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**ALLIANCE MANAGEMENT OF
POST-COLD WAR US-ISRAELI RELATIONS**

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LINGNAN UNIVERSITY

2011

**ALLIANCE MANAGEMENT OF
POST-COLD WAR US-ISRAELI RELATIONS**

by
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A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Degree of
Master of Philosophy in Social Sciences
(Political Science)

Lingnan University

2011

ABSTRACT

Alliance management in post-Cold War US-Israeli relations

by

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There is always a controversial debate on why the US-Israeli relationship can enjoy lengthy endurance (even after the end of the Cold War). Scholars have traditionally offered explanations through either the strategic role of Israel to the US, or domestic factors including the Jewish lobbies in the US, or the cultural affinities between the two states. However, they tend to emphasize the significance of only one particular dimension, marginalizing possible insights from competitive dimensions.

This research aims to offer a different approach to study US-Israeli relations through alliance management theories. Although there are no formal military treaties between the US and Israel, the relationship between the two states is indeed a de facto alliance. Therefore alliance management theories are applicable to the study on the US-Israel relations. A new explanation transcending the boundaries amongst various traditional approaches can be achieved.

This research showed phased fluctuations within this bilateral alliance. Critical junctures, including (i) the end of the Cold war, (ii) the 9/11 incident, (iii) US turmoil in post-war Iraq, forced the US to redefine its top interests in the Middle East. The US-Israeli alliance will become more tension-prone when allying partners experience growing conflicting top interests or weakening shared top interests. Successful alliance management between the two states could stabilize the relations in case of high conflicting interests while consolidate the relations in case of low conflicting interests. The US-Israeli alliance has successfully limited the level of tensions and thus maintained a close and stable relationship even after the end of the Cold War.

DECLARATION

I declare that this is an original work based primarily on my own research, and I warrant that all citations of previous research, published or unpublished, have been duly acknowledged.

(CHAU Wun Liong)

June 2011

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL OF THESIS

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The List of Abbreviations

AIPAC	American Israel Public Affairs Committee
CRS	Congressional Research Services
DOD	Department of Defence
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
QME	Qualitative Military Edge
US	United States
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UK	United Kingdom

Acknowledgement

Studying the US-Israeli relations in Hong Kong is difficult but I manage to complete this research finally. I would like to express my deep gratitude to my Chief Supervisor Dr. Zhang Baohui for his pinpoint advices and valuable inspirations to the construction of my research framework. I am very grateful to my Co-supervisor Prof. Brian Bridges, who offered me generous guidance and encouragement since my final year of undergraduate studies, when I am writing my senior thesis under the supervision by Prof. Paul Harris. I feel thankful to Prof. Harris also for his support in the preparatory stage of this research before his resignation.

I would also thank the teachers in the Department of Political Science, including Prof. Wong Yiu-chung, Dr. Chung Chien-peng, Dr. Chan Che-po, Dr. Jonathan Symons and Dr. Lawrence Ho Ka-ki. They provided me with helpful advice and sincere support. Besides, I am indebted to Prof. Peter Baehr for his academic enlightenment in his two undergraduate courses on social theories. He also encouraged me during my postgraduate studies. In addition, I should thank Dr. Annie Chan Hau-nung and Dr. Lucia Siu Leung-sea for their attendance to my research finding seminar.

I understand the preciousness of the opportunity to be a postgraduate student in Lingnan University. I can enjoy sufficient freedom to pursue my research interest

which is even not very common in Hong Kong. Besides, I am immersed with great friendships and idea exchanges from my postgraduate fellows. For instance, Tommy Wong Miu-fai often shared his experience and offered great help to me when I felt stressful in my research progress. Others like Rami Chan Hin-yeung, Zena Wu Zeying, Roger Lo Ki-chiu, Roy Law Yui, Arbitor Ma Yiu-chung, Sabrina Huang Zhen, Cao Ting, Steve Lui Chun-lok, Veronica Shek King-fan and Taki Chan Yau-tsang are also great companions.

Lastly, I have to express my immense gratitude to my parents, whose love, trust and tolerance are always the firmest back-up to me. I often make choices interesting on my perception but strange in others' eyes. Perhaps this was already reflected from my rare research topic in the context of Hong Kong. Yet my parents never question but support my ambitions. This gives me extra impetus to let them be proud of me.

Chapter 1 Introduction

The US took over the hegemonic role in the Middle East from Great Britain soon after the end of the Second World War. In the Middle East, Israel was often the storm centre of regional disputes. The prolonged Arab-Israeli conflicts since the establishment of the state of Israel, especially the Israeli-Palestinian one, were one of the fundamental roots of regional violence. The US and Israel gradually built up strong linkages since the 1960s and even developed to a “*de facto* alliance” nowadays. Although the US had put forward the “peace process” since 1970s, it failed to make significant progress till now. The Arab states ascribed the failures to the American bias towards Israel. Indeed the prolonged Israeli-Palestinian conflicts, especially the perception of American bias towards Israel on all issues, were generally regarded as one of the major sources of anti-Americanism in the Middle East.¹

1.1 Research questions and objectives

Despite encountering certain troubles, the US retained its cohesive relationship with Israel even after the end of Cold War and thus there is always a

¹ William B. Quandt, “New US Policies for a New Middle East?”, in *The Middle East and the United States*, ed. David W. Lesch (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 2007), 500.

controversial debate: why can the US-Israeli relationship enjoy lengthy endurance? Scholars usually offer explanations by either the strategic role of Israel to the US, or domestic factors like the Jewish lobbies in the US, or the cultural affinities between the two states. However, they usually suffered fundamental limitations to overlook inspirations from competitive streams by viewing their suggested focus as the overriding factor to determine the US-Israeli relations.

The key objective of this research is to offer a different approach to answer the above question through alliance management theories. Although there are no formal military treaties between the US and Israel, the relationship between the two states, as further discussed below, is indeed a *de facto* alliance. Therefore alliance management theories are applicable to the study on US-Israeli relations. A new explanation encompassing the boundaries amongst various traditional streams can be achieved. Besides, this thesis would try to offer explanations on two sub-questions. First, why could the much weaker Israel sometimes have strong bargaining positions versus the US in such an asymmetric alliance relationship? Second, as the establishment of the US-Israeli alliance relationship rooted from significant convergence of national interests, there should be fluctuations in alliance cohesiveness when the US and Israel redefined their national interests. Major

historical events could force either the US or Israel to reshape perceptions of its national interests. How did such strategic redefinitions affect intra-alliance management of US-Israeli relations?

1.2 Literature review on US-Israeli relations

In the US, there are growing debates on the strategic value of the US-Israeli alliance. Stephen M. Walt and John J. Mearsheimer ignited the biggest storm in their book *Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy*, claiming that Israel is no longer a strategic asset but rather a strategic liability to US after the end of Cold War. They ascribed the feeble gestures of US politicians over Israel to the restraint exercised by influential far-rightist Jewish lobbies in the US.² It belongs to one of the three major traditional approaches to study US-Israel relations. Local lobby groups are usually crucial factors in US domestic politics. Just as Michael Donelan argued, “US foreign policy [is] an emanation of domestic politics”³, so the domestic politics perspective is indeed unneglectable in the study of US-Israel alliance. Yet we should not forget that the role of lobbyists and interest groups is only one of the factors in this approach. They did not necessarily represent the definitive but swinging public opinion.

² John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 5-6.

³ Michael Donelan, “The Elements of United States Foreign Policy” in *Foreign Policies of the Powers*, ed. F.S. Northedge (London: Faber & Faber, 1972), 45.

Another example of this approach is Cheryl A. Rubenberg's *Israel and the American National Interest: A Critical Examination* which argued that even the pro-Israel Jewish lobbies like AIPAC might not represent the interests of the majority of Jews in the US, they had distorted the perception of US national interests for their own political agenda.⁴

Another major approach followed traditional realist approach in theories of international relations. For realists, national strategic interests formed the key determinant of rational foreign policy-making. In this perspective, the US-Israel alliance should be put in a broader context of US Middle East and even global strategy. Israel had an important strategic role to the US and thus the alliance relationship should be maintained. Indeed the argument of Mearsheimer and Walt was also bounded in this framework. Their argument that Jewish lobbies have played a too influential role in US Middle East policy originated from their low appraisal of the post-Cold War strategic value of US-Israel alliance. On the other hand, there are certainly responses which maintained that strategic interests are still overriding in US foreign policy-making to Israel and in the Middle East. A.F.K. Organski's *The \$36*

⁴ Cheryl A. Rubenberg, *Israel and the American National Interest: A Critical Examination* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 375.

billion bargain: strategy and politics in U.S. assistance to Israel is representative literature on the national or strategic interest approach⁵.

The last approach lay on the stream of social constructivism in theories of international relations, referring the formation and maintenance of the US-Israeli alliance to cultural affinities between the two countries. Cultural affinities included the similarities in political culture, historical and religious ties, as well as shared values and ideologies. Yet this dimension is seldom regarded as the dominant explanation for the lengthy endurance of the US-Israel alliance. Examples included Michelle Mart's *Eye on Israel: how America came to view Israel as an ally*⁶ and Elizabeth Stephens' *US policy toward Israel: the role of political culture in defining the "special relationship"*⁷.

This thesis was not written for joining the debate on whether Jewish lobbies were distorting US Middle East policy. Instead, my research aims to avoid traditional approaches which rely on only one particular dimension to explain the US-Israel alliance. The three dimensions should be best considered as three ideal types, and the alliance management between US and Israel is indeed a mixture of effects of all three

⁵ A.F.K. Organski, *The \$36 Billion Bargain: Strategy and Politics in U.S. Assistance to Israel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).

⁶ Michelle Mart, *Eye on Israel: How America Came to View Israel as an Ally* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2006).

⁷ Elizabeth Stephens, *US policy toward Israel: the role of political culture in defining the "special relationship"* (Portland OR: Sussex Academic Press, 2006).

dimensions in fluctuating proportions. Although the realist national and security interests dimension may appear more significant in this thesis, the other dimensions may be more applicable particularly in some cases.

1.3 The US and Israel: “alliance” or “special relationship”?

There are confusing descriptions of the cooperative bilateral relationship between Israel and the United States. The notions of “special relationship”⁸ and “alliance”⁹ are most commonly adopted by scholars to describe US-Israeli relations. The two terms refer to the same concept in the context of US-Israel relations, and are often used interchangeably. For instance, Walt adopted “special relationship” in the book *Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy* which he co-wrote with Mearsheimer. Yet he also put the US-Israeli relationship as an example of alliance into his alliance theory classic *The Origins of Alliances*. However, he was referring to the same concept. Indeed, academics and diplomats have adopted a range of terms to portray

⁸ Some examples for the notion of “special relationship” can be seen in: (1) John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007). (2) Elizabeth Stephens, *US Policy toward Israel: the Role of Political Culture in Defining the “Special Relationship”* (Portland OR: Sussex Academic Press, 2006). (3) Michael Thomas, *American Policy toward Israel: the Power and Limits of Beliefs* (London; New York: Routledge, 2007). (4) Bernard Reich, “The United States and Israel: the Nature of a Special Relationship”, in *The Middle East and the United States*, ed. David W. Lesch (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 2007), 205-225. (5) Dumbrell, John and Atel R. Schäfer. ed. *America’s “Special Relationships”* (London; New York: Routledge, 2009).

⁹ Some examples for the notion of “alliance” can be seen in: (1) Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987). (2) Jeremy Pressman, *Warring Friends: Alliance Restraint in International Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008). (3) Herbert Druks, *The Uncertain Alliance: The US and Israel from Kennedy to the Peace Process* (Westport, Connecticut; London: Greenwood Press, 2001). (4) Michelle Mart, *Eye on Israel: How America Came to View Israel as an Ally* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2006).

cooperative international relationships: “coalition”, “pact”, “bloc”, “entente”, “détente”, “alignment” as well as “special relationship” and “alliance”.¹⁰ This makes the definition of the relative concepts even more confusing. To avoid such confusions, I would only adopt “alliance” to describe US-Israel relations in my arguments.

Arthur A. Stein has argued that “alliances mark the cooperative end of the continuum of International relations”, with wars as the opposite conflictual end.¹¹ Alliance thus should rank highest to imply the extent of cooperation among those confusing terms. The term “special relationship” indeed cannot properly imply the strength or cohesiveness of a cooperative relationship.

Another major reason that I prefer adopting the term “alliance” is the much richer existence of systematic theories for “alliances” than “special relationships”. Although there is a range of literatures which study US-Israel relations under the framework of “special relationship”, they seldom showed general theories which are applicable to other inter-state relationships. After all, the term “special relationship”

¹⁰ Generalized from : (1) Arthur A. Stein, *Why Nations Cooperate* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990), 151. (2) Ole R. Holsti, P. Terrence Hopmann, John D. Sullivan. *Unity and Disintegration in International Alliances* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985).

¹¹ Arthur A. Stein, *Why Nations Cooperate* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990), 151.

is indeed an invention by Winston Churchill to describe wartime US-UK relations.¹²

This is a term with political implications more than theoretical implications.

In the literature on alliance theory, alliances are usually discussed together with alignments. Both refer to cooperative relationships amongst two or more states but “alliance” is always viewed as a stronger word than “alignment”. For instance, Glenn H. Snyder defined alliances as “*formal associations of states for the use (or non-use) of military force, in specified circumstances, against states outside their own membership*”, while alignments as only “*expectations of states about whether they will be supported or opposed by other states in future interactions*”.¹³ Stephen M. Walt regarded alliance as “*a formal commitment for security cooperation between two or more states, intended to augment each member’s power, security, and/or influence*”, while alignment is distinguished by its informality.¹⁴ Ole R. Holsti, P. Terrence Hopmann and John D. Sullivan argued that “*an alliance is a formal agreement between two or more nations to collaborate on national security issues*”.¹⁵ Celeste A. Wallander and Robert O. Keohane distinguished alliances and alignments through their difference on institutionalization: alliances as “*exclusive security*

¹² Elizabeth Stephens, *US policy toward Israel: the Role of Political Culture in Defining the “Special Relationship”* (Portland OR: Sussex Academic Press, 2006), 1.

¹³ Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 4, 6.

¹⁴ Stephen M. Walt, “Alliances in a Unipolar World”, *World Politics* 61, no. 1 (Jan 2009), 86.

¹⁵ Ole R. Holsti, P. Terrence Hopmann, John D. Sullivan, *Unity and Disintegration in International Alliances* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985), 4.

institutions oriented towards threat”, and alignments as “minimally institutionalized” ones.¹⁶

From the above definitions, we may catch the important common grounds to describe the nature of alliances: (i) security (or military) cooperation and (ii) formality (or institutionalization) of cooperation. In this thesis, “security cooperation” would be viewed as a more appropriate term than “military cooperation”. Formality usually refers to the signing of treaties or agreement for mutual military commitment or cooperation. However, Israel has indeed never signed a mutual defence agreement with the US as in normal cases of alliances.¹⁷ This lack of formal documents may explain why some scholars adopted “special relationship” instead of “alliance” to describe US-Israel relations. Yet I believe the closeness of relations is more important than whether a treaty is really signed. The closeness of relations between the US and Israel is expressed through three facets: diplomatic protection, financial support and military cooperation.

First, Israel has enjoyed strong diplomatic protection from the US in the international arena. The US had vetoed 39 United Nations Security Council

¹⁶ Celeste A. Wallender and Robert O. Keohane, “Risk, Threat, and Security Institutions” in *Imperfect Unions: Security Institutions over Time and Space*, ed. Helga Haftendorn, Robert O. Keohane and Celeste A. Wallender, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 28.

¹⁷ Carol Migdalovitz, “Israel: Background and Relations with the United States” (Order Code: RL33476), *Congressional Research Service* (April 2, 2009).

Resolutions which were unfavourable to Israel, among a total of 181 resolutions vetoed by all permanent members of UNSC between Jan 1946 and May 2006. This does not count those proposals withdrawn owing to foreseeable vetoes from the US. Israel could therefore unrestrictedly act against international expectations under such protection.¹⁸

The second facet appeared in the status of Israel as the largest cumulative recipient of US foreign aid since World War II. This status was built upon Israel being the largest single annual aid recipient from the US in the period between 1976 and 2004, and since just second to Iraq. The financial assistance consisted of both economic and military programs, including loans and grants, which amounted to around \$102 billion until 2008 (in historical dollars, or over \$176 billion in constant 2008 dollars).¹⁹ However, the above figures from the reports of Congressional Research Services (CRS) might still be underestimated ones as there are uncounted money transfers to Israel. For instance, money from the Department of Defense (DOD, of the US) budget in the name of joint research or developmental projects were excluded from such accounting.²⁰

¹⁸ Michael Thomas, *American policy toward Israel: The Power and Limits of Beliefs* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 5.

¹⁹ Jeremy M. Sharp, "U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel" (Order Code: RL3322), *Congressional Research Service* (Dec 4, 2009).

²⁰ Shirl McArthur, "A Conservative Tally of Total Direct U.S. Aid to Israel: \$97.5 billion and

This brought us to the third, and also the most important, facet of military support and cooperation. Alliance theories generally take a strong military coalition as the pivotal definition for an alliance. Although the US and Israel have never signed any alliance treaties, Israel was named as a “major non-NATO ally” of the United States from April 1988.²¹ This conferred Israel with bidding preferences on US defence contracts and even cheap acquirement of surplus US equipment.²² This is indeed a common status also shared by even some other Middle East states, but Israel’s affinities with the US clearly overrode other Middle East states as it also enjoyed an ultimate security promise: qualitative military edge (QME). The US has gifted Israel with the commitment to its QME over regional threats since the Johnson administration.²³ Although the definition of QME appeared only after the US Congress legislation in 2008²⁴, Israel has enjoyed substantial military support and cooperation much earlier than such clarification. For instance, the US and Israel have

counting”, *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* (May 2003): 32-33, 59.

²¹ Bernard Reich, “The United States and Israel: the nature of a special relationship”, in *The Middle East and the United States*, ed. David W. Lesch (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 2007), 212.

²² Michael Thomas, *American Policy toward Israel: The Power and Limits of Beliefs* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 4-5.

²³ William Wunderle and Andre Briere, “Augmenting Israel’s Qualitative Military Edge”, *Middle East Quarterly* (Winter 2008), 49-58.

²⁴ Jeremy M. Sharp, “U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel” (Order Code: RL33222), *Congressional Research Services*, (Dec 4, 2009).

Note: And definition of QME can be seen in the “*Naval Vessel Transfer Act of 2008*” passed by US Congress (P.L. 110-429):

the ability to counter and defeat any credible conventional military threat from any individual state or possible coalition of states or from non-state actors, while sustaining minimal damage and casualties, through the use of superior military means, possessed in sufficient quantity, including weapons, command, control, communication, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities that in their technical characteristics are superior in capability to those of such other individual or possible coalition of states or non-state actors.

established a “Joint Politico-Military Group” since 1983. This bilateral strategic forum comprised a range of representatives from the diplomatic, military, intelligence and foreign affairs services.²⁵ The two countries even have intelligence exchanges²⁶ and missile defence cooperation²⁷ with each other.

As shown above, the depth of cooperation, especially in the military sector, between the US and Israel should have already met the standard of an alliance. Despite the lack of formal treaties or agreements, the ties between the US and Israel are stronger than many other inter-state relationships that fulfil theoretical definitions of alliances. Indeed, formal treaties or agreements are usually a mutual commitment to and institutionalization of existing security cooperative intentions or acts. The key for an alliance relationship is not a paper treaty but substantive security cooperation. If we must set formality as a requirement of alliance definitions, I would rather adopt Walt’s description of “*de facto* alliance”²⁸ in reasoning the US-Israel relations. The intrinsic alliance nature of US-Israel relations allows the application of alliance theories in my research.

²⁵ Efraim Inbar, “US-Israel Relations in the Post-Cold War Era”, in *US-Israeli relations in a new era: issues and challenges after 9/11*, ed. Eytan Gilboa and Efraim Inbar (New York: Routledge, 2009), 43.

²⁶ Efraim Inbar, “US-Israel Relations in the Post-Cold War Era”, in *US-Israeli relations in a new era: issues and challenges after 9/11*, ed. Eytan Gilboa and Efraim Inbar (New York: Routledge, 2009), 43.

²⁷ Kenneth Katzman, “Israel: Missile Defense Cooperation with the United States” (Order Code: RS20516), *Congressional Research Services* (March 24, 2000).

²⁸ Stephen M. Walt, “Alliances in a Unipolar World”, *World Politics* 61, no. 1 (Jan 2009):113.

1.4 Structure of thesis

This thesis consists of seven chapters. In this chapter, I have first briefly reviewed literatures on the US-Israeli relationship and then have noticed the deficiency of the reliance of only one of the three major traditional approaches. Therefore this research seeks to offer a different approach to study the US-Israeli relationship through alliance management theories, as this bilateral relationship is indeed a *de facto* alliance.

In Chapter 2, I will review literatures on existing alliance management theories from which my research framework would be derived and crystallized. The theory on alliance management by Glenn H. Snyder and the theory on post-crisis diplomacy by Yakub Halabi would set the basis of my research framework. I will also outline and explain the chronological structure to divide the post-Cold War timeline into three phases (Phase I, II and III) according to three major crises: (i) the end of the Cold War, (ii) the 9/11 incident, and (iii) the US turmoil in Iraq. In Chapter 3, I will explain my choices of major crises in this research and examine the impact of those three major crises on the US top regional interests in the Middle East and Israeli top national interests.

From Chapter 4 to Chapter 6, I will study US-Israeli alliance management in Phase I to III, with one chapter for one phase. In each of the three chapters, there will be two parts, with the first part comparing US and Israel top interests in that phase and the second part analyzing the corresponding internal dynamics of alliance management. In Chapter 7, the last one, I would conclude and generalize my findings from the previous chapters and therefore I could portray the general fluctuations of the US-Israeli alliance relationship since the end of Cold War and show how successful alliance management contributed to maintain the strong relationship between the US and Israel.

Chapter 2 Literature Review, Research Framework and Methodology

2.1 Literature review

This research aims to offer a different approach to study the US-Israeli relations through the perspective of alliance management. As discussed in Chapter 1, traditional studies on the US-Israeli relations tend to emphasize the significance of only one particular dimension, marginalizing possible insights from competitive dimensions. Even though some may accept arguments from other dimensions, most of them would still view their own dimension as overriding with the others only offered supplement in maximum. Yet through the perspective of alliance management, the insights from all dimensions could be absorbed under this research framework and thus an unbiased stance towards different dimensions could be achieved. In a sense, the three traditional dimensions could be viewed as ideal types of the rationales of alliance decisions. In this research, the strategic interest dimension was most frequently applied. Yet this did not mean the other dimensions were secondary or supplementary to the strategic interest dimension. The other dimensions could bring greater insights in some cases.

2.1.1 Alliance theories

There are a range of general theories on alliances but the US-Israeli alliance is seldom studied with applications of those theories. A recent example of such applications is Jeremy Pressman's *Warring friends: alliance restraint in international politics*. This book studied alliance restraints in the US relations with both Israel and Great Britain. In the case of the US-Israeli alliance, Pressman analysed seven cases of Israeli military policy conflicting with US expectations, with three of them showing unsuccessful US attempts to restrain Israel. He argued that restraining attempts failed because the US has not really mobilized its power resources. However, if the stronger side determined to restrain its ally and mobilize its power resources, the weaker side would have to concede reluctantly. The US would not decide to make restraining efforts unless Israeli actions might challenge its regional policies.²⁹

Pressman's theory of alliance restraint provided a special perspective on the studies of alliance management. Traditional alliance theories, like those in Stephen M. Walt's classic *The Origins of Alliances*, focused on the study of alliance formation and how states manoeuvred such alliance to maximize their national and security

²⁹ Jeremy Pressman, *Warring Friends: Alliance Restraint in International Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 78-81, 117-119.

interests through balancing or bandwagoning.³⁰ Walt argued: “the primary purpose of most alliances is to combine the members’ capabilities in a way that furthers their respective interests.”³¹ Pressman indeed has added restraining allies as a possible secondary purpose, if not also the primary reason in some cases, of alliance formation.

Patricia A. Weitsman explored on the basis of Walt’s concept of dichotomy of “balancing” and “bandwagoning” in *Dangerous Alliance: Proponents of Peace, Weapons of War*. She proposed a curvilinear relationship between perceived threat and the tendency of allying with threat origins. When a state perceived different extents of threat, it would adopt different strategies toward the threat origins. Vis-à-vis the threat from an adversary, a state may choose to hedge (to), tether (with), balance (against) and bandwagoning (with).³² Weitsman further supplemented her theory by discussing alliance cohesion and outlining a range of possible dyadic alliance combinations, which is determined by the different motives (i.e. hedge, tether, balance, or bandwagon) of the allying states.³³ The US-Israeli alliance perhaps best suited her definition of low internal threat (i.e. mutual threats between

³⁰ Definitions of balancing and bandwagoning can be seen in: Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 17.

³¹ Stephen M. Walt, “Why Alliances Endure or Collapse”, *Survival* 39, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 157.

³² Patricia A. Weitsman, *Dangerous Alliances: Proponents of Peace, Weapons of War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 17-24.

³³ Patricia A. Weitsman, *Dangerous Alliances: Proponents of Peace, Weapons of War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 24-29.

the two allies) and high external threat, which theoretically resulted in high cohesion and balancing alliances.

However, as mentioned before, the US-Israeli alliance is indeed an asymmetrical one. The perception of the level of external threats should be quite different between US and Israel owing to the difference in both national power and the proximity with potential enemies in the Middle East. Such differences may also influence the management of US-Israel alliance. Furthermore, we have to notice that Weitsman's account of possible dyadic alliance motivations is very much simplified. In reality, bilateral relationships usually involved more than one motivation. When Stephen Walt analysed alliance strategies in unipolarity, he expanded his famous balancing-bandwagoning dichotomy to a range of six responses built upon one's support or opposition to the unipole. However, even Walt would regard those six responses extended from balancing-bandwagoning dichotomy as ideal types. As he stated, states may select one strategy on one issue but choose another strategy on another issue in reality.³⁴

Indeed Walt has also made his own analyzing framework of alliance management. In his article "Why alliances endure or collapse", he generalized three

³⁴ Stephen M. Walt, "Alliances in a Unipolar World". *World Politics* 61, no. 1 (Jan 2009): 100-116.

main factors of alliance collapse and five key factors of alliance persistence. (i) Changing perceptions of threat, (ii) declining credibility and (iii) domestic politics can contribute to alliance collapse. For the factor of domestic politics, there are further divisions to (a) demographic and social trends, (b) domestic competition, and (c) regime change. For alliance persistence, either (i) hegemonic leadership within the alliance, (ii) preserving credibility, (iii) domestic politics and elite manipulation, (iv) the level of institutionalization or (v) ideological solidarity and shared identities would be the key factors.³⁵ However, Walt's framework cannot explain why there are still occasional disputes within the US-Israeli relations. It may be systemic enough to explain why US-Israeli alliance will not break but it is not detailed enough to portray the internal dynamics within the alliance.

Glenn H. Snyder, in his book *Alliance Politics*, should provide one of the most thorough neo-realist accounts for alliance management till now. He viewed alliance management as an intra-alliance bargaining process, with one's relative bargaining power determining the bargaining results. He then figured out different factors and situations which involved such bargaining process. Weitsman has accurately pointed out that Snyder focused on interactions and negotiations but not

³⁵ Stephen M. Walt, "Why Alliances Endure or Collapse", *Survival* 39, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 164-179.

the factors determining policies towards external threats of an alliance.³⁶ However, this deficiency is rather minor as interactions and negotiations are inevitable in alliances and we need to understand their dynamics in order to understand how the US and Israel maintained their alliance relationship since the end of Cold War. This can be remedied by merging Yakub Halabi's theory, which will be discussed next. In this research, Snyder's alliance management theory would be a key reference in the theoretical framework.

2.1.2 Halabi's post-crises diplomacy theory

Although alliance theories, especially Snyder's alliance management theory, will be borrowed in this research, there is addition of elements to enrich the theoretical applicability of the framework to explain the fluctuations of US-Israeli relations. This thesis is highly inspired by Yakub Halabi's book *US foreign policy in the Middle East: from crises to change*, which studies the fluctuations of US regional strategy in the Middle East. Halabi generalizes six central arguments in the book: First, a major crisis demonstrates obsolescence of an existing order and let the hegemon know how regional powers became disenchanted with this order. Second, only hegemon is able to create a new regional order and regional powers can only

³⁶ Patricia A. Weitsman, *Dangerous Alliances: Proponents of Peace, Weapons of War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 24.

inflict costs on the hegemon and impair an existing order in maximum. Third, the hegemon adopts new mindsets for strategic rejuvenation in order to take it as a new hegemonic controlling mechanism and retain regional allies locked in a refreshed post-crisis order favourable to the hegemon without stimulation of allies' fear to hegemony. Regional powers can sometimes take advantage on the hegemon in a particular issue area to show their opposition to the existing order. Fourth, the hegemon, the local regimes, and the local people are the three parties to a regional order. The regional order would be fully hegemonic in the Gramscian sense only when it satisfies every party. Fifth, the hegemon, aiming to stabilize the new order, locks local regimes by creating new international or regional institution while encourages regional states to lock local people by creating new domestic institution. Sixth, the hegemon may be forced to pursue discrepant policies when there are too many states in the region and contradictory interests for the hegemon.³⁷

Indeed Halabi's arguments can be further concentrated to one key argument: a major crisis will highlight deficiencies in an old set of ideas which are institutionalized in existing policies, and this will stimulate the emergence of a new mindset which can ultimately help policymakers of the hegemon reshape foreign

³⁷ Yakub Halabi, *US Foreign Policy in the Middle East: From Crises to Change* (Farnham, Surrey, England; Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2009), 13.

policy or construct new institutions. Yet the crisis must be a “major” one. It should bring a huge public impact on US economy, society, and polity so that it could mark a “watershed in the America comprehension of the politics”.³⁸ In other words, US strategic perceptions of the Middle East will be redefined from time to time, once a major crisis occurred.

The resultant change in US strategy would probably also influence the bilateral relationship between the US and other Middle East states. Yet the US-Israeli alliance seemed well maintained since it was informally established. This would raise an interesting question: How did the US-Israeli alliance adapt to the unexpected situations and the subsequent US strategy redefinition? A possible answer would be the good adaption of the US-Israeli alliance to the new situations. Such an adaptation can refer to the alliance management of both states, including the rejuvenation of strategic common grounds in both countries.

Through absorbing Halabi’s theory, a chronological structure can be set up upon basic alliance management theory. This can repair the most apparent deficiency of Snyder’s alliance management theory, as Patricia Weitsman has accurately pointed out, i.e. the emphasis on interactions and negotiations with the neglect of the factors

³⁸ Yakub Halabi, *US Foreign Policy in the Middle East: From Crises to Change* (Farnham, Surrey, England; Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2009), 3-5, 9.

determining policies towards external threats of an alliance.³⁹ Halabi defined “policy” as the outcomes of the institutionalization of policymakers’ mindsets which aim to achieve certain goals. Yet a new order emerges if a critical juncture breaks the credibility of the original mindsets.⁴⁰ In other words, a major crisis serves as a triggering factor to redefine US regional strategy and makes the US-Israeli alliance adapt to the new regional situation.

However, the term “major crises” will be replaced by “**critical junctures**”. The word “crisis” itself has a strongly negative meaning. However, the biggest deficiency of Halabi’s arguments was its omission of the end of the Cold War as one of the events which brought dramatic impact to US foreign policy to the Middle East. The end of the Cold War triggered the reshaping of US global diplomatic priorities and thus US national security interests in the Middle East were redefined inevitably. According to Charles F. Hermann, a “crisis” should be defined as a situation which simultaneously induced “high threat” (i.e. threat to “the high-priority goals of the decision-making unit”) on, allowed “short time” (to respond) for, and brought “surprise” to the decision-makers of foreign policy.⁴¹ The end of the Cold War,

³⁹ Patricia A. Weitsman, *Dangerous Alliances: Proponents of Peace, Weapons of War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 24.

⁴⁰ Yakub Halabi, *US Foreign Policy in the Middle East: From Crises to Change* (Farnham, Surrey, England; Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2009), 8.

⁴¹ Charles F. Hermann, *Crises in Foreign Policy: A Simulation Analysis* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1969), 29.

though having triggered redefinitions of US Middle East policy, could not be regarded as a threat to the US. As major non-crises like the end of the Cold War could also brought impact of similar nature, the term “major crises” might not be the most accurate term to conceptualize situations which could trigger redefinition of US national security interests in the Middle East. Positive events like the end of the Cold War could also stimulate US strategic redefinition. So a neutral word of “critical juncture” would be better than a negative “(major) crisis”. Besides, short responding time was also not a critical element to reach the impact of similar nature to Halabi’s “crisis”. For instance, the US turmoil in post-war Iraq, to be further elaborated next chapter, was also a critical issue to the US Middle East policy. However, its impact was chronic as it have gradually reverted the public support of launching war on Saddam’s Iraq. Domestic pressure on the existing US administration accumulated and was finally expressed as the Republican fiasco in mid-term election and the resignation of hawkish Ronald Rumsfeld.

Hermann’s “crisis” showed logical similarities with Halabi’s “crisis” at the element of “surprise”. While Halabi argued that major “crisis” will highlight deficiencies in an old set of ideas which are institutionalized in existing policies, Hermann defined “surprise” as “the absence of awareness on the part of

policymakers that the situation is likely to occur”.⁴² In other words, policymakers would be “surprised” by an unexpected situation. Therefore, in this thesis, a “critical juncture” to US Middle East strategy referred to the situation which US policymakers would not expect or would be surprised under the original strategic perception related to the Middle East. This would therefore force US policymakers to redefine its regional interests to adapt to the new situation.

2.2 Theoretical framework for the research

2.2.1 Framework Structure

The theoretical framework in this research, as inspired by Halabi, first divides the post-Cold War timeline into phases according to the three major crises: (i) the end of the Cold War, (ii) the 9/11 incident, (iii) the US turmoil in post-war Iraq. Each critical juncture would trigger a definitive strategic re-evaluation of US Middle East policies and thus caused the start of a new phase. In other words, each phase was the time interval between two consecutive major crises. For instance, Phase I started from the end of the Cold War and ended after the 9/11 incident. The impact of each

⁴² Charles F. Hermann, *Crises in Foreign Policy: A Simulation Analysis* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1969), 30.

critical juncture to the US top regional interests in the Middle East and Israeli top national interests will be analysed in Chapter 3. This relies on historical analysis on the perception change of decision-makers in both the US and Israel.

In Chapter 4, 5 and 6, there are analyses on alliance dynamics within the US-Israeli relations of Phase I, II and III respectively. Analysis of each phase comprises two parts. Part A will compare the redefined US top regional interests in the Middle East and Israeli top national interests in order to examine the extent of interest convergence between the US and Israel. Part B will study the internal dynamics of alliance management between the US and Israel in order to examine how the US-Israeli relations adapt to the new situations induced by a critical juncture. This part relies on alliance management theories. As discussed above, Snyder's alliance management theory on intra-alliance bargaining process will serve as the theoretical core in this research, though insights from other literatures of alliance theories may also be incorporated into my research framework to remedy possible minor deficiencies. Rejuvenation of strategic common grounds will be needed for allying partners after a critical juncture which forces a state to redefine its interests. This reflects the goal of alliance management defined by Snyder, i.e. "(by either joint

or unilateral action...) to maximize joint benefits and minimize costs to one's independent interests".⁴³

Finally, in Chapter 7, the general trends and alliance management dynamics of the US-Israeli relations in the three phases will be compared in order to examine the fluctuations of the US-Israeli alliance. More importantly, this comparison can offer us an explanation of why the US and Israel can maintain its alliance relationship after the end of the Cold War.

2.2.2 Theoretical basis for analyzing internal dynamics of US-Israeli alliance management (Part B of phase analysis)

The theoretical basis for analyzing internal dynamics of US-Israeli alliance management relies heavily on Snyder's alliance management with incorporations of concepts mainly from Halabi's post-crisis diplomacy theory. Snyder's theory bases on his unique model of the international system. He views alliance management as an intra-alliance bargaining process on interest-conflicting issues, the results of which are determined by the relative bargaining powers of the allying partners. Allies may fall into security dilemma between abandonment and entrapment in the

⁴³ Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 165-166.

bargaining process. The concepts and theoretical contents of Snyder's theory, and the amendments adopted in this research will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

2.2.2.1 Model of the international system

Snyder classified four interrelated analytic entities not only for alliance analysis but also for international system studies: "units" (states), "structure", "relationships", and "interactions". While relationships and interactions are aspects of the systemic process, the acting unit (through its attributes) and system structure serve as "internal" and "external" inputs into the process respectively.⁴⁴

First, "unit" itself was not a meaningful analytic entity if its attributes were not taken into account. Those attributes would differentiate those units from others. Snyder did not have detailed accounts on the analytic entity of "unit". Yet some examples of unit attributes can still be generalized: power resources⁴⁵ (or forces), interests (or preferences)⁴⁶ and level of vulnerability⁴⁷.

Second, traditional realist concepts of anarchy and polarity are two major aspects of system "structure". However, Snyder argued that structure would not

⁴⁴ Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 16.

⁴⁵ Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 28.

⁴⁶ Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 32.

⁴⁷ Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 32.

directly determine a state's policy choice, but just served as systemic constraints on policy choices. Its linkage with "unit" mainly reflected the meaning of polarity (structure) as the distribution of power resources (unit attribute) in international system.⁴⁸

Third, "relationship" involved several principal components: alignments and alliances, common and conflicting interests, capabilities, and independence. Snyder argued that those items were not "structure" as "they are not systemwide concepts". They are "characteristics of relationship between particular states" which are the real decisive determinants of choices and outcomes. Yet alliances are relationships which are influenced by structure. Snyder also distinguished the nature of interaction as behaviour from that of relationships as situational context of behaviour, while interaction and relationships often mutually influenced. In addition, he linked "relationships" and "units" together by arguing "relationships form at the intersection of the attributes of states". For instance, when interests of two states (unit attributes) intersected, commonality or conflicts of interests (relationships) may rise.⁴⁹

Lastly, "interaction", as defined by Snyder, referred to "any behaviour that impinges on or is influenced by some other party". It served as the key dependent

⁴⁸ Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 18.

⁴⁹ Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 20-22, 32.

variable in Snyder's theoretical account for alliance management. Snyder concluded three main "arenas" of an interaction "game": military preparedness, military actions, and diplomacy. The former two related to military concepts are easy to reason. Yet we need a clearer definition of diplomacy. Snyder argued that diplomacy referred to "all verbal communication between states, including (i) alliance formation and intra-alliance bargaining, as well as (ii) communication and bargaining between adversaries".⁵⁰

The concept of critical juncture can be freely incorporated into this framework. For instance, critical juncture would greatly alter mainly "units" (e.g. establishment of new ones or disappearance of old ones) and their attributes (e.g. interest perceptions of states). This continuously affects relationships (e.g. level of interest commonality or conflicts), and sometimes even "structure" (e.g. polarity change owing to reallocation of power resources after the end of Cold War). The remaining "interactions" are those efforts of adaptations to the new situations. We should not forget those changes in units and their attributes, and the subsequent changes in either structures or relationships, could also be the political outcome of those interactions. Indeed, those critical junctures could be in nature a kind of political outcome resulted from those interactions.

⁵⁰ Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 33-34.

In the US-Israeli alliance, US top regional interests in the Middle East and Israeli top national security interests served as the key “unit attributes”. The US had other interests in other region which were not applicable to the Middle East. Only US regional interests in the Middle East mattered because Israeli existential threats were basically limited to regional neighbours. As the analytic entity “relationship” referred to the intersection of unit attributes, the comparisons between the above US and Israeli interests served as the key “relationships” in this research. The converging interests brought the two states together to form the alliance. Yet the diverging interests did not necessarily distance the allying partners. Only conflicting interests might weaken an alliance. Those diverging interests that were not conflicting were usually insignificant to the alliance management.

2.2.2.2 Intra-alliance bargaining process

This research adopts Snyder’s definition of alliance management as a process of tacit or explicit bargaining on both common and competitive interests. He argued that alliances always build on common interests but competitive interests also exist to different extents. The common interests induce states to form alliance, but the competitive interests exert oppositional forces to pull the allies apart. Therefore alliance management serves to “counter these centrifugal tendencies, by either joint

or unilateral action” so as to “maximize joint benefits and minimize costs to one’s independent interests”.⁵¹

This intra-alliance bargaining process is represented through the analytic entity “interactions” according to Snyder’s theory. Therefore, the typologies of the two concepts are basically the same: military preparedness, military actions, and diplomacy. Military preparedness is intrinsically a matter of burden-sharing. Military actions are related to war-time manoeuvre. Snyder put much efforts of classifying subtypes of diplomacy: (i) “renegotiation of alliance terms”, (ii) “addition of member”, (iii) “bargaining about the diplomatic stance to be taken toward an adversary”, and (iv) “bargaining about conflicts between the allies not involving an adversary”.⁵² As the US and Israel had never fought on a war together as an ally, diplomacy was the dominant form of their interactions.

Relative bargaining power and its determinants

Snyder argued that the outcomes of the intra-alliance bargaining process will be decided by the relative bargaining power of allying states. Snyder further classified the major determinants of intra-alliance bargaining power: (i) degree of

⁵¹ Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 165-167.

⁵² Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 177.

dependence, (ii) firmness of **commitment**, and (iii) comparative intensity of own **interests** in the bargaining issues. When one's dependence to an ally grows, one will get more vulnerable to an ally's possible deprivation and thus lose bargaining power. When one is more firmly committed to an ally, the credibility of its threats of deprivation and thus its bargaining power will be impaired. When one values higher to its concession and lower to its ally's reciprocation in a bargaining issue, one will tend more to resist an ally's proposal and thus in a sense gain extra relative bargaining power against one's allies.⁵³ However, an advantage in either one or two categories could be offset by a disadvantage in the other one or two categories, and the amount of power resources that a state owned would not directly change to advantages in those categories.⁵⁴ A short reminder to the major determinants of such power is generalized in the figure below. The impact of those critical junctures will be explained through those concepts in this research.

⁵³ Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 166.

⁵⁴ Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 171.

Figure 2.1: Brief note on bargaining power and its determinants.

Determinants	The effect of its rise to one's bargaining power
Degree of DEPENDENCE to an ally	Decrease
Firmness of COMMITMENT to an ally	Decrease
Comparative intensity of own INTERESTS (in a bargaining issue)	Increase

“Dependence” of a state on an alliance, according to Snyder, referred to the “function of net benefit receiving from an alliance, compared to the benefits available from alternative sources”. In others words, dependence served as “the opportunity cost of terminating” any relationship, including alliances. However, Snyder argued the definition of alliance dependence should be limited to the essential military security value. Other values including prestige and domestic stability are only inessential luxuries.⁵⁵ Yet doubts remain about Snyder’s theory. As would be shown in the following chapters, the threats of restraining economic assistance were sometimes used as a restraining effort of the US to Israel. Moreover, under the pressure and calculations on future elections, is it really possible for a government of democratic regimes like the US and Israel to withstand domestic economic instability? Economic security could not be regarded as an inessential value. One possible reason

⁵⁵ Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 166-167.

why Snyder omitted economic security is that economic linkages did not necessarily exist in military alliances. Yet economic security might have to be taken into account if there are strong economic links between allying states.

Snyder defined “commitment” as “an arrangement of values that disposes one to act in a certain way”. It is a degree concept but an absolute either-or one. The two main sources of commitment are (i) “the verbal promises in the alliance contract and subsequent elaborations of it” and (ii) “interests in aiding the ally that would exist apart from the promise”. The strength of a verbal promise is determined by its explicitness and preciseness. A more explicit and precise promise would increase costs of non-fulfilment and reduced the credibility of a threat of non-fulfilment. Bargaining power of that state thus decreased by its strong commitment. Commitment-by-interest meant “a state’s underlying interest in defending the partner, apart from the verbal alliance pledge”. If one state has strategic interests to protect its ally, its ally will earn extra bargaining power in front of it.⁵⁶

The “interests” described by Snyder as determinants of alliance management referred to “the parties’ interest(s) in the specific issue about which they are bargaining”. It existed when conflicts of interest appeared, yet allying states could

⁵⁶ Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 169-170.

still persuade their partner(s) to concede. This concept was different from “dependency” as it took the value of bargainer’s concession and (/or) the value of its partner’s offset into account. Increase in the former value or decrease in the latter value would lead a state to higher tendency to resist partner’s bargaining proposal. In other words, the relative bargaining power in this category was decided by the comparative valuation of states’ interests in conflict.⁵⁷

Snyder added some supplementary factors on the relative alliance bargaining power: time preferences and attitudes towards risk. The former one could be understood as the impatience of a state over a bargaining issue may impair its bargaining power (with the possibilities of high interests in it). The latter one meant that risk aversion could reduce a state’s willingness to risk alliance breakdown and thus its bargaining power.⁵⁸

Alliance security dilemma

A final important concept from Snyder’s framework is the alliance security dilemma. This is built on the tension over an issue between the fear of abandonment and the fear of entrapment. The fear of abandonment comprises both the subjective

⁵⁷ Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 170-171.

⁵⁸ Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 173.

probability, as well as the costs to oneself, of partner's defection. Entrapment can be defined as the reluctant entrance into a war over unshared interests of the ally owing to one's commitment. It is more likely to occur when a state faces a strategic interest in defending its partner, rather than satisfies legal-moral commitment. In other words, alliance security dilemma involves the management of security-autonomy trade-off, with abandonment causing loss of security while entrapment causing loss of autonomy. This assumes that an optimum mix of security and autonomy for alliance members existed before the issue. Yet such optimum can be disrupted by "changes in the alliance's environment, or in the interests, capabilities, or domestic situations of the members themselves".⁵⁹ The alliance security dilemma is built upon the conflict of interests on an issue among allying states. If interest commonality is relatively high, both fear of abandonment and entrapment will be little. If allies face threats from different opponents, or face the same adversary but have different conflicts with that adversary, the alliance security dilemma will be very high.⁶⁰

The major forms of abandonment and entrapment suggested by Snyder are generalized below. Consecutive occurrence of the latter two forms of abandonment would devalue the alliance relationship for the partner.⁶¹ In the chronological range

⁵⁹ Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 180-181, 183.

⁶⁰ Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 186-187.

⁶¹ Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 182.

of the research, only the last two forms of abandonment are likely to appear in the US-Israeli alliance.

Figure 2.2: Forms of abandonment and Entrapment⁶²

	Abandonment	Entrapment
Forms	1. Formal abrogation of the alliance	1. Ally's outright and unexpected attack on the opponent
	2. Failure to fulfill alliance commitments	2. Ally's direct provocation on opponent to attack
	3. Failure to meet the expected level of diplomatic support to the allying partner in a dispute with its adversary	3. Ally's firm-held position in crisis bargaining which results in the outbreak of war

There are either standard or alternative response to both the fear of abandonment and the fear of entrapment. Adopting the alternative response may lead to a better result but it often involves other risks. The standard response to the fear of abandonment is "to move closer to the ally in some way so as to increase its perception of one's loyalty". Probability of abandonment decrease as the increase of ally's expected benefit from the alliance reduces its defection incentive. The three ways to achieve it are (i) "renegotiation of alliance contract in the ally's favour", (ii)

⁶² Generalized from: Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 182-183.

“increase one’s commitment by diplomatic communications and public statements”, and (iii) “support the ally in specific conflicts with adversary”. Yet there is an alternative response, i.e. “threaten to defect oneself unless the ally becomes more supportive”. The ally fearing being abandoned will probably tighten its alliance commitment or increase support to partner. Yet one has to risk being defected before it really practises its threats. If the threats to the ally exceed certain threshold, or the ally already considers defection, one’s threat to defect will probably have negative impact.⁶³

The fear of entrapment provides impetus for one to restrain its ally. So the standard response to such fear is to move away from the ally through loosening one’s commitment or threatening support withdrawal. This aims to force ally to concede so as to avoid fighting or be less bound to join the fight. There is also an alternative response, i.e. give the ally a firm commitment. This suits the case that “the ally is deemed unrestrainable”. This aims to deter the ally’s adversary and/or make the ally more confident and relaxed when facing adversary. Yet risks exist as the tightened commitment can further entrap one when a fight really breaks out.⁶⁴

⁶³ Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 183-185.

⁶⁴ Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 185-186.

2.3 Methodology

This research adopts qualitative research methodology. This research relies on content analysis of academic literatures, news articles, governmental documents, reports from the Congressional Research Services. However, the insufficiency of open governmental documents about the US-Israeli relations as well as the time and cost restraints on interviewing relevant government officials will be clear stumbling blocks to this research.

Method of multiple case studies will be adopted in the analysis of internal dynamics of US-Israeli alliance management. Yet it will be too complicated to study every case happened in the US-Israeli alliance. Therefore only cases related to (i) Israeli-Palestinian peace talks and (ii) major Israeli military actions in the Middle East will be selected.

The significance of Israeli-Palestinian peace talks to the US and Israel, and even the Middle East, explains why the issue is selected. To the Middle East, the Israeli-Palestinian conflicts, as discussed in Chapter 1, are one of the fundamental roots of regional violence in the Middle East. Regional stability can never be achieved if the Israelis and Palestinians cannot settle down their conflicts. To Israel,

the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks involve nearly all of its top national interests. To the US, its stances to those conflicts and to the peace process are the key sources of anti-Americanism in the Middle East, which may in turn harm its interests of regional stability. Furthermore, the character of continuity of the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, allows comparison on different time phases, in the peace talks.

Cases of major Israeli military actions are also selected because they can disrupt regional stability and often undermine the Arab-Israeli peace negotiations. Besides, the US-Israeli *de facto* alliance is fundamentally a security relationship, therefore it is reasonable to take the US stance towards major Israeli military actions as a determinant of the cohesiveness of US-Israeli relations. Those cases of major military actions often shared similar kinds of consequences and thus are comparable in different phases.

Chapter 3 Critical junctures and their impact on US and Israeli top interests

The greatest deficiency of Halabi's phase division is the omission of the impact of the end of the Cold War. The end of the Cold War marked a watershed in world politics and inevitably also US strategic perceptions in the Middle East. During the Cold War, the major US interests in the Middle East can be simplified as a "holy trinity": Israel, oil and anti-communism.⁶⁵ However, Halabi has correctly differentiated the subtle changes in the factor of oil. Before the oil crisis (1973-1974), oil prices have never been taken into real account. Yet this critical juncture forced US administrations to concern a reasonable oil price and the recycling of petrodollar into US market.⁶⁶ This evolved oil access requirement lasting till now.

3.1 Impact of critical junctures to US top regional interests in the Middle East

3.1.1 Critical juncture I: The end of the Cold War

As reflected in the 1995 National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement, US government was "especially pursuing a comprehensive

⁶⁵ Michael C. Hudson, "To Play the Hegemon: Fifty Years of US Policy toward the Middle East", *Middle East Journal* 50, no.3 (Summer 1996).

⁶⁶ Yakub Halabi, *US Foreign Policy in the Middle East: From Crises to Change* (Farnham, Surrey, England; Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2009), .

breakthrough to Middle East peace, assuring the security of Israel and our (Note: US) Arab friends, and maintaining the free flow of oil at reasonable prices” in the Middle East.⁶⁷ The latter two are parts of the old “holy trinity” during the Cold War. Yet the remaining element, anti-communism has ceased to be a major US interest in the region since the end of the Cold War. Anti-communism was expressed as the efforts to block Soviet penetration in cold-war Middle East. When the Soviet Union became formally dissolved in December 1991, the US was formally relieved from the worry of Soviet penetration in the region. Yet before that, the US has already successfully punished Iraq for its invasion to Kuwait (August 1990 - February 1991) without any resistance from the Soviet Union. This indicated that regional regimes can no longer expect the Soviet Union as an alternative to US for support.⁶⁸ In other words, the most direct impact of the Soviet collapse is the polarity change in the world system, changing from bipolarity in the Cold War to a new situation of unipolarity, with the US as the only superpower.

There are two new major US interests emerged from the general pursuit for Middle East peace since the end of the Cold War: (i) nuclear non-proliferation and (ii) regional stability. In the 1993 Report on the Bottom-up Review, there were four main

⁶⁷ The White House, *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement* (Feb 1995): 30.

⁶⁸ Barry Rubin, “America and the Middle East in the Post-Cold War”, in *Eagle in a New World: American Grand Strategy in the Post-Cold War Era*, ed. Kenneth A. Oye, Robert J. Lieber and Donald Rothchild (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), 424.

global dangers to US rising instead of the previous general Soviet and communist threat: the potential proliferation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, large-scale aggression from regional challengers or small-scale and often internal conflicts caused by “ethnic or religious animosities, state-sponsored terrorism, or subversion of friendly governments”, difficulties in promoting reform and democracy “in the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and elsewhere”, and lastly, a general economic risk against US economic growth.⁶⁹ Yet promotion of democracy, as reflected in the report, was not an overriding post-Cold War US regional goal in the Middle East. US efforts were concentrated on the former Soviet region and Eastern Europe. Besides, the major economic risk which was likely to be triggered in the Middle East was oil supply. The demand of oil access stability was already a major US national interest in the region. Therefore the only new major US interests are nuclear non-proliferation and regional stability.

The pursuit of nuclear non-proliferation was a global issue which US inevitably also took it seriously. The disintegration of the Soviet Union brought a high risk of nuclear proliferation because: (i) there are no longer centralized command and control over nuclear systems in the former Soviet region, (ii) Russia and Ukraine, the major successors of former Soviet nuclear ability, might be tempted

⁶⁹ The White House, *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement* (Feb 1995):.

to sell their nuclear weapons due to financial difficulties, (iii) the former Soviet nuclear scientists and engineers could be hired by states which tried to develop nuclear weapons.⁷⁰ Both Iran and Iraq showed signs of developing nuclear technology and perhaps even nuclear weaponry. Although it seemed hypocritical for the US to tacitly allow its Israeli ally to develop nuclear weapons, nuclear non-proliferation among Middle East states (except Israel which is promised to enjoy QME) was still a major US strategic interest.

By controlling regional conflicts and challengers, regional order and stability which are favourable to the US can be achieved. The Gulf War against Hussein's invasion to Kuwait first implicated US determination to maintain regional order and stability.⁷¹ Barry Rubin argued that there were three major US regional goals during the Cold War. The first one was to marginalize the Soviet Union while strengthening US impact to the region. Second, the US had to advocate allies but stifle regional challengers. Lastly, peace preservation and war deterrence were also crucial to the US, yet those potential conflicts were regionally endemic and the US ability to resolve them was limited.⁷² Yet during the Cold War, regional challengers to the US

⁷⁰ Michael Cox, *US Foreign Policy after the Cold War: Superpower without a Mission?* (London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1995), 57-58.

⁷¹ Nasser H. Aruri, *Dishonest Broker: the U.S. Role in Israel and Palestine* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2003), 29.

⁷² Barry Rubin, "America and the Middle East in the Post-Cold War", in *Eagle in a New World: American Grand Strategy in the Post-Cold War Era*, ed. Kenneth A. Oye, Robert J. Lieber and Donald Rothchild (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), 427-8.

could choose to join the Soviet bloc. This could explain why the US would not tolerate a pro-Soviet Mosaddeq administration in Iran. In the post-Cold War era, there was no alternative backer for those regional challengers. US stifling efforts on them could solely serve for regional stability. Moreover, the US efforts to preserve peace were also restrained by the anti-communist factor during the Cold War. For example, the US could only put forward Israeli-Egyptian peace process after Anwar Sadat converted out from the Soviet camp. In contrast, the Reagan administration did not put substantial pressure on Israel to facilitate the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. A key reason was the PLO was pro-Soviet. In other words, during the Cold War, regional stability was important but would be sacrificed in case of the need of anti-Communism. The US definitely wanted a stable Middle East, yet following its game rule. This pursuit for regional stability would no longer be overridden by anti-Communism since the end of the Cold War and thus rose as a major US interest in the Middle East. A key pillar was the “dual containment” between Iraq and Iran to ensure regional stability and indirectly protected oil-rich states in the Middle East.⁷³

Therefore we can see a more active US role in pushing forward the Israeli-Palestinian peace process as will be discussed in Chapter 4.

⁷³ Gary Sick, “The United States in the Persian Gulf”, in *The Middle East and the United States: a Historical and Political Reassessment*, ed. David W. Lesch (Boulder, Colo.; Westview Press, 2007).

3.1.2 Critical juncture II: The 9/11 incident

Unlike the national security report in the Clinton administration, the Bush administration has no specific discussion on US interests in any particular geographic region in its national security report. Yet we can understand the change of core US regional interests through examining the key strategies outlined in the 2002 National Security Strategy of the United States of America:

- (i) champion aspirations for human dignity,
- (ii) strengthen alliances to defeat global terrorism and work to prevent attacks against US and its friends,
- (iii) work with others to defuse regional conflicts,
- (iv) prevent our enemies from threatening US, its allies, and its friends with weapons of mass destruction,
- (v) ignite a new era of global economic growth through free markets and free trade,
- (vi) expand the circle of development by opening societies and building the infrastructure of democracy,
- (vii) develop agenda for cooperative action with the other main centres of global power, and
- (viii) transform US national security institutions to meet the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Sept 2002): vii.

Yet only (ii), (iii) and (iv) are directly related to US national security interests and (iv) is a succession of nuclear non-proliferation since the end of the Cold War. Just the same as pre-9/11 period, oil served as the core US interest in economic security and thus (v) was mainly expressed as stable oil access in reasonable price in the context of US Middle East core interest. The pursuit for democracy and human rights, i.e. (i) and (vi), often pushed the Bush government into dilemma. Yet they were usually sacrificed for short-term needs. For instance, there were accusations of mistreating jailed terrorists in the Guantánamo Bay detention camp and the US government refused to recognize the Hamas rule in Gaza through democratic election. The values of human rights and democracy were sacrificed for anti-terrorism and even Israel in the latter case. Perhaps at this stage, promotion of human rights and democracy was still not a major US interest, at least secondary to the top interests such as Israel and anti-terrorism. Furthermore, there are no other global powers to cooperate in the Middle East and the reformation of security institution is internal affairs and has no particular impact to the Middle East, so (vii) and (viii) are also invalid.

It is worth of further analysing the above (ii) and (iii). Anti-terrorism became a top US security interest since the 9/11 incident. This terrorist attack launched by al

Qaeda⁷⁵ should be regarded as one of the most dramatic historical turning point to US perception on its national and security interests. Although Stephen M. Walt argued that the then Bush administration had not radically converted its foreign policy priorities from its predecessors in many areas, he could not refute that US had absolutely no intention to fight “an all-out campaign against ‘global terrorism’” before 9/11.⁷⁶ Indeed even during the Cold War period, there were already strategic designs against terrorism.⁷⁷ Yet anti-terrorism had never been a key pillar of US national security interests before 9/11. Besides, anti-terrorism was not an exclusive interests to the US. The US government also feared that terrorist could acquire nuclear weapons and other WMDs, as well as their precursors.⁷⁸

Regional stability, though still an important strategic goal, was no longer a top US priority to pursue, even the second Bush administration claimed to “work with others to defuse regional conflicts” and push forward the Israeli-Palestinian peace process⁷⁹. When the Bush administration decided to overthrow Saddam

⁷⁵ The key leaders of al Qaeda were believed to be located in Afghanistan during the 9/11 incident but the organization was indeed rooted from the Middle East. For instance, Osama bin Laden is a blue-blooded Saudi while Ayman al-Zawahri is an Egyptian. Even Afghanistan should not be excluded from the cultural circle centred from the Middle East despite its geographic location in Central Asia. Al Qaeda also announced to wage a “jihad” to the US for its intervention to the Middle East.

⁷⁶ Stephen M. Walt, “Beyond bin Laden: Reshaping US Foreign Policy”, *International Security* 26, no. 3 (Winter 2001/02): 56.

⁷⁷ “Terrorism and the Rule of Law”, addressed by L. Paul Bremer, III, Ambassador at Large for Counter-Terrorism, before the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco, April 23, 1987. [in Robert A. Vitas and John Allen Williams (ed.), *US National Security Policy and Strategy, 1987-1994: Documents and Policy Proposals* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996)]

⁷⁸ White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Sept 2002): 6.

⁷⁹ White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Sept 2002): 9.

Hussein, it has indeed forgone the previous policy of “dual containment” between Iraq and Iran. To achieve a stable Middle East, the pre-9/11 US governments preferred strengthen the containment by “smart sanctions”, i.e. selective embargo only on military items, to pre-emptive military actions towards any regional challenger.⁸⁰ As Halabi argued, the Iraq War was not “a direct US response” to 9/11. The incident helped dissolve any possible resistance from president and congress to the neo-Conservative agenda to wage a war on Iraq.⁸¹ In other words, US goals on regional stability was overridden by the fear of being attacked in homeland owing to the 9/11 incident. Therefore pre-emptive (e.g. Iraq War) or retaliatory (e.g. Afghanistan War) military actions could get concurrency in the US government. Iraq was picked because it inflicted a range of US top strategic interests in the region: oil, anti-terrorism and nuclear non-proliferation. George W. Bush even claimed that Iraq was “the central front in the War on Terror”.⁸² The Second Bush administration also believed that it could practise the strategic goal (perhaps indeed secondary) of democratization in a Hussein-ousted Iraq. Regional stability should not be completely refuted as an important US Middle East strategic interest, but it had to be

⁸⁰ Steve A. Yetiv, “The Iraq War of 2003, ” in *The Middle East and the United States: a Historical and Political Reassessment*, ed. David W. Lesch (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 2007).

⁸¹ Yakub Halabi, *US Foreign Policy in the Middle East: From Crises to Change* (Farnham, Surrey, England; Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2009), 109.

⁸² George W. Bush, “Global Message: A Central Front in the War on Terror” (Sept 7, 2003). <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2003/09/20030909.html> (accessed Mar 19, 2011).

sacrificed after 9/11 if there was a top strategic interest to fulfil. The corresponding part in the later 2006 version of the same report might explain, “Some conflicts pose such a grave threat to our broader interests and values that conflict intervention may be needed to restore peace and stability.”⁸³ Just as shown in a self-reflection of George W. Bush, offense “on every battlefield”, but not regional stability, should be the key strategy in the War on Terror.⁸⁴ In other words, the Bush administration indeed expected to sacrifice short-term regional cold-peace stability for long-term regional conflict-free stability under US hegemony. Yet the reality did not go along with its imagination.

3.1.3 Critical juncture III: Turmoil in the Second Iraq War

The Second Iraq War itself was not a turning point to US foreign policy. The military action followed the post-9/11 rationale to descend the priority of regional stability. Despite the easy victory against the Hussein regime, the coalition troop, with US army in majority, suffered growing casualties yet still in vain to restore domestic stability in Iraq. During the casualties’ peak between 2004 and 2007, there were more than 800 US soldiers killed in Iraq annually.⁸⁵ The war was also a grave

⁸³ White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Sept 2002): 16.

⁸⁴ George W. Bush, “Offense, not stability: conducting the Global War on Terror”, *Hampton Roads International Security Quarterly* (Jan 15, 2008): 40-42.

⁸⁵ US military casualties figures. <http://icasualties.org/iraq/ByYear.aspx> (accessed Apr 2, 2011).

financial burden to the US government. The military operations in Iraq through DOD had totally cost US\$ 706.7 billion until FY2010, with FY2007 and FY2008 the peak of budget spent.⁸⁶ For post-war reconstruction and stabilization, Iraq even surpassed Israel to receive the most annual financial assistance from the US since 2004.⁸⁷ The US public became more and more negative to US military operations in Iraq with growing sacrifice of lives and money.

According to the Pew Research Centre poll research (See Figure 3.1), the people believing the decision to fight the Iraq War was right showed a general descending trend while those believing wrong a general ascending trend. At the beginning of the war, the right-wrong difference was about 75%-25%, but the proportion kept alternatively reversing since early 2005 and those believing Iraq War was a wrong decision completely surpassed those viewing as a right one from late 2006. On November 2008, during the presidential election, the right-wrong proportion for the Iraq War was 39%-50% while that for Afghanistan War was still 64%-25%.⁸⁸ Eventually Democrat Barack Obama defeated President Bush's Republican compatriot, John McCain in the 2008 presidential campaign. However,

⁸⁶ Amy Belasco, "The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan and Other Global War on Terror Operations since 9/11" (Order Code: RL33110), *Congressional Research Services* (Sep 2, 2010): p.14.

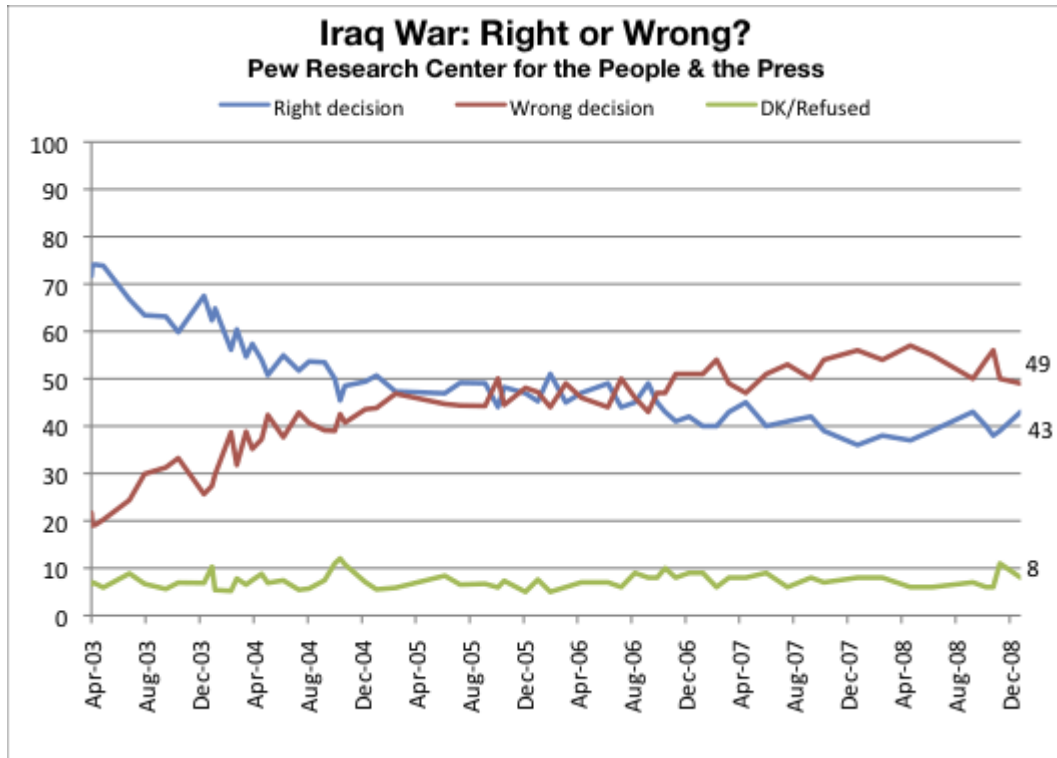
⁸⁷ Jeremy M. Sharp, "U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel" (Order Code: RL3322), *Congressional Research Service* (Dec 4, 2009).

⁸⁸ Jodie T. Allen, "Polling Wars: Hawks vs. Doves", *Pew Research Centre* (Nov 23, 2009).

<http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1420/american-opinions-of-war-iraq--iran-afghanistan-vietnam-somalia> (accessed Apr 2, 2011)

the electoral victory of Obama itself was not the watershed of US foreign policy. The accumulative disapproval in US public owing to the turmoil in Iraq, despite a gradual progress, was the actual catalyst to US strategic redefinitions.

Figure 3.1:



Source: Pew Research Centre⁸⁹

Other than domestic rebound, the geopolitical situations caused by the Iraq turmoil also stimulated the US government to redefine its strategic interests in the Middle East. In a special study of *Foreign Policy*, Iran, Moqtada al-Sadr and al Qaeda rose as the three biggest real winners in the Iraq War. Iran, as the ultimately biggest winner, successfully engaged in the political vacuum in post-war Iraq, especially through the Shiite majority in the state. Although Iran was posing enhancing threats to regional stability, the US government could not confront it with

⁸⁹ Jodie T. Allen, "Polling Wars: Hawks vs. Doves", *Pew Research Centre* (Nov 23, 2009). <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1420/american-opinions-of-war-iraq--iran-afghanistan-vietnam-somalia> (accessed Apr 2, 2011)

military operations. Even containment to Iran faces the stumbling block of the anti-Americanism in the region.⁹⁰ Sadr, the second biggest winner in this ranking, is a radical Shiite cleric which exploited the post-War turmoil to win influence in the Iraq.⁹¹ Although his influence was still limited to domestic arena, his actions in Iraq might bring indirect impact to regional stability. It could probably be the reverse of the expectations of the Bush administration that al Qaeda turned out to be one of the major real winners in the Iraq War. Al Qaeda could rally its forces again as the US government has diverted its attention to Iraq and relieved its pressure on al Qaeda. Besides, the Iraq War not only stimulated further anti-Americanism within global Muslims but also inspired a new generation of future Jihadists.⁹²

The Iraq War, resulting in domestic turmoil, brought both local and international sequels to the US governments. While 9/11 is a typical “turning point” to US perception of Middle East policy, the after-effect of the Iraq War did not appear at once. For instance, it took a gradual process to change domestic perceptions. In a sense, the resignation of Donald Rumsfeld, the hawkish Secretary of Defense, on late 2006 set a trademark of the surrender of post-9/11 US foreign policy rationale to the eventual domestic rebound owing to the troubles faced by the

⁹⁰ Vali Nasr, “Who Wins in Iraq: Iran”, *Foreign Policy* (Mar/Apr 2007): 40-41.

⁹¹ Dexter Filkins, “Who Wins in Iraq: Moqtada al-Sadr”, *Foreign Policy* (Mar/Apr 2007): 41-42.

⁹² Daniel Byman, “Who Wins in Iraq: al Qaeda”, *Foreign Policy* (Mar/Apr 2007): 42-43.

US, especially the growing US casualties, in Iraq. Yet it is already more than three years after the US invasion.

Regional stability resumed as a top US strategic interest owing to the crisis of Iraq turmoil. The fall of Saddam Hussein and the failed stabilization to Iraq destroyed the power balance in the Middle East. In this new phase, regional stability would not be sacrificed for anti-terrorism and nuclear non-proliferation, though the latter two were still among the top priorities. Therefore Iran, a regional challenger with both linkages with terrorist groups and nuclear development, was not set as US target for another military operation. Indeed, no US administrations dared to expand the warfront under such domestic atmosphere. Perhaps the Bush administration was reluctant to concede, but it had to re-stabilize the whole Middle East situation, not only Iraq. This could explain its new efforts to restore Israeli-Palestinian peace talks in its last two years. It would be discussed in details in Chapter 6.

The division of phases reflected mainly how US strategic interests were redefined, without taking Israel into real account. This indeed followed Halabi's logic that only the hegemon (i.e. US) can self-create a new regional order, while regional powers (like Israel) can merely make the hegemon pay some costs to

undermine the existing order in maximum.⁹³ By expanding this logic, we may assume that the US-Israel alliance would probably remain steady unless the US should face major redefinitions of its strategic interests. Whether Israel has similar redefinitions is minor to its alliance relationship with US. Such assumption may attract some suspicions, especially from those who emphasized the impact of Israel and its Jewish lobbies in the US. The accuracy of this assumption in reality would be further discussed in the following chapters. Yet at least a simple standard for re-structuring the historical timeline can be derived. Such simplification would not apply to the next part of alliance management, which requires detailed analysis of intra-alliance dynamics.

3.2 The relatively consistent national strategic interests of Israel

Moshe Dayan, Israeli former defence minister and foreign minister, has once said, “Israel has no foreign policy, only a defense policy.”⁹⁴ Unlike the US as an external player in the region, Israel could face direct and immediate military threats from its Middle East neighbours owing to the geographical proximity. Therefore security and existence are the most important national interests to Israel. Steven R.

⁹³ Yakub Halabi, *US Foreign Policy in the Middle East: From Crises to Change* (Farnham, Surrey, England; Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, c2009), 13.

⁹⁴ Michael Kramer, “The political interest nobody does nothing better than Shamir”, *Time*, Sep 30, 1991. (<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,973944,00.html>)

David has generalized three major sources of existential threats to Israel, (i) demographic threats of the Palestinians to the Jewish majority in Israel, (ii) military threats from conventional weapons on inter-state level, (iii) military threats from weapons of mass destruction (WMD), e.g. nuclear weapons.⁹⁵

The demographic threat stems from the concern that the Arab population has faster growth than the Jewish population within Israel and Palestine region. The difference in population growth could challenge Israel's status as a Jewish state during democratic elections in long term.⁹⁶ This can somewhat explain why Israeli administration always attempted to block the return of Palestinian refugees and thus brought barriers to the peace talks with the Palestinians.

Owing to population deficit, Israel often suffered quantitative military disadvantage towards potential major regional enemies such as Egypt, Iran and Syria. Therefore Israel is determined to maintain its qualitative military edge over potential regional enemies through the US support. Conflicts within the alliance may arise when the US plans to sell weapons with high technology, which are potential to erode Israel's QME, to Middle East states. Yet Israel is more afraid of the threats

⁹⁵ Steven R. David, "Existential Threats to Israel" in *Contemporary Israel: Domestic Politics, Foreign policy, and security challenges*, ed. Robert O. Freedman (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2008), 299-315.

⁹⁶ Steven R. David, "Existential Threats to Israel" in *Contemporary Israel: Domestic Politics, Foreign policy, and security challenges*, ed. Robert O. Freedman (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2008), 305.

from WMD, especially nuclear weapons. Israel's QME would be destroyed if there are any states in the Middle East acquiring nuclear weapons. Israel also has nuclear weapons but deliberately shows ambiguity to this fact, i.e. neither admitting nor denying its possession of nuclear weapons.⁹⁷ This is indeed a major deterrent and the last resort against its potential enemies. It will be a major existential threat to Israel when this ultimate QME is removed. Therefore Israel may carry out unilateral military operation against any regional powers if they attempt to acquire nuclear weapons.⁹⁸

Israel also has non-existential security concerns over regional terrorist groups. Regional terrorist groups brought another important security threat, perhaps not existential but more consistent, to Israel. As Zeev Maoz argued, Israel took low-intensity warfare with Arab states and sub-state actors as a key security strategy since its establishment. In addition to deterring and compelling opponents, Israel's limited military operations aimed to expand Israeli militarism, raise IDF morale, and even test for potential larger operations.⁹⁹ Perhaps such argument may overlook the active attacking role of terrorist groups in the region. Yet it hints the strong vigilance

⁹⁷ Alon Ben-Meir, "An Iranian Bombshell: How Israel Can and Will Respond", *Harvard International Review* (Spring 2010): 16.

⁹⁸ Alon Ben-Meir, "An Iranian Bombshell: How Israel Can and Will Respond", *Harvard International Review* (Spring 2010): 16.

⁹⁹ Zeev Moaz, "Evaluating Israel's Security of Low-intensity Warfare, 1949-2006", *Security Studies* 16, Iss.3 (2007): 346.

of Israel towards its neighbours. Maoz believed that Israel's strategy could have an ultimate deterrent effect on the Arab states but not on the Palestinians and Hezbollah.¹⁰⁰ This partly explained why threats from states and threats from non-state actors (e.g. PLO, Hamas and Hezbollah) should be divided as two different types of threats in this research. If the conventional weaponry of the Arab states was strong enough, Israel could be overwhelmed. Yet conventional military threats from terrorist group probably could be consistent torment to the Israelis but could never really harm Israel's existence by itself.

Moreover, Israel has strategic interests in territory. Territory is always a key issue in Arab-Israeli peace talks. The territories occupied from the several Arab-Israeli wars, the status of East Jerusalem, and the settlements beyond the "green line" raised the greatest controversies and are often causes of the breakdown of peace process. Indeed the resources on the territory are also an important issue in the peace talks. Water, as a scarce but vital resource in the Middle East, is especially highly strategic to both Israel and the Arab states.¹⁰¹ The Zionists even had unilateral plans on the Jordan River before Israel's establishment.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Zeev Moaz, "Evaluating Israel's Security of Low-intensity Warfare, 1949-2006", *Security Studies* 16, Iss.3 (2007): 347.

¹⁰¹ John Bulloch and Adel Darwish, *Water Wars: Coming Conflicts in the Middle East* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1993), 15, 18.

¹⁰² Munther J. Haddadin, "Water in the Middle East Peace Process", *The Geographical Journal* 168,

There is no fundamental change in the nature of strategic interests and perceived threats of Israel since the end of Cold War. Yet different administrations may have different perceptions to the extent of those strategic interests. For instance, while the Rabin administration would like to make certain concession on territory to the Palestinians, the Netanyahu administration did not believe in the proposal of “land for peace”. However, the nature of the perceived national security interests is consistent. Even Rabin’s proposal of potential land concession is limited to region with low strategic values.

The states involved may change yet the strategic interests and perceived threats of Israel are general. For example, there is no difference in the nature of nuclear threats of Iran and Iraq if either of them acquires destructive nuclear technology. Furthermore, the above national interests can be interlinked. For instance, the Palestinian issue is indeed a mixture of demographic threats, terrorist threats, territorial interests and resources interests. A unilateral military action may serve to both counteract terrorist threats and fulfil territorial and resources interests.

Chapter 4 Alliance management in Phase I: from the end of the Cold War

In the coming three chapters, the alliance management will be analysed phase by phase. Critical junctures would bring changes to the content of the systemic analytic entities. The end of the Cold War was signalled by the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. However the end started when the Soviet Union could no longer maintain its global influence, even though it was too difficult to be exact about that moment. The most obvious change by this critical juncture appeared in the “structure” of the international system, which changed from bipolarity to unipolarity. As discussed in Chapter 2, the US perception of national interests in the Middle East altered after the end of the Cold War. This belonged to the change in the “unit attribute”. The intersection level of interest perceptions between the US and Israel would thus fluctuate. Therefore the impact of the end of the Cold War also existed for the US-Israeli alliance “relationship”. The core of this research examined how the critical junctures redefined the “relationship” and “interactions” within the US-Israeli alliance. The linkage between “relationship” and “interactions” is not unidirectional but two-way. For instance, disputes between allying partners (interactions) owing to

convergence of interest perceptions (relationship) may be remedied by adaptation efforts (interactions) and thus the alliance (relationship) can be maintained.

4.1 Comparison on US and Israeli top interests

As discussed in Chapter 2, there had been a major redefinition of regional interests in the Middle East by the US administrations since the end of the Cold War. As drawn up in the following two tables, the Cold War pillar of anti-communism was downgraded and surpassed by WMD non-proliferation and regional stability. Yet reliable oil access and Israel's security remained as US top regional interests. On the Israeli side, the natures of its top national interests kept constant even after the end of Cold War. After all, the Soviet Union had never posed direct threats to Israel's overriding interest of survival. Yet as Israel's regional enemies had often relied on the Soviet support, the Soviet collapse greatly relieved the possible pressure from the Soviet-backed states and PLO to Israel. There might also be different perceptions of the urgency to fulfil or protect their top interests. For example, the Rabin and the Netanyahu administrations portrayed very different attitudes towards the peace talks with the Palestinians. The natures of their perceived interests were basically the same but they might carry out their national interests in different ways.

In post-Cold War period, the top interests of the US and Israel in the Middle East became less convergent. First, the unimportance of anti-communism inevitably impaired the strategic value of Israel to the US. There were even arguments that Israel could have already become a “strategic liability” to the US since the end of the Cold War.¹⁰³ Second, Israel’s territorial expansion and resources maximization could be constrained by the US prior pursuit of regional stability. Territorial and resources distributions were long the core in the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. To ensure a stable Middle East, the US governments knew that they had to help in resolving the conflicts between the Israelis and the Palestinians. This offered the US governments an incentive to push forward a new stage of the peace process after the end of the Cold War. In other words, the increasing US interests to resolve Israeli-Palestinian conflicts would strengthen US bargaining power in the issue.

Both the US and Israel had convergent interests in preventing the Middle East states obtaining WMDs during the Cold War. Yet the intensity of this interest varied owing to the proximity differences. The US governments just upgraded and altered the nature of this interest according to the new situation since the Soviet collapse. They now viewed the issue in a global context with the fear of the proliferation of the

¹⁰³ John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 5.

former Soviet nuclear weaponry and technology to “rogue states”, including those in the Middle East, while Israeli concern remained consistent. However, the nuclear factor was basically irrelevant to the examining issues in this research for two reasons. First, no Middle East state other than Israel was believed to have successfully developed nuclear weaponry. Second, Israel faced no emergency sufficiently serious to force it to use its hidden nuclear military power even till Phase III. It was not necessary for the case of nuclear proliferation to be brought into the issues of either Israeli-Palestinian peace talks or Israeli unilateral military actions.

Figure 4.1: [Cold War] US top regional interests in the Middle East and Israeli top national interests

US	Israel
<i>Anti-communism</i>	Jewish majority in controlled territories
Reliable oil access	Inter-state conventional weaponry attack prevention
Israel's security	WMD attack prevention
	Anti-terrorism
	Territories and resources maximization

Figure 4.2: [Post-Cold War] US top regional interests in the Middle East and Israeli top national interests

US	Israel
Reliable oil access	Jewish majority in controlled territories
Israel's security	Inter-state conventional weaponry attack prevention
WMD non-proliferation	WMD attack prevention
Regional Stability	Anti-terrorism
	Territories and resources maximization

4.2 Internal dynamics of US-Israeli alliance management

When the Soviet Union was already on the verge of collapse, the US successfully consolidated its hegemony in the Middle East. The global interest of anti-Communism gradually faded out from late 1980s and regional stability correspondingly climbed up to be a US top interest in the Middle East. Besides, there was also a side-effect of the Soviet disintegration on Israel which triggered subsequent conflict between Israel and the US (as well as the Palestinians): the Soviet Jewish emigration. However, this new issue did not change the nature of Israel's top national interests but just served as strong Israeli excuses to practice its interest to maximize territories. In other words, the US-Israeli alliance relationship faced substantial challenges only from the change of both US top interests (unit attributes) and polarity in the international system (structure).

4.2.1 *Disputes over Israeli settlements: A hint?*

The first apparent hint of the new US-Israeli tension appeared in the US affirmative vote in UNSC Resolution 607 (Jan 5, 1988), which opposed Israel's plan to deport nine Palestinian leaders in the First Intifada.¹⁰⁴ However, this rare US

¹⁰⁴ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Jan 6, 1988).
<http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Foreign%20Relations/Israels%20Foreign%20Relations%20since%201947/1984-1988/318%20Security%20Council%20Resolution%20607%20-1988--%20Situat> (accessed

support for a UNSC resolution which was unfavourable to Israel was certainly not decisive to the maintenance of alliance relationship. It was closer to a hedging move rather than a real restraining effort towards Israel. The US faced neither a threat nor a real interest in the case so it was basically not motivated to substantially restrain Israel. That could explain why the US did not vote in favour but abstained in the subsequent UNSC Resolution 608 (Jan 14, 1988) which echoed on the same issue.

Yet the Jewish settlement issue sparked a series of real diplomatic conflicts between the Bush I administration of the US and the Shamir administration after the outbreak of the First Intifada. Since the Soviet Jews rushed into Israel at the end of Cold War, the Shamir administration wanted to accommodate the immigrants by building settlements beyond the 1967 border. The act violated the established US principle that Israel should retreat beyond the green line in accordance with UNSC Resolution 242 in the long term. In a speech delivered towards AIPAC on May 22, 1989, US Secretary of State James A. Baker criticized Shamir's plan for a greater Israel as "unrealistic".¹⁰⁵

Apr 9, 2011).

¹⁰⁵ James A. Baker, "Principles and pragmatism: American policy toward the Arab-Israeli conflict", US Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, *Current Policy* 1176.

There was an argument that Baker's speech unfairly made more specific demands on the Palestinians than on the Israelis¹⁰⁶, but we should understand that Baker had to soften the critical tone against Israel in a speech delivered towards such an influential Jewish lobby group. Indeed Baker has already shown the clear stance of the Bush I administration against Israel's expansionist approach on Jewish settlements. Yet this hedge failed to restrain Israel. Indeed, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir even once claimed that "big immigration requires Israel to be big as well" on January 14, 1990.¹⁰⁷

George H. W. Bush became the first US president to single out East Jerusalem over the settlement issue¹⁰⁸ when he publicized the US view of East Jerusalem as Israel's non-sovereign occupied territory in a press conference on March 3, 1990¹⁰⁹. This was a strong restraining message threatening Israel to concede. Yet the Shamir cabinet strongly reacted with the rejection of Baker's peace talk plan. In the subsequent few weeks, Shamir weathered a governing challenge from the Labour Party and formed an even more right-wing cabinet.¹¹⁰ On the other hand, Bush also

¹⁰⁶ Naseer H. Aruri, *Dishonest Broker: the US Role in Israel and Palestine* (Cambridge: South End Press, 2003), 67.

¹⁰⁷ Geoffrey Aronson, "Soviet Jewish Emigration, the United States, and the Occupied territories", *Journal of Palestinian Studies* 19, no.4 (Summer 1990): 30.

¹⁰⁸ William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflicts since 1967* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005), 299.

¹⁰⁹ Clyde R. Mark, "Israeli-United States Relations" (Order Code: IB82008), *Congressional Research Services* (Mar 7, 2005): 3.

¹¹⁰ William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflicts since 1967* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005), 299.

faced domestic pressure from disagreements from both the Congress and the media. He eventually softened his stance and put the argument on the final status of Jerusalem aside.¹¹¹ The settlement disputes apparently disturbed the US-Israeli relationship. US pressure on Israel continued when it voted in favour again of the UNSC Resolution 672 on October 12, 1990, which condemned Israel for killing 20 Palestinians in Jerusalem and demanded an investigation by a UN mission.

4.4.2 The First Iraq War: A favourable turn?

However, the subsequent First Iraq War gave the two governments a chance to remedy the deteriorating relationship. When Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait on August 1990, the Bush administration was determined to build an international military coalition which involved Arab states such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Syria. However, Israel could produce an entrapment scene to the US if it retaliated to Iraq's missile attacks where were to begin after fighting started in January 1991. The Arab states, especially Saudi Arabia, had already borne high domestic pressure for allowing US troops entering their territory. The US military entrance into Mecca, the holiest site in Islam, brought an even more serious backlash from global Muslims. As the Arab public generally harboured a strong hatred against Israel, Israel would have

¹¹¹ Naseer H. Aruri, *Dishonest Broker: the US Role in Israel and Palestine* (Cambridge: South End Press, 2003), 133-135.

intensified the predicament of the Arab states had it entered the battlefield. Then the Arab states might have to succumb to domestic pressure and withdraw from the US-led coalition. To ensure restoration of regional stability with the help of other Arab states, the US government needed to restrain Israel from retaliation.

The US adopted a sophisticated restraining strategy to ensure Israel would not attack Iraq. As Snyder has proposed, there is a standard response and an alternative response vis-à-vis entrapment. The standard response for the US was to move away from Israel through loosening its commitment or threatening support withdrawal while the alternative one was to give an even firmer commitment to Israel. The Bush administration adopted both measures sophisticatedly.

In the pre-war period, the US restraining efforts generally followed the alternative response of enhancing commitments to Israel. For example, US President George H. W. Bush first repeated its commitment to Israel's security on September 27, 1990.¹¹² It was a reasonable act as Israel in the early diplomatic exchanges of views with the US showed a strong determination to retaliate against any Iraq attack. Israel looked "unrestrainable" at this stage and using an alternative response would

¹¹² Clyde R. Mark, "Israeli-United States Relations" (Order Code: IB82008), *Congressional Research Service* (Mar 7, 2005): 3.

be more appropriate.¹¹³ This message in more hedging sense was certainly not strong enough to dissuade Israel from retaliation. The Bush administration further set up a secure communications link called “Hammer Rick” between defence officials of both states. This substantial enhancement of commitment basically dissuaded Israel from any pre-emptive attack over Iraq without consulting the US.¹¹⁴ When the war against Iraq became inevitable, the US government sent a delegation, including Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleberger and Assistant Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, to Israel with further commitments of positive incentives. Then Israel promised again to consult the US before using force against Iraq.¹¹⁵ On January 15, 1991, President Bush even signed National Security Directive 54 which declared that: “Should Israel be threatened with imminent attack or be attacked by Iraq, the United States will respond with force against Iraq and will discourage Israeli participation in hostilities”.¹¹⁶ In other words, the US showed determination of restraining Israel no matter whether it was attacked by Iraq or not.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ Snyder argued that when “the ally is deemed unrestrainable”, one had better take the alternative response vis-à-vis entrapment scene.

¹¹⁴ Scott B. Lasensky, “Friendly Restraint: US-Israel Relations during the Gulf Crisis of 1990-1991”, *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 3, no.2 (Jun 1999): 27.

¹¹⁵ Scott B. Lasensky, “Friendly Restraint: US-Israel Relations during the Gulf Crisis of 1990-1991”, *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 3, no.2 (Jun 1999): 27.

¹¹⁶ National Security Directive 54 (Jan 15, 1991).

¹¹⁷ Jeremy Pressman, *Warring Friends: Alliance Restraint in International Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 110.

When the war broke out, the Bush administration made stronger restraining efforts through five positive measures (i.e. the alternative responses) and one negative measure (i.e. the standard response). First of the five positive inducements, “Hammer Rick” served for both quick consultations and early US warning of Iraq’s Scud attack to Israel. Second, Eagleberger and Wolfowitz were sent to Israel again to reiterate the US commitments to Israel and put pressure on Israeli leaders to avoid retaliation. Third, the US immediately sent emergency military support, especially the US-operated Patriot anti-missile batteries, to Israel. Fourth, the US lured Israel with extra financial aid to compensate for Israeli losses in Iraqi attack. Fifth, the US-led coalition forces continuously underwent Scud-hunting operations over Western Iraq. The only US negative measure was to “withhold key operational intelligence information the Israeli needed to carry out their retaliatory plans”.¹¹⁸

The first, third and last positive measures practised commitment before the outbreak of war while the second and fourth ones raised the US commitment to Israel. All of them, as alternative responses to entrapment risk, aimed to make Israel more confident and relaxed vis-à-vis the Iraq’s missile threats.

¹¹⁸ Scott B. Lasensky, “Friendly Restraint: US-Israel Relations during the Gulf Crisis of 1990-1991”, *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 3, no.2 (Jun 1999): 28.

Indeed it was not easy for the US to restrain Israel through the negative measure. When Israel suffered several Scud attacks, it attempted to retaliate but the US refused to cooperate. However, the Bush I administration first banned Israel's requests for the identification-friend-or-foe (IFF) codes and any air corridors to reach Iraq. Then US top officials continuously declined Israel's request for approval of retaliation. Israel even needed to cancel several individual attack operations in late January because the US was unwilling to cooperate.¹¹⁹ The negative measures, as a standard response to entrapment risk, ensured Israel would not abandon its forbearance from retaliation. After all, reckless Israeli military operations might wrongly attack coalition forces or even destroy the US-led coalition by violating Jordanian or Saudi airspace.¹²⁰

However, the key reason why Israel agreed to be restrained by the US was the Shamir cabinet's trust in the US capability of regional balancing. If Israel did not believe the US-led coalition could ensure its ultimate security, it would not have tolerated the early assaults of Iraq. To Israel, the US was always the most decisive actor in regional balancing resulting in a favourable situation. Its strong dependence on the US to balance Saddam's Iraq conferred on Israel a rather weak position on this

¹¹⁹ Jeremy Pressman, *Warring Friends: Alliance Restraint in International Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 111.

¹²⁰ Jeremy Pressman, *Warring Friends: Alliance Restraint in International Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 111.

issue. Besides, Israel was bound by its commitment of consulting the US before any retaliation. Furthermore, Israel would not possess any important interests when its casualties' risk was successfully minimized by the US. On contrary, the Shamir cabinet could ingratiate itself with the Bush administration to strengthen the alliance relationship, which would be a more important Israeli interest. Thus Israel had only accumulated very little relative bargaining power on the issue of whether retaliate to Iraq or not. As a result, the US had successfully restrained Israel from retaliating against Saddam's provocations.

4.2.3 Madrid peace process: Financial restraint

The honeymoon of the above successful alliance management attempt during the First Iraq War did not even really get started before the Bush I administration showed its eagerness to revive the Israeli-Palestinian process. For instance, US either did not employ its veto or even supported UNSC resolutions which condemned Israel for its policies and practices which harmed the human and political rights of the Palestinians, until a replacing security coalition was organized amongst only Arab coalition members, excluding the US in April 1991.¹²¹ Yet the previous settlement issue was the real overriding stumbling block. Bush reiterated the steady US stance

¹²¹ James Ross-Nazzal, *The U.S. Veto and the Polemics of the Question of Palestine in the United Nations Security Council, 1972-2007* (Lewiston, Queenston, Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2008), 134-135.

calling for “comprehensive peace” based on UNSC Resolutions 242 and 338. While he committed the US again to both “Israel’s security and recognition” and “legitimate Palestinian political rights”, he did not yet mention a Palestinian state.¹²²

After Israel expressed its request for \$10 billion in US loan guarantees for accommodation of Soviet Jewish immigrants¹²³, Baker clearly showed his view by arguing in a house subcommittee on May 22, 1991, “I don’t think that there is any bigger obstacle to peace than the settlement activity that continues not only unabated but at an enhanced pace”¹²⁴ and Bush reiterated this view the following day¹²⁵. Yet mere hedging-sense pressure would never move the Shamir administration. The Shamir cabinet perceived a relatively much stronger interest in constructing settlements beyond the green line than the Bush administration did. While the Bush administration did not want to give up a militarily reliable ally like Israel, it needed more determination to break its restricted relative bargaining power in the settlement issue.

¹²² Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Second Chance: Three Presidents and the Crisis of American Superpower* (New York: Basic Books, 2007), 75.

¹²³ William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflicts since 1967* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005), 307.

¹²⁴ Bernard Reich, “United States and Israel: a special relationship”, in *The Middle East and the United States*, ed. David W. Lesch (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 2007), 213-214.

¹²⁵ William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflicts since 1967* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005), 307.

As a failed coup weakened Mikhail Gorbachev's authority in the Soviet Union and brought the communist pole close to disintegration, the US could then marginalize the Soviet role in the peace process.¹²⁶ Therefore the US interest in regional stability, involving a peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians, in the Middle East was no longer restrained by the fading top interest of anti-communism. Therefore Bush made a real restraining effort against Israel on September 6, 1991, when he asked Congress for a 120-day postponement before considering Israel's request.¹²⁷ He even challenged AIPAC, the most influential Israeli supporter going in the US by publicizing the diplomatic need of the 120-day delay request for the peace process and emphasized his constitutional authority to handle foreign policy in mid-September.¹²⁸ As a result, US diplomatic pressure and a firm stance against settlement expansion finally left the Shamir cabinet no choice but to participate in the Madrid conference which brought Israel together with its immediate Arabs neighbours.¹²⁹

However, it did not mean that Israel had to make concession on every issue.

The US also took its ally's demands into account. The proposal from the Bush I

¹²⁶ William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflicts since 1967* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005), 309.

¹²⁷ William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflicts since 1967* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005), 310.

¹²⁸ Michael Thomas, *American Policy toward Israel: the Power and Limits of Beliefs* (London; New York: Routledge, 2007), 151.

¹²⁹ William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflicts since 1967* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005), 310.

administration for the negotiation details included significant terms favourable to Israel, e.g. refusing active UN participation, postponing negotiations on the definitive status of both sides, and even informalizing the principle of “land for peace”, in order to restrain the Shamir cabinet at the negotiation table in a better-looking way.¹³⁰ After all, the negotiation between the Israelis and the Palestinians was a long process and there was no urgent need for the US to restrain Israel in full-scale way. Indeed the change of the power balance after the First Gulf War also contributed to this development as Israeli security emergency decreased and the bargaining power of the Palestinians was severely weakened after wrongly supporting Saddam Hussein. Yet it was already a diplomatic victory for the Bush administration to restrain the Shamir cabinet at the negotiation table “with definite proposals”, which was indeed “a task which Israel considered taboo”.¹³¹

Although the US had already made sophisticated efforts, the Madrid peace process was unpromising. The Bush administration seemed to ascribe, at least partially, the responsibility for the peace talk hindrance to the Shamir cabinet. This might explain why it showed a clear preference to Shamir’s rival, Yitzhak Rabin of the Labour Party, during the 1992 Knesset elections. The Bush administration even

¹³⁰ James A. Cohen, *Beyond Alliance: Israel in US Foreign Policy*, trans. Camille Mansour (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 187.

¹³¹ Naseer Aruri, *The obstruction of peace: the US, Israel and the Palestinians* (Monroe, Maine: Common Courage Press, 1996), 184.

restricted Israel's demanding loan guarantees with conditions apparently unacceptable to the Shamir cabinet and rejected Congress mediation, preventing Shamir from taking advantage of this for his election campaign.¹³² Rabin eventually replaced Shamir as the Israel's Prime Minister in July 1992. Rabin quickly announced the cancellation of over 6000 housing units of planning settlements and reduction of subsidies on the remainder, although around 10000 units of constructing settlements would be retained and completed. Yet this was sufficient for the Bush I administration to lift its blockage to the loan guarantees.¹³³

This loan guarantees saga was a typical example of how the US and Israel managed their relationship. The unrestricted interest of regional stability owing to the end of the War raised the US concern about the peace talks between the Israelis and the Palestinians. As territorial distribution would determine the result of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, the US had a strong interest in restraining Israel from implementing the plan to expand settlements beyond the green line. Perhaps Israel still had a relatively more intense interest in the settlement issue, yet such difference would then be neglectable when taking Israel's high dependence (partially shown in its invulnerability to the US threat of withdrawing certain financial

¹³² William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflicts since 1967* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005), 312-313.

¹³³ William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflicts since 1967* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005), 314.

assistance) and US low (or even no) commitment on the same issue into account. Therefore while the US was more willing to convert its power resources into capabilities to restrain Israel, the relative bargaining power of the US boomed. A rightist cabinet would rather fight on with the tension with the US but still needed to concede if the US restraining efforts were strong enough. A moderate cabinet might rather choose to cooperate in exchange of a more friendly relationship with the US in order to gain more assistance. Financial assistance was a pivotal means of the US government to restrain Israel in the above cases. Even Shamir survived from the challenge from Rabin, he probably could not withstand the foreseeable increase of US restraining efforts. Indeed Bush was backed up with broad domestic support to restrain Shamir through holding loan guarantees, including from the favourable poll results and even editorial support from the national newspapers.¹³⁴

4.2.4 Oslo peace process: False hope

Bush lost his presidency soon after Rabin replaced Shamir. His successor, Bill Clinton, followed the direction of promoting Middle East peace by facilitating the Israeli-Arab peace process (especially the Israeli-Palestinian one). Fortunately, his early opponent was Rabin, a moderate Israeli leader compared with Shamir, and this

¹³⁴ Michael Thomas, *American Policy toward Israel: the Power and Limits of Beliefs* (London; New York: Routledge, 2007), 152.

probably made Clinton's task easier. Yet Rabin was a pragmatic politician with his own political considerations. For instance, he was deliberately absent from the Knesset vote on repealing the ban on private Israeli contacts with the PLO, motivated by the dovish Mashov faction in the cabinet, hinting his reluctance at the decision. He had been worried of Bush's exploitation of this ban lifting but felt relieved after Bush was defeated in the presidential election.¹³⁵ However, he did not refuse either the creation of the Palestinian Authority or even the return of Yasser Arafat to the West Bank, unlike the firm opposing stance of his predecessor.¹³⁶

The Clinton administration continued the previous conception of achieving regional stability through regional peacemaking. Yet modus operandi of the Clinton administration was different from that of Bush, which allowed lower-ranked officials to enter the core decision-making circle.¹³⁷ Martin Indyk¹³⁸ was one of the most influential Middle East experts in the Clinton administration.¹³⁹ His views could closely represent the rationale of Clinton's Middle East policy: first, the Clinton administration observed an opportunity to achieve a comprehensive regional peace

¹³⁵ David Makovsky, *Making Peace with the PLO: The Rabin Government's Road to the Oslo Accord* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1995), 20.

¹³⁶ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Second Chance: Three Presidents and the Crisis of American Superpower* (New York: Basic Books, 2007), 76.

¹³⁷ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Second Chance: Three Presidents and the Crisis of American Superpower* (New York: Basic Books, 2007), 86.

¹³⁸ Special Assistant to President Clinton and Senior Director for the Near East and South Asia on the staff of the National Security Council (1993-1995)

¹³⁹ William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflicts since 1967* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005), 312-313.

and thus temporarily gave up the long-term goal of democratization in the region; second, regional leaders would lose the excuse of Arab-Israeli conflicts to delay domestic political reforms, whose possible destabilizing effect was unbearable to the US, meanwhile, owing to the significance of regional stability in the oil-rich Middle East.¹⁴⁰ This could explain how regional stability, a top Middle East interest of US, was linked with the US active role in facilitating Israeli-Palestinian peace process in Phase I.

The Clinton administration successfully persuaded Israel to restart the broken peace process in Washington. However, the Palestinians at the negotiating table had insufficient representativeness owing to the lack of authority from the PLO.¹⁴¹ This eventually forced Rabin to reluctantly accept direct talks with the PLO, yet without direct involvement of Arafat from spring 1993. With the help of secret Norwegian facilitations and, equally important, the pragmatism of both the Israeli government (with special credits to Rabin and Shimon Peres) and the PLO (with special credits to both Arafat, the decision-maker, and Mahmoud Abbas, the hidden architect), Israeli-Palestinian peace talks strove for a breakthrough.¹⁴² Although the Clinton

¹⁴⁰ Martin Indyk, "Back to the Bazaar: the post-Gulf War Bargain", *Foreign Affairs* 81, Iss.1 (Jan/Feb 2002).

¹⁴¹ William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflicts since 1967* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005), 325.

¹⁴² David Makovsky, *Making Peace with the PLO: The Rabin Government's Road to the Oslo Accord* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1995), 21-22.

administration was informed of this secret peace process, it was indifferent to the “sideshow” and did not get involvement until a final agreement between both sides was reached.¹⁴³ We could see how willing the Rabin cabinet was to reach a peace agreement with the Palestinians, even without Clinton’s involvement.

On the other hand, the Clinton administration seemed to be tolerating Israel’s acts which might impair the peace process. For the first example, Israel expelled 413 Palestinians to Lebanon in December 1992. Eventually the Clinton administration, which has just started its tenure in January 1993, diplomatically protected Israel from UNSC sanction. Second, Israel isolated four districts in the occupied territories in March 1993 and made the Palestinian residents suffered from financial hardship but the US was indifferent to the issue. Third, Israel unilaterally attacked southern Lebanon, causing severe casualties and destructions with no substantial restraining efforts from the US.¹⁴⁴ The above cases did not really impair the peace process and therefore the Clinton administration had no incentives to restrain Israel. The US tended to react passively to Israel’s action. One might argue Israel was free-riding. Yet the US had no interest and no capability to constrain every move of its ally. It would intend to restrain Israel only when Israel’s deeds challenged the US top

¹⁴³ William B. Quandt, “After the Israeli-PLO Breakthrough: Next Steps for the United States”, *The Brookings Review* 12, Iss. 1 (Winter 1994), 30.

¹⁴⁴ Naseer H. Aruri, *Dishonest Broker: the US Role in Israel and Palestine* (Cambridge: South End Press, 2003), 85.

interests. In other words, the US seldom counteracted with Israel unless it felt it was being entrapped by Israel's acts. Rabin was indeed willing to reach an eventual peace agreement with the PLO and that was why he accepted the secret top-level negotiations held in Oslo. He would therefore acutely control the negative impact of the above cases for both the Madrid and Oslo peace processes. The Clinton administration knew Rabin's pragmatism and thus would harbour more tolerance of Israel.

The Clinton administration continued its facilitating efforts after the signing of Oslo I¹⁴⁵ declaration in 1993 but in vain. Yet the Rabin cabinet and PLO carefully followed the Oslo track and finally signed the Oslo II¹⁴⁶. As the result was favourable to the US interests, there were no tensions between the Clinton administration and the Rabin cabinet. However, Rabin was assassinated on November 4, 1995. This was a turning point in Israeli domestic politics as the Likud hardliner Benjamin Netanyahu eventually defeated Peres, Rabin's successor in the Labour Party, in the mid-1996 election. The Israeli-Palestinian peace process became unpromising since then.

¹⁴⁵ Officially called "Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements".

¹⁴⁶ Officially called "The Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza strip".

Netanyahu, like his Likud predecessor Shamir, showed unwillingness to make concessions on the settlement issue. For example, he pushed forward the “Guidelines of the Government of Israel” in June 1996, which granted the Jewish settlements in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip with a permanent status of “national importance to Israel’s defense and an expression of Zionist fulfilment.”¹⁴⁷ This not only violated UNSC Resolution 242 but also challenged the steadfast US request for Israel to obey the above resolution. However, Netanyahu, unlike Shamir during the Bush I era, at least showed willingness to hold talks with the PLO, and even directly with Arafat.

Shortly after Netanyahu became Israeli Premier, Clinton entered his campaign of presidential re-election and secured a victory over Bob Dole’s challenge. Although he faced a counteracting Republican-dominated Congress, his reputation as a friend of Israel from the previous efforts to facilitate Arab-Israeli peace talks offered him more space to manoeuvre. If he could maintain his security commitment to Israel, he would still have enough personal political counters to bargain with Netanyahu even under the constraints of Congress.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ Israeli Government, Ministry of Foreign Affairs , *Guidelines of the Government of Israel* (Jun 17, 1996). http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFAArchive/1990_1999/1998/6/Guidelines%20of%20the%20Government%20of%20Israel%20-%20June%201996 (accessed Apr 4, 2011).

¹⁴⁸ William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflicts since 1967* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005), 345.

Before the start of Clinton's second tenure, there was another breakthrough in the peace process. During the Washington Summit in early October 1996, the Clinton administration managed to defuse the small-scale Israeli-Palestinian violence, stimulated by Israeli unilateral opening of the Hasmonean Tunnel, and restart the peace process.¹⁴⁹ Finally, on January 15, 1997, Israel and the PLO initialled the Hebron Protocol. Both the US and Israel governments conceded in some way. While Netanyahu reluctantly accept further Israeli withdrawal under US pressure, the US also agreed to include a "Note for the Record" written by Dennis Ross¹⁵⁰ which stated Israeli commitment to Oslo II "on the basis of reciprocity". Israel was likely to take advantage of that because it provided justifications for Netanyahu in case he wanted to suspend the peace process. Although the PLO also enjoyed this justification, the situation would be unfavourable for them to do so.¹⁵¹ However, it was the PLO which decided to suspend the talks first after Israel announced new plans for settlement construction in March 1997. Israel also suspended the peace process after the two suicide bombs exploded in West Jerusalem on July 30 and September 4. The efforts of Madeleine Albright, then secretary of state, to seek a bilateral diplomatic truce were futile as Netanyahu retained his strong stance on

¹⁴⁹ Itamar Rabinovich, *Waging Peace: Israel and the Arabs 1948-2003* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), 100.

¹⁵⁰ He was the US special Middle East coordinator at the moment.

¹⁵¹ William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflicts since 1967* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005), 346-347.

settlements.¹⁵² What the Clinton administration did was only a gesture: Clinton refused to meet with Netanyahu who visited the US in November. Such a gesture has no tangible restraining impact on Netanyahu.

4.2.5 1998-1999: Distractions

In the years of 1998 and 1999, the Clinton administration was de-motivated from facilitating the Israeli-Palestinian peace process owing to both domestic (Clinton's sexual scandal) and international (the Kosovo War) distractions. As the US interests were less intense in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, its relative bargaining power over Israel was weakened in the issue. Therefore Israel was less likely to be restrained by the US. Besides, the Palestinian side was somewhat unrestrainable too. Yet an Israeli-Palestinian dispute would not bring tensions to US-Israel relationship if the US government viewed the Palestinian side as bearing more responsibilities for such a situation.

Clinton was pulled into the sexual scandal and the subsequent impeachment crisis around Monica Lewinsky. Besides, he received more severe antagonisms in the Congress in which both houses were controlled by the Republicans. If the sexual

¹⁵² Naseer H. Aruri, *Dishonest Broker: The US Role in Israel and Palestine* (Cambridge: South End Press, 2003), 115.

scandal had distracted him, an antagonizing Congress would have constrained his policy implementation. For instance, the Clinton administration had no reactions even though Netanyahu rejected an underground US proposal including certain Israeli territorial withdrawal.¹⁵³ It was not until the Republicans lost five house seats to the Democrats in the November mid-term election that Clinton could feel slightly relieved over the congressional antagonisms, even the Republicans still maintained a slim majority in the House of Representatives. An antagonistic Congress limited the restraining measures that the Clinton administration could adopt. For instance, it was difficult for Clinton to use financial assistance as a negative measure to restrain a disobedient Netanyahu, as his predecessor had done to Shamir.

Nevertheless, the Clinton administration still managed to make some progress in the Wye River Summit. Arafat and Netanyahu (as well as Israel's foreign minister Ariel Sharon) accepted an invitation to meet with Clinton and his colleagues in mid-October 1998. Netanyahu and Arafat eventually succumbed to small-scale compromise under Clinton's skilful diplomatic pressure, which included both the help of King Hussein of Jordan and the storming-out in front of both leaders after nights of fruitless negotiations.¹⁵⁴ Yet the finally-reached Wye Agreement was still

¹⁵³ William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflicts since 1967* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005), 353.

¹⁵⁴ J.F.O. McAllister, "Inside Wye Plantation", *Time*, Nov 2, 1998, p.21.

interim in sense, for it only included security commitment and partial National Charter revocation from the Palestinian side, and gradual conditional territorial withdrawals and certain prisoner release from the Israeli side.¹⁵⁵ Indeed, the attitude of the Clinton administration was nearer to hedging rather than restraining. It never forced the Netanyahu side to give up its conditional offer to retreat after the Palestinian Authority (PA) first controlled violence against Israel. Indeed the violence towards Israel was mostly from Hamas, a terrorist group beyond the PA's control. Yet the Netanyahu cabinet often wanted to make use of non-PA attacks towards Israel to suspend its negotiations with the PA. The Clinton administration chose to tolerate but not break Netanyahu's excuses owing to consideration of its domestic constraints. For instance, when Netanyahu decided to suspend implementation of the Wye Agreement under domestic pressure, Clinton was fighting against the Senate attempts of impeachment. Clinton could not spare any concentration to restrain Netanyahu from doing so.

Indeed the Kosovo crisis was developing and deteriorating during Clinton's impeachment crisis. The Clinton administration was distracted until the US was forced to intervene in the humanitarian crisis in Kosovo as Serb president Slobodan

¹⁵⁵ William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflicts since 1967* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005), 355.

Milosevic was believed to carry out ethnic cleansing against the Albanians there.¹⁵⁶

Then the Clinton administration exploited its diplomatic energy on organizing a NATO-led military coalition to bombard Yugoslavia. Although the US owned hegemonic power resources, it could not always mobilize them into capabilities to cope with matters all over the world. The US government had to distribute its power mobilization according to the urgency of foreign affairs. The Kosovo War ranked US top priority in foreign policy at that period of time and thus further distracted the Clinton administration from mediating or facilitating the unpromising Israel-Palestinian peace process until it had forced Milosevic to retreat from Kosovo with the help of Russia by June 1999.

In addition, the Kosovo crisis also attracted the eyes of both the Israelis and the Arabs. The Arabs apparently would concern as the Albanians in Kosovo were mostly Muslims. They even compared the plight of the Kosovars with that of the Palestinians.¹⁵⁷ To the Israelis, the concern was more complicated. They had sympathy to the Kosovars as the ethnic cleansing suspicions recalled the Jewish history of the Holocaust. Yet some, as represented by Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon, worried that the possible establishment of an Islamic state in Kosovo would harm

¹⁵⁶ Elaine Sciolino and Ethan Bronner, "How a President, Distracted by Scandal, Entered Balkan War", *New York Times*, National Edition (April 18, 1999).

¹⁵⁷ William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflicts since 1967* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005), 357.

global stability. Fortunately, Netanyahu stood firm to support NATO and did not raise further diplomatic disputes with the US.¹⁵⁸

Furthermore, the Israeli election was scheduled for mid-May 1999, so the Clinton administration preferred waiting to acting with the expectation of pragmatic Labour candidate Ehud Barak winning over Netanyahu. As a result, what the Clinton administration did during in the first half of 1999 was only sending Arafat a letter with a further US commitment on facilitating a final-status agreement.¹⁵⁹ The only impact of the letter was the use of the term “partnership” to describe US-Palestinian relationship, which boosted fears in the Israeli public and further destroyed Netanyahu’s hope of electoral victory.

The story of those two years told us that the US could only restrain Israel when both domestic and international factors were not constrainable on the incumbent administration. Without domestic, especially congressional, support, the US administration found it difficult to exploit effective restraining measures such as negative financial sanctions. The diplomatic energy of a government was limited even for a hegemon like the post-Cold War US. Therefore, when the Clinton administration was concentrated on a particular issue of significant urgency,

¹⁵⁸ Hilary Andersson, “Israel divided on Kosovo”, *BBC News*, Apr 9, 1999.

¹⁵⁹ William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflicts since 1967* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005), 355.

especially involving US military actions, it would temporarily reduce its interests and lose certain bargaining power on less significant and urgent issues. This could explain why Netanyahu could prohibit the Oslo peace process without feeling a similar extent of restraints as had Shamir in the Bush era. Yet the Clinton administration at least still managed to keep Netanyahu at the negotiation table and made several symbolic concessions to the Palestinians.

4.2.6 The final efforts of Clinton: In vain again

As the Clinton administration hoped, Barak won the election. Barak spent some more time to form a strong Knesset before resuming negotiations with the Palestinians. Barak, despite also regarded as a pragmatist like Rabin, was not a supporter of Oslo. To fight for a more favourable bargaining position, Barak first criticized the US for over-involvement in the recent Wye River Summit, exceeding its facilitating role to sometimes be judge and arbitrator. He also preferred an overall agreement to an incrementalist approach of retreating by little and little. He even asked Clinton to accept deferral of Wye implementation to save his political capital for future negotiations. Clinton responded positively with a reiteration of its role solely facilitating and a further commitment of military support.¹⁶⁰ In this case, the

¹⁶⁰ William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflicts since 1967* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005), 360.

sophisticated alliance management between Israel and the US ensured mutual understanding and compromise. This prevented reoccurrence of tension like during the periods of Bush-Shamir and Clinton-Netanyahu times. The Clinton administration was willing to accept Barak's preference because those concessions were not only harmless to the US top regional interests but also favourable to boost Israeli willingness to participate in the peace process, which would in turn consolidate the US interest of regional stability.

However, the Israeli government only focused on the negotiations with the Syrians during the early Barak tenure. Barak only contributed to the peace process with the Palestinians by signing the Sharm al-Sheikh memorandum for implementation of the Wye agreement in September 1999.¹⁶¹ Yet Israel and Syria failed to reach an agreement in the corresponding Geneva Summit in March 2000. Then Barak decided to withdraw from South Lebanon for security calculations in May. After that the Israelis resumed negotiations with the Palestinians.¹⁶² In addition, with the strong efforts by Clinton, a summit including Barak and Arafat was held in July. During this Camp David II, the US had put pressure on both the Israeli side and the Palestinian side for territorial redistribution. Yet the Clinton administration had

¹⁶¹ Itamar Rabinovich, *Waging peace: Israel and the Arabs 1948-2003* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), 144.

¹⁶² Itamar Rabinovich, *Waging peace: Israel and the Arabs 1948-2003* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), 140-143.

never restrained Israel to make concessions on East Jerusalem and had even turned to the Israel side on the issue. The US winked at the Israeli settlement construction in Jerusalem and changed its status from “occupied territory” to “disputed territory”. The Congress was even more fanatical to support Jerusalem as “an indivisible capital of Israel”.¹⁶³ The controversy on the status of Jerusalem and the authority over the city’s Arab district was the more significant stumbling block than the settlement issues. Although the Clinton administration realized the significance of the peace process for maintaining a stable Middle East, it was not willing or did not see the significance to restrain Israel to concede Eastern Jerusalem to the Palestinians. Israel even seemed to have successfully persuaded the US to back them on the Jerusalem issue. Therefore, there was no clear tensions between the US and Israel on the Jerusalem issue during the Clinton era.

When the US tried to force both Barak and Arafat back to the negotiation table, Ariel Sharon visited the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount area on September 28, 2000. As the Palestinians regarded this holy site should be under their control, they reacted angrily and finally sparked violence. That was the Second Intifada. The Clinton administration could no longer count on the hope to advance peace process

¹⁶³ Naseer H. Aruri, *Dishonest Broker: the US Role in Israel and Palestine* (Cambridge: South End Press, 2003), 135-140, 170.

but had to seek a quick truce between the Israelis and the Palestinians.¹⁶⁴ Yet his attempts did not change the situation at all. Finally, Clinton proposed a compromise plan on the pivotal Jerusalem disputes in December. Yet as Clinton's tenure was nearly at the end and his successor George W. Bush belonged to his rival party, Barak and Arafat had reservations over the Clinton Parameters even both of them showed interests in accepting it.¹⁶⁵ The subsequent Taba Summit eventually started on the first day Clinton left office.

George W. Bush (shortened as Bush II in this chapter), the son of Clinton's predecessor, succeeded Clinton's legacy of the Taba Summit. Yet the talks paused as the Israeli election was coming. Hawkish Sharon eventually replaced Barak as the new Israeli premier. With low expectations, the Bush administration did attempt to resume the peace process. The Mitchell Report published in late April 2001 argued that Arafat had no responsibility for the outbreak of the Second Intifada but should have done more to stop the subsequent violence, while accusing both Sharon's visit to the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount and Israel's settlement expansion beyond the green line as provocative. By endorsing the above findings, the Bush II administration successfully forced both Israel and Palestine to concede. Yet the

¹⁶⁴ William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflicts since 1967* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005), 374.

¹⁶⁵ William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflicts since 1967* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005), 375-376.

violence still escalated and this made the US try to restart the peace process from June 2001. Sharon asked Bush II not to push new initiatives but Bush II reacted by delaying his decision on new Israeli request for financial aid.¹⁶⁶ If the situation went on, Sharon might have been restrained like Shamir into returning to the peace talks. Yet the 9/11 incident in 2001 brought an extraordinary change to nearly everywhere over the world.

4.3 Summary on Phase I

The end of the Cold War reformed the nature of US top interests in the Middle East. As the interest of regional stability was no longer constrained by the previously overriding interests of anti-communism, the US started to pursue the Arab-Israeli peace process and prevent new Israeli stimulation to its Arabs neighbours. The growing conflicts in top interests made the US-Israeli alliance relationship more tension-prone. However, the alliance management on military action (the First Iraq War) did not bring a negative impact. The series of exchanges of ideas contrarily remedied the deteriorating relationship between Bush and Shamir. The Israeli-Palestinian peace process was the real weathercock of the US-Israeli alliance relationship. Conflicts often broke out when the Israeli government refused

¹⁶⁶ William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflicts since 1967* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005), 392-393.

to make concessions as the US administration expected. The diplomatic tensions between the two states would be intensified if Israel's prime minister and the majority of his cabinet members were hardliners against territorial concessions to the Palestinians. Besides, if the US administration felt fewer constraints or distractions from the domestic and international level, it would be able to exert more pressure on Israel. The Lewinsky affair and the Kosovo War had distracted the Clinton administration from making more significant progress in the peace talks.

However, the US administration preferred as a facilitator rather than an arbitrator in the Arab-Israeli peace process. Therefore, the US seldom exerted unilateral pressure on Israel at the negotiation table after Bush I restrained Shamir into joining the Madrid peace conference. Even hawkish Netanyahu could only hinder the peace process but still needed to talk with Arafat. Besides, even though the US would pressurize Israel when needed, it would still let Israel concede in a face-saving way by taking Israel's ideas into account, especially on the Jerusalem issue.

The US-Israeli alliance relationship experienced a general downturn during Phase I. Restraining was the most commonly used measures by the US in the issue of Israeli-Palestinian peace process, where it was easy for the US and Israel to have

conflicts of interests. However, the downturn never caused danger of the breakdown of the alliance relationship. The most apparent answer was that Israel has kept showing willingness in negotiations with the Palestinians. There was also no urgency for the US to give up Israel as its ally. After all, there were still other regional challengers in the Middle East, e.g. Iran, Iraq and even Syria, for which the US needed Israel for regional balancing. Furthermore, there was no domestic support for abandoning Israel after the victory of the Cold War. In short, the US-Israeli alliance relationship in Phase I was somewhat weakened but remained basically stable.

Chapter 5 Alliance management in Phase II: after 9/11 incident

5.1 Comparison on US and Israeli top interests

The most direct impact of the 9/11 incident to US strategic perception was the promotion of anti-terrorism to be a top priority. As a retaliating military action against al-Qaeda, the chief instigator of 9/11, was inevitable, regional stability in the Middle East was destined to be sacrificed for the war on terror. The Iraq War in 2003 was somewhat a “Bush corollary” to this new rationale of regional strategy, similar to the “Roosevelt Corollary” to the Monroe doctrine. The war might not have been fought if the Democrats rather than the Republicans had dominated the US government during this phase. Yet 9/11 did shock away the resistance in the US society to the neo-conservative view of fighting a war in Iraq. This allowed the Bush administration to adopt a pre-emptive strike on its perceived “rogue states” like Saddam Hussein’s Iraq. When the US government itself did not view regional stability as an important interest, it would be more tolerant to its ally’s military actions, which could mostly exert relatively insignificant impact on the regional order. In other words, a lower intensity of US interest on regional stability in turn strengthened the relative bargaining power of Israel to launch a military attack.

Israel had a long-term interest in anti-terrorism and this interest was closely related to the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. Most of Israel's unilateral military operations also aimed at the neighbouring terrorist groups. Therefore when the US began to rank anti-terrorism as a top strategic interest and Israel successfully incorporated its conflicts with Hamas and Hezbollah into the US global framework of anti-terrorism, the two states had a much more convergent interest on the issue. As terrorism was closely interrelated with its peace talks with the Palestinians, Israel could enjoy fewer restraints from the US on the peace process. Furthermore, Israel could share its intelligence of Middle East terrorists and its anti-terrorist experience with the US government. This increased the US dependence and interest on the strategic value of Israel in its war on terror. As a result, the bilateral relationship between the US and Israel was highly consolidated in Phase II.

Figure 5.1: [Post-Cold War] US top regional interests in the Middle East and Israeli top national interests

US	Israel
Reliable oil access	Jewish majority in controlled territories
Israel's security	Inter-state conventional weaponry attack prevention
WMD non-proliferation	WMD attack prevention
<i>Regional Stability</i>	Anti-terrorism
	Territories and resources maximization

Figure 5.2: [Post-9/11] US top regional interests in the Middle East and Israeli top national interests

US	Israel
Reliable oil access	Jewish majority in controlled territories
Israel's security	Inter-state conventional weaponry attack prevention
WMD non-proliferation	WMD attack prevention
Anti-terrorism	Anti-terrorism
	Territories and resources maximization

5.2 Internal dynamics of US-Israeli alliance management

The 9/11 incident forced the US government to raise anti-terrorism as an overriding global interest. As the major terrorist threats to the US fundamentally originated from the Middle East, the US interest to beat the terrorist challenge even pulled regional stability down as a secondary US interest in the Middle East. Therefore it reduced US interest to enhance the peace process and thus resulted in lower conflicts of interests between the US and Israel. Furthermore, Israel was knowledgeable on anti-terrorism through its historical conflicts with the Palestinians and the Lebanese. It managed to merge its interests on anti-terrorism around its neighbours with the US global framework of anti-terrorism after 9/11. This boost in commonality of top national interests thus consolidated the US-Israel alliance relationship.

5.2.1 Marginalization of Arafat

The 9/11 incident should have distracted the Bush II administration on both domestic and international levels. Bush and his team had to focus on the immediate responses required by the US public. Besides, the incident triggered an inevitable war in Afghanistan against al Qaeda and the Taliban which would exploit US

diplomatic energy. However, the Bush II administration still managed to retain some efforts on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Thanks to the insistence of Secretary of State Colin Powell, who pointed to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as one of the “root causes” of terrorism, Bush decided to share his concentration on the peace process by working out a “vision” for a two-state solution, apart from preparing for the War on Afghanistan. However, Bush did not oppose to the proposal of the neo-conservatives to spread the frontline to Iraq but wanted to try Powell’s plan first.¹⁶⁷

The Bush administration demanded Ariel Sharon, the Israeli Premier, for permission for a talk between Shimon Peres and Yasser Arafat. Yet Sharon rejected this and instead proposed his willingness to assist in the coalition against terrorism. When he argued against being the only one to object to US requests after 9/11, Bush simply responded, “When I ask you for A and you suggest B, I consider that a refusal.” This forced Sharon to send his son, Omri, and the director-general of the Foreign Ministry, Avi Gil, to meet with Arafat.¹⁶⁸ Sharon later even claimed, “Do not try to appease the Arabs at our expense.” This provoked Bush with a strong reaction

¹⁶⁷ William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflicts since 1967*(Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005), 299.

¹⁶⁸ Akiva Eldar, “Powell Settles a Score,” *Haaretz*, September 26, 2001.

to claim Sharon's remarks "unacceptable".¹⁶⁹ Yet this small tension had no shattering effect to the US-Israeli alliance relationship. After all, the two states now had a strong similar interest against terrorism and thus had room for cooperation. In this early stage of Phase II, the US-Israeli alliance relationship was still adapting to the new situation. In this adaptation process, the two states would still have quarrels.

However, Israel still managed to convince the US of their convergent top interests in anti-terrorism even with the sacrifice of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process after some initial quarrels. In order to persuade the US to derail the peace process, Israel made use of the uncontrollable violence in the Second Intifada to link up Arafat and his PLO with terrorism. US only showed "expressed reservations", which had no tangible restraining pressure, to Israel's act of targeted killings of Palestinian terrorist leaders.¹⁷⁰ Yet Israel's act only stimulated more terrorist attacks from the Palestinians, but perhaps that was what Sharon expected so as to demonize Arafat and his Fatah.¹⁷¹ After Fatah-linked al-Aqsa Brigades claimed responsibility for a retaliatory terrorist attack to a Jewish settlement in the West Bank, Sharon's office declared, "Yasser Arafat is no longer relevant to the state of Israel and there

¹⁶⁹ "Powell defuses U.S.-Israel flap", *CNN News*, October 5, 2001,

<http://edition.cnn.com/2001/US/10/05/ret.us.sharon/index.html> (accessed Apr 10, 2011).

¹⁷⁰ Gal Luft, "The Logic of Israel's Targeted Killing", *Middle East Quarterly*, (Winter 2003)

¹⁷¹ Naseer H. Aruri, *Dishonest broker: the US role in Israel and Palestine* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2003), p.202.

will be no more contact with him” on December 12, 2001.¹⁷² By portraying Arafat’s challenge to the US determination to fight against terrorism, Sharon had the excuse to persuade the Bush administration to marginalize Arafat. Arafat’s unwillingness or inability to control terrorism in Palestine raised US concerns, frustration, and disappointment. Therefore Bush announced in late January 2002 that he was disappointed with Arafat for his failure to prevent terrorism but allowing potential escalation of Palestinian violence against Israel.¹⁷³ Sharon began considering to expel Arafat from the Palestinian territories, and some Israelis even wanted to kill him. Yet Bush objected to both plans and suggested isolating him was already enough.¹⁷⁴

Subsequently, Israel launched “Operation Defensive Shield” into the West Bank from March 29 to May 3 as retaliation to a Palestinian terrorist attack. The Israeli military operation resulted in hundreds of casualties and thousands of arrests amongst the Palestinians. Although the US voted for the UNSC Resolution 1405, the strong US diplomatic pressure had made UNSC describe the mission as “fact-finding” instead of “investigation”. This could be viewed as a diplomatic

¹⁷² “Arafat’s choice”, *The Economist*, December 13, 2001, http://www.economist.com/node/906167?Story_ID=906167

¹⁷³ Bernard Reich, “United States and Israel: A Special Relationship”, in *The Middle East and the United States: a Historical and Political Reassessment*, ed. David W. Lesch (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 2007), 220.

¹⁷⁴ William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflicts since 1967*(Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005), 397.

victory for Israel with US support against the Arab appeals for an investigation.¹⁷⁵

The US was clearly endorsing Israeli military action from the viewpoint of anti-terrorism. Finally, Bush, though not directly naming out Arafat, “call(ed) on the Palestinian people to elect new leaders, leaders not compromised by terror” in a speech delivered on June 24, 2002.¹⁷⁶ Although Arafat refused to admit Bush’s intention of ousting him, Bush administration officials had further confirmed the meaning inside Bush’s speech.¹⁷⁷ However, Arafat remained as the President of the PA until his death but was put under house arrest in most of his last years of life. The US and Israel no longer allowed him to play any significant role in the peace process. In William B. Quandt’s words, the two states “were now fully aligned as allies in the war on terror” and Bush now just regarded Arafat as “little more than junior member of the axis of evil”.¹⁷⁸

5.2.2 The Road Map as well as the Second Iraq War

In April 2002, the US decided to join the forum of the Quartet on the Middle East (the Quartet) held in Madrid, which involved also the European Union (EU), the

¹⁷⁵ “UN Agrees to Jenin Mission”, *BBC News*, April 20, 2002.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/1940601.stm (accessed Apr 15, 2011).

¹⁷⁶ “‘Palestinians Must Elect New Leaders’: Extracts from President Bush's speech”, *The Guardians*, June 25, 2002, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2002/jun/25/israel2> (accessed Apr 13, 2011).

¹⁷⁷ “Arafat, Bush Administration Differ over Speech”, *CNN World News*, June 25, 2002, http://articles.cnn.com/2002-06-25/world/bush.speech.reax_1_bush-speech-palestinian-state-palestina-n-legislature?_s=PM:WORLD (accessed Apr 13, 2011).

¹⁷⁸ William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflicts since 1967* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005), 398-399.

United Nations (UN) and Russia. Although the Quartet was initiated by the other three parties, the Bush administration still attended this forum as a preparation for the future Second Iraq War to reduce its tensions with those partner-rivals in advance and as a response to the violent deterioration in the Israeli-Palestinian situation.¹⁷⁹ Nevertheless, the United States was still dominating the issue. First, in the same speech to urge ousting of Arafat, Bush outlined his principles for advancing the peace process. He offered his provisional support to the establishment of a Palestinian state until the new authority destroyed Palestinian terrorist groups.¹⁸⁰ In July 2002, the Quartet held another meeting in New York and finally reached a compromise between the US request to oust Arafat and the oppositions from the other three parties. Arafat would retain a symbolic position, i.e. to stay but be marginalized, and a Palestinian state would be formed within three years.¹⁸¹ The EU was initially allowed to draft a “realistic road map” along the spirit of Bush’s speech. Yet the EU draft was never released and was replaced in September 2002 with the US alternative draft¹⁸², which Bush released on October 15, 2002. The key idea of this draft, as concluded by Itamar Rabinovich, was a three-phase settlement scheme: “(1) reform

¹⁷⁹ Itamar Rabinovich, *Waging Peace: Israel and the Arabs 1948-2003* (Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), 203.

¹⁸⁰ “‘Palestinians Must Elect New Leaders’: Extracts from President Bush's speech”, *The Guardians*, June 25, 2002, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2002/jun/25/israel2> (accessed Apr 13, 2011).

¹⁸¹ Itamar Rabinovich, *Waging Peace: Israel and the Arabs 1948-2003* (Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press), 203.

¹⁸² The full name of the document is “Elements of a Performance-Based Road Map to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict”. See “Special Documents: The Road Map”, *Journal of Palestine Studies* XXXII, no.4 (Summer 2003): 83.

within the Palestinian Authority, Israel withdrawal to the lines of September 2000, and Palestinian elections; (2) the formation of a Palestinian state in provisional borders and a Palestinian constitution in the course of 2003; and (3) in the course of 2004 and during the first half of 2005, final status negotiations.”¹⁸³ Although this plan required certain Israeli concessions if it were to be successfully implemented, it was indeed a favourable proposal to Israel. As a “performance-based” road map, the Palestinians had to first give up both Arafat and intifada before triggering the next step of limited Israeli withdrawal on territory. Yet it was Sharon who deliberately stimulated the Palestinian intifada by visiting the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount area. Besides, Sharon should have clearly known that the violence could never be stopped under Israeli regular military operations and targeted killings. Israel would not be happy with the requirement of concessions within the plan but was not likely to confront the US over such an intrinsically favourable proposal. Yet Sharon faced domestic pressure as the Labour Party withdrew from the governing coalition and thus could not accept this proposal at this critical moment.¹⁸⁴ As a result, the US delayed the finalization of road map in late 2002 giving the reasons of “heated Israeli objections” and continuously requested for further postponements until after first

¹⁸³ Itamar Rabinovich, *Waging Peace: Israel and the Arabs 1948-2003* (Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press), 203-204.

¹⁸⁴ William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflicts since 1967*(Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005), 400.

Israeli elections in late January, then the formation of the new government, subsequently the Second Iraq War, the nomination of a Palestinian Premier and even the establishment of a new PA government.¹⁸⁵ What the US demanded above were all favourable to Israel. The fact of a consolidated US-Israeli alliance relationship was so apparent.

Sharon sophisticatedly managed the US-Israeli relationship by making symbolic concessions to the peace proposals. First, he claimed to be ready for “painful concessions” to reach a political settlement with the Palestinians. Second, he kept a double-handed policy with both dialogue with the Bush administration and a parallel one with the leadership of the settlers in West Bank and Gaza. Third, he accepted the idea of a Palestinian state even though facing objection from the Likud’s Party Centre, as wished by the Bush administration through its peace proposal draft.¹⁸⁶ Indeed, the peace process since the end of the Cold War already set the principle of Israeli territory withdrawal in long term. The question was only how much Israel had to concede. So the Bush II administration did not need to restrain much, as Bush I did on Shamir, to achieve Sharon’s public confirmation to the above principles. Finally, Sharon managed to almost double Likud’s seats in Knesset and

¹⁸⁵ “Special Documents: The Road Map”, *Journal of Palestine Studies* XXXII, no.4 (Summer 2003): 3.

¹⁸⁶ Itamar Rabinovich, *Waging Peace: Israel and the Arabs 1948-2003* (Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), 213-214.

thus formed a governing coalition without Labour. This gave him further freedom in bargaining with the US to minimize the territorial withdrawal.

On March 19, 2003, the US finally launched the Second Iraq War despite the strong opposition from certain European countries. The Second Iraq War did not heavily distract the Bush (II) administration to the same extent as the Kosovo War in 1999 did to the Clinton administration. It was similar to the case of the First Iraq War, in which Bush I administration quickly shift attention from Iraq to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Yet the statement of the similar logic between the two cases behind the attempts to shift attention from Iraq to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, as William B. Quandt argued¹⁸⁷, was not completely correct. First, the military operations towards Iraq of the Bush I administration were passive while those of the Bush II administration were active. Bush I had already been pressing Israel to the negotiation table before the First Iraq War. Therefore it was natural for him to restart the peace process soon after the Iraq War. Yet Bush II considered the removal of Iraq could facilitate the implementation of the Road Map. Therefore he continued his Road Map proposal soon after eliminating Saddam Hussein. Second, the US attitudes to Israel in the two cases of the attention shift were different. While

¹⁸⁷ William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflicts since 1967*(Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005), 401-402.

Bush I was restraining Shamir to the Madrid peace conference which was unfavourable to Israel in that historical context, the Bush II was luring Sharon to accept an intrinsically favourable peace proposal. This reflected the difference of alliance cohesiveness between the US and Israel in Phase I and Phase II.

The Quartet finally released the document of “A Performance-Based Roadmap to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict” on April 30, 2003, soon after Mahmoud Abbas formed the new cabinet of the Palestinian Authority (PA). Under pressure from the Bush administration, the Sharon’s cabinet agreed to adopt the plan with fourteen reservations on March 25, 2003.¹⁸⁸ The Bush administration agreed to all of the Israel’s reservations, except number 6 and 10, which Israel demanded Palestinians to abandon hope of refugee’s “right of return” to Israel and required to exclude any reference to the Saudi initiative (for a peace exchange deal of a full Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 border) respectively.¹⁸⁹ This showed a big US diplomatic concession to Israel. On the Palestinian side, Abbas was built above the ground on stilts held by Arafat and had no real power over Palestinian security forces. Besides, Hamas, al-Aqsa Martyrs

¹⁸⁸ “Israel's Response to the Road Map”, May 25, 2003.

http://www.knesset.gov.il/process/docs/roadmap_response_eng.htm (accessed Apr 13, 2011).

¹⁸⁹ Haaretz Service, Nathan Guttman and Aluf Benn, “Sharon: Israel is Ready to Accept the Middle East Road Map”, *Haaretz*, May 23, 2003.

Brigade and other terrorist groups or Fatah factions refused to accept the Road Map.¹⁹⁰

Soon after that, Bush met with Sharon and Abbas, in an effort to reactivate the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, on the day after a joint meeting with Abbas and several Arab leaders, including Jordanian King Abdullah II of Jordan, Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, and Bahraini King Hamad al Khalifa. Yet the meetings were fruitless.¹⁹¹ Moreover, the cycle between Palestinian terrorist attacks (especially by Hamas) and Israeli retaliation (especially with targeted killings) recurred since June 2003.¹⁹² Although the US wanted to save the situation by paying \$20 million aid to the PA in August 2003, Abbas eventually resigned and was replaced by Ahmed Qurei (or Abu Alaa). Owing to the failure of US efforts to restore stability in Iraq and the upcoming presidential re-election, Bush began to be distracted away from the peace process. Sharon thus faced no pressure from Bush to communicate with Palestinian leaders.¹⁹³

5.2.3 Sharon's "unilateral disengagement" plan

¹⁹⁰ Robert O. Freedman, "The Bush administration and the Arab-Israeli conflict: the record of its first four years", *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 9, no.1 (Spring 2005)

¹⁹¹ Robert O. Freedman, "The Bush administration and the Arab-Israeli conflict: the record of its first four years", *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 9, no.1 (Spring 2005)

¹⁹² Itamar Rabinovich, *Waging Peace: Israel and the Arabs 1948-2003* (Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), 217-218.

¹⁹³ William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflicts since 1967* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005), 404.

On December 18, 2003, Sharon declared his plan of “unilateral disengagement” in view of the unpromising development of the Road Map. He claimed that this plan would “grant maximum security and minimize friction between Israelis and Palestinians” without harming Israeli strategic coordination with the US.¹⁹⁴ The Road Map was actually dead after a meeting on January 27, 2004, between US and Israeli officials, including US National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice and her aides, Sharon’s Bureau Chief Dov Weisglass, Israeli Ambassador to the US Danny Ayalon and Sharon’s Foreign Policy Adviser Shalom Tourgeman. As Israel could enjoy freedom of action with the frozen peace process, at least before the departure of Arafat, Sharon assumed a political victory by getting US consent to give up the Road Map.¹⁹⁵ Then Sharon released a more detailed plan of reaching an interim arrangement to relieve the conflict level with the Palestinians. Sharon’s proposal involved three key unilateral Israeli steps: (i) acceleration of barrier construction to separate Israel from the area in the West Bank which Palestinians were inhabited (in order to reduce terrorist attacks and infiltration), (ii) unilateral withdrawal from the entire Gaza Strip, which Israel has already surrounded with a barrier, (iii) consolidation of the large settlement blocs in the West Bank to be

¹⁹⁴ Ariel Sharon, “Address by PM Ariel Sharon at the Fourth Herzliya Conference”, December 18, 2003. <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Speeches+by+Israeli+leaders/2003/Address+by+PM+Ariel+Sharon+at+the+Fourth+Herzliya.htm> (accessed Apr 15, 2011).

¹⁹⁵ Aluf Benn, “The day the road map died”, *Haaretz*, January 29, 2004.

annexed to Israel.¹⁹⁶ Although this led to domestic problems for Sharon, he managed to win a letter from Bush to relieve its restraints to Israel on the peace talks on April 14, 2004: “In light of new realities on the ground, including already existing major Israeli population centres, it is unrealistic to expect that the outcome of final status negotiations will be a full and complete return to the armistice lines of 1949, and all previous efforts to negotiate a two-state solution have reached the same conclusion”.¹⁹⁷ Bush even publicly called Sharon’s plan “bold and courageous”.¹⁹⁸

Although Sharon’s proposal looked like making concessions to the Palestinians, it was more complex than it seemed. First, there were strategic considerations on the unilateral disengagement from the Gaza strip. It was very unlikely for Israel to annex the region on the final settlement for several reasons: (i) severe demographic deficit of Jewish population in the region (0.6% to the Palestinian population), (ii) weak Jewish linkage to the region in history, (iii) geostrategic advantage to start off military operations from outside than from inside, (iv) relatively high casualty toll of Israelis in the region.¹⁹⁹ The demographic deficit

¹⁹⁶ William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflicts since 1967* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005), 405-406.

¹⁹⁷ “Letter from President Bush to Prime Minister Sharon”, April 14, 2004, from Appendix AH, William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflicts since 1967* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005), http://www.brookings.edu/press/Books/~media/Files/Press/Books/2005/peaceprocess3/peaceprocess_appendixAH.pdf (accessed Apr 15, 2011).

¹⁹⁸ Brian Knowlton, “Bush supports Sharon’s plan to withdraw from the Gaza Strip”, *International Herald Tribune*, April 14, 2004.

¹⁹⁹ Shmuel Even, “Israel’s Strategy of Unilateral Withdrawal”, *Strategic Assessment* 12, no.1 (June

was especially crucial in this case as Israeli maintained its uniqueness of democracy in the Middle East. Losing a population majority in Israel would be a fatal blow to the Jewish domination of the territory. As discussed in Chapter 2, Israel was suffering from an existential threat of the deepening demographic deficit owing to the faster-growing Palestinian population. Israel could enjoy a strategic benefit of preventing non-Jewish population dilution by withdrawing from Gaza.

Second, Israeli territorial loss from unilateral disengagement in Gaza would be eventually compensated with the partial annexation of West Bank. The settlements in the West Bank would only accommodate Jewish people and thus would not disrupt the Jewish majority after annexation could be implemented. Sharon's proposal was basically a unilateral land exchange plan without consent from the Palestinians. Despite Rice's comment that this was "not consistent with our (the US) understanding under the road map", the Bush administration still supported the settlement expansion of areas already with certain development (but not undeveloped region).²⁰⁰ The closeness between the Bush administration and the Sharon cabinet could be understood from this case.

2009): 34.

²⁰⁰ Steven R. Weisman, "U.S. Now Said to Support Growth For Some West Bank Settlements", *New York Times*, August 21, 2004.

Third, “the significance of the disengagement plan is the freezing of the peace process”, as quoted from Weisglass, “and when you freeze that process, you prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state, and you prevent a discussion on the refugees, the borders and Jerusalem”.²⁰¹ In other words, Sharon indeed had no real interests in advancing the peace process with the Palestinians and the ultimate goal of his proposal was the distraction of negotiations from the final status with the Palestinians. Yet it managed to win support, or at least tacit consent, from the Bush administration. Weisglass even claimed this plan had got Bush’s “blessing” and “ratification” of both Houses of Congress,²⁰² though the Bush administration had never announced to give up the peace process. A possible answer to this situation could be the mixture of the lack of formal and direct Israeli declaration to block the Road Map, and also distractions to the Bush administration of growing Iraq turmoil as well as the presidential re-election.

5.2.4 Hamas’ electoral victory

Arafat died on November 11, 2004. Before that moment, Bush had already secured for another presidential term. Sharon has successfully marginalized Arafat

²⁰¹ Ari Shavit, “Top PM Aide: Gaza Plan Aims to Freeze the Peace Process”, *Haaretz*, October 6, 2004.

²⁰² Ari Shavit, “Top PM Aide: Gaza Plan Aims to Freeze the Peace Process”, *Haaretz*, October 6, 2004.

from the peace process before his eventual death. Although the Bush administration tended to support Israel in the Israeli-Palestinian conflicts, it had not waived its goal to facilitate the peace process. Therefore, in the final days of Arafat, the Bush administration started to exert pressure on Israel to make certain concessions to cement the standing of moderate Palestinian leaders in the coming election. For instance, Israel finally defrosted the \$40-million tax funds for the PA and agreed on military withdrawal from the Palestinian population areas.²⁰³ However, such kind of restraint was so minor that it had no impact on the cohesiveness of US-Israeli alliance relationship. It was at most a policy fine-tuning to adapt to a sudden event. Before Abbas succeeded his office to the PA President after a Hamas-boycotted election in January 2005, the Bush administration further worked to boost the Palestinian moderates. It offered a \$23.5 million aid to the Palestinian Authority in December 2004.²⁰⁴ The most direct change owing to the presidential succession in the PA was that Abbas was willing to restart peace talks with Israel while Arafat was not.

Despite some ripples happened in the course of time, Sharon and Abbas declared a truce in Israeli-Palestinian hostilities. Yet the Israeli side maintained that

²⁰³ Steven R. Weisman, "Israel Takes Quiet Steps to Bolster Palestinians", *New York Times*, Nov 14, 2004.

²⁰⁴ "U.S. to Give \$23.5 Million for Palestinians", *New York Times*, Dec 9, 2004.

this was still only a “pre-Road Map situation”. As Sharon lacked enough political energy to implement both the Gaza withdrawal and an outpost dismantlement in the West Bank, Israel expected Abbas to make the first move of destroying terrorism to activate the first stage of the Road Map.²⁰⁵ The Bush administration supported this round of meetings by sharply increasing US direct aid to the PA to \$350 million²⁰⁶ and sending Rice, now Secretary of State, to Israel to maintain pressure on Israel.²⁰⁷ Although there were open differences between Bush and Sharon over the settlement expansion in the West Bank, Bush offered tremendous support to Sharon on the Gaza withdrawal.²⁰⁸ Besides, US did have concerns about the situation after the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and even pressed Israel to ensure a successful transition in Gaza. The Bush administration expected this withdrawal to set the basis of a future Palestinian state.²⁰⁹

What the Bush administration worried was about correct, for Hamas defeated Fatah in the Palestinian parliamentary elections on January 25, 2006. While Hamas won 74, i.e. more than a half, of the 132 seats in Palestinian Legislative Council,

²⁰⁵ Steven Erlanger, “Urging new path, Sharon and Abbas declare truce”, *New York Times*, Feb 9, 2005.

²⁰⁶ Steven R. Weisman, “Palestinians would get more aid in Bush Plan”, *New York Times*, Feb 3, 2005.

²⁰⁷ Steven R. Weisman and Steven Erlanger, “U.S. prods Israel for hard choices on Palestinians”, *New York Times*, Feb 7, 2005.

²⁰⁸ Richard W. Stevenson, “Bush supports plan by Sharon for a withdrawal from Gaza”, *New York Times*, April 12, 2005.

²⁰⁹ Steven Erlanger, “U.S. presses Israel to smooth the path to a Palestinian Gaza”, *New York Times*, August 7, 2005.

Fatah only secured 45 of them.²¹⁰ Three weeks before that, Sharon suffered a sudden stroke and lost consciousness. Ehud Olmert became the Acting Prime Minister. Olmert emphasized Israeli refusal to negotiate with the PA which included armed terrorist groups like Hamas. He stated that Israeli-Palestinian peace talks would only resume when Hamas disarmed, gave up its claim for Israeli destruction, and accepted all previous Israeli-Palestinian agreements. The Bush administration clearly supported Olmert by reiterating its security commitment to Israel in that the US refused to deal with any Hamas-like political party which “articulates the destruction of Israel as part of its platform”.²¹¹ This conformed to the pattern in Phase II: the US and Israel had a strong convergence of interests over anti-terrorism. As Hamas was regarded as a terrorist group by both the US and Israel, its legitimate status in Palestine would only triggered a common stance of the US and Israel. This would further consolidate the US-Israeli alliance. Therefore, it proved what Quandt argued, “The unilateralist Israeli ‘vision’ has little in common with the one that Bush purports to uphold, yet Bush has shown no indication of having a strategy for coaxing Israeli leaders into showing more flexibility. In reality, it is the Israelis who have been setting the pace for developments on the ground.”²¹² Indeed Israel could

²¹⁰ Aaron D. Pina, “Palestinian Elections”, *CRS Report for Congress* [RL33269], Feb 9, 2006, p.10.

²¹¹ Carol Migdalovitz, “Israeli-Arab Negotiations: Background, Conflicts, and U.S. Policy” (Order Code: RL33530), *Congressional Research Service* (Aug 12, 2009): 17.

²¹² William B. Quandt, “On the Peace Process in the Middle East”, *Daedalus* 135, Iss. 2 (Spring 2006): 134.

only dominate the peace process when the US put no, or at least insignificant, pressure on Israel. Achieving regional stability through promoting the peace process, bounded by the top interest of anti-terrorism, was still not an overriding issue to the US at this moment.

As Hamas refused to abandon its hostility towards Israel, the US and the EU ceased to pay direct aid to the Hamas-led authority in Gaza since April 2006. The US even halted the financial assistance to the Abbas-led government in the West Bank for Abbas' failure in security force control. Besides, Israel has already been withholding an amount of around \$50 million per month from the PA.²¹³ Abbas could not change the situation and the Bush administration eventually accepted Olmert's proposal to realign the settlements in the West Bank.²¹⁴ The US just retained a similar stance to Olmert's proposal as to Sharon's previous unilateral disengagement plan. From June 2006, Hamas resumed violence against Israel. The kidnap of Corporal Gilad Shalit on June 25 sparked a strong Israeli military retaliation on Hamas. The Bush administration certainly showed its support to Israel's "right to defend itself".²¹⁵

²¹³ Steven R. Weisman and Craig S. Smith, "U.S. and Europe Halt Aid to Palestinian Government", *New York Times*, April 8, 2006.

²¹⁴ Carol Migdalovitz, "Israeli-Arab Negotiations: Background, Conflicts, and U.S. Policy" (Order Code: RL33530), *Congressional Research Service* (Aug 12, 2009):18.

²¹⁵ Carol Migdalovitz, "Israeli-Arab Negotiations: Background, Conflicts, and U.S. Policy" (Order

5.2.5 *The Second Lebanon War*

Yet Israeli attention switched to Lebanon very quickly. Shortly after a “mis-targeted” killing of a Hamas leader Nabil al Shamiah (indeed aimed at another Hamas leader), militants from Hezbollah, a Lebanese guerrilla, captured two Israeli soldiers after a cross-border action. Israel retaliated with air and artillery strikes, subsequently also an army invasion, into southern Lebanon. Hezbollah answered with a sustained bombardment of Haifa and other northern Israeli region.²¹⁶ Bush described the conflicts as “terrorism and terrorist attacks on a democratic country” and further ascribed them to be “inspired by nation states, like Syria and Iran”.²¹⁷ Bush’s attitude hinted at the US expectation to use Israel as an agent of regional balancing, not only confronting terrorist groups but also deterring the remaining regional challengers.

Yet the 34-day long Israeli military operations failed to destroy Hezbollah. Both sides suffered heavy casualties before UNSC Resolution 1701 was finally implemented on August 14, 2006.²¹⁸ Bush first blamed the responsibility on

Code: RL33530), *Congressional Research Service* (Aug 12, 2009):19.

²¹⁶ T.G. Fraser, *The Arab-Israeli conflict*, 3rd ed. (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 190.

²¹⁷ Robin Wright and Thomas E. Ricks, "Bush Supports Israel's Move Against Hezbollah", *Washington Post*, Jul 19, 2006.

²¹⁸ T.G. Fraser, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 3rd ed. (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 191.

Hezbollah and its state sponsors, Iran and Syria, and then claimed Hezbollah “suffered a defeat in the crisis”.²¹⁹ Yet Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, leader of Hezbollah claimed victory later.²²⁰ The US reaffirmed its commitment to Israel in this conflict. The bilateral alliance relationship was thus consolidated.

On the other hand, the US failed to stabilize the post-war Iraq and faced growing casualties of soldiers and other personnel. This triggered a growing domestic war-weariness and weakened the popularity of the Bush administration. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld especially attracted criticisms and was asked to step down. Rumsfeld finally succumbed to domestic pressure and resigned his position on November 6, 2006. The Bush administration announced it on November 8, after the Republican Party lost its majority in the Congress in the mid-term election. Rumsfeld formally quit office on December 16. The Bush administration only facilitated a cease-fire agreement in Gaza during the period. Israel launched another military operation into northern Gaza on October 31, 2006, some days earlier than Rumsfeld resignation, for six days but in vain to stop Palestinian rocket fire even with heavy Palestinian casualties. Under international pressure, Olmert and Abbas reached a cease-fire agreement on Gaza, with Hamas claiming to “respect”,

²¹⁹ Michael A. Fletcher, “Hezbollah the Loser in Battle, Bush Says”, *Washington Post*, Aug 15, 2006.

²²⁰ T.G. Fraser, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 3rd ed. (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 191.

on November 25. This successfully reduced the cases of rocket fire attack along the Israeli border.²²¹ The result of the mid-term election was the outburst of US public discontent and the resignation of Rumsfeld removed the most significant stumbling block for the Bush administration to fit public expectations. At this moment, the end of Phase II, which has been developing for a long time, could eventually be concluded.

5.3 Summary on Phase II

The 9/11 incident bolstered the priority of anti-terrorism in US foreign policy in the Middle East. Under the Bush administration, regional stability was turned down to be secondary again in Phase II. Although the US was still willing to promote the Israeli-Palestinian peace process as shown its support to the Road Map, it would consider how to resist terrorism first. This was similar to the situation during the Cold War, which any hope of promoting the peace process could be restrained by the US ultimate interest of anti-communism. The case in Phase III was just the replacement of the interest of anti-terrorism to anti-communism. Therefore the Bush administration often demanded the Palestinian side to waive terrorist acts before any Israeli concession. The converging top interests of anti-terrorism and the priority

²²¹ Carol Migdalovitz, "Israeli-Arab Negotiations: Background, Conflicts, and U.S. Policy" (Order Code: RL33530), *Congressional Research Service* (Aug 12, 2009): 20.

decrease of US interest in regional stability relieved the tension-proneness of the US-Israeli alliance relationship.

Owing to the previous rounds of negotiations in Phase I, the US and Israel would no longer face tension on whether Israel should enter the peace talks. The alliance management within Phase II was vague and subtle since the US and Israel had much fewer conflicts of interests. Occasions of security dilemma within the alliance thus decreased. Besides, there were mutual needs of regional balancing in the alliance. Furthermore, there was stronger cooperation, especially on intelligence sharing, between the two states in Phase II. As a result, The US-Israeli alliance relationship experienced a general upturn during Phase II.

Chapter 6 Alliance management in Phase III: From the US turmoil in Iraq

6.1 Comparison on US and Israeli top interests

The fall of Saddam Hussein produced a political vacuum in the Middle East, especially the Gulf region. The US actions failed to stabilize the turmoil in Iraq. This forced the US government to reconsider the significance of regional stability in the Middle East. Anti-terrorism and WMD non-proliferation were still top US interests but regional stability would no longer be sacrificed. Establishment and the subsequent stabilization of a new regional order became urgent especially when the US public realized the adverse situations in Iraq. This forced the US government to reevaluate the significance of regional stability. Unless the domestic stability in Iraq and regional order were restored, the US army would still be trapped in Iraq despite the stronger and stronger domestic opposition to secure other US top regional interests such as oil supply and WMD non-proliferation.

Besides, the US had to consider the growing Iranian challenging influence in Middle East affairs. Iran was believed to be developing nuclear weapons and had potential existential threat to Israel. However, as there was still no evidence that Iran

had possessed such technology, there was still no significant effect to regional stability. The more urgent Iranian threat to regional stability was its suspected linkage with Hamas and Hezbollah, which had consistent conflicts with Israel, and its potential impact on the Shiites in post-war Iraq.

Similar to the case in Phase I, the US found that it had better make certain efforts on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process in the course of reconstructing regional stability. This intensified the US interests in the peace process and thus the US could achieve a relatively higher bargaining power on Israel in the issue. On the other hand, Israel's unilateral military operations could become an unfavourable variable when the US wanted to minimize the hot conflicts in the region. Therefore the US would have more intensified interests to restrain Israel's military actions.

However, the US was still restricted by the shared interest of anti-terrorism with Israel and thus could only exert limited pressure on Israel. We could observe that some of US top regional interests were incompatible in some extent. However, neither of those top interests would be sacrificed for the complete achievement of another top interest. Therefore the US would find it difficult to strike a balance amongst different top interests. That required sophisticated manoeuvre by the US officials.

Figure 6.1: [Post-9/11] US top regional interests in the Middle East and Israeli top national interests

US	Israel
Reliable oil access	Jewish majority in controlled territories
Israel's security	Inter-state conventional weaponry attack prevention
WMD non-proliferation	WMD attack prevention
Anti-terrorism	Anti-terrorism
	Territories and resources maximization

Figure 6.2: [Post-US turmoil in Iraq] US top regional interests in the Middle East and Israeli top national interests

US	Israel
Reliable oil access	Jewish majority in controlled territories
Israel's security	Inter-state conventional weaponry attack prevention
WMD non-proliferation	WMD attack prevention
Anti-terrorism	Anti-terrorism
Regional stability	Territories and resources maximization

6.2 Internal dynamics of US-Israeli alliance management

The Republicans lost majority in both Senate and House of Representative in the 2006 mid-term election, as to pay for the public discontent towards the Iraq War launched by the Bush administration. This forced the Bush administration to consider regional stabilization again. Therefore the US sought to make further progress in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. This made the US-Israeli alliance become more tension-prone. However, as anti-terrorism remained as a common interest between the US and Israel, the alliance relationship of the two states was still very cohesive.

6.2.1 *After resignation of Rumsfeld*

The Bush administration promised to restart its efforts on facilitating the peace process between Israel and Abbas' side of PA. This was a part of the strategy to attract Arab partners to join an anti-Iran coalition to maintain a regional situation favourable to the US.²²² For example, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice visited the Middle East to send both Israeli and Palestinian side the message of US view of the correct timing to restart peace process.²²³ Rice subsequently maintained its efforts to hold talks with Israeli and Palestinian leaders. Yet there were no concrete

²²² Jim Lobe, "Politics-US: Mideast strategy increasingly targets Iran", *Global Information Network*, Jan 26, 2007.

²²³ Thom Shanker, "Perhaps thinking of legacy, Bush has Rice on the move", *New York Times*, Jan 19, 2007.

results in those talks.²²⁴ The US encouraged Saudi Arabia to help more actively in regional diplomacy. Indeed this was a part of the new Middle East policies of the US. Yet the resulting Mecca Accord, which attempted to remedy the rift inside the PA, was beyond the expectation of Israel and the Quartet. Israel argued that this would allow Hamas not to recognize Israel before joining the negotiation.²²⁵

Yet the US-backed Saudi efforts successfully softened Israeli attitude to the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative.²²⁶ Both Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni praised the “positive” elements in this initiative.²²⁷ The key elements in this Saudi plan included a full recognition to Israel, peace offer in exchange of Israeli withdrawal to 1967 lines, refugee return according to UN General Assembly Resolution 194, and Palestinian state establishment with East Jerusalem as the capital.²²⁸ The US tried to organize moderate Arab states to resist radical terrorist groups and promote peace in the region. This was an effort to serve both top US interests of anti-terrorism and regional stability. Therefore the US could avoid tangible restraints on, and thus reducing tensions with, Israel in facilitating peace

²²⁴ Helene Cooper and Steven Erlanger, “Mideast talks conclude with little result”, *New York Times*, Feb 20, 2007.

²²⁵ Carol Migdalovitz, “Israeli-Arab Negotiations: Background, Conflicts, and U.S. Policy” (Order Code: RL33530), *Congressional Research Service* (Aug 12, 2009): 21.

²²⁶ Carol Migdalovitz, “Israeli-Arab Negotiations: Background, Conflicts, and U.S. Policy” (Order Code: RL33530), *Congressional Research Service* (Aug 12, 2009): 21.

²²⁷ Steven Erlanger, “2002 Saudi plan revived as spur to Arab-Israeli talks”, *New York Times*, Mar 13, 2007.

²²⁸ “Arab Peace Initiative”, 2002, <http://www.al-bab.com/arab/docs/league/peace02.htm> (accessed Apr 17, 2011).

process. Yet there were still disagreement between the two allies. For instance, while Israel was determined to boycott the whole PA with the involvement of Hamas, the US even considered resuming direct international aid to the Palestinian government.²²⁹ Yet the Bush administration was still worried of Hamas so it reduced the amount of aids and restricted the ways for the PA to use the money, so that Hamas would not receive the money from the US.²³⁰

Rice's consecutive shuttle diplomacy only made Israel agree to negotiate with Palestinians twice a month on day-to-day issues, such as population flow in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank and arms smuggling, but not on key issues for final settlement of peace process, including Jerusalem, Palestinian refugees and the Palestinian state border.²³¹ Under the constraint of the top interest of anti-terrorism, it was difficult for the Bush administration to seek a breakthrough in the peace process when it viewed the Palestinian side to be involved with a terrorist group like Hamas. In other words, the main impetus for the US to push forward the peace process, the top interest of regional stability, was diluted by the counter-effect of the interest of anti-terrorism. This limited the bargaining power of the Bush

²²⁹ Isabel Kershner, "U.S. and Israel disagree on Palestinian contacts", *New York Times*, Mar 19, 2007.

²³⁰ Helene Cooper, "Wary of Hamas, U.S. is to trim aid to Palestinian forces", *New York Times*, Mar 22, 2007.

²³¹ Helene Cooper, "Mideast leaders to hold talks twice a month", *New York Times*, Mar 28, 2007.

administration to exert pressure on Israel in the issue of Israeli-Palestinian peace talks.

The US gradually developed a new strategy towards the Palestinians which conformed Israeli interests without totally discarding its interests in promoting peace process to stabilize the Middle East. The short unity of Fatah and Hamas to form a Palestinian government ended with an escalation of conflicts in May 2007, which resulted in the complete control of Gaza by Hamas on June 14. This forced President Abbas (Fatah) to dismiss Haniyah (Hamas) as Prime Minister and dissolve the unity government. The US certainly stood on Abbas' side.²³² This shortened the distance between the stances of the US and Israel on the Palestinians as the US could now treat Fatah and Hamas in separate ways. The US and Israel advocated and remained communications with Fatah in the West Bank while opposed and suppressed to Hamas in Gaza. Olmert claimed that this could be "a new opening" to the peace process.²³³ Following the "West Bank first" strategy, the Bush administration advocated the blockage to Gaza with efforts from both Israel and Fatah.²³⁴ Then it unfroze aid to the Abbas side of the PA.²³⁵ Israel cooperated with the US move by

²³² Carol Migdalovitz, "Israeli-Arab Negotiations: Background, Conflicts, and U.S. Policy" (Order Code: RL33530), *Congressional Research Service* (Aug 12, 2009): 21-22.

²³³ Steven Erlanger, "Palestinian split poses a policy quandary for U.S.", *New York Times*, Jun 17, 2007.

²³⁴ Steven Erlanger and Isabel Kershner, "With pressure put on Hamas, Gaza is cut off", *New York Times*, Jul 10, 2007.

²³⁵ Helene Cooper, "U.S. unfreezes millions in aid to Palestinians", *New York Times*, Jun 19, 2007.

restoring full financial ties with the Abbas-led PA, including tax revenue return.²³⁶

Besides, Olmert met with Abbas on July 16. Bush supported it by announcing its willingness to assist reform in the PA for future serious peace negotiations. On July 25, Olmert announced that they would work on an “agreement on principles” for the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, from characteristics of a Palestinian state to the nature of future bilateral linkages. Yet there were still disagreements between Olmert and Abbas on the negotiating priority of the “final status” of the Palestinian state.²³⁷

6.2.2 *The Annapolis Conference*

Nevertheless, the Israelis and the Palestinians still managed to attend the Annapolis Conference convened by the Bush administration in late November 2007. In this conference with representatives from 49 countries and international organizations invited by the US, the Bush administration successfully got the involvement of Saudi Arabia, a US ally without formal relations with Israel. Syria, despite its unfavourable linkage with Iran, Lebanon and terrorist groups in the region, was also invited under the demand from other Arab countries.²³⁸ This conference showed the policy difference of the Bush administration between Phase II and Phase

²³⁶ Steven Erlanger, “Israel restores financial ties to PA”, *New York Times*, Jul 2, 2007.

²³⁷ Carol Migdalovitz, “Israeli-Arab Negotiations: Background, Conflicts, and U.S. Policy” (Order Code: RL33530), *Congressional Research Service* (Aug 12, 2009): 22.

²³⁸ Carol Migdalovitz, “Israeli-Palestinian peace process: the Annapolis Conference” (Order Code: RL22768), *Congressional Research Service* (Dec 7, 2007): 3.

III. First, the size of invitation to the Annapolis Conference was a contrast to the US unilateral attitude in the Second Iraq War, which the Bush administration would rather form a “coalition of the willing” than seeking approval from the United Nations. On the guidance of the reviving top interest of regional stability, the Bush administration decided to gather a strong international support in this occasion. Second, the inclusion of Syria even broke the “with us or against us” principle of the Bush administration. From the exclusion of Iran and Hamas, we could understand the sophisticated fine-tune of policy of the Bush administration. As Iran and Hamas posed a stronger and more immediate threat to Israel respectively, they would not be invited (indeed they had no intention to join too) by the Bush administration. While Iran was even facing doubt and hostility from the US, Israel and even the Arab states, the invitation to Hamas would deflect the new US “West Bank First” strategy, despite the Arab wish of Fatah-Hamas reconciliation. Yet as Syria had a weaker challenge to the US interests of anti-terrorism and regional stability, and Israel was not unwilling to discuss with Syria, the Bush administration would consider suggestions from the Arab friends and invited also Syria to the conference. This could enhance the support from the Arab countries and were advantageous to regional stability, which the US tried to uphold.

Although a “Joint Understanding” on the structure or process of future peace negotiations was finally read by Bush in the conference, the result of the mutual promise to maintain regular negotiations was not decisive. While Israel won the flexibility of making concession dependent on the Road Map implementation, the Palestinians won the chance to negotiate issues on final status without the constraints of the Road Map implementation. However, Bush described Israel as the Jewish homeland. This raised the Palestinian concerns for its possible impact on the future talks on refugee return and the status of Israeli Arabs.²³⁹

Israel quickly sparked new controversy in early December when it planned for new settlement construction in Har Homa, an Israeli-occupied region in southern Jerusalem. The issue of East Jerusalem was neglected in the previous negotiations in Annapolis and even in the Road Map. Both processes during the Bush administration focused on the issue in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. In addition to inevitable Palestinian discontent, Rice also openly criticized Israeli decision and said, “We are in a time when the goal is to build maximum confidence with the parties and this doesn't help to build confidence.” She claimed she wanted to make her position “clear” for no prejudgement in final-status negotiations when a new round of peace

²³⁹ Carol Migdalovitz, “Israeli-Arab Negotiations: Background, Conflicts, and U.S. Policy” (Order Code: RL33530), *Congressional Research Service* (Aug 12, 2009): 24.

talks would begin very soon.²⁴⁰ Owing to the new need and interest during Phase III for the US government to advance the peace process, it tended to show a stronger stance against any Israeli acts which might destroy the hope of continuing peace talks. However, the Bush administration had no real restraining efforts on Israel.

6.2.3 After Annapolis

In Phase III, the US policies and attitude on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process experienced the dilemma in balancing its somewhat contradictory top Middle East interests of both regional balancing and anti-terrorism, which would influence the dynamics within the US-Israeli relationship. The achievement of regional stability, with an integral part of resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflicts, inevitably required Israeli concessions and thus would impair the US-Israeli relationship. Yet the achievement of the anti-terrorism required technical and intelligence sharing from Israel and would increase US dependence on and commitment to Israel. This gave the US incentive to consolidate its alliance relationship with Israel. As a result, the US needed extra sophistication in handling its policies and attitude on any issues related to the peace talks between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Such dilemma further intensified after the glimmering hope evolved in the Annapolis Conference as

²⁴⁰ Ari Rabinovich, "Rice criticizes Israel on settlement building", *Washington Post*, Dec 7, 2007.

the Bush administration did not want to waste this opportunity to secure certain historical legacy.

This was reflected in Bush's choice of language during his visit to Israel and the PA in early January 2008. To comfort the Palestinians, Bush used the term "occupation", which he did so rarely before, to describe the existence of the Israelis in the West Bank and Gaza since the end of the 1967 war. He told Israel "to help, not hinder the modernization of the Palestinian security force", as a support to Abbas cabinet and a warning to the Israelis. Besides, he required Israel again to halt settlement expansion for the implementation of the Road Map. Yet Bush did not forget to comfort the Israelis. For instance, he did not adopt the common usage of the "borders of 1967", which the Arabs preferred, but choose a pro-Israeli usage of "the armistice line of 1949". He also stated no view on the controversial issue of final status of Jerusalem, which was apparently favourable to Israel in the context of Olmert's settlement construction plan in Har Homa and would revive Israeli-Palestinian military tensions. The skilfulness of his diplomatic discourse was best shown in his subtle criticism with understanding to Israel on the Israeli checkpoints and barriers against the Palestinians: "Checkpoints create frustration for

people. They create a sense of security for Israel; they create massive frustrations for the Palestinians.²⁴¹

Although the Bush administration showed more criticisms on Israel than before, symbolic lip services could only prohibit further Israeli stimulation to the situation but had no restraining impact to reverse Israeli unfavourable deeds to the peace process. The US and Israel might fall into tensions because of those lip services. Yet when the US has no intention to make concrete efforts to restrain Israel, its relationship with Israel would still be far from real storm. The lack of such intention of the Bush administration could be explained by its limited bargaining power in the issue.

Despite the stronger US interest in promoting peace process in Phase III than in Phase II, its dependence on Israel, i.e. US strategic needs on Israel to cooperate in the War on Terror, basically remained unchanged. Furthermore, the Bush administration had growing dependence on Israel to balance Iran, which brought growing threats to all US top interests. First, Iran was determined to develop nuclear technology and suspiciously also corresponding weaponry. The Bush administration viewed it as a challenge to its interest of nuclear non-proliferation. Second, Iran was

²⁴¹ Steven Lee Myers, "Bush outlines Mideast peace plan", *New York Times*, Jan 11, 2008.

accused of backing terrorist groups like Hamas and Hezbollah. This was a fierce violation of the US War on Terror. Third, as Iran was a major oil exporter in the world, it has the potential to challenge the US interest of stable oil access with reasonable price. Fourth, as Iran had growing influence in post-war Iraq owing to its Shiite nature, this raised concerns from all of the US, Israel and Sunnis neighbours. Therefore, Iran was also viewed as a challenger to the US-dominated regional stability. Moreover, as the Shiites controlled the oil-producing region in Iraq, the Iranian influence to them would also complicate US oil interest in the Middle East. To the US, Israel was the strongest and most reliable ally in the Middle East to balance Iran regionally. Therefore Israel was perceived to possess stronger strategic value to the US in view of Iranian threat. After all, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad continued to reiterate his hostility towards Israel. This brought threat, yet indeed verbal only, or the sense of danger to Israeli existence, which was also a top US interest. Therefore the relative bargaining power of the US to Israel was further weakened by its relative increase of dependence on Israel and inevitably strengthened its security commitment to Israel. This further constrained the choices of the Bush administration towards Israel. Yet the relatively more intense US interest in promoting peace process compensated for the above deficiencies. This could generally explain why the Bush administration exerted more pressure on Israel in

Phase III than in Phase II, but was constrained to hedge or verbal restraints rather than tangible restraining efforts like those in Phase I.

6.2.4 Israeli-Hamas truce

There was no further breakthrough in the peace process after the Annapolis Conference in November 2007 and Bush's visit to the region in January 2008. The US only managed to pull either Olmert or Abbas back to the negotiation table in case a new round of Israeli-Palestinian disputes gave excuses to either side to temporarily quit negotiations. For example, Abbas agreed to resume face-to-face talk with Olmert under Rice's pressure, after one-month withdrawal owing to Israeli incursion into Gaza.²⁴² The Bush administration had considered fine-tuning its policy towards Hamas under the deadlock in the moment. The Bush administration asked Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in March 2008 to be an intermediary to connect Israel and representatives of Hamas into a cease-fire talk.²⁴³ As discussed above, Hamas was not abandoned in the Arab world, and moderate Sunnis powers even hoped Hamas to reconcile with Fatah. Besides, Hamas had also softened its hostility to Israel. Its leaders claimed that they would propose a long-term truce with Israel if Israelis

²⁴² Helene Cooper, "Pressed by Rice, Palestinian leader agrees to return to peace talks with Israeli", *New York Times*, Apr 1, 2008.

²⁴³ Helene Cooper, "U.S. may relent on Hamas role in talks", *New York Times*, Mar 19, 2008.

returned to the 1967 borders.²⁴⁴ Therefore it was not unacceptable for the US to fine-tune its attitude towards Hamas if both Hamas and Israel showed willingness (or at least, could be pressed) to discuss with each other. After all, such fine-tuned attitude towards Hamas will be welcomed by Arab allies of the US, despite possible Israeli discontent. This again reflected how the Bush administration was struggling in balancing between the interests of anti-terrorism and regional stability.

Egyptian General Omar Suleiman was responsible for mediating the indirect talks between Israel and Hamas. The two sides discussed on issues from Palestinian rocket fire attacks from Gaza to Israel to Israeli unilateral military action towards Gaza, and from Gaza blockage to prisoner exchange. The two sides still managed to achieve temporary cease-fire with each other although not every issue was settled. Yet the planned six-month ceasefire, which took effect from June 19, 2008, quickly faced troubles. Small terrorist groups continued rocket firing to Israeli territory since June 24. Those non-Hamas irritations were responded with short-term closures of the commercial crossings into the Gaza Strip.²⁴⁵

²⁴⁴ Ethan Bronner, "A year reshapes Hamas and Gaza", *New York Times*, Jun 15, 2008.

²⁴⁵ Carol Migdalovitz, "Israeli-Arab Negotiations: Background, Conflicts, and U.S. Policy" (Order Code: RL33530), *Congressional Research Service* (Aug 12, 2009): 27.

6.2.5 *The Gaza War*

The Israeli-Hamas ceasefire expired on December 19, 2008 and Hamas soon resumed rocket firing on Israeli territories. After several warnings on continuous Hamas attacks, Israel finally retaliated with a military operation, coded with “Cast Lead”, in Gaza on December 27.²⁴⁶ This brought a final test to the Bush administration in its last days. Democrat Barack Obama won the November Presidential Election and would succeed Bush in January 2009. The Bush administration showed strong support to the Olmert cabinet. Rice stated the strong US condemnation to “the repeated rocket and mortar attacks against Israel” and held “ Hamas responsible for breaking the cease-fire and for the renewal of violence in Gaza”, despite appeals for the restoration of cease-fire.²⁴⁷ This hinted that the US perceived Hamas as the chief offender of regional stability and anti-terrorism again. Therefore the Bush administration had no intention to restrain Israel’s military actions immediately. Yet the US hoped to limit the scale of Israeli military actions to the scale of targeting Hamas militants but also not the civilians. Gordon Johndroe, spokesman of the White House stated, “The United States urges Israel to avoid civilian casualties as it targets Hamas in Gaza.”²⁴⁸ There was subtle US concern that

²⁴⁶ Jenny Percival, “Israel launches deadly Gaza attacks”, *Guardian*, Dec 27, 2008.

²⁴⁷ Robert Pear, “White House Puts Onus on Hamas to End Violence”, *New York Times*, Dec 27, 2008.

²⁴⁸ Jenny Percival, “Israel launches deadly Gaza attacks”, *Guardian*, Dec 27, 2008.

Israeli killings of the Palestinian civilians would trigger regional discontent. This might not only shift the focus on countering terrorist groups like Hamas but also disrupt regional stability.

The operation started with coordinated air strikes and later expanded with ground force actions from January 3, 2009. This series of military attacks in Gaza targeted on not only military facilities but also civilian infrastructure with suspected linkages with Hamas.²⁴⁹ This inevitably attracted discontent from other states in the region, even including Turkey, a rare Israeli ally in the Middle East. The Gaza War was the fuse of the future deterioration of the Israeli-Turkish alliance relationship.

Indeed, the Bush administration expected a durable ceasefire rather than an immediate one at this stage.²⁵⁰ Yet it did not hope to be entrapped in the after-effect of Israeli military action, which was though legitimized with anti-terrorism, e.g. deteriorating anti-Americanism in the region. The Bush administration was eventually involved into drafting the UNSC resolution which called for ceasefire. Yet it surprisingly abstained in the final voting under Israeli pressure, though the resolution was still passed. This heavily weakened the pressure exerted on Israel by

²⁴⁹ Jim Zanotti, "Introduction: The Gaza Conflict", in Jim Zanotti, Carol Migdalovitz, Jeremy M. Sharp, Casey L. Addis, Christopher M. Blanchard and Rhoda Margesson, "Israel and Hamas: Conflict in Gaza (2008-2009)" (Order Code: RL33530), *Congressional Research Service* (Feb 19, 2009,): 2.

²⁵⁰ Mark Landler, "Rice Heads to U.N. for Talks on Gaza Cease-Fire", *New York Times*, Jan 6, 2009.

this resolution, but some still believed that the US still presented its subtle message to Israel to support a ceasefire for not vetoing the resolution.²⁵¹ Indeed this again reflected the US dilemma on balancing its interests in regional stability and anti-terrorism. Retrieving a quick truce could best fit the hope of regional stability while the opportunity to hit Hamas hard in the guidance of anti-terrorism goal should not be wasted. Therefore a possible real expectation of the Bush administration would be a delayed ceasefire for Israel to weaken Hamas as much as possible. This could explain why it softened its call for ceasefire at the last minute. It was somehow a standard response to the fear of entrapment by threatening to reduce diplomatic support. Yet as the fear of entrapment was limited, the commitment refraining was also limited. On the other hand, the US Congress also backed Bush's stance to Israel by passing resolution "recognizing Israel's right to defend itself against attacks from Gaza"²⁵², following the diplomatic tone of the Bush administration. This ensured no domestic pressure on the above manoeuvre of the Bush administration.

After causing around 1200 Palestinian deaths, Olmert declared ceasefire and claimed victory on January 18, 2009²⁵³, two days before Obama's presidential inauguration. The Bush administration also contributed to the ceasefire. It offered the

²⁵¹ Julian Borger, "White House 'behind' US volte-face on ceasefire call", *Guardian*, Jan 9, 2009.

²⁵² "US congress votes to back Israel", *Al Jazeera*, Jan 10, 2009.

²⁵³ "Israel declares ceasefire in Gaza", *BBC News*, Jan 18, 2009.

Israelis a graceful excuse of unilateral ceasefire by accepting Livni's initiation of the US "agreement to prevent arms smuggling" in the Gaza strip.²⁵⁴ Hamas subsequently announced its own ceasefire for a week²⁵⁵ and was believed to maintain certain indirect secret talks with Israel soon after that²⁵⁶.

6.2.6 Netanyahu's return

Benjamin Netanyahu became the Israeli Prime Minister again since March 31, 2009. Similar to his last tenure in Phase I, he held a strongly negative attitude to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Unlike his apparent reluctance to negotiate with the Palestinians in Phase I, he actively threw out a peace process approach with three "parallel channels" (economic, security and diplomatic) from the very beginning, which he later reframed his approach with a triple track (political, security, economic). Yet he did not promise a Palestinian state. He also maintained that "peace will not come without security" and that "the Palestinians must recognize Israel as a Jewish state".²⁵⁷ His Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman surprisingly argued in April 1 that the 2007 Annapolis Joint Declaration was no binding validity owing to

²⁵⁴ Aluf Benn, "Israel declares victory in Gaza, but at what cost?", *Haaretz*, Jan 18, 2009.

²⁵⁵ Carol Migdalovitz, "Israeli-Arab Negotiations: Background, Conflicts, and U.S. Policy" (Order Code: RL33530), *Congressional Research Service* (Aug 12, 2009): 29.

²⁵⁶ "Hamas condemns Gaza rocket strikes on Israel", *Haaretz*, Mar 12, 2009.

²⁵⁷ Carol Migdalovitz, "Israeli-Arab Negotiations: Background, Conflicts, and U.S. Policy" (Order Code: RL33530), *Congressional Research Service* (Aug 12, 2009): 31.

the lack of ratification by both the Israeli government and the Knesset. The US only responded with reiterating its commitment on the two-state solution.²⁵⁸

After meeting with the visiting Netanyahu on May 18, 2009, Obama reiterated its expectation to “achieve a two-state solution in which Israelis and Palestinians are living side by side in peace and security”. However, while Obama supported Israeli long-term demand for Palestinian security assurances to and Arab normalization with Israel, he called for a stop on settlement constructions and expressed concerns on the “humanitarian situation in Gaza”.²⁵⁹ Secretary of State Hilary Clinton added with a US “two-step efforts”, which first sought to halt settlement construction for “additions, natural growth, any kind of settlement activity”, and then pushed forward the “two-state solution”.²⁶⁰ The stance of Obama administration hinted the upcoming US-Israeli disputes on settlement constructions.

Responding to the subtle warning of the Obama administration, Netanyahu declared on May 21 that “Jerusalem is the eternal capital of the Jewish people, a city reunified so as never again to be divided” and “united Jerusalem is Israel’s capital”,

²⁵⁸ Herb Keinon, “Lieberman: Annapolis doesn’t obligate us”, *Jerusalem Post*, April 1, 2009.

²⁵⁹ White House “Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel in press availability”, May 18, 2009, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-obama-and-israeli-prime-minister-netanyahu-press-availability> (accessed Apr 24, 2011)

²⁶⁰ “US presses Israel on settlements”, *Al Jazeera*, May 20, 2009.

thus rejected Palestinians' capital hope on East Jerusalem.²⁶¹ And the day was the 42nd anniversary of Israeli annexation of East Jerusalem. While Israel still dreamed of retaining limited settlement construction in the West Bank²⁶², the Obama administration was clearly irritated by Netanyahu's comment and thus started to consider restraining the Netanyahu cabinet.

Obama first comforted Abbas by reiterating his stance against any kind of Israeli settlement expansion.²⁶³ Then he and his administration analysed possible restraining measures to Israel. Yet most of the discussed measures were symbolic and thus had no significant restraining pressure on Israel. They included reducing diplomatic support to Israel in the United Nations and hardening criticisms on Israeli settlements. Yet the Obama administration had never considered strong measures of placing conditions against Israel settlement expectations on loan guarantees as the Bush I administration did in Phase I. Obama would rather carefully pick a moderate word "unhelpful" to describe Israeli settlement constructions in public statements.²⁶⁴

Under growing pressure from the Obama administration, Netanyahu reluctantly accepted the principle of a future Palestinian state. Yet he made a range of

²⁶¹ "Netanyahu: Jerusalem holy sites will remain Israeli forever", *Haaretz*, May 21, 2009.

²⁶² Isabel Kershner and Mark Landler, "Israel Insists on Some Construction in West Bank Settlements", *New York Times*, May 28, 2009.

²⁶³ Carol Migdalovitz, "Israeli-Arab Negotiations: Background, Conflicts, and U.S. Policy" (Order Code: RL33530), *Congressional Research Service* (Aug 12, 2009): 32.

²⁶⁴ Helene Cooper, "U.S. Weighs Tactics on Israeli Settlement", *New York Times*, May 31, 2009.

harsh reservations of two principles. The first one was Palestinian recognition of Israel as a Jewish state. The second one was demilitarization of the Palestinian territory, i.e. “without an army, without control of its airspace, and with effective security measures to prevent weapons smuggling into the territory” and without ability to forge military pacts. He declared, “If we receive this guarantee regarding demilitarization and Israel’s security needs, and if the Palestinians recognize Israel as the state of the Jewish people, then we will be ready in a future peace agreement to reach a solution where a demilitarized Palestinian state exists alongside the Jewish state.”²⁶⁵ The Palestinian side were not satisfied with Netanyahu’s offer, especially on the issue of East Jerusalem and Netanyahu’s principle of recognition. Abbas suggested preconditions of Israeli stop on all settlement activities and Israeli acceptance of the 1967 borders as “terms of reference”. Yet Netanyahu rejected this counter-offer.²⁶⁶ The resulted deadlock proved that Netanyahu’s offer could not convince others for a real breakthrough. Even the hawks in Israel did not show any worry on this suggestion, which involved the unfavourable possibility of the establishment of a Palestinian state.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁵ Benjamin Netanyahu, “PM’s Speech at the Begin-Sadat Center at Bar-Ilan University”, *Prime Minister’s Office*, Jun 14, 2009, <http://www.pmo.gov.il/PMOEng/Archive/Speeches/2009/06/speechbarilan140609.htm> (accessed Apr 21, 2011).

²⁶⁶ Casey L. Addis, “Israel: Background and U.S. Relations” (Order Code: RL33476), *Congressional Research Service* (Feb 14, 2011): 13, 23.

²⁶⁷ Isabel Kershner, “Netanyahu’s talk of peace finds few true believers”, *New York Times*, Jul 20,

6.2.7 *Controversies on East Jerusalem settlement activities*

Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak approved a range of settlement construction in the West Bank on September 6, 2009. This act was believed to be the foundation for future suspension of settlement construction in the West Bank.²⁶⁸ Eventually Netanyahu won cabinet approval and declared a 10-month moratorium on settlement construction in the West Bank on November 25. He described this offer “far-reaching and painful”. Yet he would retain constructions of public buildings “essential for normal life” in the settlements and all settlement activities in East Jerusalem.²⁶⁹ Secretary of State Hilary Clinton first expressed appreciation of Netanyahu’s offer but quickly changed her words to criticisms to Netanyahu’s insufficient concessions under Arab discontent and pressure.²⁷⁰ Israel then announced a new round of settlement construction plan in East Jerusalem in late December 2009.²⁷¹ Since then East Jerusalem settlements caused the key disputes between the US and Israel.

2009.

²⁶⁸ Carol Migdalovitz, “Israeli-Arab Negotiations: Background, Conflicts, and U.S. Policy” (Order Code: RL33530), *Congressional Research Service* (January 29, 2010): 33.

²⁶⁹ Barak Ravid and agencies, “Netanyahu declares 10-month settlement freeze ‘to restart peace talks’”, *Haaretz*, Nov 25, 2009.

²⁷⁰ Carol Migdalovitz, “Israeli-Arab Negotiations: Background, Conflicts, and U.S. Policy” (Order Code: RL33530), *Congressional Research Service* (January 29, 2010): 35.

²⁷¹ Ethan Bronner, “Israel Plans Homes in East Jerusalem”, *New York Times*, December 29, 2009.

The US continued its efforts to facilitate the peace process despite the stumbling block of Israeli plan of settlement construction in East Jerusalem. The Obama administration finally persuaded the PA to accept “proximity talks” with Israel after shuttle diplomacy by George Mitchell, US Middle East Envoy, in early March 2009.²⁷² This made US Vice President Joe Biden’s visit to Israel a bit more promising. However, Israel’s Interior Ministry gave a surprise to the visiting Biden on March 9, 2010, who had just publicly reiterated US security commitment to Israel hours earlier, by suddenly announcing new settlement construction plan of 1600 new housings units in Ramat Shlomo. As the stance of Obama administration was clearly opposing any unilateral Israeli settlement construction in East Jerusalem, Biden was clearly irritated by the unexpected Israeli move and condemned it as “precisely the kind of step that undermines the trust we need right now”.²⁷³ Yet Biden still appreciated responses from Netanyahu, who explained the plan would actually take several years but not be implemented immediately, and reiterated the “friendship” between the US and Israel.²⁷⁴ Despite the surprising embarrassment, Biden’s words showed that the discontent of the Obama administration was limited to the Netanyahu cabinet at most, but not its relationship with Israel.

²⁷² Khaled Abu Toameh and Herb Keinon, “PA agrees to ‘proximity talks’”, *Jerusalem Post*, Mar 8, 2010.

²⁷³ Ethan Bronner, “As Biden Visits, Israel unveils plan for new settlements”, *New York Times*, Mar 9, 2010.

²⁷⁴ JPost.com staff and Herb Keinon, “US has no better friend than Israel”, *Jerusalem Post*, Mar 11, 2010.

The key concern was the Israeli pursuit of settlement construction in East Jerusalem, but not the mere embarrassment by the Netanyahu's cabinet. For instance, Clinton warned Netanyahu that Israeli settlement construction plan in East Jerusalem as sending a "deeply negative signal" to "the bilateral relationship" between the US and Israel in a phone call subsequent to the spoiled visit of Biden. She even told him that the US wanted Israel to take "specific actions" to show commitment to both the bilateral relationship and the peace process.²⁷⁵ David Axelrod, Obama's senior advisor, even argued that Israeli announcement on East Jerusalem settlement plan was not an accident and ill-timed but "seemed calculated" to bring adverse impact to the upcoming "proximity talks".²⁷⁶ The reaction of the Obama administration was accurate as Netanyahu's apology was not for the settlement plan in East Jerusalem. What Netanyahu claimed "regrettable" and "hurtful" was for the poor timing of plan announcement, and he had no intention to take back the plan.²⁷⁷

Michael B. Oren, the Israeli ambassador to the US, was even quoted for claiming "Israel's ties with the US are in the most serious crisis since 1975". The 1975 disputes originated from the US demand for Israeli partial military withdrawal

²⁷⁵ Mark Landler, "Housing plan harms ties, Clinton tells Netanyahu", *New York Times*, Mar 13, 2010.

²⁷⁶ Isabel Kershner, "Netanyahu offers apology, but no shift in policy", *New York Times*, Mar 14, 2010.

²⁷⁷ Isabel Kershner, "Netanyahu offers apology, but no shift in policy", *New York Times*, Mar 14, 2010.

from Sinai Peninsula occupied during the Six-day War. He also argued that “no (US) government in the past 40 years has limited (Israeli) construction in neighbourhoods of Jerusalem”.²⁷⁸ Although Oren later claimed that he had been “flagrantly misquoted”²⁷⁹, it was true that the US-Israeli alliance faced serious tensions in this case. The Obama administration perceived any settlement expansion in East Jerusalem would force Abbas out from the chance of peace negotiations. There was no barrier of the anti-terrorist interest on inviting Abbas to peace negotiations and thus the role of the interest of regional stability could be maximized. Therefore, the US had an intense interest to block Israeli plan to build extra settlement in East Jerusalem. However, the Netanyahu cabinet strongly maintained that East Jerusalem was part of the Israeli indivisible capital and was unwilling to make concessions on the final status of Jerusalem. Therefore the two states had a relatively strong divergence in the bargaining issue of East Jerusalem settlement. As a result, the US-Israeli relationship was under serious tensions. However, it was not an issue which could break the US-Israeli alliance.

²⁷⁸ “Ties between Israel and US ‘worst in 35 years’”, *BBC News*, Mar 15, 2010.
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8567706.stm (accessed Apr 23, 2011).

²⁷⁹ Mark Landler, “Opportunity in a fight with Israel”, *New York Times*, Mar 16, 2010.

6.2.8 *Gaza Flotilla raid*

The Obama administration declared the revival of peace process through proximity talks in early May 2010, despite low public expectations of early breakthrough. The East Jerusalem settlement issues delayed the proposed peace talks for two months. Israel was forced to agree to preliminary discussion of core issues, such as the final status of Jerusalem and right of Palestinian refugee return, in the proximity talks.²⁸⁰ However, the peace process was soon distracted by the case Flotilla incident.

On May 31, 2010, Israel navy intercepted a six-ship flotilla at international waters which was going to transport humanitarian aid to the Hamas-controlled yet Israel-blocked Gaza Strip. Passengers on the *MV Mavi Marmara*, one of the six ships, resisted and fought with Israeli naval commandos. Eventually nine passengers, eight Turks and one Turkish-American, were killed. This quickly caused an international dispute between Israel and its rare regional ally Turkey.²⁸¹ As Turkey was also a US ally, despite weaker linkages compared to the US-Israeli one, this added further difficulties for the Obama administration to mediate the Israeli-Turkish conflicts.

²⁸⁰ Isabel Kershner, "U.S.-brokered Mideast shuttle talks begin again", *New York Times*, May 9, 2010.

²⁸¹ Carol Migdalovitz, "Israel's blockade of Gaza, the *Mavi Marmara* Incident, and its aftermath" (Order Code: R41275), *Congressional Research Service* (Jun 23, 2010): 2-3.

The Obama administration persuaded Turkey to adopt condemnation on “acts” causing deaths rather than on Israel in UNSC statements. It also blocked the call for an international investigation, which let the Israelis self-investigated the incident. Besides, it condemned any attempt to break the Gaza blockade and supported Israel of its right to check whether weapons would be smuggled in Gaza with humanitarian aids.²⁸² The reaction of the Obama administration just followed the trend in Phase III. As Gaza was under controlled by Hamas, a US-designated terrorist group, its blockade was covered by the US interests of anti-terrorism. It reflected the contrast in US attitude towards East Jerusalem issue which excluded Hamas in negotiations. As a result, the booming US-Israeli tensions were soon slackened by the Flotilla incident.

Abbas decided to resume talks with the Israelis in spite of the Flotilla Incident.

The Obama administration eventually facilitated two direct talks between Abbas and Netanyahu in Washington, DC and Egypt. In early September 2010, the Obama administration asked the Netanyahu cabinet to extend the moratorium on West Bank settlement construction for the sake of maintaining the peace process.²⁸³ Abbas decided to quit the peace talks in early October after Netanyahu’s rejection of

²⁸² Carol Migdalovitz, “Israel’s blockade of Gaza, the *Mavi Marmara* Incident, and its aftermath”, (Order Code: R41275), *Congressional Research Service* (Jun 23, 2010): 9-10.

²⁸³ Helene Cooper, “U.S. urges Israel to extend settlement moratorium”, *New York Times*, Sept 10, 2010.

moratorium extension.²⁸⁴ When Obama faced a mid-term election defeat in November, he lacked the momentum to push forward further progress.²⁸⁵ Furthermore, the protests in North Africa eventually developed to an Egyptian revolution. Viewing the top status of Egypt in Middle East politics, the Obama administration would be distracted away from the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and the fall of Egyptian Hosni Mubarak could conclude a fourth major crises to US Middle East policies since the end of the Cold War. This would mean an end to Phase III.

6.2.9 Distractions in Phase III

There were similarities in the trends between Phase I and Phase III. Yet the restraining phenomenon in Phase III was less effective than that in Phase I. For instance, the Obama administration did not analyze the possibility of referencing the restraining trump of the Bush I administration, i.e. preconditioning the loan guarantees. The key reason should be the interest balancing dilemma between anti-terrorism and regional stability. However, the Obama administration might also be distracted or constrained by major domestic events, similar to Clinton's case of

²⁸⁴ Casey L. Addis, "Israel: Background and U.S. Relations", (Order Code: RL33476), *Congressional Research Service* (Feb 14, 2011): 23.

²⁸⁵ "Can Israel now say boo to America?", *The Economist*, Nov 6, 2010.

sexual scandal. This limited the political energy of the Obama administration to exert significant pressure on Israel.

First, the financial tsunami in 2008 heavily destroyed US economy. As Obama took office in the aftermath of the economic crisis, this inevitably forced Obama to put more focus on reviving domestic economy. Although this did not bring significant burden on Obama's diplomatic team, Israel would be more difficult to be restrained when US President did not pay enough efforts. Second, the Obama administration put the legislation of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) as one of its political priority, other than dealing with the economy in downturn. This further reduced Obama's attention to international affairs, including Israel. Third, perhaps most importantly, Obama faced a strong domestic antagonism from Republicans and Tea Party. While Bush I won a broad-based support in restraining Israel, Obama had to consider the reaction of his fierce political rivals. This ultimately constrained the policy choices of the Obama administration when his political rivals showed a close relationship with the governing hardliners in Israel. After all, there was nearly no possibility of passing a bill on preconditioning Israeli loan guarantees in the Congress. Yet it was difficult to examine the significance of the above distracting or constraining factors to the Obama administration.

6.3 Summary on Phase III

The US turmoil in Iraq altered domestic preferences and eventually triggered US redefinition of regional interests in the Middle East. The interest of regional stability retrieved top priority despite continued existence of the interest of anti-terrorism. Yet the coexistence of the two interests meant the mutual constraining of them. This situation was commonly expressed as the US eagerness to revive the peace process in less pro-Israel terms with the US support to blockade of Hamas-controlled Gaza. The increased conflicts of interests made the US-Israeli alliance more tension-prone.

In Phase III, the US-Israeli alliance relationship experienced a general downturn compared to Phase II. Yet it should be better than that in Phase I owing to the convergence of the anti-terrorist interest. Similar to the case in Phase I, if Israel's prime minister and the majority of his cabinet members were hardliners on issues in which the US and Israel had conflicts of interests, tensions between the US and Israel seemed inevitable. The case of East Jerusalem settlement was a best example. However, when the issues involved also the concerns on anti-terrorism, the US would not hesitate to offer its assistance to Israel even there were disputes at the time.

This could be shown in the US help to Israel in the case of Flotilla Incident.

Therefore the US-Israeli alliance was still stable despite occurrence of tensions.

Chapter 7 Generalization and Conclusions

7.1 Generalization on phased analysis on US-Israeli alliance relations

After analyzing its alliance management amongst the three phases along the post-Cold War period, the US-Israeli alliance is found to have general fluctuations. In the case of the US-Israeli alliance, the US interest of regional stability, which triggered the US pursuit of promoting Israeli-Palestinian peace process, often contradicted Israeli national interests. After all, Israeli concessions to the Palestinians often undermine its top national interests. For instance, prohibiting settlement constructions in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip or East Jerusalem is a counteraction to Israeli top interest in territorial maximization. In Phase I, there was a general downturn in the US-Israeli alliance relationship because regional stability became a top US interest in the Middle East after the constraining anti-communist interest faded out. Yet the relationship retrieved an upturn during Phase II when the US interest of regional stability turned secondary again as constrained by a new common interest of anti-terrorism. In Phase III, the US and Israel experienced a downturn again but the level of relationship did not deteriorate to that during Phase I in general. Regional stability retrieved top priority but anti-terrorism remained top US interests.

The two contradictory interests antagonized with each other and thus limited the tension level in the US-Israeli alliance.

7.1.1 Conflicting interests and tensions

Alliance is primarily a product of the converging interests amongst various states. Yet diverging interests will still exist within a close and strong alliance. Diverging interests do not necessarily result in conflicting interests. Only conflicting interests (amongst the diverging interests) can cause tensions. The impact of conflicting interests should be one of the determinants of alliance endurance. In other words, both the manipulation of converging interests and the management on conflicting interests could offer explanation to alliance maintenance. An alliance relationship will become more tension-prone when allying partners experience growing conflicting interests or undermining common interests. The relationship of top interests amongst allying partners is even more crucial as a secondary interest can be sacrificed for the fulfilment of a top interest. Tension-proneness of an alliance is inversely related to the cohesiveness of the alliance. In other words, a general downturn in the US-Israeli relationship means the alliance becomes more tension-prone, vice versa.

However, an alliance is not destined to fall into tensions when the allying partners have conflicting interests. There are two possible occasions. First, if either (or some, or all) of the allying partners is willing to concede in advance or voluntarily, no disputes will be sparked and thus no tensions will grow. For instance, as discussed in Chapter 5, Israeli Premier Ariel Sharon initiated a plan of “unilateral disengagement” in Phase II. Although there may be other strategic calculations in his decision, such proposal did fulfil the expectation of the Bush administration to achieve a breakthrough in the peace process. Although regional stability was only a secondary interest to the US at that time, the Bush administration still hope to seek a breakthrough in Israeli-Palestinian peace process provided that there were no contradictions with US top interests. Therefore, the Bush administration expressed extraordinary appreciations to Sharon for his voluntary contribution to the peace process, even though it might be already known the secret calculations behind. Sharon’s proposal not only avoided the disclosure of possible conflicting interests but also contrastingly strengthened the mutual trust with the Bush administration.

Second, if there are distractions to either (or some, or all) of the allying partners from dealing with issues of conflicting interests. Issues around the US-Israel alliance were often important enough to the US and seldom allowed the US to be

distracted to other issues. Major domestic issues such as serious scandals of an administration, the approaching of presidential (or mid-term) elections, domestic economic crisis or political struggles may distract a US administration to focus on coping with the imperative troubles first. The Lewinsky affair during the Clinton era (Phase I), the financial tsunami occurred in late Bush II era (Phase III) and the bipartisan antagonism in the Obama administration (Phase III) had distracted the US administrations in office to different extents. The first one avoided potential disputes on the peace process between Clinton and Netanyahu, and the latter two between Obama and Netanyahu. Major international issues such as major military operations with US involvement will also distract a US administration from the peace process facilitation. The Kosovo War in 1999 (Phase I) distracted the Clinton administration from making substantial restraints to the Netanyahu cabinet which often prohibited the progress of Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations. The two Iraq Wars (Phase I, II) had also temporarily distracted the Bush I and Bush II administrations from the peace process. For the first war, although the Bush I administration had restrained Israel from military retaliation, it did temporarily reduce attentions on the peace process and Israeli settlement, which Bush I and Shamir had serious disputes before the war. This greatly softened the US-Israeli tensions at the early stage of Phase I.

7.1.2 Alliance management and the maintenance of the US-Israeli alliance

The long-term maintenance of the US-Israeli alliance raised controversies on the reasons behind. This thesis showed that alliance management between the US and Israel contributed to such maintenance. In such an asymmetric bilateral alliance, the US indeed often has stronger relative bargaining power over Israel. Yet if Israeli policy did not challenge US major regional interests in the Middle East, the US might not mobilize its power resources to restrain Israel. For instance, the Israeli military actions towards Hezbollah (Phase II) even received generous support from the Bush II administration. In other words, Israel was mistakenly believed to be free-riding with the US support because the US often passively responded to Israeli actions and only demanded concessions of Israel when needed. For example, the Obama administration was even irritated by Israeli sudden announcement of settlement construction in East Jerusalem during Vice President Joe Biden's visit to Israel. The Obama administration could therefore only passively respond to Israeli decision.

Successful efforts of alliance management stabilize the US-Israeli relations when there are high conflicting interests between the two states. Examples included unilateral concession of either states (mostly Israel, and usually in the way of

successful US restraints to Israel) or mutual compromise between both states. As Snyder stated, alliance management serves to “counter these centrifugal tendencies, by either joint or unilateral action” so as to “maximize joint benefits and minimize costs to one’s independent interests”.²⁸⁶ Israeli voluntary concessions are “unilateral actions”. Mutual Compromise belongs to “joint action”. US restraints to Israel were between “unilateral actions” and “joint actions”. Successful ones, which Israel reluctantly concedes, are “joint actions” while unsuccessful ones are futile “unilateral actions”.

In Phase I, there were some cases of US successful restraints on Israel such as forcing Shamir to the Madrid conference (Bush I) and Netanyahu to the Wye River Summit (Clinton), and preventing Israeli retaliation to Saddam Hussein’s provocation (Bush I). The attitude of the Israeli side is also decisive to the US-Israeli tensions. When Israel was governed by hardliners like Shamir and Netanyahu, disputes were easier to be sparked out as they were unwilling to make concessions to the US expectations. Tensions would grow when those disputes could not be settled. This explained why Israel could maintain a friendly relationship with the US when Rabin and Barak were Prime Ministers. Their relatively moderate stance towards the peace process meant the willingness to concede to a certain extent. Even their

²⁸⁶ Glenn Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 165-167.

concession might not be sufficient to achieve a final settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflicts, Israeli commitment to the US is more important in the long run. After all, the Israeli-Palestinian peace process was a long-term conflict (in the sense of conflicting expectations for the peace process between the US and Israel), therefore allies tended to manipulate apparent commitment rather than dealing with short term interests according to Snyder²⁸⁷. Yet the US at least expected some breakthrough in the peace process, as a kind of short-term outcomes, like the Oslo accords and the Wye Agreement. Camp David II was also expected to make a breakthrough and Clinton did not blame Barak but ascribed the responsibility to Arafat. Therefore it did not bring disputes between the US and Israel. According to Snyder, allies tended to maximize interest satisfaction in short-term conflicts.²⁸⁸ This could explain why US regional interests and Israeli national interests matter in the case of Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

However, if alliance management attempts are not successful, the disputes will continue to exist and tensions will grow. In Phase III, the Obama administration failed to restrain the Netanyahu cabinet on East Jerusalem settlement construction under domestic constraints and shared interests in anti-terrorism. Therefore it was

²⁸⁷ Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 180.

²⁸⁸ Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 180.

difficult to resolve the tension between the Obama administration and the Netanyahu cabinet. Besides, successful management attempts can consolidate the alliance when the level of conflicting interests is low. In Phase II, Israel successfully made use of the common interest of anti-terrorism with the US to consolidate the alliance relationship. The demonization of Arafat on his responsibility for conniving violence in the Second Intifada, and the firm opposition stance against Hamas and Hezbollah showed Israeli determination to follow the US global strategy of the War on Terror. It had also voluntarily proposed a “unilateral disengagement” plan which has pleased the Bush II administration. As a consequence the US-Israeli alliance was successfully consolidated in Phase II.

7.1.3 Summary

Despite fluctuations in different phases in the post-Cold War era, the US-Israeli alliance still maintained close and stable relationship. The key reason was the series of successful alliance management between the US and Israel which restricted the level of tensions. The US had enough power resources to convert into capabilities if it noticed the urgency to restrain unfavourable Israeli actions. The Israel would also like to make strategic concessions to US demand when needed. The US and Israel would also communicate with each other to make compromise. In

some occasions, the potential US-Israeli disputes were avoided as the US administration was coincidentally distracted by other domestic or international issues. The US-Israeli tensions have never developed to a level which would undermine the basis of the bilateral alliance. Furthermore, there was no decrease in the bilateral cooperation succeeded from the Cold War era. Cooperation has even increased since Phase II owing to the common top interest of anti-terrorism. As a result, the US-Israeli alliance can be preserved after the end of the Cold War.

According to the analysis in Chapter 3, the survival and security of Israel had never been removed from the top US interests. None of the critical junctures to the US were directly related to Israel. Therefore the US was not triggered to re-evaluate its top interest to uphold the existence of Israel. A persisting alliance like the US-Israeli one would enjoy, in a sense, “inertia” to preserve the current status if there were no counterforce against it. This follows the rationale of what Halabi argued in his view on the redefining impact of major crises to Middle East policy and interests of the US. Without a critical juncture, the US administration would not re-evaluate its regional interests. However the maintenance of the US-Israeli alliance did not rely on such “inertia” as there were conflicting interests which acted as the counterforce. Appropriate alliance management to conflicting interests would cancel out such

counterforce and were beneficial to the alliance maintenance. New converging interests, like anti-terrorism since 9/11, would add further momentum to the alliance cohesion and thus add difficulties for conflicting interests to counteract. Therefore alliance management was still crucial to the maintenance of the US-Israeli alliance. The US-Israeli alliance played an important role in protecting Israel. Therefore the US would not consider termination of the alliance relationship with Israel unless its top interest to ensure Israeli existence and security was undermined. How the US and Israel adapt to the interests of each other belongs to the field of alliance management.

7.2 Research contributions, limitations and recommendations

This research showed the applicability and advantage of alliance management theory on the study of the US-Israeli relations. First, despite without formal security treaties, the US and Israel has formed a *de facto* alliance and thus theories on alliance relationship are applicable to the US-Israeli one. Second, the rare approach of alliance management can offer a more thorough analysis on the US-Israeli relations. As discussed in Chapter 1, the traditional three approaches: national or strategic interest approach, domestic politics approach (represented by the controversial arguments on the Jewish lobbies), and cultural and religious affinity approach, often limit their arguments to the insights from their own approach. However, the

perspective of alliance management opens to all three traditional approaches. One approach may play a more important role in one case but another approach may better fit in another case. For instance, the Bush I administration dared to restrain Shamir by preconditioning the loan guarantees to Israel. Yet the Obama administration would never consider this option to restrain Netanyahu. The strategic considerations were similar in both cases. Yet Bush I enjoyed public and even congressional support in this decision but Obama encountered a hostile Congress and hardliners in the public. Thus the constraints of domestic politics could better explain the different decisions of the two US administrations.

Although arguments in this research took reference from mostly the national or strategic interest approach and some domestic politics approach, the lobbyist branch of the domestic politics approach and cultural affinity approach could still have their insignificance. Owing to the insufficiency of sources and the subtleness of the influence of the linkage between lobbyist groups or cultural affinities and US policy towards Israel, this research would focus more on the strategic considerations between administrations of the US and Israel. This research could be improved by doing field studies in both the US and Israel and face-to-face interviews with relevant people in order to have in-depth investigation on (i) national or strategic interests of

both states, (ii) the influence of the Jewish lobbies in the US, or (iii) the influence of their cultural and religious affinities to foreign policy. It would be best if the research approach through alliance management could expand to comparing the general significance of three traditional approaches through their impact on US-Israeli alliance management. Despite certain deficiencies and limitations in research, this thesis still managed to offer an innovative approach to study the US-Israel relations through the perspective of alliance management. This perspective shows both the fluctuation of tension-proneness in the US-Israeli alliance and how successful alliance management has contributed to the post-Cold War persistence of the US-Israeli *de facto* alliance.

Despite limitations in this research, an examination of the US-Israeli alliance showed that the interactions within the bilateral relationship followed the patterns of normal alliances. The US-Israeli alliance maintained owing to successful management. This could avoid overlooking factors of domestic politics and cultural affinities. It did not reject the potential influence of domestic lobby groups but would also not underestimate the strategic value of the alliance. Unlike some critics claiming Israel to become a strategic liability to the US, the adopted research

framework has showed the potential values of Israel to the US even after the end of the Cold War.

7.3 Epilogue

The real challenge of the Middle East uprising to the US was the collapse of Mubarak regime in Egypt. Egypt was a long-term important ally of the US and Israel. Since the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, the US and Israel sought to collaborate with a moderate Egypt to promote regional stability and later anti-terrorism. The US lured Egypt with tremendous financial assistance.²⁸⁹ Hosni Mubarak served as a firm ally with the US and Israel since 1981. His unexpected fall from power would thus force both the US and Israel to reconsider its Middle East strategy. To Israel, the nature of top national security interests might not change but the ways to implement them might face the need of reformation. However it was still a question mark for the impact of this new major surprise to US Middle East strategy. The US might have to wait for the situation in Egypt to be settled down before it confirmed its new strategy. Besides, the US government would be probably waiting for forthcoming collapse of Gaddafi regime in Libya also before evaluating the ultimate impact of the series of Middle East uprisings. It was still unpredictable at this moment whether the new

²⁸⁹ Duncan L. Clarke, "US Security Assistance to Egypt and Israel: Politically Untouchable?", *Middle East Journal*, Spring 1997; Iss. 51 Vol. 2, p.202-203.

Egyptian regime would maintain a close relationship with Israel. On May 2011, a new US-Israeli quarrel broke out owing to Obama's controversial usage of "1967 border" (i.e. Israeli border before the 1967 Arab-Israeli War) as the basis of resolving Israeli-Palestinian conflicts. Yet Obama later supplemented that his proposal including land-swap up to Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and eventually softened the tension.²⁹⁰ It could be a hint of a new general deterioration of US-Israeli relationship but it could also be a part of the adaptation process to the new situation. Therefore the exact future development was still unknown.

²⁹⁰ Natasha Mozgovaya and Barak Ravid, "Obama on '67 borders:' I said publicly what has long been known privately", *Haaretz*, May 23, 2011. <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/obama-on-67-borders-i-said-publicly-what-has-long-been-known-privately-1.363402> (Access on August 20, 2011)

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