To what extent is the current 'road map to peace' likely to be more successful in achieving peace in the Arab-Israeli conflict than any of the previous attempts in the last 30 years?

The Arab-Israeli conflict has been ongoing for many years and so far a peaceful solution to the violence has not been reached. The 'peace process' aims to find a just, fair and lasting peace solution to the conflict in the Middle East.

The USA in particular has been very active in looking for a peace solution. This is because Israel is their ally. There are several million Jews in the USA and many send money to support Israel. Also the Arabs used oil as a very successful weapon in the Yom Kippur War, and the West depends on this oil. This was demonstrated with the price rises of 1973 that caused economic recession very quickly. The USA still wished to support Israel, but it was also important not to offend the Arab countries, and their plentiful oil supplies. Therefore peace in the Middle East has been the goal of successive American Presidents.

In the last 30 years there have been several unsuccessful attempts to find a peace solution for the conflict in the Middle East. In 1973 peace talks opened and this was the first time that Arabs and Israelis had sat together at a peace conference. UN troops were brought in, and things seemed to be heading the right way towards peace.

However the first major peace negotiations were in 1977 when the President Carter of the USA offered to act as mediator for President Sadat of Egypt and President Begin of Israel, the leaders of the two sides at that time. The negotiations took place at Carter's holiday home Camp David. Sadat and Begin agreed to negotiate a peace treaty and establish democratic relations. Egypt would recognise Israel's right to exist and Israel would gradually retreat from the Sinai Peninsula. This was the first peace agreement in the Middle East between Israel and an Arab country. However although Israel and Egypt could now exist side by side, the two leaders had to face much internal opposition over Camp David, and there was not peace. There were still a great deal of violence and terrorist attacks. Two years after the peace treaty was signed, Sadat was assassinated by Arab extremists in Egypt.

Following the Gulf War against Saddam Hussein in 1990, a conference was held in Madrid where US President Bush stated that any settlement in the Middle East would be based on the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. This stated the demand of the withdrawal of Israel from the occupied territories, acknowledgement of independent states in the Middle East, a just settlement to the refugee problem and that all parties should start negotiations aimed at establishing a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. The declaration was an agenda for negotiations covering a five year interim period which would then aim to lead to a permanent agreement and address such issues as Jerusalem, settlements and the 1948 refugees.

In 1993 the Oslo declaration was made after a series of negotiations. Yasser Arafat and Prime Minister Rabin made mutual concessions. Israel recognised the PLO as "the representative of the Palestinian people and would commence negotiations with the PLO within the Middle East peace process". The PLO agreed to "renounce the use of terrorism". However there were some members of the PLO who remained

unconvinced by Oslo, and said that too much had been surrendered to Israel. Members of extreme groups such as 'The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine' said they would work against the "Agreement of Shame". There were immediate disagreements about the area if land around Jericho which the Palestinians would control and Israel specified 24km squared and Arafat demand 350km squared. However there were many Israelis who also opposed the new peace agreements, and one Israeli shot dead 29 Palestinians at prayer. This massacre immediately sparked off riots in Gaza, Jerusaluem, Nablus, Ramallah and Hebron. Again there was not peace.

In June 2003 a new solution and agreement to try and end the violence in the Middle East. The new "Roadmap to Peace" is intended to be a goal driven, phase by phase route ending the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians within two years. It is also meant to have specific target dates, benchmarks and reciprocal confidence building measures built in. The plan was pieced together by diplomats from the USA, Russia, the European Union and the United Nations and was amended after consultations with Israelis and Palestinians. The first main stage of the Roadmap, originally intended to take place by May 2003 stated an end to violence against Israelis and Palestinians; Palestinian political reform; Israeli withdrawal and freeze on settlement expansion and Palestinian elections. This first stage was not achieved and there is still much violence against Israelis and Palestinians.

The Roadmap was published with the backing of the US President, so there is no doubt the USA supports it. America does not want to offend either side; the Israelis because there is a very large population of Jewish people living in the US, and the Arabs because of their economic weapon of oil. 64% of Americans believe that the USA, UN, EU and Russia should work together to achieve peace in the Middle East. Source One shows President George Bush supporting the peace process on a trip to The Middle East with Sharon. This is a reliable unbiased source.

The Palestinians are still resentful about how they lost their "homeland". They now only control less than 20% of the original amount of land that they once had. Source 2 is from a documentary about life as a Palestinian as it is now. However when reviewing this source one should consider that the documentary was made by reporter John Pilger who is very sympathetic towards the Arabs and is Anti-American, therefore it is biased but it does show how dramatically life for the Palestinians has changed. Source 3 shows a questionnaire that was carried out on a number of Palestinians. It shows that the majority of Arabs strongly oppose the peace process. Source 4 also shows that the majority of Arabs are pessimistic about reaching a peaceful solution to the Arab Israeli conflict. However these sources may not reflect the entire population of the Palestinians or may have been taken from an unfair selection of the population. Source 5 shows how they do not appear to be committed to the Roadmap, as they have not met deadlines. To the contrary they appear to have built up armies, possibly to fight the Israelis. This source is probably fa ir as it's from a neutral source, the BBC.

Ariel Sharon the Prime Minister of Israel has openly said he views Palestine as a separate state. He has started to withdraw Israeli troops from Palestine allocated land. Although source 6 shows that he is only willing to give back some of the land, and his motives are in question, he will give back some of the land wanted by the Arabs and keep the rest for Israel. However in source 7 it states that if terrorism does not stop

then he will freeze the roadmap. These sources are both secondary and give opposing bias opinions, so are not too reliable. Source 8 praises Sharon, and shows how he is very committed to peace, and his actions he has taken towards peace. It is an argument for Israel and Sharon, but does consider the other side's point of view. According to source 3 the majority of Israelis 'somewhat support' the peace process.

I do not think the 'Roadmap to Peace' will be successful. It will end up like the previous attempts at peace in the Middle East; Camp David, Madrid and Oslo, all of which failed. In my opinion there is no reason why the current Roadmap to Peace will be any different to these previous failures. The Roadmap has already failed its first target in May 2003, and does not seem to be heading towards any kind of peace. The leaders write the agreements but the people of Israel and Palestine have to live with them, many people on both sides still do not accept the right for the other to exist. Also there are still extreme terrorists groups who are never going to be happy with peace, and are going to jeopardise it every time. Violence in The Middle East has become a way of life for the people who live there, and its possible that that will never change.