

ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT AND THE UNITED STATES' COMPREHENSIVE PEACE SETTLEMENT PROCESS (2001-2014)

Humphrey Nwefuru Nwobashi *, Ph.D & Anthony Itumo, Ph.D
Department of Political Science, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki

Abstract

This study examined Israeli-Palestinian conflict with a focus on the US comprehensive peace settlement process. This paper examined this peace option and how it has affected the realization of a two-state solution in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The study adopted explanatory research design, and used qualitative research technique and content analysis. The study adopted the zero-sum two-person game theory which enabled us to understand the win-win or loss-loss attitude of the parties involved. The paper discussed and analysed the research objectives through which we evaluated the research hypotheses and provided the findings. We found that the hegemony of US, interest groups, religious and cultural differences of both parties and the strategic interest of US in the Middle East has made the realization of the two-state solution difficult, and the implications of the failure of US peace settlement process at achieving the goal of resolving the conflict has led to the hatred of United States and her allies by Islamic fundamentalists and proliferation of terrorist groups in the Middle East. We recommended that US seeks the cooperation of all world leaders in which all should face the hard truths of this conflict and the dangers it has posed to world peace by showing more proactive actions and commitment in the resolution of the conflict. US should also change her position as the chief intermediary between the Israelis and the Palestinians and support United Nations peace initiative so as to achieve a two state solution in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Keywords: Conflict, Peace, Process, Resolution, Settlement

Introduction

Middle East region of the world has remained endemic with protracted modern international conflicts of varying dimensions and proportions. The most prominent of the conflicts in this region is the Arab-Israeli conflict. This conflict is between some Arab nations and the State of Israel. Israeli - Palestinian conflict gave rise to the Arab - Israeli conflict. Israeli - Palestinian has remained a flash point and recurrent decimal in international politics (Eze, 2012: 4; Ngar, 2001: 1-10).

The conflict arose when Arab national movement wanted to achieve a Palestinian state on the land they had lived for centuries and the Zionism wanted to establish a nation — state to enable them achieve self determination on the same land (Rouhana, 2006: 15-141). The land of the former Palestine became object

of the conflict. The World Zionist Organization established Jewish National Fund which encouraged Jewish immigration into Palestine and purchased land from the Arabs absentee landowners. In 1917, the Arthur James Balfour who was the Foreign Affairs Secretary of Britain conveyed the British favour for the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people (Jeremy, 2005: 3; ICS, 2011: 1).

On May 14, 1948 Israel declared independence based on the area partitioned to it. On the next day, fighting started in Palestine between the Jewish and Arab forces. Not until Israel declared independence, most of the fighting had always been between local forces (Jawad, 2006: 72-114). In response to the Israelis' declaration of independence, some Arab States become directly involved. The aftermath of the war when it ended fully in 1949, the Israeli forces defeated the Arab forces, controlled about 78% of the territories in UNSCOP's plan and Jerusalem failed to be under international zone. Israel controlled the west of the city while Trans-Jordan now Jordan held to the east.

Of the remaining 22%, Egypt occupied the Gaza strip, while Jordan held to the West Bank. Again, about 750,000 Palestinians became refugees as a result of expulsion, offensives, massacre and panic and fear. Almost none was allowed to return contrary to the UN resolution 194 (Jeremy, 2005, p.5; Jubeh, 2002, pp. 5-11; Lesch & Lustik, 2005, p.48).

Since 1970s to date, the United States of America started to pursue comprehensive peace settlement, to resolve the conflict. Based on this, the United States had over the years adopted various peace measures in her effort to bring a peaceful settlement of the conflict. Some of the peace processes according to Oded (2002: 13); Ledrach (1997, pp.9-13); Klein (2007, pp. 6-11); Eze, (2012, p.43) include but not limited to; Camp David Accord of 1978 conference; Madrid conference of 1991; Oslo Accords of 1993; Hebron Agreement of 1997; Wye River Memorandum 1998; Camp David Summit 2000; Arab Peace Initiative; the Road Map to peace 2000; the Annapolis conference 2007 and the Direct Peace Talk 2003-2004. Notwithstanding these peace moves, in November, 1988, the Palestinian National Council - the Palestinian Parliament in exile in Egypt issued a unilateral declaration of independence of the State of Palestine. The Palestinian uprisings called *intifadas* occurred in December, 1987 and September, 2000 respectively. Terrorist activities against Israel have continued unabated. Israel on the other hand has refused to stop settlement activities.

The State of Israel and the Palestinians have engaged themselves in a protracted violent conflict for many decades. This conflict has attracted the peace efforts of Britain, United Nations, Quartet (comprising US, UN, EU and the Russian Representative), Arab League, United States and the Palestinian -UN Initiative. In spite of these peace efforts, none has been able to produce a final status agreement that could end the conflict. Among these peace efforts, the US comprehensive peace settlement process has remained outstandingly prominent in terms of its currency as competing alternatives for the resolution of the conflict. Notwithstanding its lofty ideals, the conflict is still raging.

The US comprehensive peace settlement process is the term used to represent the United States led efforts to bring about a negotiated peace treaty between the State of Israel and the Palestinian. It is the gradual step-by-step approach adopted by the United States of America to resolve one of the world's most difficult conflicts. It is worrisome that this peace initiative which appears lofty and promising has spanned over four decades making Quandrat (2005) to describe it as "a slogan used to achieve mark time". It has failed to achieve the desired final peace agreement status. This peace initiative has always been constrained by failed promises by both sides of the conflict which have created deadlocks in the peace process.

The major thrust of the study is to examine the US comprehensive peace settlement process in the realization of a two-state solution in Israeli – Palestinian conflict. The US peace plan was chosen among other peace plans because apart from UN peace initiative, other peace plans have been overtaken by event and presently do not attract much of scholars' attention. The peace plan has also in recent times, generated controversies and reactions among scholars.

Despite the controversies which this peace plan has generated currently among scholars (Oded, 2002: 13; Eze, 2012: 43; Onuoha, 2008: 317-326; Pappé, 2004: 176; Sayigh, 1975: 14; Dore, 2009: 109; Allan and Satht, 1997: 15; Fisk, 2005: 536; Dereshowitz, 2005: 12; Alon, 2009: 41-46; Pierre, 2009: 71; Morisson, 2012: 1), there have not been reasonable efforts toward a comprehensive study of this peace initiative in achieving a two-state solution that will about the final peaceful resolution of the Israeli - Palestinian conflict. This is with a view to understanding why this peace plan has failed to be utilized in resolving the conflict.

This study therefore intends to make this modest contribution which would break the jinx by undertaking a comprehensive study of the US peace initiative with a view to determining it's potentials for resolving the protracted Israeli - Palestinian conflict. Based on the foregoing, we pose the following research questions:

- (1) Do the hegemony of US, interest groups, religious and cultural differences of both parties and the strategic interest of US in the Middle East hampered the realization of the two-state solution in the Israeli – Palestinian conflict?
- (2) What are the implications of the failure of US peace settlement process at achieving the goal of resolving the Israeli – Palestinian conflict?

Consequently, the research is guided by the following specific objectives:

2. To establish how the hegemony of US, interest groups, religious and cultural differences of both parties and the strategic interest of US in the Middle East has hampered the realization of the two-state solution in the Israeli – Palestinian conflict.
3. To x-ray the implications of the failure of US peace settlement process at achieving the goal of resolving the Israeli – Palestinian conflict.

Review of Related Literature

The Key Issues in the Conflict

Some scholars have identified and examined the following key issues in the conflict.

Ownership and Control of Former Palestine

Many scholars are of the agreement that dispute is over the ownership of the same land by two peoples who are victims of external forces (Eze, 2012:33; Djerejian, 2010:7-9; Onuoha, 2008:311; Calvocoressi, 2001:381-382). Onuoha (2008:311) and Miller (2003:31) emphasized the centrality of land in the conflict thus:

The basic issue is that two separate groups of people -want to build a state on the same piece of land. The complexity of the issue lies in the fact that the problem in question is one that cannot be resolved in a win-win way. If one nation controls the other will not, while sharing is possible in theory, contending sides usually regard compromise a loss. This is usually true in societies where natural fear and hatred is so ingrained that opposing groups cannot imagine living with or working with the other side but willing to.... take whatever means necessary to ensure group survival and protect their way of life:

Anup (2006: 30) also opines that land is central in the conflict. He stated thus:

The fundamental disagreement is over land. Both Jewish Israelis and Arab Muslim Palestinians claim rights to the region known as Palestinian comparing the current state of Israel, the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

These statements confirm that Palestinian-Israeli conflict stems from competing Jewish and Arab claims to the land in former Palestine. The conflict took more radical dimension as a result of the rise in the late 19th century in national sentiments and movements, as exemplified in Zionism and Arab nationalism.

The right over this piece of land has generated unending and controversial debate among scholars. It is therefore, plausible to clarify the scholars views into Pro Israelis' views and Pro Palestinians' views. On Pro-Israeli views, Anup (2006: 30) asserts thus:

Israelis trace their roots to this land back to ancient Biblical times as the land in which Moses, Jesus and the likes lived. It was then known as Israel as most who know a bit about the Bible are familiar with. Being a fundamental aspect of the Bible, most Christians share this belief that Israel is the homeland of the Jewish people.

Lending his voice also over Israelis right to the land, Krauthammer (2005: 50) opines:

Israel became a nation about 1300 BC, two thousand years before the rise of Islam. The people of modern day Israel share the same language

and culture shaped by the Jewish heritage and religion passed through generations starting with the founding father Abraham. Since the Jewish conquest in 1271 BCE, the Jews have had dominion over the land for one thousand years with a continuous presence in the land for the past 3,300 years.

Dunner (2006: 48) supports the above position that:

The ancient Jewish Kingdom of Israel and Judea had been successfully conquered by several foreign empires. In 135 CE, the Roman Empire defeated the third revolt against its rule and consequently expelled the surviving Jews from Jerusalem and its surroundings, selling many of them into slavery. The Roman Province was then renamed Palestine. The Arab conquered Palestine in the 7th century in which the remaining inhabitants were mostly assimilated into Arab culture and Muslim religion. It becomes part of the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire in 1516.

On the other hand, the Palestinians' views are of the belief that Palestinians lay claim to the land based on long standing occupation of the area. In this regard, Owen (2002: 201) narrates that:

The Palestinians claim a long standing connection with the land. They point out that the Arabs are also the descendants of Abraham but through Ishmael, Esau and others, they are in origin, cousins to the Jews. Those who live today in the disputed area of the West Bank and Gaza Strip claim equal right to the land on the basis of descent from Abraham, but they also base their claims on centuries of occupation of the land and argue that the Jews from whom Israeli state was established are more recent immigrants with less claim to live there.

Elystain (2009: 43) opines also that the Palestinians regard Israel as their homeland and see the Jewish as presently in Israel as European settlers that sojourned there during and after Second World War. He states:

Palestinians view Israel as their homeland and the land of their ancestors - the Canaanites. They have some of their religion most holy places like the al-Aqsa Mosque, the second holiest place in Islam ... They see the Jewish population as European settlers that came during and after the Second World War.

In the same view, Rouhana (2006: 115-116) argues that Palestinians has right on the land based on the fact that:

The Palestinians are an ancient people with historical roots in Palestine that date back to before 'the emergence of the Zionist Movement. Palestine is the exclusive homeland of the Palestinian Arab nation within the borders of the British mandate. Had it not been for the Zionist

enterprise, Palestinian could have developed into a Palestinian State under rule by British mandate as did other Arab countries. If the Jews have a right to an independent state on the basis of their long time suffering, including the Holocaust, then this right should be realized outside of Palestine because the latter is the home of Palestinian people.

On critical examinations of the two contrasting views, it is observed that there maximalist positions have transformed the conflict in its present status and injected into the conflict six critical issues namely: the status of Jerusalem, border, security, settlement, right of return of refugees and division of Palestinian internal politics. These issues arise progressively as the conflict escalated.

Status of Jerusalem

On the issue of the status of Jerusalem, the three largest Abrahamic religions and peoples — Judaism and Judea; Christianity and Christians and Islam - Arab or Muslims entity claim Jerusalem as their religions and historical place. Israel asserts that the city should not be divided and should remain unified within Israel as political and undivided capital of Israel (Eze, 2012: 37). Sheldon (1991: 24) and Shlomo (2009: 2-3) collaborate these positions based on biblical and historical evidence:

For over 3,300 years Jerusalem has been the Jews capital. Jerusalem has never been the capital of any Arab or Muslim entity..... In the Jewish Bible, Jerusalem is mentioned over 669 times and Zion (which refers to Jerusalem and sometimes the land of Israel is mentioned 823 times. The Christian Bibles mentioned Jerusalem 154 times and Zion 7 times. Jerusalem is not mentioned once in Koran. Jerusalem is also not mentioned in the Palestinian Covenant. David established the city of Jerusalem as the capital of the whole land of Israel. Mohammed never came to Jerusalem.

He maintains that the Jews respect the holy places or sites while the Palestinians more often have desecrated the holy sites. Palestine on the other hand claims at least the parts of the city which were not part of Israel prior to 1967. Harch (2007: 69) insists that Jerusalem is the third highest city in Islamic religion after Mecca and Medina and the place where Mohammed made two important journeys in his accession into heaven. The Palestinian National Authority PNA (2009: 9) declared that:

Jerusalem is our people's religion, culture, economic and political centre. It is the flower of cities and capital of capitals. It cannot be anything but the internal capital of the future Palestinian state. Jerusalem is under threat of the occupying authority. The occupying authority is implementing a systematic plan to alter the city's land marks and its geography and demographic character in order to forcibly create facts on ground, ultimately separating it from its Palestinian surroundings and eradicating its Arab Palestinian heritage.

The claim and counter claim of Jerusalem by the Jewish and Palestinians possess the issue of maximalist position on the conflict.

Border

As at now, the Israeli State does not have a defined border while Palestinians still remain stateless people. The challenge of border stems from the 55% and 42%, and the remaining 3% constituted Jerusalem which is considered as international zone, in favour of the Jews in the partition plan of UNGA of 1947. After the Arab-Israeli war of 1948, it changed to 78% and 22%. It is this 22% that is being contested for and creating a problem of border and contiguity for the future Palestinian State which has remained an inherent issue in the conflict. The 22% now constitutes West Bank including East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip which Palestinians view as the future Palestinian State. Till date, the final borders of a Palestinian and Israeli States have remained unresolved (Onuoha, 2008: 317; Jeremy, 2005: 4).

Settlement and Expansion

On issue of settlement of the areas annexed after the six day war of 1967, the Palestinians and international community believed the area is an occupied territory while the Israelis dismiss the claim saying it is a disputed area (Eze, 2012: 49). Gazser (1997: 207) and Ross (2004: 1) gave the following reasons why the area is an occupied territory rather than a disputed one as argued by Israelis.

- That since the territory is no longer under the control of its own authorities but under that of a hostile force, that body of international law is applicable to the situation which deals specifically with occupied territory,
- That the Israeli Supreme Court as long as 1979 in the Bethel case held that Israel has been holding these territories under a belligerent occupation,
- That the argument that Israel is an occupying power because some of its forces withdrew from area A of the occupied territory is also untenable,
- That the Oslo Accords left Israel with ultimate legal responsibility over the occupied Palestinian territories,
- That the least is not per se the military presence of the occupying forces in all of the territory, but the extent to which the occupying power, through its military presence, is exercising effective control.
- That in so far as the Supreme Court of Israel, international Court of Justice ICT and all the major actors (i.e. the Quartet of the UN, US, EU and Russia agree that the territory in question is occupied, then it must be occupied.

Refugee Problem

The 1948 and 1967 wars created a problem of 750,000 refugees, making majority of the Palestinian people as refugees and displaced persons living in the Palestinian territory and abroad (PNA, 2009: 10). Most refugees live under

oppressive and harsh conditions.

A debate emerged from the right of return of the refugees. Ever since the refugee problem arose, in which the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution of 181. Palestinians and the United Nations have claimed that the Palestinians have a right to return to their former homes (Jeremy, 2005: 5). Israel insists that the right of return will mean an end to Israeli State, because of their numerical strength and their terrorist orientations.

Security

On security, the main problem arose from the unwillingness of Arab world to accept the existence of a Jewish State in its midst (Shlomo, 2007: 3). It is seen as insecurity tool created by the Arab world for the purpose of fighting and destroying Israel. From Israeli point of view, it has moved from a territorial one to an existential one between two peoples living on the same piece of land.

Comprehensive Peace Settlement Process

Scholars identified the peace moves in the Israeli — Palestinian conflict (Oded, 2002: 138; Eze, 2012: 43; Onuoha, 2008: 317-326; Pressman, 2003: 5-43; Qurei, 2006: 11) to include;

- Camp David conference of 1978,
- Madrid conference of 1991,
- Oslo Accords of 1993,
- Hebron Agreement of 1997,
- Nye river Memorandum of 1998,
- Camp David Summit of 2000,
- The Road Map to peace of 2003,
- The Annapolis conference of 2007.

In 1978, former President of America, Jimmy Carter invited the then Israeli Prime Minister, Menachem Begin and the Egyptian President, Anwar Sadat to a summit at the United States Presidential Resort, Camp David. The summit lasted from September 5 to 7, 1978 in which Carter acted as intermediary. Based on resolution of 242, the three leaders adopted a comprehensive settlement of the Arab - Israeli conflict. It achieved a peace treaty signed on March 26, 1979 that made Egypt to recover the Sinai Peninsula. The negotiations to achieve a Palestinian State which began on Monday 25, 1979 have remained elusive till date. On July, 1980, Israel annexed east Jerusalem. The Palestinian rejected all the provisions in the accord pertaining their autonomy.

Baron (1984) quoted in Onuoha (2008: 321) and Pressman (2003: 19), explained the issues thus:

As was the case sixty years earlier with Balfour Declaration, the Palestinians were confronted with decisions which would determine their destiny without their being consulted and without their being given the chance to decide freely on their future..... The

Camp David Accords not only afford them merely a secondary role, but perhaps more seriously divide them into categories each of which is promised potentially a different solution.

In close examination, the Camp David conference failed because it did not nominate a Palestinian representative and the annexation of east Jerusalem which further stalled the peace process.

The Madrid conference of 1991, immediately after the first Gulf War, which lasted for three days, started from October 30 - November 1, 1991. It marked a turning point and it was called by the then US President George H. Bush in Madrid between Israel and Arab nations involved in the Arab - Israeli -Conflict. Syria, Jordan and Lebanon participated in the conference. The conference served only as a preamble to direct bilateral and multi-lateral talks between Israel and its neighbours (Eze, 2012: 44). After a lot of horse trading, the parties to the conflict stated their positions (Onuoha, 2008: 322). For Shamir, this meant peace first with other things to follow; for the Arabs, it meant withdrawal from the occupied territories first and then peace. With these positions and heightened acrimony between Syria and Israel, America spelt out but the American concept of a compromise in order to order priorities between Arab and Israel positions.

Land, peace and security are inseparable elements in the search for a comprehensive settlement peace by itself is unachievable without a territorial solution and security a territorial solution by itself will not resolve the conflict without also being in peace and security security by itself is impossible to achieve without a territorial solution and peace (Le, Monde, Nov 3-4, 1991 quoted in Onuoha, 2008: 322).

Washington was proposed as the place and December 4, 1991 as the date for the second phase of the peace conference. The second round of the conference eventually began on December 10 and lasted to 18 December, 1991, but became deadlock. With the emergence of President Bill Clinton, the peace process started all over again (Onuoha, 2008: 323).

The Oslo conference took place at Oslo, Norway. It led to Oslo accord of 1993. In the words of Pappé (2004: 176), Israeli officials led by Yitzhak Rabin and Palestinian Liberation Organisation led by Yasser Arafat in 1993 strove to find a peaceful solution through what became known as the Oslo peace process. A crucial milestone in this progress was Arafat's letter of recognition of Israel's right to exist. The crux of the Oslo agreement was that Israel would gradually cede control of the Palestine territories over to Palestine in exchange for peace.

Sayigh (1975: 14) quoted Rabin, the then prime minister of Israel saying: "we have fought against you the Palestinians, we say today in a loud and clear voice enough of blood and tears. The peace process suffered a serious setback as a result of the assassination in 1995 of Israeli Prime Minister, Rabin. Dore (2009: 109) noted that:

The scenario became worse with the election of a new Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu who declared a tit-for-tat policy which he termed "reciprocity" in which Israel would not engage in further peace process unless Arafat discontinued with what Netanyahu defined as the "Palestinian revolving door policy" i.e., incitement and direct support of terrorism.

The Hebron agreement came into being following the contradictory elements in the dynamics of the Oslo peace process. Israel and Palestinian Liberation Organization negotiated that lasted from January 7 to January 17, 1997. It discussed the redeployment of Israeli military forces in Hebron in line with the Oslo accords. In this case, Israel was to withdraw her troops in 80% of the Hebron and Palestinian Authority would cease from all kinds of terrorist attacks. Allan and Satloft (1997: 15) are of the opinion that the Hebron agreement was a major landmark. However, Quandt (2007: 23) believed Israel was the loser. The Palestinians on the other hand were apprehensive of the agreement (Adoni, 2002: 14). This created a double jeopardy. Adoni condemned the principle of "reciprocity" in Israeli would withdraw troops while Palestinians would ensure Israel's security. Michael and Sela (2006: 275) also showed dissatisfaction with the Hebron accord.

The Wye River memorandum was another agreement negotiated between Israel and the Palestinian Authority to implement the earlier interim agreement of 28 September, 1995. It was brokered by the United States at the Aspen Institute Wye River Conference Centre which resulted to an agreement signed on October 23, 1998 (Ross, 2004: 237; Gellman, 1998: 1). The Wye River memorandum (Fisk, 2005: 536) called for the Palestinians and Israelis to be more effective in carrying out their reciprocal responsibility in terms of deployments and security, implement internationally accepted norms of human rights and rule of law and to be guided by the need to protect the public, respect human dignity and avoid harassment; enhance economic cooperation through the reactivation of all standing committees and ensure immediate resumption of permanent status negotiation on an accelerated basis and the determination to adhere to the mutual goal of reaching an agreement by May, 1999. However, despite the lofty goals, the Wye River memorandum was attacked from a Palestinian analyst, Fisk (2005: 336) who maintains it was intrinsically unfair in the Palestinian side. The agreement if it were implemented would have returned around 14 percent of the 22 percent of the mandate Palestine left to the Palestinians as opposed to 90 percent expected under the Oslo Accords. The outbreak of the September 2000 Al-Aqsa intifada and the counter attacks from the Israeli forces shattered the memorandum.

Another strategic peace initiative aimed at resolving the Israeli - Palestinian conflict was the Camp David Summit of 2000. Dereshowitz (2005: 12) remarks that the Camp David summit under Bill Clinton Administration provided the best opportunity for peace between Israel and Palestinian. This summit according to Dereshowitz made the then Israeli Prime Minister, Ehud Barak to make to make the

following concessions for peace:

- Palestinian control of 95% of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.
- Palestinian sovereignty over East Jerusalem.
- 69 Jewish settlers to be ceded to Israel.
- Control of 10% of the West Bank territory by Israel.
- The Palestinians to forego the "Right of Return of Palestinian refugees who fled since 1948.

The lofty ideals of the Camp David summit notwithstanding, Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority rejected them. For Hussein and Malley (2001: 48), the rejection was justified. Akram (2001) stated that "if he were a Palestinian, he would have rejected Camp David as well". Morris (2002: 28) recounted that Yasser Arafat's rejection caused the collapse of the Camp David proposals. Unfortunately, Arafat failed to make counter offer. Yaar and Herman accused Arafat for the failure of the summit by stating that no tenable solution would be crafted which would satisfy both Israeli and Palestine demands. President Clinton also blamed Arafat stating "I regret that in 2000 Arafat missed the opportunity to that nation to come into being" and hoped for a day a State of Palestine in a just and lasting peace (Noam, 2003: 195). The bone of contention was giving up right of return. Hassner (2007: 81) had contrary view; to him it was the failure of Participants at the negotiation to include religious leaders that stalled the peace process.

The Road Map for peace is another round of peace initiative which was also championed by the United States with the utmost aim of finding an amicable solution to the Israeli - Palestinian conflict. It was a joint proposal by the quartet - the United States, the European Union, Russia and the United Nations. On June 24, 2002, President George W. Bush called for an independent Palestinian State that would live side by side with Israeli. Wiseman (2009: 23) sees the road map for peace settlement as representing a starting point toward achieving the vision of two states, a secure state of Israel and a viable, peaceful democratic Palestine. Ibrahim (2004: 22) applauded the road map for peace but decried the absence of an international force in the occupied territories to supervise its implementation. However, Gazi (2004) expresses reservation about the road map for peace and the Israeli government's stand. Oziee (2004: 28) has pessimistic conclusion as to its eventual outcome. In other words, peace and stability in the region are still far in the distance. Yosef (2005: 52) cautions that Israel cannot agree to the creation of a Palestinian State until the terrorist groups are disarmed. On the futility of the road map, Isabel (2004: 53) sternly states that giving Palestinians Statehood is opening more avenues for continued terrorist attack against Israel. On the other hand, Shilon (2005: 89) observes that lack of trust between Israelis and Palestinians will mar any attempt at bringing peace to them.

The skepticism and criticisms expressed by scholars, the Israelis and the Palestinian over the road map for peace came to the fore in which by the end of 2003, the Palestinian Authority had not prevented terrorism and Israeli had neither

withdrawn from Palestinian areas occupied nor frozen settlement expansion. For benefit of doubt, the requirements of phase I of the road map were not fulfilled and the road map has also failed to continue. The failure of the road map for peace in the view of Levin (2006: 422) "is principally due to the distrust among the Israelis and Palestinians while President Bush on May 8, 2004, in an interview with Egypt's Al-Ahram Newspaper, attributed the failure of the road map for peace to the resurgence of violence.

The Annapolis conference was another Middle East peace conference held on November 27, 2007, at the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, United States. The conference established for the first time a two -states solution. This was enshrined as the mutually agreed — upon agenda in order to address the Israeli - Palestinian conflict. The both parties in the conflict demonstrated an understanding that the final state Palestinian — Israeli peace will be a two state solution. Moreover, the context of the conference did include adversarial position from the negotiators against the Israel. In the conference, the US plays the major mediator role while the other three members assume lower status positions (Rabbi, 2008: 6-7). Olmert and Abbas in a joint statement attacked the outcome of the conference. Attacking the outcome of the conference, Lior (2007: 28) also states that:

No leader in any generation has the right to give always Eretz Israel We call on the Jews abroad and especially on community leaders and rabbis to join us in our efforts against this treaty and its implementation. Together, we will save the people of Israel from the government terrible plan. Peace would only be achieved by cleansing the country of Arabs and resettling them in the countries where they came from.

On Obama's assumption of office, Alon (2009: 41-46) urged him to take resounding steps toward resolving the Palestinian conflict. He further suggested: an application of tough love in dealing with Israel; prodding both Israelis and Palestinians to change the nature of their daily encounters and overall relationship; offer Arab extremists a choice by reaching out to groups like Hamas; embracing the Arab peace initiative. Pierre (2009: 71) suggested Obama to pursue the following: Israelis right to exist, Palestinians right to exist, end and dismantle of Israeli settlements and the West bank wall be moved back to the 1967 boundaries as stipulated by the United Nations resolution 242. Obama made manifest his policy trust of resolving the conflict in his address to the Arab World in Cairo on June 4, 2009. On Israeli side, he spoke thus:

Around the world the Jewish people for centuries were persecuted. And anti-Semitism in Europe culminated in an unprecedented Holocaust where Jews were enslaved, tortured, shot and gassed to death by the third Reich. Six million Jews killed, more than the entire Jewish population of Israel today. Denying that fact is baseless, it is ignorant and it is hateful. Threatening Israel with destruction or repeating vile stereotypes about Jews is deeply wrong and only serves to evoke in the memories while

preventing the peace that the people of this region deserve (www.obamaspeech.com/cairo retrieved on March 18, 2014).

On the side of Palestinians:

it is also undeniable that the Palestinian people, Muslims and Christians have suffered in pursuit of a homeland. For more than 60 years they have endured the pain of dislocation. Many wait in refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza and neighbouring lands for a life of peace and security that they have never been able to live. They endure the daily humiliation, large and small that come with occupation. So let there be -no doubt, the situation for Palestinian people is intolerable. America will not turn our backs or the legitimate Palestinian aspiration for dignity opportunity and a state of their own (www.obamaspeech.com/cairo retrieved on March 18, 2014).

Obama admonishes both parties to stop pointing accusing finger on each other and to live up to each to their responsibilities so that their children can grow up together without fear (www.obama.com/cairo, retrieved 03/18/14). The Obama speech elicited some reactions. Some extracted honesty and truth in Obama's speech, other saw the speech differently. Mac (2009: 16) supports Obama speech over reframing of Israel and Palestine. For Zathran (2009: 23) the speech did a lot of good things. On the contrary, Kerrick (2009: 43) was disappointed as he said the speech was the weakest part.

The Obama's administration strategies in the resolution of Israeli - Palestinian conflict moved from "proximity talks" to direct peace talks which commenced on September 2, 2010. Currently US imposed deadline for completing 'framework' for peace talks by the end of April 29, 2014. He urged both parties to be ready to move forward in the spirit of compromise and cooperation during separate meetings with Abbas Mahmoud on 17/03/14 and Benjamin Netanyahu on 3/03/14 (Rechie Trimble Dream, March 17, 2014 www.abcnews.80.com/blogs/politics/2Q14/03, retrieved March 18, 2014).

Abbas called on Israel to release the remaining prisoners by the end of March to show it is serious about peace efforts. Obama presses Abbas to help break stalemate with Israel (www.molalereuters.com/article/id, retrieved March 18, 2014). The Palestinians have threatened to resume their campaign for formal UN recognition if talks fail.

Theoretical Framework

As a result of the nature of this study, the zero sum two person game theory was adopted. The choice of zero sum two person game theory is in line with number of choices available to the parties involved in the conflict and the US peace moves actors. The zero sum game will aptly explain the strategies Israelis and Palestinians have adopted in the conflict situations of the Palestinian - Israeli conflict which have involved arms struggles, numerous peace conferences and

accords. The game theory is associated with the works of Mahajan (1988); Piano and Rugs (1973); Neuman and Morgenstern (1963); Shubik (1967); Varma (1975); Agena (2010). The central theme of the theory is that there are two parties to the game of politics. It is use in political science for the study and understanding of international problems and how the parties involved in them behave. Those parties can be individuals, or institutions. Each party is more interested to win the game. The theory seeks to identify and explain patterns and regularities in the way people confronted with conflict situations behave and actually make decisions. It provides platform or formal model for identifying and understanding the optimum or the most rational strategy which actors in decision or bargain making contexts pursue. The players employ a lot of strategies that would minimize loss while maximizing the possible gains or pay - offs.

The relevance of the theory is anchored on the understanding that the winner takes all syndromes that has characterized the conflict. It has created a situation in which what one player wins is equal to what his opponent losses, making the sum of the outcome for the two players to be zero. Represent thus; pay - off for the winner to be $+x$, while that of the loser is $-x$, the two pay - offs added, we shall continued to have in the conflict $x - f(-x) = 0$; $x - x = 0$. Palestinians and Israelis have continued to adopt the game theory approach which has created a seemingly uncertain situation.

Methodology

The study adopted explanatory research design. It enabled us to answer the research questions correctly and evaluate the hypotheses appropriately. This research design allowed us to test the game theory that explained the behavioural calculus of the two parties to the conflict as well as the US peace moves actors.

This study which is qualitative in nature used secondary method of data collection. Basically, data collection was through secondary sources. The sources include textbooks, journal articles, government documents, periodicals and internet materials. Data for analysis exist in qualitative form. We carried out the three complementary steps of qualitative data analysis; data processing, data analysis and data interpretation.

Discussion and Analysis

This section attempts to discuss and analyse the critical components and variables in the study in tandem with objectives of the study and evaluation of hypotheses in order to provide reliable findings. Therefore, the task here is to examine the US comprehensive peace settlement process in the realization of a two-state solution in the Israeli – Palestinian conflict.

Understanding the Goals of US Comprehensive Peace Settlement Process

Our focus is to identify the ideological foundations and orientation that informed coming into being of comprehensive peace settlement process. On that the side of peace, Quandt (2005) says:

Sometime in the mid 1970s, the term peace process became widely used to describe the American led efforts to bring about a negotiated peace between Israel and her neighbours. The phrase stuck and ever since it has been synonymous with gradual step-by-step approach to resolving one of the world's most difficult conflicts. In the years since 1967, the emphasis in Washington has shifted from the spelling out of the ingredients of "peace" to the process" of getting there on how issues be resolved— the process — rather than on substance, what should be done? The best it is what has been the peace process has been about. At worst, it has been little more than a slogan used to achieve mark time.

On all attempts to create a peace path which would lead to peace is the fact that more often than not promises to carry out "good well measures" were not carried out by both sides. These failed promises more often than not created deadlocks in the peace process.

Furthermore, negotiations to attain agreement on the "final status" agreement have been interrupted by several outbreaks of hostilities. The result is that both Israelis and Palestinians have grown weary of the process. Israelis have shown concern over the Gaza Strip controlled by the Hamas, who do not want peace with a Jewish State. According to Jews views, this limits the ability of the Palestinians to make peace with Israel and enforce it. Israel maintains that even violent over take of the Gaza Strip by the Hamas will result to the creation of an unstable new State (ZOA, retrieved January 14, 2014). Again the Palestinians' insistence on the right of return of refugees into Israel, which is believed, would destroy the Jewish character of Israel makes peace negotiation here difficult for both sides.

On the side of Palestinians, the continued occupation, settlement and expansion effort in the West Bank restricts the area available for the realization of a Palestinian State. Major currents issues between the two sides:

- Borders and division of the land;
- Strong emotions relating to the conflict on both sides;
- Palestinians' concern over Israeli settlement;
- Israeli security concern over terrorism, safe borders, incitement and borders;
- Right to return of Palestinian refugees.

On US views on the peace process, US officials, citizens and lobbying groups have maintained a policy that Israel must give up some of the land that it conquered in 1967 war in order to achieve peace and that Palestinian must actively prevent terrorism, and that Israel has unconditional right to exist. On the side of Israeli, peace ought to be negotiated on the basis of giving up some control of the occupied territories in return for a stop to the conflict and violence and PLO not Hamas to be her negotiating partners. On the side of Palestinian, the Israeli must

give up the occupied territories, allow a right of return and apologize for the wrongs done to Palestinians (Pappe, 2004).

The Factors that Account for Failure of the US Comprehensive Peace Settlement Process

The failure of the US comprehensive peace process to resolve Israeli – Palestinian conflict predicts the availability of factors that drive them. The factors that drive the conflict are; US hegemony, avalanche of interest groups; Israelis dominance in the Middle East regional power; religion and cultural differences; and the US strategic interest in the Middle East.

Concerning the US hegemony, the United States of America holds a preponderance of power in the international system. This followed her victory over Germany and Japan during the World War II and facilitated by the exhaustion of former Soviet Union in the Cold War which led to its dissolution (Goldstein, 2003: 99). As a result of these extreme power disparities, US usually dominate the affairs and rules of the United Nations. Arising the hegemonic status of America, she often favoured unilateral approach to some critical world issues and expected the world to comply (Goldstein, 2003: 403).

The dominance of the US in world politics is highlighted by Goldstein (2003: 304) when he stated that "if there is a President of the world" it is more likely the US President than the UN Secretary General". The hegemony of US factor has led US to pursue the peace process unilaterally and threaten the UN initiative with its veto.

Interest groups have affected the outcomes of the peace processes and did also challenges the Palestinian UN initiative in the attainment of a two state solution. These interests groups include the Arab nations, the US, the Jews in Diaspora especially the American Jews. These groups whose interest define the positions of the parties involved in the conflict drive the differences inherent in the two peace options and affect the realization of a two state solution in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Arab nations had in 1948 and 1967 joined forces with the Palestinians to fight Israel; the former Soviet Union assisted the Palestinians while America remained committed to Israelis containment of the conflict (Calvocoressi, 2001: 438).

US strategic interest in the Middle East is another factor that serves as one of the drivers of the differences between the peace options. Oil is the major component of the US's national interest. Incidentally, the large deposit of oil in the Middle East is very strategic and important to the world especially the United States of America. Oil has remained a driver of modern technology and US has remained technological strong because of oil. Chandra (1994: 251) opined that "petroleum is the blood of modern, technology and the Middle East is sailing in the sea of petroleum. The vast supply of oil has rendered this region a vital strategic end in itself. The region contains about 15% of US oil".

The above assertion demonstrates that US will always act in-response to her national interests and oil constitutes a critical component of her national interest. The strategic place of oil in the overall life of the America is the fact that oil is a strategic commodity and the life blood of economic well being of US. It points to

the fact that US depends upon the region's oil. In furthering this interest, Israel is seen as the strong ally of US.

The Implications of the failure of the US Comprehensive Peace Settlement in Resolving the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

The US comprehensive peace process has failed to independently resolve the Israeli - Palestinian conflict. The failure in resolving this protracted conflict has negative and devastating implications for the geo-political stability of the Middle East which in turn has many negative effects globally. The failure to resolve this most dreaded world conflict in recent times is the principal cause of the recurrent instability that characterized Middle East geopolitics. It has remained the main cause of international terrorism (Landis, 2010: 10).

He opined that Al-Queda was founded because of it and it also gave birth to Hamas and Hezbollah. Iran supports Hezbollah and Hamas, adducing the primary reason why Iranian nuclear programme is currently been opposed by United States and her interested allies. It is the main brain behind the virulence of Islamic fundamentalism and its rejection of Western cultures (Landis, 2010: 10). It is the basis of the hatred of the United States of America as well as that of the Western nations by Islamic fundamentalist, still polarizing the world into dramatically opposed blocs. The conflict has seriously hampered the integration of the Muslim world into the comity of nations. The conflict has prevented the enthronement of more democratic governments within Islamic world.

The failure of successive United States governments to end the conflict, her incessant use of veto against Palestinians and in favour of the Israelis in the United Nations have all cast the American people as favouring Israeli interest over those of Palestinian, and by extension, over the Muslim world (Kelman, 2008: 62-66). In-addition, her support to the Israelis in terms of weapons, funding, and political backing for Israel to maintain the occupation, cast doubt to Americans' unbiased position in the matter. The implications are that all attempts at achieving the goal of resolving the conflict have had no success. This made Kelman (2008: 62-68) to opine that: "United States is the major obstacle to the resolution of the Israeli - Palestinian conflict. To him, despite the claims by the United States of being an honest "broker" between Israelis and the Palestinians, she has always favoured Israelis.

Conclusion and Recommendations

A study of the Israeli - Palestinian conflict and the US comprehensive peace settlement has shown that armed struggle employed by the Palestinians had always escalated the conflict. The armed struggle produced the 1920, 1921, 1927, 1948, and the 1967 wars, engendered the uprisings (intifadas) of 1987 and 2000. We consider this option ineffective in the resolution of the conflict.

The peace process has had long delays in discussing the substantial issues in the conflict which had resulted in deadlocks as result of lack of faith and trust in the peace process. The failure of US comprehensive peace settlement process at

achieving the goal of resolving the conflict has led to the hatred of United States and her allies by Islamic fundamentalists and proliferation of terrorist groups in the Middle East.

We recommended that there is a need for US to seek the cooperation of all world leaders in which all should face the hard truths of this conflict and the dangers it has posed to world peace by showing more proactive actions and commitment in the resolution of the conflict, and US should change her position as the chief intermediary between the Israelis and the Palestinians and support United Nations peace initiative so as to achieve a two state solution in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

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