which would be sponsored by the United States. President Bush and Secretary Baker would later ask the Soviets to co-sponsor the conference in a show of unity and peace. By co-sponsoring the peace conference with the Soviets, this would help show the world President Bush's vision of his 'New World Order', in which he envisioned the world's superpowers cooperating to solve global issues and crisis. What were once enemies in the Cold War were now allies in a quest for peace. Soviet participation in the conference would be symbolic, however, due to internal problems within the Soviet Union.

“Don't let the cat die on your doorstep”: The Long Road to Madrid

With the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, the United States had become the sole global superpower. The Persian Gulf War only emphasized this power. With this newfound status came responsibility for helping to solve global problems, especially in the Middle East. Once the war was declared a success, the Bush administration decided to use the goodwill that it had acquired and try its hand at the elusive Arab-Israeli peace process in earnest. As stated in his address to a joint session of Congress, President Bush had “asked Secretary Baker to go to the Middle East to begin the process...to advance the search for peace and stability.”³³

As stated in his speech, President Bush asked Secretary Baker to take the lead in this endeavor. President Bush gave Secretary Baker wide room to conduct talks as he saw fit due to a previously agreed upon arrangement. In a meeting held in 1989, just after Bush was sworn into

³³ Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the Cessation of the Persian Gulf Conflict, March 6, 1991, Public Papers, George Bush Presidential Library.
<http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=2767&year=&month=> (accessed 12 April 2010).

office, President Bush, Secretary Baker, and a group of Middle East advisors discussed the Arab-Israeli conflict and all that it entailed. Baker advocated that he and the State Department would “assume total control” of any Arab-Israeli peace process. The reason behind this was that he felt the U.S. President had only “one shot in the Middle East” and that all groundwork must be laid before the President would be involved. An unidentified advisor disagreed with Baker’s idea and said that the President should “articulate a vision for peace and assert himself” into the process. After hearing from both sides, Bush agreed with Baker and let him take the lead.³⁴ While President Bush would on occasions correspond with foreign leaders during the negotiations, these letters tended to re-emphasize Baker’s position. This would be the pattern that would be followed throughout the peace process. President Bush, however, would be adamant about one issue that he saw as an impediment to peace. This would be the issue of the Jewish settlement construction in the occupied territories.

From March to October 1991, Secretary Baker conducted shuttle diplomacy to negotiate and gain approval for the first of its kind peace conference.³⁵ The challenges facing Secretary Baker were many, especially from a reluctant Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir and the tough negotiating Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad. Both men were steadfast in their beliefs and were unwilling to bend on many issues, especially in their opinions on the contentious issue that has kept them at a state of conflict dating back to 1967, the Israeli occupation of the Golan Heights.

³⁴ Maureen Dowd and Thomas L. Friedman, “The Fabulous Bush & Baker Boys,” *New York Times*, May 6, 1990, SM34.
<<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdlink?did=114754763&sid=2&Fmt=10&clientId=19872&RQT=309&VName=HNP>>
(accessed: 14 Oct. 2010). While conducting research, “The Fabulous Bush & Baker Boys,” was continuously referenced in books and articles written on the subject of President Bush and Secretary Baker’s working relationship in the White House. While by no means a complete description of their relationship, the article appears to have become one of the definitive sources of reference in order to better understand their relationship.

³⁵ Dalia Dassa Kaye, “Beyond the Handshake: Multilateral Cooperation in the Arab-Israeli Peace Process,” PhD. Diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1997, p. 63.

While not a strategist, those that worked with Secretary Baker described him as a pragmatist, who recognized opportunities when he saw them. In one instance during the talks, Secretary Baker told Shamir that “principles are fine, but if you’re going to succeed in carrying them out, you need to be pragmatic.”³⁶ Using his pragmatic sense, he wanted to accomplish three goals; the first was to place Prime Minister Shamir in position so that he could not refuse to attend the conference, in the hope that this would then prompt the Palestinians and the Syrians attend as well. Second was to put together a conference that had enough symbolism for the Arabs, but not too much substance for the Israelis. And third was to find a solution to coerce “non-PLO” Palestinians to sit at the negotiating table with Israel.³⁷ Knowing that achieving these goals would be a daunting task, Secretary Baker proceeded forward, determined not to fail in his mission.

Israeli Obstacles

When the time came to begin negotiations with Israel to participate in the peace conference, Secretary Baker would have to negotiate with a right-wing coalition government, led by Yitzhak Shamir, which was opposed to any land-for-peace deal. In these negotiations, Shamir would prove to be difficult to negotiate with. Shamir looked at a peace conference between Israel and its Arab neighbors with pessimism and mistrust. This mindset was not only directed against the Arabs but also against the United States. This mainly stemmed from the rocky relationship that Shamir had with U.S. President George H.W. Bush.³⁸ Shamir’s views, which were forged from a

³⁶ Miller, *The Much Too Promised Land*, p. 194.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 218

³⁸ The strained relationship stems from Shamir’s perception that Bush harbored prejudices against Israel, specifically when held the posts of U.N. ambassador and Vice President of the United States. Shamir also found Bush after his rise to the presidency, to be lacking in compassion toward Israel. This was apparent when came to the subject of Jewish settlements in the occupied territories. In his memoirs, Shamir expresses that while the previous administration had advocated for the withdrawal from the territories, no President of the United States had ever so

lifetime of struggle, would be the guide in which Shamir would use in negotiating with Baker and later, with the Arabs.

When the idea of a peace conference was presented to Prime Minister Shamir, he was very reluctant to support the effort to initiate peace talks. The memory of the 1939 ‘Round Table’ conference in London weighed on his mind. At the conference, Prime Minister Chamberlain invited Jewish and Arab leaders to discuss a possible solution for Palestine. Leading up to the conference, the Jewish delegation was repeatedly assured that there was no danger of having an Arab state forced on them or having Jewish immigration halted. However, as they did during the First World War, the British had made promises to both sides. To the Arabs, the British had promised that the Jews would be in the minority and a freeze would be issued on Jewish immigration. With this, the conference was over before it began. The Arabs refused to either sit or speak directly with the Jewish delegation, which caused the British to conduct talks with both sides alone. “The Arab ‘minimum’ demand was: a complete halt to all Jewish development in Palestine.”³⁹

Further complicating Shamir’s decision to participate in the conference was his opposition to the initial peace agreement reached with Egypt over the complete withdrawal from Sinai in 1979. Shamir saw the treaty with Egypt as setting a “disastrous precedent” not only for the advancement of the ‘land for peace’ ideology, but also for the forced removal of Jewish settlers.⁴⁰ This thinking would make it difficult for Shamir to agree to a conference that would see Israel withdraw from territory (Judea and Samaria) that he saw to be an integral part of the

quickly, or so implacably, disapproved of Jewish settlement beyond the Green Line, see Shamir, *Summing Up*, pp. 205-206.

³⁹ Shamir, *Summing Up*, pp. 27-28.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

Land of Israel, neither ‘captured’ in 1967 nor ‘returnable’ to anyone.⁴¹ The ‘land for peace’ ideology however would be the basis for President Bush’s push for peace. As it had before, the call for Israel to adhere to U.N. Security Council Resolution 242 and 338 would be the foundation of President Bush’s envisioned peace conference.

Before a joint session of Congress, President Bush was adamant that any conference be “grounded [on] United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 and the principle of territory for peace.”⁴² While most nations agreed with this requirement, the Israeli government under Prime Minister Shamir took issue with this stipulation.

While U.N. Security Council Resolution 242 has been cited by the international community to demand Israel relinquish control over the occupied territories, Israel has usually interpreted the resolution in their favor. In section one, article two of the resolution it states:

“Termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force.”⁴³

In this sentence, those Israelis that support the maintaining of the territories believe the resolution sanctions their claim. They tend to emphasize the section of the sentence that states, “recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force.” Since many see the territories as necessary to help defend their country from any Arab onslaught, then the maintaining of Israeli control over the territories is sanctioned and legal. This interpretation has never been recognized by other governments.

The Bush Administration’s policy of approaching the Middle East peace process through U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 came about a few years before 1991. At the

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 150.

⁴² Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the Cessation of the Persian Gulf Conflict, March 6, 1991, Public Papers, George Bush Presidential Library.

⁴³ United Nations Security Council Resolutions, 1967, U.N. Security Council Resolution 242. <<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/240/94/IMG/NR024094.pdf?OpenElement>> (accessed 24 Feb. 2010).

annual American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) on March 22, 1989, Secretary Baker spoke to what was at first a friendly audience. He spoke of the strategic partnership that both nations share as well as their commitment to democratic values. The situation however quickly turned hostile. Baker began to speak of Shamir's lack of attention to the occupied territories.⁴⁴ Though Baker was simply stating long-standing American policy, his blunt wording of it caused the people in the audience to sit in "stony silence."⁴⁵ In his speech, Secretary Baker acknowledged that Israel should "lay aside once and for all the unrealistic vision of a Greater Israel." He also said that Israel should, "forswear annexation," stop settlement activity, allow schools to reopen in the territories, and "reach out to the Palestinians as neighbors who deserve political rights".⁴⁶

Secretary Baker's speech left Shamir puzzled. Shamir took the speech as a slight directed solely at him and felt the tone to be hostile. However, what troubled Shamir the most was the notion of a 'Greater Israel.' It is Shamir's opinion that the term used by Baker was a 'misnomer' and that "what people talked about was not a 'Greater Israel' but all of Israel, the whole of Israel, of which we would give away no part."⁴⁷

Many Israelis questioned the United States ability to be fair during the peace conference due to the perceived American insensitivity to Israeli security concerns. They saw this especially evident in the fact that the United States advocated a land for peace solution.⁴⁸ Prime Minister

⁴⁴ William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israel Conflict Since 1967* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005), p. 296.

⁴⁵ Baker and DeFrank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 122.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 121. While this section of the speech fell flat, the speech was generally well received. It was not until the AIPAC put a "spin" on the speech that negative reviews began to take hold. This would lead to Secretary Baker receiving a message from Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Arens stating his disappointment at the tone of the speech. In turn, Secretary Baker was disappointed in Arens for not giving him the benefit of the doubt in his speech.

⁴⁷ Shamir, *Summing Up*, p. 202.

⁴⁸ Clyde Haberman, "Israel Approaches Peace Conference In a Grim Mood," *New York Times*, October 20, 1991, 5 <[http://proquest.umi.com/pqdlink?did=115564743&sid=10\\$clientID=1987&RQT=309&VName=HNP](http://proquest.umi.com/pqdlink?did=115564743&sid=10$clientID=1987&RQT=309&VName=HNP)> (accessed 3 March 2010). While the reasons of Israeli distrust of the United States peace conference precede the Persian Gulf

Shamir also had his own misgivings with the Bush administration and Secretary Baker. Shamir once stated to his foreign minister Moshe Arens that he felt Secretary Baker was against Israel. Prime Minister Shamir also felt that arrangements between the United States and the Arabs were being worked out behind the Israelis back. His suspicion was based on Secretary Baker's refusal to agree to preconditions proposed by Israel, which were numerous.⁴⁹ Moshe Arens had already come to the same conclusion as well.⁵⁰ Secretary Baker would later surmise that the reasons for Israeli distrust of President Bush and himself was partially due to "the mythology of our inferred links to the Arabs as a result of our Texas background."⁵¹

With such suspicions hanging in the background, negotiating with Shamir became difficult for Secretary Baker. However, the main issue that was left unresolved up until this point was loan guarantees that the United States had promised Israel so that it could absorb the thousands of Russian Jews migrating to Israel. At issue was Shamir's policy of using the U.S. provided loan to construct housing in the occupied territories. Secretary Baker viewed this as a set back to peace and made his views known to the Israeli government.⁵²

Ultimately, President Bush asked Congress to defer for 120 days the loan legislation in order to avoid any potential problems that might occur which could derail the peace conference. President Bush stated in a press conference on September 6, 1991 that "in the best interest of the

War, the main security reasons, as stated in the article, of the United States showing insensitivity was due to the United States asking the Israelis to "sit out" the Persian Gulf War to help keep the coalition together as well as not retaliating against any possible Iraqi Scud missiles. What added further insult was that the United States admonished Israel for conducting surveillance flights over Iraq.

⁴⁹ Shamir, *Summing Up*, p. 235.

⁵⁰ Miller, *The Much Too Promised Land*, p. 71. The original reference comes from Moshe Arens memoir, *Broken Covenant: American Foreign Policy and the Crisis Between the U.S. and Israel* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), which chronicles his life as Israeli Foreign Minister.

⁵¹ Baker and DeFrank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 444.

⁵² Baker and DeFrank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 444. Further complicating the issue was Prime Minister Shamir's hubris boasting that Russian Jewish immigration would soon dramatically alter the demographic character of the West Bank and Gaza. His boasting however would prove not to be true in the end, see Christison, *Perceptions of Palestine*, p. 262.

peace process and of peace itself that consideration of this absorption aid [loan guarantee] question for Israel [would] be deferred for simply 120 days.”⁵³

Before visiting Israel, Secretary Baker had a meeting with Shamir’s former Israeli Justice Minister, Dan Meridor, to inform him that he expected answers to three questions: Would Israel agree to attend a regional conference with the Arabs and the Palestinians? Would they agree that the basis for any such meeting would be a comprehensive settlement based on U.N. Security Council Resolution 242? And would Israel attend if Palestinians from the territories were present?⁵⁴ These questions would later be restated by Baker to Shamir when he arrived in Jerusalem on April 9. To Baker’s surprise, Shamir had shifted a little on his stance on various issues. Shamir had now agreed to attend the conference and would even agree to Palestinian representation, but only if they were a part of the Jordanian delegation. This stipulation further requested that no delegates from the joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation could be from Jerusalem. This was asked in hopes of diluting any impact the PLO would have on the negotiations as well as to convey that the Palestinians had no claim to East Jerusalem. Prime Minister Shamir had many more demands and conditions in order to attend the conference. Of those demands, he requested that the Palestinian delegates issue a letter renouncing the PLO. Secretary Baker emphatically rejected this request.⁵⁵ Another demand was that there be no U.N. involvement due to perceived anti-Israel stances by many of its members. Also Prime Minister Shamir objected to any European involvement as well.⁵⁶ These demands were contentious due to

⁵³ “The Middle East: U.S.-Soviet Cooperation and Secretary Baker’s Diplomacy for Peace,” *Foreign Policy Bulletin*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (September/ October 1991): 64. *Foreign Policy Bulletin* is a reference periodical of primary sources of U.S. foreign policy. Speeches, reports, and other government documents from public officials and Congressional meetings are printed and published by Cambridge University Press. This source will be used throughout the paper, especially concerning the conference itself.

⁵⁴ Baker and DeFrank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 445.

⁵⁵ Christison, *Perceptions of Palestine*, pp. 268-69.

⁵⁶ Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace*, p. 85.

Arab demands that an “international presence” participate in the conference. Eventually a compromise was agreed to, which not only met Israeli demands, but also Syria’s as well.⁵⁷

One thing that Shamir still did not agree with was the use of U.N. Security Council Resolution 242 as the basis for the conference. It was Shamir’s wish to insert into the statement the phrase “as agreed at Camp David.” This was due to the idea that Menachem Begin, Israeli Prime Minister at the time of the Camp David Accord, had not agreed to a land for peace settlement. Secretary Baker knew that the Arabs would never agree to any alteration to the language of the resolution but made note of the request.⁵⁸ Baker would have to rely on incentives in order to get Shamir to agree to the meeting. The loan guarantees for absorbing the incoming Russian Jews was off the table. The one thing that Baker could offer was diplomacy.

Using as a bargaining chip, Shamir was offered the incentive of full diplomatic recognition of Israel by the Soviet Union for accepting the invitation to the talks.⁵⁹ Diplomatic relations had been severed ever since the Soviets supported Arab countries that had attacked Israel in the Six-Day War. Resuming diplomatic relations would be a sign of the seriousness of the parties to convene a peace conference.

While Shamir considered this offer, he made a diplomatic request of his own. In 1975, the United Nations General Assembly passed resolution 3379 which equated Zionism to a form of

⁵⁷ The Arab demand for an international presence called for the conference to be conducted under the auspices of the United Nations along with European involvement. The compromise that was eventually reached helped bring Syrian President Assad on board with the peace conference. This will be discussed in detail further in the paper.

⁵⁸ Baker and DeFrank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 445.

⁵⁹ Baker and DeFrank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 428. Diplomatic recognition of Israel was part of the terms issued by Secretary of State James A. Baker in order for the Soviets to be allowed to co-sponsor the peace talks with the United States. On 15 March 1991 Secretary Baker went to Moscow to meet with Soviet Foreign Minister Alexander Bessmertnykh concerning this proposal. As stated in his memoirs, Secretary Baker said that “the President (Bush) was prepared to accept a regional conference co-sponsored by the Soviets. In exchange, however, Gorbachev would be expected to establish full diplomatic relations with Israel.” This was to demonstrate a sign of good faith. p. 428.

racism and discrimination.⁶⁰ The Israelis viewed this resolution as anti-Semitic and anti-Israel. Ever since the resolution was passed, Israel had lobbied for the UN to revoke the resolution. At this moment, Shamir believed he had found away to achieve his goal. If Shamir was to attend the conference, Shamir wanted the United States to push for the revocation of UN General Assembly resolution 3379. Secretary Baker was open to the request.⁶¹

Even though Shamir still held reservations concerning the conference, Prime Minister Shamir reluctantly recommended that his cabinet approve of the peace conference. In his own words, he admitted that he saw “no better alternative.”⁶² While Israelis had agreed to attend the conference, the threat of pulling out of the talks was ever present. One such occasion happened five days before the talks were to begin. As review of the final Jordanian-Palestinian delegation list was being approved, the Israelis took issue with Palestinian negotiator Saeb Eraket. A stipulation under the peace conference agreement stated that Israel would not have to negotiate with any member from the PLO. In an interview, Mr. Eraket commented that he and his colleagues were “the PLO delegation” chosen by it and representing it.⁶³ Small disagreements and perceived infraction of the protocol constantly put the conference in jeopardy. However, on October 30, after months of persuasion, the Israeli delegation, headed by Prime Minister Shamir, arrived in Madrid.

⁶⁰ United Nations General Assembly Resolution, 1975, U.N. General Assembly Resolution 3379, <<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/000/92/IMG/NR000092.pdf?OpenElement>> (accessed 1 Apr. 2011).

⁶¹ After Israel agreed and eventually attended the peace conference, the United States kept its promise and helped bring about the revocation of UN General Assembly resolution 3379. With the passage of UN General Assembly 46/86, General Assembly resolution 3379 was revoked.

⁶² Haberman, “Israel Approaches Peace Conference in a Grim Mood,” *New York Times*, October 20, 1991, 5.

⁶³ Clyde Haberman, “Israeli Delegation to Talks is Named,” *New York Times*, October 26, 1991, <<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdlink?did=116278274&sid=2&Fmt=10&clientId=19872&RQT=309&VName=HNP>> (accessed: April 29, 2010). The issue was eventually resolved when one of the chief Palestinian spokesmen, Faisal Al-Husseini, distanced himself and the Palestinian delegates from Saeb Eraket’s comments. While not completely satisfied, the Israelis accepted Al-Husseini’s response.

Palestinian Negotiations

While negotiating with Israel, Secretary Baker was simultaneously holding talks with the Palestinians to bring them to the negotiating table. Without the Palestinians, the peace conference would be almost meaningless, considering the point of the conference was to bring an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict, which many believe stemmed from the Palestinian issue. Secretary Baker's objective was to convince the Palestinians that armed struggle against Israel would not achieve their ultimate goal of an independent Palestine within the pre-1967 borders. The only way to achieve statehood would be through direct negotiations with Israel. For the Palestinians, however, the notion of negotiating with Israel was farfetched considering the deep distrust between the two groups. Still, Secretary Baker took it upon himself to see to it that both Israelis and Palestinians met at the negotiating table.⁶⁴

Within the Palestinian ranks, the subject of speaking with the United States was mixed. Those in the occupied territories were in favor of talks, while those in Tunis, the headquarters of the PLO, were reluctant to commit to any meetings with Secretary Baker. When Secretary Baker came to seek negotiators from the Palestinians, those in the occupied territories refused to make any decision without the consent of the PLO and its chairman, Yasser Arafat. Eventually, after much deliberation, the decision was made for preliminary talks to go forward with Secretary Baker.⁶⁵

It must be said that not all Palestinian groups agreed with the beginning of talks with the United States concerning the peace conference. Radical groups such as Hamas and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine strongly condemned the talks and went so far as to say that

⁶⁴ The pre-1967 border are defined as the territories of the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem, that were captured by the Israel during the 1967 War, which more commonly known as the Six-Day war. Another term often used for these borders is the Green Line.

⁶⁵ Hanan Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace: A Personal Account* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), p. 82.

the Palestinian negotiators were capitulating to Israel and describe them as “American agents and traitors.”⁶⁶ This rhetoric would not deter the negotiators from doing what they believed was in the best interest of the Palestinian people.

When Secretary Baker traveled to the Middle East on March 12, he met a delegation of Palestinian negotiators at the West Jerusalem American consulate that consisted of members that were part of the PLO or what the “outside” and by those who were from the occupied territories, the “inside.” Most notably, the negotiators were headed by Hanan Ashrawi, a Christian Palestinian living in the West Bank, Faisal Husseini, a member of the PLO in Jerusalem, and Saeb Erakat, a long standing Palestinian negotiator. Their main objectives, as described by Ashrawi were two fold: “to reach out to the enemy, and to the world; but also to reach inward and to heal the spirit within [their] hearts.”⁶⁷

While this first meeting was seen as preliminary, what can be seen as undiplomatic rhetoric was on display from both sides. Husseini began by explaining to Secretary Baker that they were meeting with him “at the behest of the PLO” who they declared as the sole legitimate leadership of Palestinian people. Countering this statement, Secretary Baker relayed the message that he did not care who their leadership was, but that he only cared about finding non-PLO people in the Occupied Territories, who were willing to enter into direct negotiations with Israel based on U.N. Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, and who are willing to live side by side with Israel in peace.⁶⁸

Based on this statement, the Palestinian negotiators tried to interject a point, but Secretary Baker interrupted, reminding them of their decision, especially by the PLO leadership, to “back

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 115.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 82.

⁶⁸ Ibid. The stipulation of seeking non-PLO negotiators came at the request of Israeli Prime Minister Shamir, who laid out many conditions in order to agree to attend the conference.

the wrong horse” during the invasion of Kuwait and the subsequent Gulf War.⁶⁹ Secretary Baker’s statement was a stark reminder that the Palestinians came to the negotiating table with a distinct disadvantage. Concession had to be made on the part of the Palestinians. Still, this fact did not deter the negotiators from pushing forward with their grievances. They were fighting not only for statehood, but also for personal honor and dignity.⁷⁰

Another issue that was brought to Secretary Baker’s attention was the issue of Jewish settlement construction in the occupied territories. When the Israelis captured the West Bank, Gaza, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights in the 1967 War, many Jewish settlements were constructed within these territories, much to the disapproval of the international community. In response, the U.N. Security Council passed resolution 446 on March 22, 1979, which states that settlement construction in the Palestinian and Arab territories “have no legal validity.”⁷¹ Israeli justification for establishing settlements in the occupied territories was to create what is known as ‘facts on the ground’. This practice would make it difficult for Palestinians to force Israel to relinquish land during any future peace deal due to the enormous effort in removing large population areas. The Palestinian negotiators made it clear that they were wary of entering into direct talks with the Israelis as long as settlement construction continued.⁷² Secretary Baker, in response to the settlement issue, promised that the peace process would bring an end to settlement construction. However, he emphasized, the halting of settlement construction could

⁶⁹ This reference alluded to Arafat and the PLO’s decision to support Saddam Hussein, while most of the Arab world remained either neutral or participated in the coalition to remove Iraqi forces from Kuwait. The decision to support Saddam Hussein has been viewed as done out of frustration due the lack of U.S. leadership in the peace process as well as from a perceived notion of U.S.-Israeli bias. The PLO’s continued support of Saddam’s anti-Israeli rhetoric eventually led to a suspension of U.S.-P.L.O talks in June 1990, see Christison, *Perceptions of Palestine* , p. 263.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 83.

⁷¹ “United Nations Security Council Resolution 446,” Security Council Resolutions 1979, <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/370/60/IMG/NR037060.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed 3 Feb. 2011).

⁷² Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace*, p. 83

not be a pre-condition to the talks.⁷³ In a move that would help limit settlement activity and inadvertently show the seriousness of the United States to the Palestinians, President Bush requested that loan guarantees sought by the Israelis be delayed.

In subsequent meetings, the U.S. negotiating team suggested to the Palestinians that they form a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation. When Arafat heard this suggestion, he was livid. He, along with the Palestinian negotiators believed that if they agreed to the joint delegation, it would be perceived that they were conceding the point that the Palestinians did not have a separate identity from Jordanians.⁷⁴ After much posturing and arguing with the United States, the Palestinians ultimately agreed to the joint delegation. However, the Palestinians had a few demands of their own which they wished the United States to commit to before finally agreeing to attend the conference. This agreement would later be the basis for the Letter of Assurances, which would be issued not only to the Palestinians, but also the Israelis and Syrians.

When talks began for drafting the Letter of Assurances, Hanan Ashrawi and Faisal Husseini would take the lead with the full trust and support of Arafat and PLO. The Palestinian negotiators were very adamant about having the United States commit to paper the Palestinian issues they felt strongly about in order to keep the United States from going back on their word. The U.S. negotiators, however, had their own plan. The format for the peace conference would mirror that of the Camp David Accords.⁷⁵ Needless to say, the Palestinians objected to this format. They wanted a format that was mutual and not one dictated by the Israelis and the United States.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 88

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 96. What caused the Palestinians to react angrily to this suggestion was that not only did it paint the Palestinians as not having a separate identity from the Jordanians, but that the request to form a joint delegation was a demand from Prime Minister Shamir, who refused to attend the conference if the Palestinians were given their own, separate delegation. The Palestinian delegation took this as the United States once again giving in to Israeli demands without question.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 93.

Ashrawi describes eighteen meetings that were held between the Palestinian negotiator and Secretary Baker in both Jerusalem and Washington, D.C. These meetings, which were to be known as the “Baker Meetings,” were contentious and frustrating for both sides. Every issue and point that was brought to the attention of the Palestinians had to be approved by the PLO before agreeing or disagreeing with the point. On occasions, secret meetings were arranged, where the lead negotiators would fly to Tunis in order to be instructed on what needed to be said and done. All trips were considered to be, under Israeli law, illegal and punishable by imprisonment. Therefore all meetings had to be arranged so that flights were diverted to other locations first before finally arriving in Tunis.

From these talks, Secretary Baker constantly warned the Palestinians not to “leave the dead cat on your door step” when it came to the negotiations.⁷⁶ He even threatened to walk out several times to prove the point that the United States was serious in convening a peace conference. Eventually Secretary Baker would return to continue the negotiations, however his patience with the Palestinian positions was growing noticeably thin. Secretary Baker’s patience would be tested throughout the negotiating process.

As the start of the conference grew near, Secretary Baker asked the Palestinian delegation for a list of people that would represent them in the joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation. Knowing that Israel would have the final approval of the list, the Palestinians rushed to put together a list of names that included people who they knew would be rejected. When the day came for Secretary Baker to receive the official list, the Palestinian negotiators were only willing to give a “tentative and unofficial list.” It was later revealed that Arafat told Ashrawi that under no

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 87. This expression seemed to be Secretary Baker’s favorite line when he spoke with all the negotiating parties. The statement, as interpreted by Aaron Miller, meant that if the [peace] process collapsed, make sure the other side takes the fall, see Miller, *The Much Too Promised Land*, p. 197.

circumstance were they to give Secretary Baker a list of Palestinian delegates.⁷⁷ This enraged Baker, causing him, in an account by Ashrawi, to hurl an inadvertent, undiplomatic, insult at the Palestinian negotiators by using language that many Israelis had used to describe the Palestinians. After going back and forth, it was eventually agreed to that the Palestinians would provide Secretary Baker with an informal list.⁷⁸

Unfortunately, this would not be that last of the arguments flying back and forth between Secretary Baker and the Palestinian delegation over the issue of Palestinian representation in the joint delegation. But, at this point, the commitment had been made by the Palestinians, and they were compelled to honor it.

Syria and Assad

On April 11, Secretary Baker flew to Damascus to speak with President Hafez Al-Assad. Baker knew that Assad, of all the Arab leaders, would be the most difficult to bring to the negotiating table. His first meeting with President Assad would last five and half hours. During that time, Baker relayed what Shamir had said and requested. Assad summarily ignored his words and began to talk about the conference. Assad informed Baker that he was willing to attend the conference, but only under four conditions: 1) the conference was to be described as an international conference, 2) there would be assurances that the co-sponsors would guarantee all its results, 3) the conference must be continuous to guarantee impetus to the negotiations, and

⁷⁷ Miller, *The Much Too Promised Land*, p. 222.

⁷⁸ Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace*, p. 127. Faisal Husseini and Hanan Ashrawi would not take Secretary Baker's perceived insult lying down. In a rare show of undiplomatic anger, Husseini proceeded to yell back at Secretary Baker for using Israeli language that was considered derogatory.

4) to ensure that the conference had “international legitimacy” and “moral authority,” it must be under the aegis of the United Nations.⁷⁹

After his first meeting with Secretary Baker, President Assad still had reservations and wished for the United States to accept his conditions before he agreed to attend the peace conference. Seeing that President Assad could be persuaded, Secretary Baker turned to President Bush to help sway Assad. In order to put more pressure on President Assad, President Bush enlisted the help of King Fahd bin abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia, President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, and King Hussein of Jordan. On May 31, President Bush sent a series of letters to these leaders to solicit help from Syria’s neighbors hoping to convince President Assad to agree to the peace conference.

To Saudi King Fahd, President Bush explained that peace efforts had reached a “critical point” and that help was needed. Bush, reminding the king of his past commitment to use his influence if requested, asked the king to intervene in three key efforts. The first was for the king to put pressure on Assad. As stated in his letter, Bush had “fashioned a process to take any *reasonable* Syrian requirement into account”, however, Assad’s “problems with this process [were] largely procedural and symbolic”[emphasis in the original]. Bush wanted the king to emphasize the benefits of attending the peace conference as well as the possible disadvantages. Of the benefits, the return of the Golan Heights was the most important. Progress concerning the resolution of the Palestinian issue in conjunction with the United States was another.⁸⁰

President Bush also asked Saudi Arabia to look past Jordan’s behavior during the Gulf War. Since President Bush wished to see a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation at the conference,

⁷⁹ Baker and DeFrank. *The Politics of Diplomacy*. p. 447.

⁸⁰ Letter to King Fahd bin abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia from President Bush, May 31, 1991. <<http://galenet.galegroup.com.libproxy.tulane.edu:2048/servlet/DDRS?vrsn=1.0&locID=tulane&c=10&ste=6&docNum=CK2349561985>> (accessed: 2010 June 24)

Jordan, trying to get back in the good graces of the United States, made an effort to accomplish this task. Jordan had now become a key player in the peace effort. If Jordan was able to deliver on this arrangement, Bush asked King Fahd to react favorably towards them. Bush however did not ask the Saudis to forgive the Jordanians for the side that they took during the war.⁸¹

The third effort was to have Saudi Arabia, either alone or in conjunction with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) recognize the possibility of living side by side in peace with Israel. For Bush, this recognition would help in alleviating the hostile climate in the region and possibly lead others to follow suit. However, President Bush did leave room for the Saudis to condition the recognition. One possible condition that Bush indicated was that progress be made toward the Palestinian issue as well as a moratorium on Israeli settlement construction in the occupied territories.⁸²

Bush's letter to Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak asked that he speak not only with Assad but also King Hussein. This letter however had a different tone than the one written for the Saudi king. In this particular letter, Bush asked Mubarak to persuade both President Assad and King Hussein to agree to the conference, but left open the possibility that Assad might say no. Also mentioned was the need to keep the Palestinian negotiators involved in the talks and away from the perception that they were involved with the PLO, which the United States wished not to be apart of the peace conference. This condition was mainly aimed at Israeli reluctance to speak with any member of the PLO.⁸³

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Baker and DeFrank. *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 447.

⁸³ In a letter to Egyptian President Mohammad Hosni Mubarak, President George H.W. Bush emphasizes the importance for Egypt to persuade other Arab countries to participate in the Arab-Israeli peace process which will convene in Madrid, Spain, on 10/30/91, Letter Bush to Mubarak, May 31, 1991, <<http://galenet.galegroup.com.libproxy.tulane.edu:2048/servlet/DDRS?vrsn=1.0&locID=tulane&c=10&ste=6&docNum=CK2349561983>> (accessed: 2010 June 24).

In the letter sent to King Hussein of Jordan, President Bush expressed the importance of Jordan in the peace process. He asks two things of King Hussein. The first was for Jordan to assist in forming a Palestinian delegation. Preferably, President Bush would like to have a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation that would be agreeable to both the Arabs and the Israelis. The second request was for Jordan to attend the conference. Even though President Bush was writing this letter to persuade the Jordanians to attend, he did not want to pressure them. His goal, as stated in the letter, was for Jordan to “decide for itself and not allow any other party to determine Jordan’s role.”⁸⁴

While the President knew of King Hussein’s hesitation to participate, Bush also knew that Jordan was in a bind. Since Jordan had sided with Iraq during the Gulf War, the United States cut military aid to the kingdom and conditioned the restoration of those funds only if Jordan showed a willingness to redeem itself.⁸⁵ By participating in the conference, President Bush saw an opportunity for Jordan to do so. President Bush wanted Jordan to be open about its willingness to participate in order to foster an atmosphere of confidence in the peace process. If the Jordanians were willing to do this, then it would be easier for President Bush to lobby Congress to restore full military aid. In closing, President Bush again emphasized the need for Jordan to attend and that doing so would not only be historic, but beneficial to the kingdom.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Message to Jordanian King Hussein I from President George H.W. Bush regarding a wish that Jordan assist in the formation of a Palestinian delegation to attend the Middle East Peace Conference. Memo. White House, May 31, 1991,

<http://galenet.galegroup.com.libproxy.tulane.edu:2048/servlet/DDRS?vrsn=1.0&locID=tulane&c=12&ste=6&docNum=CK2349554831> (accessed: 2011 Jan. 5).

⁸⁵ “U.S. Restores Military Aid to Jordan,” *New York Times*, October 31, 1991, A18
<<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdlink?did=116057121&sid=3&Fmt=10&clientId=19872&RQT=309&VName=HNP>>
(accessed: 2011 Jan. 5).

⁸⁶ Message to Jordanian King Hussein I from President George H.W. Bush regarding a wish that Jordan assist in the formation of a Palestinian delegation to attend the Middle East Peace Conference. Memo. White House, May 31, 1991,

<http://galenet.galegroup.com.libproxy.tulane.edu:2048/servlet/DDRS?vrsn=1.0&locID=tulane&c=12&ste=6&docNum=CK2349554831> (accessed: 2011 Jan. 5).

President Bush not only sent letters to these Arab leaders on May 31, but also sent one directly to President Assad. This letter, the second sent that week to Assad, summarized Secretary Baker's points made to Assad when they originally had met. In his letter, Bush tried to put to rest any misgivings that Assad may have in participating in the peace conference, especially when it came to the conditions that he laid out for Baker in their first meeting. While President Bush felt that the United States had addressed two of Assad's four conditions, Bush reiterated his stance on each issue.⁸⁷

Of the four conditions expressed by Assad to Baker, the first and fourth conditions described the peace conference as an international conference and for the United Nations to conduct the conference to ensure that the conference had "international legitimacy" and "moral authority." In his letter, Bush indicated that he was proposing a "package of elements which will have a cumulative effect and should meet any reasonable requirements" that Assad might have in regard to United Nations participation. This package consisted of a United Nations observer being present, the U.N. Resolutions 242 and 338 would be the basis for a comprehensive settlement, all parties would seek United Nations endorsement of any agreement, and the co-sponsors agreed to keep the U.N. Secretary-General informed of all developments of the negotiations. President Bush also reasoned that the United States, Soviet, and European participation in the talks met the requirements of "international legitimacy."⁸⁸

Also stated in the letter was a point that Secretary Baker was not able to convey when he met with President Assad. This point was that the United States and the Soviet Union intended to be

⁸⁷ In a letter to Syrian President Hafiz al-Assad, President George H.W. Bush emphasizes the importance for Syria to participate in the Arab-Israeli peace process to be convened in Madrid, Spain, on 10/30/91. These negotiations are based on UN Security Council Letter. White House.
<http://galenet.galegroup.com.libproxy.tulane.edu:2048/servlet/DDRS?vrsn=1.0&locID=tulane&c=10&ste=6&n=10&docNum=CK2349558369&finalAuth=true> (accessed: 2010 June 24).

⁸⁸ Ibid. President Bush also stated in the letter that of the last two points that are contained in the package, Secretary Baker was not in a position to commit when he met with Assad. It was only agreed to by President Bush when Prime Minister Shamir raised no objections to Baker when he proposed the points to him.

engaged throughout the negotiations and that they were committed to the idea of territory for peace, which would be applied to all fronts, including the Golan Heights, which the United States still refused to recognize as being annexed by Israel. Most importantly, President Bush offered the idea that the United States would issue a security guarantee on the mutually agreed upon border.⁸⁹ In order to achieve this goal, however, President Assad would have to agree to the conference.

Choosing a Host City

Once all sides had tentatively agreed to attend the peace conference, a location for convening the conference had to be chosen. Each side presented a list of candidate cities to host the event. For the United States, the first choice was Washington, D.C., however, this suggestion was quickly brushed aside by the Soviets. The Soviets had in mind the city of Prague or Cairo as an alternative. The Cairo venue was immediately dismissed by Shamir due to his objection to holding the conference in an Arab capital. A consensus was formed that the conference should take place in a European capital. Secretary Baker and his team then settled on The Hague.⁹⁰

Once selected, the Secretary Baker sent a secret team to investigate the city as a possible venue for the conference. When the investigation was completed, Secretary Baker took his findings to all the parties to approve or disapprove of the location. On October 15, in a meeting with President Assad, Secretary Baker proposed the venue to him. With his tough negotiating

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Baker and DeFrank. *The Politics of Diplomacy*. p. 510. Geneva, Switzerland was also considered a candidate city to host the conference. But, with the failure of the 1973 Geneva Conference, which was convened after the 1973 Arab-Israeli War but was not attended by Syria, Baker and his team dismissed the city in order to avoid a historical comparison.

style, Assad rejected the idea, noting the lack of a Syrian embassy in The Hague and what he called “political problems.”⁹¹

Finally, after much debate, Secretary Baker asked Assad, “What city would be acceptable?” Assad gave a list of European cities that he felt were acceptable, but none seemed to be agreeable to Baker. The Secretary of State then offered Madrid and Lisbon. Assad replied, “Madrid is better than Lisbon.” Secretary Baker took this statement as a sign of compromise and immediately went to work acquiring the approval of the Spanish government. Though it was on short notice, the Spanish government agreed to play host to the conference.⁹² The venue had now been set. Invitation would be sent to the waiting parties.⁹³

The Invitation

On October 18, 1991, a statement from the White House was issued announcing that Secretary of State James A. Baker and Soviet Foreign Minister Boris Pankin had issued invitations to an unprecedented Middle East peace conference to be held in Madrid from October 30 to November 1. These invitations were sent out, with specific instructions, to each ambassador in the respected countries that would participate or observe the peace conference.

After many months of shuttle diplomacy, Secretary Baker had been able to achieve what many had thought impossible: bringing Israel and its neighbors together to discuss a lasting peace settlement. The Madrid Peace Conference, organizers proclaimed, had the “potential to

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 511. As stated in Baker’s memoirs, Assad would not specify what “political problems” Syria had with the Netherlands. After investigating the matter, it was deduced that the problem stemmed from economic sanctions the Netherlands had voted for against the Syrians.

⁹² Ibid. The city of Madrid had become the perfect compromise city due to it being on the list of acceptable cities presented to Baker by the Israelis. Soon after the compromise was reached on Madrid, Prime Minister Shamir and Soviet Foreign Minister Pankin gave their approval, thus settling on the venue for the conference.

⁹³ It must be noted that not all parties were aware that Madrid was chosen as a host city. As stated in Hanan Ashrawi’s memoir, the Palestinian delegation was surprised that Madrid was chosen considering the site of the conference was never discussed with them, see Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace*, p. 129.

bring true peace and security to the peoples of the area.”⁹⁴ Invitations had been extended to Israel and its surrounding neighbors: Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and the Palestinians; agreed upon observers were also extended invitations. A deadline of five days was given for each country either to accept or reject the invitations.⁹⁵

Letter of Assurances

While the Letter of Invitations was sent out to each participating delegations and observers, another document was also presented to those delegations that were negotiating partners in the peace conference. This other document, which was in the form of a letter, outlined the agreed to conditions in which the negotiating parties would attend the conference. This letter came to be known as the Letter of Assurances. Originally drafted at the request of the Palestinian negotiators in order to keep the United States from backtracking on its promises, the letters were later requested by all negotiating partners. While the fundamentals of the letters were the same for each negotiating party, individual requests were added as well.

Of the individual requests stated in the Palestinian letter, they demanded the United States not determine who could speak for the Palestinians in the peace process. They further requested assurances from the United States on the issue of East Jerusalem. In no way would the selection of delegates preclude the issue of East Jerusalem from the talks.⁹⁶ Also, the United States must

⁹⁴ Statement Announcing the Middle East Peace Conference, October 18, 1991, Public Papers, George Bush Presidential Library. http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=3519&year=&month= (accessed 25 Feb. 2010).

⁹⁵ “The Madrid Peace Conference,” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 21, no. 2 (Winter, 1992): 121. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2537235> (accessed 25 February 2010). This timetable was established in the Letter of Invitation to the Peace talks in Madrid, 18 October 1991, which states that “we urgently request your positive response as soon as possible, but no later than 6:00 p.m. Washington time, 23 October.”

⁹⁶ This request stems from the demand from Israel that no Palestinian delegate come from Jerusalem, which Secretary Baker was willing to accept as a condition for Israeli participation. While this upset the Palestinian delegation, under the Letter of Assurances, not having a delegate from Jerusalem would not prejudice their claim to the city.

stand committed to opposing Israeli annexation of East Jerusalem and imposing Israeli law in its boundaries. Most importantly, they sought to enjoin all parties from taking unilateral actions that would seek to predetermine issues which should be resolved through negotiations.⁹⁷

In the letter sent to Syria, many of the points responded to concerns expressed by President Assad and agreed to in President Bush's May 31 letter to Assad. The letter stated that the United States would keep the Secretary-General of the U.N. informed of all proceedings and agreements, and the United States would not take a conflicting position or action against anything the Security Council agreed to. A final settlement can only be reached through mutual concessions and agreement based on U.N. Security Council Resolution 242 and the land-for-peace process. This would apply to all occupied territory, including the Golan Heights. If an agreement is reached, and a border is agreed upon, then the United States would serve to guarantee border security.⁹⁸ The letter also agreed to reconvene only if all parties agreed to do so.⁹⁹

The Israeli letter contained seventeen demands that were explicit in their meaning. The first major demand was that the opening peace conference would have no power to make decisions, hold votes or impose positions. The United States could not force dialogue between Israel and any member of the PLO. Concerning the Palestinian delegation, all members must be from the West Bank or Gaza and must be ready to live in peace with Israel. Israel had the right to interpret U.N. Security Council Resolution 242 as they saw fit, along with any other interpretations. Most

⁹⁷ "The Madrid Peace Conference", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 21, no. 2 (winter, 1992): 118-119.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 119.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 119. This demand was also requested by Prime Minister Shamir in his original negotiations with Secretary Baker. At first Secretary Baker was wary of agreeing to this stipulation. However, when President Assad conveyed to him the same feeling of the reconvening of the conference, Secretary Baker gave President Bush's approval of such language to us in the Letter of Assurances for both the Israelis and Syrians, see Ross, *The Missing Peace*, p. 70.

importantly, the United States agreed to the demand that it would not support the creation of an independent Palestinian state.¹⁰⁰

Once all the Letter of Assurances had been delivered to their respective delegations, each side was able to view what was assured by the United States. The negotiations had to be as transparent as possible in order to create an atmosphere of trust and between all the parties and the United States. Secretary Baker and the State Department knew very well that negotiations not made public could lead to a total breakdown in the peace process.

On October 23, 1991, White House Press Secretary Marlin Fitzwater announced that they “now have in hand the acceptances of all those invited to participate in the Middle East peace conference.”¹⁰¹ The last piece of the puzzle had fallen into place. Now that all the players had agreed to attend the conference, it would be up to all sides to try and make the peace initiative a success or failure.

The Madrid Peace Conference

On October 30, 1991, after many months of delicate negotiations, pressuring, and prodding, delegates from Israel and her Arab neighbors, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and the Palestinians, came together in Madrid to try and solve their long standing conflict. Out of these delegates, only the

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 120.

¹⁰¹ Statement by Press Secretary Fitzwater on the Middle East Peace Conference, October 23, 1991, Public Papers, George Bush Presidential Library. http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=3534&year=&month= (accessed 25 Feb. 2010). Even though all parties agreed to attend, the negotiations continued well after. In one instance, the Palestinians, after they received the Letter of Invitation, quickly drafted a response in the affirmative to attend the conference. However, the Palestinian negotiators, in their response, reiterated their positions and points, and made it clear that they did not agree to all the stipulations set forth in the Letter of Invitation. As to the points that they did not agree with, they stated that those points were U.S. policy rather than theirs, see Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace*, p. 126.

United States, the Soviet Union, and Israel sent their head of government to lead their delegations. All Arab nations sent their foreign ministers as delegation leaders.¹⁰²

In a well choreographed setting, delegates were seated at a ‘T’ shaped table in the Salon de las Columnas of the Royal Palace, surrounded only by the national flags of the sponsors of the conference, the United States and the Soviet Union. No other flags were allowed in order to avoid any unintended symbolism.¹⁰³ The sponsors of the conference, President Bush and Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, in their opening remarks, spoke about the significance of the endeavor the delegates were about to embark on to reach a lasting peace agreement.¹⁰⁴

The process chosen for the conference to function would be a two-track system. The two-track system involved Israel negotiating on two fronts. The first front dealt with Israel reaching a peace deal with the Arab community as a whole, the second front dealt with direct negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians. The United States would act as a mediator between the parties.

But before the seating of the delegates, private meetings took place. One such meeting occurred on the morning of October 30, 1991. President Bush, Secretary Baker, and Prime Minister Shamir spoke of the importance of the impending conference and reaffirmed their commitment to the peace process. President Bush then emphasized what was at stake at the

¹⁰² John Montgomery provided Edmund Hull with a list of delegates slated to attend the Middle East peace conference initiated by the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Countries and groups involved include: Israel; Egypt; Syria; Jordan; Lebanon; the Soviet Union; Pal Memo. National Security Council. CONFIDENTIAL. Issue Date: Oct 28, 1991. Date Declassified: Sep 04, 2003.

<http://galenet.galegroup.com.libproxy.tulane.edu:2048/servlet/DDRS?vrsn=1.0&locID=tulane&c=1&ste=6&docNum=CK2349557609> (accessed: 2011 Jan. 5).

¹⁰³ George J. Church, Lisa Beyer, Dean Fischer & J.F.O McAllister. “Middle East: Finally Face to Face,” *Time Magazine*, November 11, 1991, < <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,974249,00.html>> (accessed 11 Nov. 1991). In Secretary Baker’s memoirs, he explains that the reasoning for displaying no other national flags was due to Israeli objections. The Israeli delegation refused to sit with a Palestinian delegation under the multi-colored banner of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, see Baker and DeFrank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 512.

¹⁰⁴ It was noted in Secretary Baker’s memoirs that a painting of Charles V slaughtering Moors hung in the hall where the delegates would meet. The painting was quickly removed in order to avoid any kind of controversy from the Arab delegations, see Baker and DeFrank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 514.

conference. He made it apparent that not only do the Israelis have “a lot to lose” if the conference does not succeed but that the “Arab side also has a lot to lose.”¹⁰⁵ Shamir also reiterated his notion that any negotiations, of either the bi-lateral or multi-lateral, must take place in the Middle East, more preferably in Jerusalem. However, President Bush was adamant that the talks take place regardless of the venue.¹⁰⁶ President Bush also laid out his feelings concerning the Arabs. Bush felt that the Arabs could not afford to remain isolated “given the changes in the Soviet Union.” He also felt that they could not reject every peace deal.¹⁰⁷ It was also during this meeting that President Bush and Secretary Baker informed Prime Minister Shamir that it was agreed to that the Palestinian and the Jordanian representatives would be allotted equal time to address the conference. Prime Minister Shamir was livid, but conceded to the agreement.¹⁰⁸

Once these preliminary meetings were completed, the more formal and public aspect of the conference commenced. As the dominant co-host, President Bush was the first to speak. In his opening remarks, he wanted to convey to the delegations their reason for why the conference was called to meeting:

“We come to Madrid on a mission of hope, to begin work on a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement to the conflict in the Middle East. We come here to seek peace for a part of the world that in the long memory of man has known far too much hatred, anguish, and war. I can think of no endeavor more worthy, or more necessary.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Memorandum of Conversation of Meeting between Prime Minister Shamir and President Bush, November 8, 1991, Folder Middle East Peace Conference – Madrid, Spain, Box 1, Document 309916, White House Office of Records Management [WHORM] CO 074, George Bush Presidential Library [GBPL], College Station, TX. It must be noted that while the document does give insight into the pre-meeting before the conference was to begin, the document has been redacted; specifically Prime Minister Shamir’s words have been blackened out in this transcript. However, one can guess at what is being said by the responses that are given to Mr. Shamir from President Bush and Secretary Baker.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Shamir, *Summing Up*, p. 367.

¹⁰⁹ Remarks at the Opening Session of the Middle East Peace Conference in Madrid, Spain, October 30, 1991, Public Papers, George Bush Presidential Library.

http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=3566&year=&month= (accessed 25 Feb. 2010).

Second to speak was Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev. In his opening remarks, Gorbachev tried to put the conference into perspective from the view point of the international community:

“The international community is entitled to expect that this conference will come up with decisions that will put this concern to rest. In my view, the conference can only succeed if no one seeks any victory over a cruel past. I’m speaking of peace, rather than merely a cessation of the state of war, and a durable peace implies the implementation of and respect for the rights of the Palestinian people.”¹¹⁰

On the second day of the conference, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir was allotted time to speak to the delegations. In his speech, Shamir portrayed Israel as nation that had sought peace with its neighbors from the very beginning. “Since the beginning of Zionism, we have formulated innumerable peace proposals and plans. All of them were rejected.”¹¹¹ It appeared Shamir was using the conference as a stage to gain world sympathy. He continued by asking the Arabs in attendance to “show us and the world that you accept Israel’s existence. Demonstrate your readiness to accept Israel as a permanent entity in the region. Let the people in our region hear you speak in the language of reconciliation, coexistence and peace with Israel.”¹¹²

Prime Minister Shamir also articulated his interpretation of the reasons for the long standing conflict. Since the basis for the conference relied heavily on the compliance from all sides of U.N. Security Council Resolution 242, which calls for a land-for-peace strategy, Shamir tried to persuade the delegates that this was actually not the root cause for the conflict. For Shamir, “the root cause of the conflict is Arab refusal to recognize the legitimacy of the State of Israel.”¹¹³ With this thinking, U.N. Security Council Resolution 242 had no relevance in the discussion for

¹¹⁰ “The Madrid Middle East Peace Conference October 31-November 1, 1991” *Foreign Policy Bulletin*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (Nov/Dec 1991): 4.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

peace thereby negating the foundation of the conference. This rationale would thereby allow Israel to maintain control of the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem.

The leader of the Syrian delegation, Foreign Minister Farouk Al-Shara, was to speak next. As foreign minister, Al-Shara had become one of the driving forces to reconcile Syria with the West. While many Western diplomats respected him as a strong-willed diplomat, Al-Shara still had his prejudices, especially when he remarked that he would refuse to shake hands with an Israeli “until the occupied territories are restored.”¹¹⁴ With this in mind, Farouk Al-Shara began to speak. During his speech, in what amounted to a rebuttal to Shamir’s speech, Farouk Al-Shara tried to portray the Arabs in a sympathetic light:

“The Arabs, throughout their long history, have always advocated peace, justice and tolerance....The Jews, and oriental Jews in particular, know better than anyone that they have lived among Muslim Arabs throughout history wherever they coexisted without suffering any form of persecution or discrimination, either racial or religious. Rather they have always lived in grace and dignity.”¹¹⁵

Al-Shara demonized Israel and labeled the Israelis as “settler-colonists” who had denied Palestinians under their control their fundamental rights, most importantly, their right to self-determination. He went on to say that the “list of evidence of inhuman Israeli practices is long and documented. These were practices which were condemned by dozens of resolutions adopted by the United Nations.”¹¹⁶ To add further insult to his list of grievances against Israel, Al-Shara informed the delegates that “Israeli occupation of Syrian and Palestinian territories [had] resulted in uprooting approximately half a million Syrian citizens from Golan who have to date not been

¹¹⁴ Chris Hedges. “Farouk Al-Shara,” *New York Times*, October 31, 1991, A18
<<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdlink?did=116057119&sid=1&Fmt=10&clientId=19872&RQT=309&VName=HNP>>
(accessed: 2011 Jan. 4).

¹¹⁵ “The Madrid Middle East Peace Conference October 31-November 1, 1991” *Foreign Policy Bulletin*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (Nov/Dec 1991): 14.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

able to return.”¹¹⁷ Al-Shara intended to pull no punches in his critique of what he saw as Israeli aggression in the face of Arab disadvantages.

As the speeches ended, each delegation sent representatives to speak with the media in order to put forth their interpretation of how the talks were progressing. In the case of Israel, Deputy Foreign Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, called a news conferences consisting exclusively of Arab reporters, to try and explain and gain sympathy for their cause.¹¹⁸ However in this case, only twenty-five reporters arrived and none were from Syrian news organizations. In a French television interview, Israeli Lieut. Col. Raanan Gissin and Palestinian negotiator Albert Aghazarian, a university professor, traded barbs with each other with regard to having direct talks. In one instance, Col. Gissin asked Aghazarian why if they wanted peace that they could not negotiate back home? Aghazarian retorted to Col. Gissin that it would be possible if not for the Israeli roadblocks.¹¹⁹ The focus of all this baiting by the Israelis was to have bilateral talks continue in Israel rather than outside the region. However, the Arab delegations refused to entertain this idea.

On November 1, the conference was to conclude. Prime Minister Shamir summarized the conference in his final address before he departed for Jerusalem. In his speech, Shamir exclaimed:

“For two days, we have sat in this hall, armed with a lot of patience, to listen to what our Arab neighbors have to say. We have heard much criticism and many charges...But is this what we came here for? Such futile exchanges and rebuttals have been taken place during the last forty-three years at the U.N. and in countless international gatherings. They have not brought us an inch closer to

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 15.

¹¹⁸ Alan Cowell, “Behind the Conference of Babel, A Battle for the High Ground,” *New York Times*, November 1, 1991

<<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdlink?did=113874864&sid=4&Fmt=10&clientId=19872&RQT=309&VName=HNP>> (accessed: 2011 Jan. 6, 2011). It was later commented on after the news conference from an Egyptian journalist that the news conference held by Netanyahu, was neither hostile nor friendly.

¹¹⁹ “The Madrid Middle East Peace Conference October 31-November 1, 1991” *Foreign Policy Bulletin*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (Nov/Dec 1991): 15.

mutual understanding and peace....Nevertheless, we came here out of goodwill, hoping there might be change, a turn for the better in tone and content, that would lead us to a new and more promising chapter.”¹²⁰

The Syrian delegation responded in kind. In a shocking final address, Al-Shara went so far as to hold up an old British “wanted” poster of a much younger Yitzhak Shamir when he was in the Stern Gang. While raising the poster he added, “he (Shamir) kills peace mediators and talks about Syria [and] Lebanon terrorism.”¹²¹ Eventually Prime Minister Shamir and the Israeli delegation would travel back to Israel, leaving very little accomplished by way of an actual agreement.¹²²

This trading of abusive rhetoric between the Israeli and Syrian delegation became the center of the conference and eclipsed any and all negotiating that was taking place in Madrid. As described by Prime Minister Shamir, the conference consisted of “confrontation between Israel and the Arabs and at which the Soviet presence was purely formal and the United States functioned as co-host and troubleshooter.”¹²³

For Secretary Baker, he knew that with the presence of Prime Minister Shamir, President Assad, and Arafat’s meddling with the Palestinian negotiations, the chance for a breakthrough was slim.¹²⁴ The Palestinian perception of the conference was one of showmanship. The negotiators, and subsequent PLO leadership, admit that no real strategy was planned for the talks. Their only goal was to gain wider recognition of the Palestinian issue as well as to convey to the international community that the PLO was the ultimate authority on Palestinian issues.¹²⁵ But the most poignant observation of the conference was best summed up by Aaron Miller, who

¹²⁰ Ibid., 16.

¹²¹ Miller, *The Much Too Promised Land*, p. 231.

¹²² When Prime Minister Shamir decided to leave the conference early, his official excuse was that he could not be out of Israel on the Sabbath, therefore it was important that he return home immediately.

¹²³ Shamir, *Summing Up*, p. 167.

¹²⁴ Miller, *The Much Too Promised Land*, p. 195.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 231.

describes in his book a conversation he had with Eli Rubenstein, a close advisor to Prime Minister Shamir. In his account, Rubenstein quotes an old African king saying, “Sometimes I sit and think, sometimes I just sit.” In this instance, Rubenstein was describing Prime Minister Shamir’s attitude at the conference. When asked what he thought of a speech, Prime Minister Shamir simply answered that he did not know because he was not paying attention.¹²⁶

While nothing tangible in the form of a treaty was accomplished in Madrid, many still held out hope for successful subsequent negotiations. As was part of the agreement, these meetings would occur in Moscow and Washington, D.C. Chances of success in those meetings, however appeared slim. As more time passed without any concrete resolutions, Secretary Baker began to show a lack of interest, especially regarding negotiations with Israeli Prime Minister Shamir, whom he saw as impeding progress.¹²⁷ The hope of possible peace treaties being signed between Israel and its neighbors quickly began to fade.¹²⁸ President Bush, Secretary Baker and the State Department had hoped that with the election of Yitzhak Rabin as Prime Minister along with his Labor Party in June 1992, the United States might have a serious partner in peace. This however would prove not to be the case.

On November 3, 1992, almost exactly one year after the Madrid Peace Conference, President Bush would go on to lose the Presidential election, thereby ending his and Secretary Baker’s bid to bring peace to the Middle East. While some of President Bush’s State Department staff stayed on in the Clinton Administration, many considered the negotiations that began in Madrid dead. It would not be until the unexpected announcement that an accord between the Israelis and

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 230.

¹²⁷ Another reason for Secretary Baker’s lack of interest was the 1992 presidential election, in which many in the administration saw as a tougher than expected challenge from Arkansas governor, Bill Clinton. Secretary Baker would later be asked to resign his post as Secretary of State to work full time on President Bush’s re-election campaign, which he would ultimately lose.

¹²⁸ Miller, *The Much Too Promised Land*, p. 195.

Palestinians had been reached in August 1993, through secret negotiations in Oslo, Norway, that hope for peace in the region was revived.

When news of the Declaration of Principles, or Oslo Accords, was announced, it took many, especially the new Clinton administration, by surprise.¹²⁹ Not backed by the Americans, the United States President Bill Clinton still embraced the negotiations and invited Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat to sign the Accords at the White House to pay homage to a treaty signed in 1978 by then Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. The moment the Oslo Accords was officially signed and the ceremonial handshake was performed on 13 September 1993, the Madrid Peace Conference became all but a memory.

Conclusion

The Madrid Peace Conference was supposed to be an unprecedented gathering of bitter enemies that would, for the first time, put their disputes aside and bring a peaceful resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Due to infighting and mistrust between the parties, Madrid became another name on a long list of failed diplomatic conferences that brought no relief to the long standing Middle East dispute. What made this conference different than all others and therefore a success in the eyes of many was the fact that the United States was successful in gaining the trust and commitment of all parties that attended the conference, which had never been accomplished before. Along with convincing all sides to meet, the conference led to an atmosphere of dialogue that had previously been considered taboo, especially between the Israelis and Palestinians.

¹²⁹ Oren, *Power, Faith, and Fantasy*, p. 575.

This dialogue between the Israelis and Palestinians, which was forged in Madrid, helped create the environment for secret negotiations that led to the Oslo Accords. The Oslo Accords not only reinforced the idea that direct dialogue could bring about an agreement between the disputing parties but it also re-emphasized the land-for-peace policy that was the driving force of negotiations during the successful Camp David Accords.¹³⁰

There are many views that experts have placed on the conference and its achievements. The one thing that most can agree on is the fact that the conference happened at all.¹³¹ Former State Department analyst Dennis Ross believed that Madrid was more about symbolism than practicality. The whole point was to launch the process of negotiations and break the stereotype that Israelis and Arabs could not sit together and negotiate.¹³² Another former State Department analyst, Aaron Miller, concluded that Madrid was intended as stage-setter and an investment to keep Arabs and Israelis at the table.¹³³ He also believed that the conference was not about reaching an agreement between the sides but about forging better relations with the United States and affirming the American position of principal mediator in the Middle East conflict. Any concessions made were not to the disputing parties, but to the United States and Secretary Baker.¹³⁴

However, as time has passed since Madrid, and realities have set it, only one peace treaty, between Israel and Jordan, has been signed. The Oslo Accords would prove to be an imperfect agreement and subsequent negotiations and agreements had to be implemented throughout the

¹³⁰ The treaty, signed at the White House in Washington, D.C., was the culmination of years of negotiations between Israel and Egypt after the 1973 Arab Israeli War. The treaty was a product of the Camp David Accords, that resulted from meetings between Israeli Prime Minister Begin, Egyptian President Sadat, and U.S. President Carter, lasting from September 5-17, 1978. In this Accord, Israel agreed to withdraw from the Sinai and begin Palestinian autonomy talks within three years in exchange for a formal peace treaty with Egypt. See Douglas Little, *American Orientalism*, p. 110.

¹³¹ Baker and De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 512.

¹³² Ross, *The Missing Peace*, p. 80-81.

¹³³ Miler, *The Much Too Promised Land*, p. 270.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 203.

1990's. Yet the chance for peace was still alive. It was not until the beginning of the *Second Intifada*, also known as the *Al-Aqsa Intifada*, in September 2000 that the peace process came to halt. After a decade of negotiating, those who worked closely in the negotiations began to change their view in regard to the peace process.

Two camps have emerged regarding the peace process. There are those who still believe in the peace process and have faith that it can produce a lasting peace deal between Israel and the Arab states. Then there are those that have converted to the idea that the process has failed and that the quest for peace is a fool's dream. One such person is Aaron Miller, a former State Department advisor to President George H.W. Bush and President Bill Clinton.

Miller, who worked very closely with Secretary Baker during the run up and during the Madrid Conference, recently summarized his newfound position in a *Foreign Policy* magazine article. In his article, he states that the peace process has become more about process than peace. In his opinion, three things need to happen in order to achieve a successful peace initiative in the Middle East. The first is to have leaders willing to make the self-sacrifice in order to achieve peace. Second, the leadership must also have the moral legitimacy to take part in the talks. And third, a plan must be present that all sides can live with. As of this date, says Miller, no side is willing to pay the price for peace.¹³⁵

While views on the Arab-Israeli peace process have changed over time, Madrid must be acknowledged for its groundbreaking role in the Arab-Israeli saga. It must also be acknowledge the role of Secretary Baker. Throughout the entire process, James Baker's work cannot be overlooked. While President Bush began the initiative to begin a renewed push for peace in the

¹³⁵ Aaron David Miller, "The False Religion of Mideast Peace: And Why I'm No Longer a Believer," *Foreign Policy Magazine* (May/June, 2010).
<http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/04/19/the_false_religion_of_mideast_peace> (accessed: 14 May 2010).

Middle East, Secretary Baker deserves all the credit for executing the task that was presented to him by President Bush. It was the trust they put in Secretary Baker, who had the confidence of President Bush, that he persuaded the parties to agreed to attend the conference. Without his tireless effort and seemingly endless patience, the conference would not have taken place.

While not a turning point, the Madrid Conference needs to be seen as a stepping stone to the Oslo meetings and future peace-making efforts in the Middle East conflict. Without the groundwork laid in Madrid, Israel would not have gained a peace treaty with Jordan, thereby allowing for less militarized borders. Madrid is significant, while disputed, because it managed to achieve the one thing that was the impediment for any type of peace to be achieved. It brought all sides together, face to face, to confront their problems through words and diplomacy rather than weapons.

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Appendix A

Map of the Middle East¹³⁶



¹³⁶ Perry-Castaneda Library Map Collection, Middle East Map, http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/txu-oclc-192062619-middle_east_pol_2008.jpg (accessed 12 March 2011).

Appendix B

Map of Israel and the Occupied Territories¹³⁷



¹³⁷ Perry-Castaneda Library Map Collection, Israel Map, http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/cia10/israel_sm_2010.gif (accessed 21 March 2011)

Appendix C

Delegates of Madrid Peace Conference¹³⁸



¹³⁸ George Bush Presidential Library, Audio-Visual Archive, Foreign Affairs, Participants of the Middle East Peace Conference ascend the stairs of the Royal Palace, Madrid, Spain, <<http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/gallery.php?id=39>> (accessed 12 March 2011).

Appendix D

President Bush speaks at Madrid Conference¹³⁹



¹³⁹ George Bush Presidential Library, Audio-Visual Archive, Foreign Affairs, President Bush Addressed the Middle East Peace Conference, <http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/gallery.php?id=39> (accessed 12 March 2011).

Vita

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