

(Tentative translation)

Japan's Future Policies Towards the Middle East Peace Process: Recommendations

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1. Views on current situation

- (1) The prospects for Middle East peace remain very dim. The Palestinians feel a growing sense of despair at the continuing occupation and the poor prospects for peace, while the Israelis are extremely uneasy about the escalation of terrorism and the ultimate destination of the Middle East peace process. A wide gap separates the two groups' views on the objectives of peace, and bridging this gap is a central issue in today's peace process. The trust that the parties managed to cultivate from the early 1990s has vanished like mist, and there is significant mutual distrust between Chairman Arafat and Prime Minister Sharon.
- (2) In considering future policies, assessing the process since the Oslo Accord is of prime importance. Among the achievements of the Oslo Accord were (1) an agreement between the Israelis and Palestinians on the co-existence of two states, (2) specific negotiations on the final status of Palestine, (3) the establishment of an autonomous government, and (4) a peace treaty concluded between Israel and Jordan. At the same time, several problems were also apparent. (1) The ultimate goal was unclear, and seemed to depend on the negotiations themselves. This allowed factions on both sides opposed to peace to assert themselves and enticed them to resort to violence. (2) With the Israelis having a recognized sovereign state and the Palestinians not having one, the two parties have different views on the meaning of peace – “security free of war and terrorism” versus “independence by ending the occupation” – and they were therefore working at cross-purposes. The asymmetry of the situation led to the failure of efforts to construct a cooperative system for security with a primary focus on maintaining public order, which in turn generated even further distrust. (3) The absence of an impartial international guarantor, along with an excessive dependence on the US and a linkage between the Middle East peace process and US domestic politics created an opaqueness with regard to public peace order and finances under an autonomous government. (4) No progress was made toward the normalization of relations between Israel and the Arab nations. (5) No conditionalities were placed on assistance for the Palestinians.

- (3) The proposal made by US President Bush on 24 June of this year is worthy for recommending an independent Palestinian state and setting a three-year deadline for its establishment, and for linking democratization of an autonomous Palestinian government with the recognition of sovereignty. Although the proposal lacks any description of a specific route to Palestinian independence, this Bush proposal seems for the time being to have set the agenda for the Middle East peace process. The focus will continue to shift towards political reform, including the convening of an international conference with the parties involved and the selection of a Palestinian legislature and a new executive administration.
- (4) In February of this year, Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia put forth a proposal that offered a normalization of relations between Israel and the Arab countries in exchange for an Israeli withdrawal from all occupied territories. This suggestion merits attention for pointing out the fundamental importance of establishing peace with all Arab countries in exchange for land.

2. What the international community should do

- (1) The immediate issues to be addressed are (1) halting the violence by both parties and achieving an Israeli military withdrawal, (2) ending the Israeli occupation and opening the way for the Palestinians to realize the ultimate goal of the peace process, the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, (3) promoting the democratization of the Palestinian Authority, and (4) bridging the gap between Palestinian and Israeli views on future peace negotiations (on such fundamental issues as the form of an independent state).
- (2) The ultimate objectives of the Middle East peace process are (1) enabling the coexistence of Palestinian and Israeli states while ensuring peace, safety, and prosperity, (2) resolving the issues of Jerusalem and refugees, (3) achieving peace between Israel on the one hand and Syria and Lebanon on the other, and (4) normalizing relations between Israel and other Arab nations.
- (3) In the short term, the following points are key:
 - To confirm the final objectives of the peace process, the UN General Assembly this autumn should adopt a resolution stipulating recognition of an independent Palestinian state and the right of Israel to exist.
 - Maximum efforts must be required from the Palestinians themselves to promote the democratization of the Palestinian Authority, such as preventing graft and corruption, strengthening the legislature, and maintaining public peace and order. Of immediate urgency is the selection of a new legislature and chief executive. The Palestinian Authority has already made it clear that elections will be held in January of next year,

and this should be tied to Palestinian independence by ensuring the fairness of these elections and establishing the legitimacy of the new administration. Consequently, the peace mediation efforts of the international community should above all be directed towards the realization and success of these elections.

- The pivotal matters in moving towards independence are halting terrorism and resolving the settlement issue. Clearly, halting terrorism is the most important matter in achieving a breakthrough in peace negotiations. As long as a complete halt to terrorist attacks is made a condition for reopening negotiations, however, it will be difficult to break the current stalemate. Halting the vicious cycle of terrorist attacks and retaliation will require a turnabout in thinking. Continued requests should also be made to Israel to halt new settlement activities.

3. International management should be introduced

- (1) To make certain that the elections are conducted fairly, (1) the violence must be halted, and (2) Israel must withdraw its army and restore the status quo as of September 2000; both parties must be strongly urged to achieve these conditions. The two sides should be encouraged to begin negotiations promptly “as a matter of election implementation”; additional countries from outside the region may also be included in the negotiations if necessary. These elections should also be conducted under international management as a guarantor of peace, and not simply through the dispatch of international observers. To this end, an international management organization (provisionally called the International Palestine Committee) will be established, comprising representatives from the countries concerned. This Committee will supervise the election, putting into place peacekeeping personnel if necessary, and generally overseeing political reform.
- (2) The international community must respect the results of the election. An accord should be reached in the pre-election negotiations on the agenda for the negotiations to be conducted after the elections (covering the disposition of Jerusalem, the end of Israeli occupation, settlements, refugees, the normalization of relations with the Arab countries, etc.), and on beginning negotiations on Palestinian independence within a given timeframe after the election. These negotiations will be carried out in line with the results of talks conducted thus far, including the 2000 Camp David summit meeting and the 2001 Taba negotiations. The aforementioned Committee will continue to operate even after the elections, directing and overseeing this process.
- (3) At the heart of this approach is the linking of Palestinian political reform and elections to a pre-election withdrawal of the Israeli army and post-election Palestinian independence. This makes it possible to switch the focus of future efforts aimed at restoring peace toward

international oversight revolving around the Palestinian election and to break the vicious cycle of debate over whether a halt to terrorist attacks or a withdrawal from the occupied territories must come first. International oversight would ensure public peace and order for the Palestinians and would help put in place and the legal and systemic infrastructure needed for independence by, among other things, creating an integrated legal system for Gaza and the West Bank and establishing a judiciary. To combine these elections, international management, and independence into a single policy, an international conference is necessary.

- (4) Immediately after the next election, the leader chosen, in his/her capacity as the leader of the Palestinian people, must declare broadly to the people of Israel (in, for example, a speech before the Knesset) his/her determination for peace and rejection of violence in order to gain the trust of Israel and the international community.
- (5) In line with this approach, the countries involved (the parties concerned, the “Quartet”, regional countries) should begin coordinating promptly to arrange an international conference of about 10 countries for this autumn.

4. What Japan should do

- (1) It is only natural that Japan, a major international player, should play a role in the Middle East peace process, given that this process is linked to other conflicts in the Middle East, that it has an enormous impact that extends beyond the Middle East to encompass the entire Islamic world, and that it continues to be a major agenda item in international politics; it goes without saying that the matter is also directly connected to energy issues. Together with other major countries Japan did play an extremely useful role in the 1990s. As some inside Japan posit a minimalist view on Japan’s role, a solid national understanding of the reasons that the country should be involved in the Middle East peace process is essential. Efforts should be made to explain these reasons to the Japanese public and win its support.
- (2) Generally speaking, speed of action is required from Japan, but even more important is the presentation of ideas. Despite the high marks Japan has earned for its political involvement, including assistance to the Palestinians over the past nine years, it would be difficult to say that it has played an adequate role in assistance or in the political process since the present Intifada began.
- (3) To turn its ideas into concrete actions by the international community, Japan must work together with the countries concerned and build coalitions. Cooperation from not only the US but also from European nations and countries in the region is needed. In that context, Japan must strengthen its ties not only with Egypt and Jordan but with Saudi Arabia as well so that those countries, for now particularly Saudi Arabia, be further involved in discussion

on the Middle East peace.

- (4) The “Quartet” comprising the US, the EU, Russia, and the UN has become an important forum for coordination. Japan should propose the establishment of an expanded group (a G8), which would be comprised by Quartet members, Japan, Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia.
- (5) Track 2 discussions would be beneficial in preparing for and supporting inter-government negotiations. Japan should promptly set up a meeting on final status, the form of an independent state, etc., and invite several prominent Israeli and Palestinian opinion makers for discrete and closed discussions. If necessary, these discussions can be held on a continuing basis.
- (6) Japan should stipulate Palestinian efforts towards peace as a practical “condition” for assistance. On the other hand, should Israeli actions interfere with this assistance to the Palestinians or its achievements, Japan should strongly present its case to the Israeli side. Japan should be more clearly speaking out in this regard.
- (7) Continued consideration should be given to developing a bilateral youth program so that future generations from both sides can coexist. Japan should also offer its own proposals with regard to the contents of the school textbooks used by the two sides to help resolve the incitement issue.
- (8) The Japanese envoy assigned responsibility in the Middle East peace process should visit the local area frequently to ensure that Japan has a visible presence there.

Notes:

1. These recommendations are based on discussions by the Middle East Peace Policy Study Group, temporarily organized within the Japan Institute of International Affairs. The Study Group met a total of five times in June and July 2002, hearing the opinions of policymakers concerned including persons connected with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and conducting discussions among the Group’s members, which included Ryoji Takeyama, Professor, National Defense Academy; Akifumi Ikeda, Professor, Toyo Eiwa Women’s University; Ukeru Magosaki, Professor, National Defense Academy; Mitsugu Saito, Director, Intelligence Coordination Division, Intelligence and Analysis Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Hideo Sato, Director, Multilateral Cultural Cooperation Division, Cultural Affairs Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Toshinori Shigeie, Senior Research Fellow, Japan Institute of International

Affairs; Masahiro Omura, Director of Research Coordination, Japan Institute of International Affairs; and Hiroshi Matsumoto, Senior Research Fellow, Japan Institute of International Affairs. The participants endeavored to keep the discussions policy-oriented and whenever possible to present alternative proposals.

2. The fundamental elements and direction of these recommendations broadly represent the shared views of the Study Group members, although individual members may not agree with each and every idea expressed herein; it should also be noted that all the members participated in a private capacity. Furthermore, these recommendations do not necessarily reflect the views of the Japan Institute of International Affairs.