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By Martin Indyk

The Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies had the honor of hosting outgoing US Ambassador to Israel Martin Indyk's farewell address before his return to the US, on July 12, 2001. The following is the text of Ambassador Indyk's speech, which contains a number of significant observations and recommendations, both about where Israel has been, and where it is headed.

Almost exactly six years ago, some of you will recall that I addressed a similar audience in this very same hall at the beginning of my first tour of duty as Ambassador in Israel. I had just come from two years in the White House serving as President Clinton's Middle East Advisor at the National Security Council, helping to formulate policy towards the Middle East. I took advantage of that occasion six years ago to lay out our strategy for the Middle East. To those of you who were there, I am amazed that you came back to hear me again, but I am grateful that you did. You might recall my argument. It went something like

this: We were, at the beginning of the Clinton Administration, at a unique moment in the history of the Middle East. The collapse of the Soviet Union, the defeat of Saddam Hussein, the combination of those two watershed events, had ended decisively the era of super-power competition in the Middle East, a competition which had fueled the Arab-Israeli conflict for every decade since the Second World War, and had at the same time dealt a decisive blow to the Arab military option against Israel and the specter of an Eastern front coalition that would make war on Israel.

The United States, as a result, was in a position of unchallenged dominance in the Middle East, that manifested itself in the opening of the Madrid Conference in October of 1992, which launched direct Arab-Israeli peace negotiations on all tracks simultaneously: Syrian track, Lebanese track, Jordanian track and Palestinian track under, you will recall, the Jordanian umbrella. In addition to that, by the time that Bill Clinton

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political discourse. The author analyzes the political concepts currently prevailing among the Arab public in Israel and delineates possible steps that Israel should take in an attempt to bridge the gaps which have developed between Arabs and Jews in Israel.

The substance of the article by **Brig. Gen. (res.) Shlomo Brom** was first presented at the annual Aharon Yariv Memorial Conference on the State of the Nation. The author assesses the significance of the outcomes of the IDF's withdrawal from Southern Lebanon, using the events of the last year as a basis. Brom analyzes the various assumptions that served those who both favored and opposed a unilateral withdrawal, with the goal of determining which of these expectations have been matched by developments on the ground.

had come to power, we had a government in Israel under the leadership of Yitzhak Rabin, of blessed memory, which had a mandate to take calculated risks for peace. So, because of this uniquely positive environment, we decided to try to take advantage of the moment, take advantage of this window of opportunity, as it was referred to at the time, to try to transform the Middle East, to try to bring it into the 21st century in a

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condition of comprehensive peace, in which all the vast potential of this region so long misspent on war could be unleashed for the good of all its people in a new era of peace.

Our strategy for achieving that objective involved two branches: The first was the policy which became known as 'dual-containment.' It was designed to contain the influence of what we then labeled the rogue states of Iraq and Iran. American diplomats don't use that terminology any more. We judged that given our dominance in the Gulf region, our vital interest there could best be protected by abandoning the policy of playing one regional power off against the other -

a policy which had been the hallmark of previous administrations, and which had helped to produce the disasters of the Iranian revolution and then the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

We faced at the beginning of the Clinton Administration two regimes - in Iraq and Iran - that were fundamentally hostile to the United States. Our approach was to try to contain both of them rather than play one off against the other, and prevent their influence in this way from spreading across the Gulf to our much weaker allies on the Arabian Peninsula, i.e., Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf Arab states.

The second branch of our strategy was to make a heroic effort to try to achieve a comprehensive peace between Israel and all of your neighbors, Palestinians, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. We believed there was a symbiotic relationship between the two branches of this strategy: the more successful we could be at containing the influence of Iraq and Iran, the easier it would be to achieve a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace; and, the more successful we could be at achieving a comprehensive peace, the more isolated Iraq and Iran would become and the more successful our policy of dual-containment. And, of course, the opposite was true, too: if we couldn't succeed in one, it would disadvantage our efforts in the other.

Six years later, now at the end of the second Clinton Administration, and the first six months of the Bush Administration, the end of my own tenure as Ambassador here in Israel, how did we do? More importantly, what are the lessons we can learn from

this experience? On the dual containment front, we actually did much better than is generally perceived. Of course, we set the barrier much lower. The expectations were much lower. Containment is a much lower objective than achievement of comprehensive peace. Nevertheless, in the case of Iran, the export of the Iranian revolution was halted. They failed to spread their revolution to the neighboring Gulf States, to Algeria, or to Egypt, although they certainly tried. Their efforts to acquire weapons of mass destruction were slowed, but obviously this continues to need a high intensity effort to slow down that pace. However, their sponsorship of terrorism and opposition to the peace process remains today a big problem. It's increasingly evident in the West Bank and Gaza, where Iranian support for Hamas and more significantly in recent days, Iranian support for Hizballah operations in the West Bank and Gaza, is very problematic and requires us and you to pay real attention to it. But in itself, Iranian opposition to the peace process and sponsorship of terrorism were not enough to stop the peace process from moving forward if it was able to move forward on its own momentum.

Where we did fail with Iran was in the effort to move beyond containment, to try to encourage President Khatemi and the forces of moderation as expressed by the vast majority of the Iranian people in their desire for change. We also failed to encourage a move to moderation in Iranian foreign policy. Khatemi proved unable to overcome the anti-American hostility of the clerics led by Ayatollah Khamenei and that

continues to be the case today. Nevertheless, the overall objective of containment was achieved.

Similarly with the case of Iraq. Yes, we had to bomb Saddam Hussein on occasion when he rattled his cage, we had to work hard to maintain the sanctions regime, we had to abandon UNSCOM when it became clear that this special regime for inspection of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, was being used as a vehicle for removing the sanctions rather than as a vehicle for discovering Saddam's

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weapons of mass destruction. We did succeed in building a wider cage through the passing of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1248 in which we ensured control of Iraq's oil revenues by the United Nations. Where we did fail, again, was when we went beyond containment to the effort to try to overthrow him. That was never part of the original policy. It was forced upon the Administration by the Congress, and its failure came as a result of a key mistake. An important lesson to be learned here was that we declared an objective – the overthrow of Saddam – without the means to achieve it, short of putting land forces back in Iraq and physically removing

him from power.

In the meantime, while we were busy containing these two regimes, we built an architecture in the Gulf, which enables the United States to maintain a large military presence there and deal effectively with any threats from either Iraq or Iran in a very short time period. This is a very important contrast to the kind of situation we found ourselves in when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in 1991 and it took us six months to mobilize and deploy the necessary forces. So, compared to earlier decades, the Gulf over the last eight years has proved to be more stable and better protected.

On the Arab-Israeli front, the results obviously were much less positive. We did achieve an Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty. We came very close on the Syrian track [as well, and]... I do believe that when the time comes, and it will eventually, for Israeli-Syrian negotiations to resume, it will be relatively easy to resolve the issues on that track, given the negotiations that have come before. We achieved, of course, a series of interim agreements on the Palestinian track. We supported an Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon and the implementation of Resolution 425. But ultimately, we fell short of achieving that comprehensive peace that we aimed for. We failed on the Syrian track in Geneva in April of last year, and we then failed on the Palestinian track at Camp David in July and Israeli and Palestinian negotiators failed again at Taba in January of this year. This was despite a major investment of President Clinton's own energy and his prestige in his last year in office.

What we got instead was the Intifada, the violence, the death and the destruction of the hope for peace. What we discovered in the process was how easy and quick it was to destroy everything that had been so painstakingly built up over the past seven years, and how easy it was to replace it with primeval, tribal hatred, anger and mistrust. Why this happened is a long and complicated story. Lack of leadership on the Arab side, Israeli politics, gaps in culture and negotiating styles, failure to live up to commitments, American missteps, and on and on. There is enough blame to go around. I guess a few others and I, myself, will be writing about it for many years to come.

This evening what I wanted to do is spend a little time talking about the lessons we might learn from this experience, for how best to get out of the current crisis between you Israelis and the Palestinians. The first lesson, I believe, is the importance of preventing the reemergence of the Arab military option. Bear in mind again that the window of opportunity opened in 1993 because the military option on the Arab side had been dealt a decisive blow. There was no way in which the Arabs could seek redress for their grievances through the use of force and they – all of them – of course, Egypt had decided to do this many years before, but all of them now had decided to try to redress their grievances through direct negotiations. They had come to understand that pursuing war against Israel only brought more trouble down on their heads. Through war, through the use of the military option, they could not regain the lands that

Israel occupied in 1967.

The greatest danger to Israeli and American aspirations for peace now would be if violence was rewarded as a result of the Palestinian resort to violence. If the military option regained credibility again, if the Intifada would spread to a regional conflagration, the treaties with Egypt and Jordan would come under serious threat and could well be broken.

So far, in the handling of this Intifada, that has not happened. It's important to understand why. I think

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it's in part because of the restrained use of force by Israel: Israel's own understanding of the limitations on its use of force, and the need to consider every move in the context of its potential for generating regional instability and the push towards a regional war. It's also in part a result of the desire of your Arab neighbors to avoid such a regional conflict. President Mubarak, in particular, as the leader of the largest, most influential, militarily most powerful Arab country, has stood firmly against the idea of a return to the Arab military option. He is being supported in that by Jordan, by Saudi Arabia, and although with its conditional support,

even by Syria. Damascus has wanted to continue to pressure you so that the Golan Heights will remain on the agenda for ultimate negotiations, but not to allow that pressure from Hizballah in the Shaba farms to degenerate into an all-out war between Israel and Syria. As a result of the brakes being applied in these Arab states to the slide to war, the chance for peace has been helped to be preserved. Along the way, this has helped to contain the Intifada, because some on the Palestinian side would love to be able to threaten our interests and the interests of the other Arab states by managing to spread the violence from the West Bank and Gaza and Israel to the rest of the Arab world. Without being able to do so, the Intifada itself has been contained quite effectively.

It's important as Israel and the United States try to find a way to stop the violence, that the suppression of the Arab military option continues to be a very high priority. It serves our interest in regional stability, and we appreciate the way in which Israel's policy of restraint has helped to maintain that regional stability. For those who would argue against the policy of restraint out of frustration or anger, or just the sheer, visceral desire to teach the other side a lesson, they should bear in mind the consequences of that kind of policy for your interests in preventing the resurrection of the Arab military option, and for our interests in regional stability.

Lesson two is equally important. It is that just because the Middle East Peace Process failed does not mean it should be abandoned. I listened with great interest to Shai Feldman's reciting of the results of the latest Jaffee

Center poll, which suggests that 58% of Israelis continue to believe in not just the peace process, but the Oslo Process, despite everything that has happened. On the other hand – again out of frustration with the situation – many people in Israel are now debating and advocating a policy of unilateralism. You call it “separation.” Some of you try to beautify it by calling it “disengagement.” But that is the antithesis of the peace process. It is the antithesis of the direct negotiations based on UN Resolution 242, which have been the hallmark of Israeli policy towards achieving peace since 1967. That policy didn’t begin with Oslo. It began after the June war in 1967 when Israel agreed to Resolution 242 as the basis for its efforts to make peace, and, in the process, agreed to Resolution 242’s key clauses which provided for Israeli withdrawal to secure and recognized borders, in exchange for peace treaties with your Arab neighbors – that is, an exchange of territories for peace. Unilateral separation is equivalent to territories for nothing. Some of you will say, “Well, we didn’t get anything in the peace process with the Palestinians anyway!” But what you got was agreements – and I’ll come back to that point in a moment about the need to recognize the sanctity of those agreements. If you pursue a unilateral course, you abandon the effort to achieve agreements. And you send a message to the other side that unilateralism is OK for them as well. Your withdrawal to whatever line you draw will be unilateral. It will not be recognized internationally, unlike the withdrawal from Lebanon, which was to the international border with Lebanon, as drawn by the United

Nations, and your withdrawal was recognized by the United Nations. Such a unilateral withdrawal from the West Bank will not be recognized, that is of course unless it is to the June 4th ’67 lines, which I don’t believe anybody who advocates separation would support. So, because it will not be recognized, because it will remain controversial, because you will retain some territories beyond the June 4th ’67 lines, the last line of your withdrawal will become the first line of the Palestinian attack. If you think

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mortars are a problem now, imagine what it could become then. And what will you do? How will you deal with it if the violence continues, as it is bound to do.

The third problem is the perception of weakness that you will create in the minds of those on the other side who would seek to redress their grievances through the use of violence. It bolsters the advocates of the military option. It gives them the very argument that Sheikh Nasrallah, the head of Hizballah, now uses, that through violence you can force Israel to withdraw from Arab territory, rather than through negotiations. This will especially be the case if, in the process

of your withdrawal, you also evacuate settlements. Don’t misunderstand us. Evacuation of some settlements will be necessary in the context of an agreement. But in the context of a unilateral act of separation, the evacuation of settlements which have been built with such a huge investment by successive governments of Israel since 1967 would forcefully underscore the perception that through violence you can produce Israeli territorial concessions.

What do you do about Jerusalem? Do you put a fence around Jerusalem and cut off 200,000 Palestinian Arabs from the West Bank? And in the process make Jerusalem the focus of violent activity against you? Or do you put a fence between the Arab and Jewish neighborhoods of Jerusalem and thereby divide the city? And what do you do about the Palestinian economy? It will surely face a collapse in such a circumstance of unilateral separation, and you will have a failed state on your borders. So lesson number two is not to go for separation, or unilateralism, but to find a way to make the peace process work more effectively. And that leads you in the direction of dealing with Yasser Arafat. Some, of course, argue that the lesson here is to replace the Palestinian leadership. But we’ve been through many efforts by Israeli governments to try to create a Palestinian leadership more to your liking, that you can deal with. There was the Jordanian option, there was the Village Leagues, there was the Internal Leadership option, and none of them worked. You are more likely to get Hamas and Hizballah as your partners than some more reasonable or reliable Palestinian

leadership.

So, I would argue that with all the problems involved, it's better to deal with Arafat and get him to stop the violence than it is to seek an alternative. Of course, you will all say, "We cannot trust him, he didn't live up to his commitments, why should we expect that he will do it again?" This reminds me of an experience I had when I was here at Tel Aviv University in 1975 during the Kissinger shuttles. Many of you will remember that time as a time of great tensions between the United States and Israel. Henry Kissinger was talking about the "reassessment." I was here studying at the Machon Shiloah in those days, and I had a student friend who was very concerned about what was happening, and he would constantly say to me, "Ask me if I trust Kissinger." And I would say, "Why?" "Just ask me, ask me if I trust Kissinger!" So I would say, "Do you trust Kissinger?" He would go all red-faced and say, "Do I have a choice!" And that's my answer to you. You don't trust Arafat, but do you have a choice? I would say, that compared to the alternatives, it's the least worst alternative. I know this is not a popular conclusion, but I would still argue that compared to going it alone in terms of unilateral separation, or going back into the West Bank and Gaza and trying to do the job yourselves, it's better to try again, yet again, to get Yasser Arafat to do the job to stop the violence. And I would argue that it is possible. Stopping the violence is not the same thing as getting Arafat to sign up to an end of conflict peace deal. It was a necessary pre-condition for the beginning of the Oslo process. It has always been a

necessary pre-condition for any negotiations between Israel and the Arabs. And it must be a necessary pre-condition today to negotiations. In fact when you look at the history of the Oslo process, you see that there are times when Arafat did stop the violence, and did fight the terrorists, and did so effectively. And there were times when he did not. So what can we learn from this? That it is possible to get him to stop the violence. But it requires high maintenance management.

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In this regard, there are several advantages in the current situation. Yasser Arafat has made new commitments to the Mitchell Plan, and in the Tenet work plan, to stop the violence. If he would do what he is committed to, what he promised Secretary Powell on his last visit to the region that he would make a maximum effort to do, if he would only do it, the violence would, in fact, stop. The problem is how to get him to do it? It requires a combination of Israeli restraint, international pressure led by the United States, the threat of terrible consequences if he doesn't, and the promise of a credible political process to address Palestinian

concerns if he does. By the way, he does have the promise of a credible political process to address his concerns. It is provided in the Mitchell Report recommendations which your government has endorsed to the letter without changes. That includes a process of cooling-off over six weeks in which the situation is returned to that which existed prior to September 28th of last year when the violence broke out, in which the closures are lifted, in which the IDF redeploys to its previous positions. And this should be followed by a eight to twelve-week period of confidence-building in which both sides have to fulfill the Mitchell recommendations that they have agreed to, which includes a settlement freeze, including natural growth. And following that confidence-building period, there will be a resumption of negotiations. I believe that although it may still take some time, with concerted pressure this approach can produce results. Already there are some things happening. Although there were incidents of firing today, which caused Israeli casualties, the number of drive-by shootings, and firing incidents in the West Bank and in Gaza, with the exception of Southern Gaza, Rafah – where there's a war going on, a mini-war going on to try to stop the smuggling – it's a very specific problem there. But otherwise, the firings have been reduced. Similarly the mortar firings have been reduced, and are now focused in one area, with one gang. And this week, for the first time, the Palestinian Security Services have begun arresting people involved in terrorist activities. Obviously, more needs to be done. Mitchell calls for a 100% effort, and we don't yet see a

100% effort. But it is now moving in the right direction, and with a concerted effort to push that forward, I believe it is not an impossible objective to achieve. While we and others undertake this effort, it's going to be important that Israel give the Palestinian Authority some space by living up to its own commitments under the Tenet Work Plan which requires Israel to avoid initiated actions in "A" areas, to curb settler violence, and to limit the damage to Palestinian property – and that includes demolitions of houses that took place in Rafah a couple of days ago.

That leads me to a fourth lesson that comes out of this peace-making effort over the last eight years. It is the importance of respecting agreements – the importance of preserving the sanctity of agreements struck. The problem with the Oslo process was that the agreements were observed in the breach. The Palestinians didn't give up violence. They didn't give up terrorism. They didn't give up incitement. And Israel didn't do the third further redeployment. It delayed the implementation of the other territorial steps, and the settlement population was doubled, and settlements expanded considerably. The bargain of Oslo was territories for security, and it broke down. Israelis didn't get the security they had the right to expect. And the Palestinians did not get the territory that they had come to expect. And we see the same problem to a smaller degree in what is happening today. Yasser Arafat agrees to the Tenet Work Plan, but he doesn't fulfill the commitment, or he does it only partially. And because he does it

partially, Israel feels it necessary only to observe its commitments under the Tenet Plan partially as well. If this continues, we will see the collapse of the Tenet Plan, a breakdown of this process of trying to end the violence, and a return to the cycle of violence that we have lived through over the last nine months – except I fear with much greater consequence. And so the lesson is that both sides must live up to their commitments. In particular in this circumstance, as the effort is undertaken to get Arafat to live up to

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his commitments, it is important that Israel do so as well.

Lesson five is probably going to strike you as a strange one. It is the advantages to Israel that come from international legitimacy. The days of "Oom-Shmoom" are back.* And understandably so, given the behavior of the peacekeeping operations of the United Nations. But, over the last eight years of the peace process, I think there are many examples of the way in which Israel has benefited from the involvement of the international community and from the fact that, in certain specific instances, Israel has international legitimacy on its side. The clearest example of this is in the

withdrawal of Israel from Lebanon, fulfilling U.N. Security Council Resolution 425, and thereby gaining international legitimacy for its position that when Hizballah violates the blue line as it does on a regular basis, Israel has the right to defend itself. Although that situation can become tense from time to time, it is extraordinary to look back over the last year and see how limited the Hizballah operations have been and how limited Israeli casualties have been as a result of this withdrawal and the protection provided by international legitimacy.

In this crisis that we face at the moment, part of my argument is that you need help to stop the violence, and for that you need the involvement of the international community. Yasser Arafat cares about his international legitimacy. He declared a unilateral cease-fire not just because we demanded it – and President Bush has been demanding it from day one of his assumption of office – but because the international community came to demand it forcefully in the wake of the outrageous suicide bombing and killing of 21 Israeli teenagers outside the Dolphinarium disco. Arafat declared that cease-fire in the presence of German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, representing the EU, and Terje

* 'Oom-Shmoom' (lit., 'The UN – phooey!') A phrase, first used by Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, to belittle the UN (known in Israel by its Hebrew acronym, 'Oom'). The phrase reflected a perception that was dominant in Israel throughout the fifties, sixties and seventies that the UN, and particular the Security Council and the General Assembly, were intractably anti-Israel.

Larsen representing the United Nations. He needed international cover. That need applies to the Arab states as well. We know now from eight years of experience that Yasser Arafat will always hesitate to move forward in the peace process unless he has Arab cover and specifically Egyptian cover. So, the role of Egypt and Jordan, Israel's peace treaty partners, also becomes very important in the achievement of these objectives.

It leads me to another point which again may seem a little heretical. I would argue in the same vein that Israel does not need to be afraid of international monitors. You have international monitors in Hebron. Does anybody know that? It's called the "Temporary International Presence in Hebron." Israel survived. Some of you may recall that we established the Israel-Lebanon Monitoring Group which was designed to oversee respect for the April '96 understandings that Warren Christopher brokered and that governed the behavior of Israel and Lebanon and the Hizballah forces during the time that Israel remained in Lebanon from 1996 until last year. Believe it or not, maybe some of you will remember that France, yes *France*, was the co-chair of the monitoring group, and it had an ability to go investigate situations. Israel found it considerably to its advantage to do so. I don't want to be seen here as advocating monitors for this situation, but only to suggest that in certain circumstances, under certain conditions, monitors might not be such a bad idea in order to preserve Israel's interests, and in order to provide the fig leaf that could help to end the violence.

I will give you another example. The Mitchell Committee itself was at first seen in Israel as a very bad development – an international commission of inquiry that would put Israel on trial for the Intifada violence. Of course, it had the potential to do that. But with our involvement and your government's engagement, and the careful structuring of the Committee, it turned out that the Mitchell Committee served an extremely useful purpose by coming up with a balanced account of what

While Israel should express its willingness to renew negotiations with Syria, this should not be done at the expense of efforts to renew the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

had happened and what could be done about it. Its recommendations were accepted wholeheartedly by your government, in particular because the Mitchell Committee came down so clearly and forcefully on the need for a unilateral cessation of violence, on the need for Yasser Arafat to make a hundred percent effort to stop the terrorism and stop the violence.

So, in this complicated world and particularly in this complicated crisis, I believe that the involvement of the international community, *properly structured under American leadership*, can serve Israel's interests very effectively.

Finally, let me conclude by lessons for the role of the United States. There is quite a debate going on in Washington these days about how much we should be engaged. Some argue that President Clinton was too engaged. Others argue that the Bush Administration needs to be more engaged. One point I would make about this is that it depends on the circumstances. As I explained at the outset, when we came in at the beginning of the Clinton Administration, we felt we had a grand opportunity to achieve a comprehensive peace. Full engagement made a lot of sense. The Bush Administration came in under very different circumstances where the opportunity to achieve peace seemed very far off. Instead, the problem was how to contain the violence, to prevent the spread to regional war and regional instability. So, the engagement was for that purpose rather than for the purpose of trying to achieve peace. Even so, whether it's the Bush Administration or the Clinton Administration, it has been a basic principle of U.S. policy that it should be up to the parties to make the tough decisions, up to the parties to take responsibility for implementing commitments that they make, in agreements that they strike through direct negotiations. That continues to be the right approach. The onus must be on you and your Arab partners in the process, and not on us. On the other hand, we have learned through this crisis that to leave you both to your own devices is not going to stop the violence. I believe that was the mistake of Sharm el-Sheikh. We reached an understanding and we left you to your own devices

and it didn't work.

So, we have to find the balance between leaving you with the responsibility, but helping you to fulfill your responsibilities, and, on the other side, pressing Yasser Arafat to fulfill his responsibilities.

That, ladies and gentlemen, is my last lesson and my final conclusion. I have to say that my time in Israel – both times in Israel – has been an extraordinary experience. Jill and I leave here with great sadness because we leave Israel in circumstances where you have not yet achieved the peace that you are still seeking and you

deserve, and sad because we leave here also after only a short one and a

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half years tenure this second time around, and sad because we leave so many good friends behind. However,

we leave here very confident that the relationship between the United States and Israel remains strong and rock solid. It has grown dramatically over the last eight years, and continues to serve as a critical ingredient in your ability, either to stand against those who would seek to use violence against you to achieve their ends or, when the opportunity for peace arises, it stands as a safety net to support you as you move forward and take risks for peace. I feel confident that will be the case far into the future. I hope that leaves you with a sense of security and it certainly leaves me with a sense of satisfaction.