

Life after Bush: Forecasting Peace in Palestine

By [Ramzy Baroud](#)

In-depth Report: [PALESTINE](#), [U.S. Elections](#)

Global Research, October 03, 2008

3 October 2008

President Bush sounded much less uncertain of his peace “vision” when he received Palestinian Authority’s Mahmoud Abbas in Washington on Sept. 25. Certainly much has changed since the Nov. 2007 conference in Annapolis, Maryland, where Bush and his secretary of state Condoleezza Rice exhorted that a Palestinian state can only be created through moderate forces, thus designated Hamas and other Palestinian groups as enemies of peace. They marked the end of 2008 as the deadline for an agreement to create that state.

If the last 10 months were a lesson, it was that neither the Bush administration is ready to abandon its pro-Israel position — which has jeopardized any real chance at true peacemaking — nor is the Israeli government under Ehud Olmert ready or willing to advance the cause of peace. It also became obvious that Abbas is hopelessly ineffectual in exercising any pressure, or holding any leverage to determine the speed or direction of peace negotiations with Israel. This, once again, reinforces the belief that the re-launch of peace talks under American auspices was a strategic choice pertinent to isolating Hamas following its election victory in Jan. 2006, and its clash with Fateh in the summer of last year.

Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erakat reportedly conveyed Bush’s pledge to Abbas, made “behind closed doors”, according to AFP, “that if a Palestinian state does not come about during his presidency, it will happen in the near future, not more than a year.”

If true, this would be the first indication that the end of the 2008 deadline is being abandoned as unrealistic and unfeasible. But can a truly viable and just peace agreement be achieved “not more than a year” following Bush’s departure?

There are no indications that a Barack Obama presidency with Joe Biden as vice president, or John McCain’s along with Sarah Palin will make a measurable difference if compared to the 8-years of Bush-Cheney leadership. The marked difference between the latter and the formers, however, is that Bush disowned the peace process altogether in his early years in office. The next president is likely to avoid such a miscalculation.

Various factors contributed to Bush’s reluctant return to his self-declared role as a peace broker. One was the death of PA Chairman Yasser Arafat, and another was the need to create distraction from the Iraq fiasco. Abbas was recreated to present the antithesis of Arafat and enjoy the legitimacy of a statesman. He was further bolstered following the political rise of Hamas, whose existence was presented as the only obstacle to the peace process.

But will Obama-Biden, or McCain-Palin approach the Middle East’s toughest conflict differently, especially as Israel is itself being shaped by a seemingly major political

reformation with the advent of Tzipi Livni as Israel's next prime minister?

Presuming that Livni's Kadima party victory on Sept. 18 will yield a stable government or coalition that would keep her at the helm, one finds it difficult to believe that any combination of future Israeli-US administrations will bring about a satisfactory peace agreement between Palestinians and Israelis. This is not an outcome of sheer pessimism or even empirical review of history, but simply because none of the names above has exhibited any promising signs of change.

Obama's grovelling to Israel at the recent American-Israeli Public Action Committee's conference and his increasingly hawkish foreign policy stances — consistent with the expectations of Israel and its friends — was meant to "assure" Israel and its backers that Obama's Muslim's middle name will not interfere with the "historic responsibility" every US administration is obliged to feel towards Israel. His devastating comments declaring Jerusalem as the "undivided capital of Israel" was a violation, not only of international law, but of the US's own foreign policy. Obama's choice of Senator Joe Biden, a devout "friend of Israel" — who tenaciously declared in an interview with Jewish-American cable network, Shalom TV, "I am a Zionist." — was meant as further pledge that his love for Israel is unmatched, undying.

Nonetheless, the Obama-Biden ticket is faced with real competition, a McCain-Palin line-up, who represent an ideal manifestation of everything that compels many Americans to stand for Israel, right or wrong: one is a hawkish militant, and the other is a religious extremist. It's this mix of militancy — McCain is willing to stay in Iraq as long as it takes, and bomb Iran at a whim — and religious zeal — Palin comprehends world affairs in biblical terms, and the Iraq war as a mission from God — that Israel and its Washington backers find particularly comforting; this mind-set guarantees unqualified support for Israel's occupation and war adventures in the ME, and ignites the passion, thus political and financial support, for Israel among a growing constituency of Christian Zionists.

Whomever will be chosen to dwell in the White House is likely to maintain the "special relationship" between his country and Israel. If they were to differ on any thing it would be on the type of symbolism that would accompany the tangible support. A McCain presidency is likely to infuse more religious characterizations of the US-Israeli rapport and continue to champion the Israeli cause separate from the UN and the EU. An Obama administration will likely emphasize the need to enlist the support of the international community, but only to maintain the existing regime of unconditional support for Israel, which often means the isolation and targeting of Israel's enemies.

A similar assertion can be made regarding Israel. Regardless of whether Livni managed to prevail over Israel's stormy politics and shaky coalitions, or Likud opposition leader Benjamin Netanyahu managed to snatch a win in possible general elections, the outcome is likely to remain the same as far as the peace process is concerned. Livni would likely maintain the charade of a peace process to no particular end: maintaining the illusion of peace making, but never a real peace. Netanyahu is likely to stall, delay and postpone his dealings with Palestinians, to please his more hawkish supporters; different approaches, same outcome.

Similarly, Livni will exploit the unconditional US support of Israel, and whatever agenda she will find suitable for her country's "security" needs. A worldly Livni with experience in foreign policy and international espionage is likely to present a better match with an

Obama-Biden administration. Livni is an intelligent, shrewd, and calculating rightwing politician with reasonable foreign policy experience. She would certainly struggle to explain Israel's war and regime change doctrine — the original Bush Doctrine — to Palin who has repeatedly proved to be clueless in foreign policy matters, and much else.

There are no signs that change, true change, is coming, regardless of who wins the White House and regardless of who rules Israel. The fact remains that the relationship that governs the US-Israeli love affair is much more convoluted, deep-rooted, and institutionalized to be affected by the exit of one man and the advent of another.

*Ramzy Baroud (www.ramzybaroud.net) is an author and editor of PalestineChronicle.com. His work has been published in many newspapers and journals worldwide. His latest book is *The Second Palestinian Intifada: A Chronicle of a People's Struggle* (Pluto Press, London).*

The original source of this article is Global Research
Copyright © Ramzy Baroud, Global Research, 2008

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Ramzy Baroud](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca
www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca