

**FAILURE OR FOLLY**

**ATALIA BEN-MEIR**



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# **FAILURE OR FOLLY**

**BY**

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# FAILURE OR FOLLY

*Atalia Ben-Meir*

## **Prologue**

Barbara Tuchman, in her outstanding book, **The March of Folly**, defines folly as the pursuit of policy contrary to self-interest, “a perverse persistence in a policy demonstrably unworkable or counterproductive”.<sup>1</sup>

Failure, in contrast, is the lack of success of a well-thought out, well-planned policy, based on a thorough, objective analysis of comprehensive pertinent information.

This book strives to provide an answer to the question of whether the Oslo peace process was the result of unforeseeable circumstances that led to its failure, or the foreseeable result of unmitigated folly.





## Chapter 1:

### Defining the Conflict: Palestinian-Israeli or Arab-Israeli

For the past year, the world has been preoccupied with Saddam Hussein and the issues revolving around his final defeat. The US has succeeded in mobilizing the support of the bulk of the Western countries, including Europe. Standing alone in their opposition in the EU are France, Germany and Belgium. In analyzing their stance, which has created a fissure within Europe, Caroline Glick, the associate editor of the Jerusalem Post, presents a unique viewpoint: rational versus irrational motives in state policy. In essence, Glick expands Barbara Tuchman's concept of folly.

Glick argues that underpinning the obstructionist policy adopted by France, Germany and Belgium is their unqualified belief that countries are rational and therefore motivated by self-interest. Israel, in signing the Oslo Accords, fell into the same trap.

For Messrs. Brzezinski<sup>2</sup> and Scowcroft,<sup>3</sup> America's problems are of its own making, and can be solved only by indulging the whims, and appeasing the demands of its "partners" in Europe and the Arab world. Apparently, they think it impossible that there are countries that are motivated not by real interests but by irrational hatred and thus cannot be appeased.

For seven years, Israel too believed...that states are motivated by rational and therefore appeasable interests. The entire Oslo process, like the negotiations with Syria and the unilateral pullout from South Lebanon, was based on the assumption that, on the whole, states and nations are rational actors. Relative military strength and deterrence theory were summarily discarded in 1993 in exchange for Shimon Peres' theory of statecraft. According to this theory, a peaceful New Middle East, built upon unilateral Israeli concessions, was a viable option since the Arabs must rationally understand that living at peace with Israel advances their interests.<sup>4</sup>

Ten years under the Oslo Agreements have undeniably discredited Peres' theory. Indeed, the "*al-Aqsa*", or Oslo *intifada*, has proven, beyond all reasonable doubt, that peace attained through appeasement is a mirage. The

roots of Arab hatred towards the very existence of Israel are deep and enduring, encompassing transcending territorial issues. In writing on the Egyptian anti-Semitic hit series, “Horseman Without a Horse”, Ehud Ya’ari, the award-winning chief Middle East commentator on Israeli TV, points out that throughout the month of *Ramadan*, rabid anti-Semitic productions appeared on TV in other Arab countries. Ya’ari writes that he and his colleagues are perplexed as to the purpose of this anti-Israel and anti-Semitic campaign:

After all, this is not about withdrawing from the territories or granting Palestinians refugees the “right of return”. Rather, it is a far-reaching, dangerous rationale laying the ground for the justification of a mass exile of Jews from Israel – “ethnic cleansing” in contemporary terms – and even beyond that, it is gradually building a case for justifying genocide!<sup>5</sup>

The essence of this message is that there is no possibility of making peace with the Jews,

not because of any political argument or clash over territory, but because that nation is *a priori* unfit to be counted among the human race. The Jewish religion is one big, ongoing lie, and Jewish history is the fruit of a consistent distortion of the past. Furthermore, the Jewish people present a future threat to the rest of the world.<sup>6</sup>

### **Clarifying the Real Issues**

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict is but the most conspicuous and contentious facet of a conflict whose overarching goal is the destruction of the State of Israel. The real issue was obfuscated in the 1980s when Israel made a major strategic mistake by adopting the unsubstantiated argument that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was the heart and the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict. As pointed out by Raphael Israeli – this was a groundless assumption. The Arab aims for the destruction of Israel have never changed; only the strategy has changed. The Palestinians are merely the spearhead in the Arab effort to weaken Israel so as to assure a military victory when the time is ripe.

The fact is that the Egyptian-Israeli and Jordanian-Israeli Peace Accords (1979 and 1994, respectively) were signed, for what they are worth, regardless of the continued festering of the Palestinian issue, and that the

threats of Iraq, Syria or Iran do not appear to diminish when the prospects brighten for an Israeli-Palestinian settlement. If anything, the Palestinian issue, far from constituting the incentive behind the ongoing Arab and Islamic enmity towards Israel, has been the pretext and rationalization for their continuing hostility. Instead of urging the Palestinians to settle with Israel, they put shackles on their hands through coaxing, threats and promises of ultimate victory if they should wait for outside deliverance.<sup>7</sup>

Nonetheless, on the basis of this concept, the pivot of all peacemaking efforts in the Middle East has been satiating Palestinian demands. Israel has been repeatedly told by an endless queue of peacemakers from Europe, the US, the UN, to say nothing of the Arab countries, that capitulating to Palestinian ultimative demands, retreating to the 1967 borders and creating a Palestinian state, would bring an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

An objective observer of the conflict can easily perceive that the truth lies somewhere else entirely. The only issue that unites all the Arab countries, creating a pseudo pan-Arabism, is the enmity towards Israel.

...the term “Arab nationalism” is a misnomer. It represents not a genuine national movement or ideal but is a euphemism for raw imperialism. There is not and has never existed an “Arab nation” and its invocation has been nothing but a clever ploy to rally popular support behind one’s quest for regional mastery.<sup>8</sup>

The only issue that has solidified pan-Arab solidarity is the “Palestinian question”, with anti-Zionism forming the main common denominator. Even the pan-Arab invasion of the newly proclaimed State of Israel in mid-May 1948 was not a shining demonstration of pan-Arab solidarity to liberate a part of the Arab homeland. It was merely a concretization of the imperialistic designs of the participants. Had the Jewish state lost the war, its territory would have been divided among the invading forces.

Abdel Nasser cloaked his hegemonic goals by invoking the restoration of “the full rights of the Palestinian people”. Likewise, Saddam Hussein disguised his predatory designs on Kuwait by linking the crisis caused by his invasion of that country with “the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Israel from the occupied Arab territories in Palestine...” Self-serving interventionism under the pretence of pan-Arab solidarity had the effect of transforming the bilateral Palestinian-Israeli dispute into a multilateral Arab-

Israeli conflict, thereby prolonging its duration, increasing its intensity, and making its resolution far more complex and tortuous.<sup>9</sup>

The major states in the Middle East still view Israel as a hegemonic economic and military threat to inter-Arab competition for regional supremacy. They have a vested interest in not allowing Israel to become a fully integrated regional actor.

Israeli withdrawal from the territories will not diminish Arab perceptions of Israel as an alien and unwelcome regional interloper and will not resolve any of the fundamental core problems of the conflict. Israeli withdrawal from the territories will not significantly decrease the prospect of a future Arab-Israeli war. It is the general consensus of most regional scholars and experts that deterrence of a future Arab-Israeli war is a function of Arab perceptions that the balance of forces greatly favors Israel. Should this perception change, then the prospect of a future Arab-Israeli war will be high regardless of continued Israel presence in territories captured in the 1967 war.<sup>10</sup>

More compelling, the outrages committed against Israel, including the suicide bombers, would not be possible if it were not for financial support provided by the Arab world. It has been reported that Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Qatar, Algeria, Oman, Syria, Bahrain, Jordan and Sudan have all deposited funds, to the tune of **\$442.5 million**, into the accounts of the Islamic Development Bank, for the *Intifadat al-Aqsa*.<sup>11</sup>

The pending Gulf crisis has already set into motion several fundamental strategic changes along Israel's eastern front. Taken together, these developments could dramatically alter Israel's security requirements in Judea and Samaria, making it more difficult for any Israeli government to offer far-reaching concessions in negotiations with the Palestinians.

The Gulf crisis has led to three major changes that draw into question Israel's security margin *vis à vis* Judea and Samaria:

- Increasing domestic instability in Jordan and King Hussein's support for Iraq raise doubts about Jordan's ability to engage in an eventual peace settlement as a stable partner cooperating with Israel to contain a future Palestinian entity.

- A rapid rapprochement between Iraq and Iran will permit Iraq's army to reduce its pre-occupation with guarding the border with Iran and instead focus more of its deployments toward the west against Israel.
- A decline in the qualitative superiority of the Israeli Air Force owing to massive US arms sales planned for Saudi Arabia which will reduce Israel's ability to rely on airpower to stop Arab armies advancing from the east.<sup>12</sup>

## **Egyptian Policy Towards Israel**

The only threat to Egypt's regional supremacy is Israel. Only Israel possesses the requisite technological expertise, economic might, and military superiority to challenge Egypt, and is a competitor for US support and largesse. For this reason, Egypt has a vested interest in insuring that Israel is not assimilated into the region.

In total disregard of the 1979 Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, Egypt continues to view Israel as a regional enemy<sup>13</sup> and as the only country that poses a credible military threat. In the international arena, Egypt consistently demonizes Israel, taking an aggressive anti-Israel posture. Within this conceptual framework, it is not surprising that Egypt, to the consternation of both Israel and the US, has unreservedly supported the Palestinians in the dispute, taking the position that Israel is responsible for the deadlock in the situation, and for exacerbating the instability in the region.

Egyptian support for the Palestinians has, sometimes, exceeded rhetoric. On January 4, 2002, Israel uncovered the *Karin-A*, a ship carrying advanced heavy weaponry from Iran to the Palestinian Authority. In order to arrive at its destination in the Palestinian Authority, the *Karin-A* had to go through the Suez Canal and be unloaded within sight of the Egyptian border. Thus, although it was a clandestine operation, it could not have been put into action without the acquiescence of the Egyptian authorities.

Beyond the overt political support proffered to the Palestinians, there is an undercurrent of sentiment in favor of opening up the peace treaty with Israel and to demand further territorial concessions. Ilan Asya, relying on an article that appeared in the Arab weekly, *Al-Wasat*, in August 1997, alleges that Egypt is planning to resuscitate its demand for territorial continuity, a code word for forcing Israel to relinquish extensive territory in the Negev, including Eilat, called the "Negev Wedge". The article, appearing under the

name “Umm Rashrash is Conquered and its Area is Larger Than the Golan”, raises the question of whether there is a guiding hand in Egypt interested in resurrecting anew the old Egyptian demand for territorial continuity in the Arab east. Submitting such demands would be in breach of Section 2 of the peace treaty that stipulates that both sides to the treaty honor the integrity of the other party. Certainly President Mubarak hasn’t abandoned that dream. On April 25, 1997 (Egyptian “Sinai Independence Day”), he declared, “Umm Rashrash is Egyptian land and we will not give it up.”<sup>14</sup> Should the territory be given over to Egypt, Israel would be cut off from the city of Eilat and the Red Sea, and Egypt would be endowed with territorial contiguity with Jordan.<sup>15</sup>

## Syria

Syria takes a long-term view of its conflict with Israel and sees the Arab-Israeli conflict as another phase in the historical clash between Islam and the West, by frequently equating the current Arab struggle with that of the Crusades. As the leader of pan-Arab Nationalism, the very existence of Israel is an anathema for Syria: “Syria defines its conflict with Israel in existential terms and believes that the Arab-Israeli conflict is a struggle for survival between two irreconcilable movements.”<sup>16</sup>

This attitude resounds in official Syrian foreign policy: rejection of Barak’s proposal to concede the Golan Heights, and in the financial and military support for *Hizbullah*.

Bashar al-Assad’s anti-Semitic remarks, made in the presence of Pope John Paul II in the course of his official visit to Syria in May 2001, epitomizes Syrian attitude towards Israel. Perhaps persuaded that the Pope subscribed to the same beliefs, in his address welcoming the Pope, al-Assad imputed that Jews:

...seek to re-create the journey of suffering and pain among people. They tried to kill the principles of all religions with the same mentality in which they betrayed Jesus Christ and the same way they tried to betray and kill the Prophet Mohammad.

In the same strain, the Syrian Minister of Defense, speaking on television, declared that: “If every Arab kills one Jew, there will be no Jews left at all... I would like to stand and kill a Jew standing opposite me.”

Exacerbating the situation is the fact that Syria views Israel as an obstacle to fulfilling its ambition of expanding its borders to encompass what it considers its historical, rightful and natural boundaries: present-day Lebanon, Jordan and Israel. To facilitate achievement of its strategic goals, Syria has entered into a *de facto* regional alliance with Iran. This alliance reflects a mutual convergence of interests as both Syria and Iran oppose the goals of the American-inspired “new world order”<sup>17</sup> with Syria serving as a conduit for the flow of Iranian weapons to the *Hizbullah* terrorist group.

### **Saudi Arabia**

Throughout the *intifada*, Saudi Arabia continued to finance the violence against Israel, including suicide bombers. By April 2002, Saudi Arabia had provided the PA and Islamic groups with about \$500 million, most of the money going to Arafat and the *Hamas* movement. Documents captured by the IDF confirmed Saudi support for the *intifada*, attesting to the systematic transfer of funds to families of suicide terrorists and to *Hamas*. The direct result of the transfer of these funds has been the encouragement of Palestinians to continue terror attacks and the strengthening of the *Hamas* terror-attack apparatus.

Spreading Islam throughout the world is a fundamental pillar of the Saudi education system. It is, therefore, not surprising that the Saudi Arabian education system has played a central role in the radicalization of Saudi youth and Muslim students in Saudi-supported schools throughout the world. These schools are spreading hatred of Christians and Jews around the world, including texts glorifying the killing of Jews.

### **Iran**

A press report, issued by the Israeli Foreign Ministry in April 25, 1998, succinctly delineated Iran’s inexorable policy towards Israel. Although great efforts were made to rehabilitate its reputation, “The one realm where Iran has made no attempt to disguise its ideological fervor is with regard to its implacable hatred of Israel. Iran remains committed to the proposition that Israel has no right to exist and that its destruction is a *desideratum*.”

Putting its creed into deed, Iran has been implicated in terror attacks against Israeli and Jewish targets throughout the world (i.e. the bombings, in Buenos Aires, of the Israeli Embassy in March 1992 and the bombing of the Jewish Community Center in July 1994).

Iran views *Hizbullah* as its spearhead in the battle against Israel, coordinating its activities with Syria. Iran was instrumental in the founding of *Hizbullah* and continues to fund its operations at a level of approximately 100 million dollars per year. *Hizbullah* terrorists are trained at Iranian military installations and then sent in combat against IDF troops. Iran ships weaponry, with Syrian acquiescence, to *Hizbullah* units operating on Israel's border. In January 1996, three Iranian trucks loaded with arms were intercepted by Turkish authorities on their way to Lebanon via Turkey and Syria. Iranian planes loaded with ammunition and weapons have landed at Damascus Airport. Their cargo, which included Sagger anti-tank missiles, long-range Katyusha rockets and high explosive anti-tank mines, was subsequently transferred to *Hizbullah* forces in South Lebanon. Iran has transferred money to terrorists in Judea, Samaria and Gaza for the purchase of weapons, and its involvement in the Karin-A smuggling affair is well documented.

The relationship between Iran and *Hizbullah* underpinned the Tehran conference organized by the Iranian parliament in May 2001. The anti-Israeli sentiment that permeated the conference set the stage for its proceedings. A main theme of the conference was Arab and Islamic unity against the "Zionist enemy", culminating seven months of intensive Iranian efforts to bring about maximum cooperation between the Palestinians and the Lebanese in the struggle against Israel.

Lebanese *Hizbullah* leader, Sheikh Hasan Nasrallah, played a leading role in the conference. Rejecting suggestions that *Hizbullah* confine itself to Lebanon, he argued,

We all have an extraordinary historic opportunity to finish off the entire cancerous Zionist project, which has been threatening our region and nation for fifty years. As a nation, it is inadmissible [for us] to waste this opportunity...The ummah (nation)...should seize this historic opportunity and carry out their duty in full toward the Palestinian people's resistance and *intifada* away from hesitation, delay, and routine, and without casting doubts on the feasibility of this path and option.<sup>18</sup>

## **Iraq**

It is not generally known, but Iraq is the only country at war with Israel that refused to sign the Rhodes Armistice Agreement of 1949. Nothing has



changed since. Saddam Hussein does not hide his hostility towards Israel, offering \$25,000 to the families of *shihadim*, suicide bombers. He portrays himself to the Arab world as the foremost leader in the struggle to liberate Palestine, swearing that he has 6.5 million volunteers in a “Jerusalem Liberation Army”, ready to fight for the Palestinian cause. His crusade against Israel is not limited to striking by land; Iraq was prepared to bombard Israel for six continuous months in order to liberate the Arab lands, from the air and the sea.

Anticipating the launch of a barrage of missiles, containing chemical and biological agents, during the war against Iraq, the Israeli government accelerated the allocation of gas masks to the population, inoculated strategic personnel against probable biological germs, instructed the population to seal their rooms to protect themselves, etc. Very few people had any doubt that Iraq would retaliate against the US by attacking Israel.

### **Arab Antagonism and Incitement**

A huge wave of anti-Semitic literature continues to sweep the Arab and Islamic world. The objectives of this “hate industry” include serving as a valuable tool, among a host of others, in the Israeli-Arab and Israeli-Palestinian struggle, reflecting the basic unwillingness to accept the existence of the State of Israel and the challenge posed by the Zionist Jewish state in the very midst of the Arab and Muslim world.

One should by no means underestimate the significance of this widespread “hate industry” and the damage caused by it in the short and the long term. This literature does not remain confined to mosques and university campuses. It reaches far beyond the circles of dubious intellectuals and extremist clerics. It enjoys widespread circulation and popularity throughout the Arab and Muslim world as well as the Muslim communities in Europe and the Western world... This “hate industry” may serve to justify or even encourage Palestinians or other Muslims to engage in murderous terrorist attacks against Israelis and Jews. The anti-Semitic literature points to the “Jewish danger” as the main threat to Islam, to which holy war (*jihad*) is the only response. It sometimes goes as far as explicitly advocating violence and murderous attacks against Jews. Potential terrorists are nurtured by anti-Semitic and anti-Jewish propaganda originating from Islamic extremism.<sup>19</sup>

Support for the Anti-Defamation League's analysis resounded at the conference on terror, convened at the Inter-Disciplinary Center (IDC) in Herzliya. In his speech, the head of Israeli intelligence, General Aaron Zeevi Farkash stated that since September 11, Israel has become the focus of global terror. Two of the main characteristics of this terror were the delegitimation of Israel's right to exist and the perception of Israeli citizens as legitimate targets for terror. The vitriolic and pernicious incitement against Jews and Israel is preparing the hearts and the minds of hundreds of millions of Arabs and Muslims to volunteer to take part in this terror.

The virulence of this incitement prompted the Israeli government, disconcerted by the inflammatory anti-Israeli rhetoric emanating from Arab countries, to issue a press statement, in April 2000, expressing deep concern at its fanaticism and intensity:

Certain parts of the Arab world have regressed to an era, which we thought would never return: an era of incitement, hostility, and demonization of the Israeli "enemy" and its leadership. This has been expressed in such incidents as the burning in effigy of Prime Minister Barak in the streets of Beirut, the superimposition of Hitler's face on a photo of Foreign Minister Levy, the widely used comparison of Israeli policy with Nazism... This incitement is often inspired by official sources within these Arab states. They include statements by leaders and officials, and agitation orchestrated by the official establishment media. The message permeates throughout the public strata and stokes the anti-Israeli atmosphere to worrisome levels – this at a time when reconciliation and confidence-building are needed most.

Even in Egypt, with whom Israel has a peace treaty since 1979, the Egyptian establishment daily, **Al-Akhbar**, wrote:

Extortion is the lifeblood of the State of Israel, since the inception of this blackmailing country to this very day. This extortion began with the creation of the Holocaust myth, according to which Hitler cremated 6 million Jews in World War II.

The Arab countries have become the center of Holocaust denial and the resurrection of the fraudulent **Protocols of the Elders of Zion**. Fueling this implacable hatred towards Israel and Jews is the resurgence of the blood libels, most notably the allegation that Jews are responsible for the terrorist bombing of the Twin Towers on September 11.<sup>20</sup>

## **Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD)**

The intensity of the pan-Arab aims of war has never waned; it just changed strategy. As argued by Yoash Tsiddon-Chatto (Israel):

“[Israel]...is facing the largest volume of firepower per km. the world has ever known, and it has no depth in normally accepted military terms. It is threatened by the highest numbers of ballistic missiles per square km./mile of territory the world has ever seen that may be launched from short ranges...”<sup>21</sup>

Compounding the challenge to Israel is the massive regional influx of state-of-the art Western military hardware in unprecedented quantities. The unfettered, massive proliferation of modern Western weaponry within the Arab world is gradually shifting the regional balance of power in favor of the Arab states, with Egypt currently fielding the 13<sup>th</sup> largest military in the world.

While the vast majority of Egyptians continue to live in squalor, the Mubarak government has devoted much of the \$1.3 billion annual US financial aid to reconstitute, rebuild and reorganize Egypt’s military to such an extent that it rivals the qualitative and quantitative levels of the IDF.<sup>22</sup>

However, the greatest danger is the proliferation of WMD in the Arab world. While a coalition of Western powers, led by the US, is in the throes of a war against Saddam Hussein, this same coalition, with the complicity of the rest of the world, ignores the growing stockpile of chemical and biological weapons being amassed by other Arab countries.

The CIA has submitted a report to Congress warning that nuclear, chemical, biological, and ballistic missile-applicable technology and expertise continues to gradually disperse worldwide. While the United States is consumed with the proliferation crises in Iraq and North Korea, other countries such as Libya, Syria and possibly the Sudan are quietly trying to acquire or expand secret arsenals of weapons of mass destruction.

The progress in the chemical and biological weapons programs in the Arab countries and Iran marks the high point in the strategic development achieved in the last two decades in these countries. Their ballistic missile capabilities have been enhanced, and their arsenals built up with the aid of Russia, China, North Korea, Pakistan, the CIS and other countries. The Arab

countries are on the verge of being capable of launching advanced lethal Chemical and biological weapons towards Israel.

The 1980s and 1990s conspicuously signaled the culmination of a fundamental process in the strategic thinking of the Arab countries and Iran—acquisition of chemical and biological weapons as a central strategic weapons components...The aspiration to produce a capability to win wars decisively (a capability which Arab armies lacked in previous wars with Israel ) or alternatively, to ensure, at least, the ability to prevent decisive victory by Israel or negate Israeli superiority, constitutes, undoubtedly, a central motivating and animating essence of the Arab-Iranian strategic concept, which assumes that these capabilities will not be attained with conventional weapons, which have always ultimately proved to be inferior relative to the IDF.<sup>23</sup>

## **Libya**

Libya sponsors terrorism, offering its support to radical Palestinian groups opposed to Israel. The CIA has exposed the fact that Libya has been negotiating with North Korea to acquire its intermediate-range Nodong ballistic missile, leveraging Qadhafi's capabilities to target Israel. Libya is today building the largest underground chemical weapons production facility in the world. It now possesses the largest chemical weapons capacity in the Middle East, having stockpiled some 100 tons of poison gas weapons.

## **Syria**

Syria has chemical and biological warheads, as well as conventional weapons, with Scud B missiles having the capability of covering half of Israel and Scud C missiles all of Israel. Although not very accurate, their mission is to strike urban concentrations and disrupt the rear. Syria has also taken delivery of ballistic missiles from North Korea, and has equipped herself with Scud D, which has a range of 435 miles. "Syria is capable of launching up to 40 ballistic missiles per day at Israeli targets, and maintain this rate of fire for about a month."<sup>24</sup>

The Assistant US Secretary of State has been quoted as saying that Syria "has had a chemical warfare program since the mid-1980s" and a US analyst has said that Syria has stockpiled more chemical weapons than Iraq. According to a 1996 Israeli report, Syria's stockpile comprises thousands of aerial bombs filled with chemical warfare agents such as sarin, and between

100 to 200 chemical warheads for Scud B and Scud C surface-to-surface missiles.<sup>25</sup>

## **Egypt**

The impetus for the massive transformation of the Egyptian military capability has been provided by the US in the form of over \$1 trillion in military and economic aid. That Israel was considered one of Egypt's main concerns was confirmed by Egyptian Defense Minister Tantawi's statement that the September 1996 Egyptian military maneuvers, the largest in Egypt's history, were conducted out of concern for Israel's non-conventional capabilities.

A Russian intelligence report pointed at Egypt's large-scale chemical warfare arsenal, as well as its intense involvement in developing biological warheads and delivery systems.

Egypt maintains strategic-technological cooperation with Iran, including increased assistance to Iraq in the production of chemical warfare agents and their storage. Egypt's complicity in the supply of entire Egyptian chemical warfare systems and the establishment of chemical manufacturing facilities in Iraq is well known.<sup>26</sup>

Cairo's growing cooperation with Iraq resulted in a secret agreement to expand chemical warfare capabilities, financed by Iraq. In 1993, a venture was confirmed by the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service. It also appears that Egypt has developed pathogens and toxins as warfare agents and has taken steps to acquire a capability for genetic engineering of microbial pathogens.<sup>27</sup>

Egypt has also upgraded its delivery systems. The CIA reported in 1999 that Egypt continued to develop Scud B and Scud C missiles and to develop the two-stage Vector short-range ballistic missiles and is interested in developing middle-range ballistic missiles. Egypt, in fact, has been for years cooperating with North Korea in a ballistic missile cooperation program. The US suspects that Egypt is developing a liquid-fueled missile ("Vector") whose range is from 800 to 1,200 kms. and has a 450-1,000 kg. payload.

## **Iran**

Iran has a large nuclear development program to construct power reactors for civilian energy generation, but US and Israel officials believe that Iran seeks to acquire the capability to build nuclear weapons.

Iran began CW production in the mid-1980s. In 1985, Iran began stockpiling cyagogen chloride, phosgene and mustard gas, and had, reportedly, initiated nerve agent production in 1994. There is no verified proof that Iran has developed biological agents.

Iran has a wide variety of delivery systems, such as Scud-B and Scud-C missiles. Iran is developing *Shihab-3* with over a 1,000 km. range and over a 700 kg. payload, and *Shihab-4* with a 2,000 km. range and a 1,000 kg. payload.

## Chapter 2: The Metamorphosis of the Labor Party

The leaders of the Labor Party designated the pursuit of peace as a central goal. In conformance with this ideology, the Party consistently reiterated its willingness to enter into negotiations with the Palestinians with no preconditions, and on the basis of UN Resolutions 242 and 338. Towards the 1988 elections, the Labor Party platform dedicated a section to the security and demographic dangers inherent in the retention of territory highly populated with Palestinians, including the threat to Israeli's essence and identity as a Jewish state. Article 4 of the platform emphasized that Israel would not retreat to the 1967 borders, and would retain areas vital to security, such as the Jordan Valley.

The Party opposed the establishment of a Palestinian state between Israel and Jordan, fearing that such a state would be a pivot of incitement and hostility. The Labor Party rather envisioned that the conflict should be resolved within the framework of a Jordanian-Palestinian state. The Labor Party platform also unequivocally stated that Jerusalem shall remain united and under Israeli sovereignty as the capital of Israel and the center of the Jewish people.

The period between the 1988 elections and the 1992 elections was a period of transition for the Labor Party, its basic orientation towards a possible solution to the conflict changing despite, or perhaps because of, the first Palestinian *intifada* against Israel.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the aftermath of the Gulf War, there was a pervasive belief that the Arabs were more inclined to assess the possibility of discarding their decade-old policy of destroying the State of Israel. Hope that a new dawn was awakening for the Middle East impelled many Labor Party activists to discern moderation in the Palestinian hostility towards Israel. Shimon Peres, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, predicted that a great opportunity for peace had opened up.

The transition the Labor Party was undergoing found expression in the party's platform for the 1992 elections. The article opposing the establishment of a Palestinian state was removed from the platform, and the new set of priorities defined the pursuit of peace on the basis of realistic concessions as the central goal of the State of Israel. Peres' stamp on the

platform was quite obvious in the article that envisioned a new Middle East in which peace would reign and a common market would be established.

The most striking departure from past platforms was the subordination of security to the pursuit of peace.

The internal division within Labor was between the larger Peres camp and the smaller Rabin camp. The Peres camp was particularly dovish and supportive of any progress in the peace talks, while the Rabin camp, although relatively hawkish, did not in principle oppose concessions that would advance the peace process. Throughout the 1992 election campaign, Labor pledged to make peace, qualifying this declaration by promising not to negotiate with the PLO or permitting the creation of a Palestinian state. So confident was Labor of its analysis that Rabin promised that his government would conclude a satisfactory deal with the Palestinian Arabs within six months, explicitly emphasizing that the deal would not be with the PLO.

Another change was the extreme Left's success in convincing Yitzhak Rabin that the territories constituted an obstacle to peace. Thus, although he had been staunchly opposed to direct negotiations with the PLO all his life and to anything resembling a Palestinian state, Rabin was persuaded that Israel could preserve its physical and existential security only by ridding itself of the "poisonous" territories through direct negotiations with the PLO.

The results of the 1992 elections catapulted the Labor Party to leadership over Israel. In introducing his government in July 1992, Yitzhak Rabin declared that it was his intention to change Israeli priorities and place the pursuit of peace at the top of its agenda and to take firm steps to bring to a conclusion the Arab-Israeli conflict. Nevertheless, in his call to the Palestinians to open a dialogue with Israel, Rabin still held the Labor Party's traditional positions: Palestinian autonomy and no withdrawal to the 1967 borders.

Ultimately, Labor did, indeed, win the elections. At his inaugural Knesset speech, in July 1992, Rabin stressed that it was about time that Israel shed the beliefs that Jews are "a people that dwells alone" and that the "whole world is against us".

We must overcome the sense of isolation that has held us in thrall for almost half a century. We must join the international movement towards peace,



reconciliation and cooperation that is spreading over the entire globe in these days – lest we be the last to remain, all alone, at the station...<sup>28</sup>

In a subsequent speech, at the Inauguration of the Steinmetz Center for Peace Research, in November 1992, Rabin expressed his optimism as to the prospects of peace between Israel and the Palestinians:

I believe that among the leadership of the territories and outside of the territories, maybe even in [PLO headquarters] Tunisia, there are today Palestinian leaders who have wised up and they understand that they cannot repeat the mistakes of the past... There are many among them who understand that is better to establish the nucleus of a Palestinians entity, even if its administrative.<sup>29</sup>

In line with its longstanding policies, the Labor government announced that it was prepared to trade land for peace, and initiated peace talks with Palestinian leaders in the territories. However, Labor failed to achieve a deal, not within six months, not even within a year, the bulk of which was spent conducting fruitless talks with Palestinian leaders under the umbrella of the United States. The Labor government, having missed its self-imposed deadline, faced the distressing prospect of not only being embarrassed by its failure to achieve peace, but the risk of the opposition Likud Party exploiting this failure at the polls. Should the Likud regain power, Labor feared it would strengthen Israel's hold on the territories, and thus peace, a la Labor Party, would forever elude Israel.

The Oslo back channel, the opening of direct talks with the PLO, offered an alternative. Although approving, and ultimately upgrading these talks were a violation of the Labor Party's pre-election promises, Rabin and Peres began to regard these promises as an impediment to achieving peace. "In defending this new policy, the Rabin government argued that it faced a choice between the "moderate" PLO and the "extremist" fundamentalist Islamic groups, such as *Hamas* and *Islamic Jihad*.<sup>30</sup>

Within this framework, 'moderate' signified an amorphous group of Palestinian Arabs who did not support the "extremist" groups that were committed to Israel's destruction.

In implementing this aggressive peace policy, Rabin pushed aside the old moderates, the traditional anti-terrorist Palestinian Arabs who had rejected the PLO, and lumped them in the same category with the new reconstituted

“moderate” Arafat and the PLO. Thus, the traditional moderates lost their political identity and became subordinated to Arafat. Rabin justified these contacts with the PLO, claiming:

The purpose of the contacts with the Palestinians in the beginning of 1993 were aimed at assessing the extent to which the Palestinian Authority was prepared to change its policy so as to become a creditable partner for negotiations with Israel.<sup>31</sup>

### **Behavior Modification in the Service of Peace**

The peace process was never a simple territorial issue. The peace process was intricately related to Israeli national identity. “Ultra-nationalist” and religious Israelis regarded Judea and Samaria as part of Israel and thus no less a part of Israel than Tel Aviv. The dogma held by the centrist, secular, leftist and ultra-leftists was that the only way Israel would be able to sustain its Zionist and liberal identity was by withdrawing from the territories.

On the basis of this polarity, Michael Barnett argues that a defining feature of Rabin’s practices and policies was to create, however temporarily, a cultural space in Israeli politics in which a withdrawal from the territories became desirable and legitimate. In other words, Rabin sought to create a tie between the Israeli national identity and interests on the one hand, and a peace process that mandated territorial compromise with the Palestinians, on the other.<sup>32</sup>

Rabin, indeed, succeeded in this undertaking, but in the process he marginalized the opponents of Oslo and exacerbated the schisms within Israeli society. As a result, the signing of the Oslo Accords in September 1993 was a watershed not only in the Israel-Palestinian relationship but also in Right-Left, religious-secular relationships. The debate over Oslo created a dichotomy within Israel which, paradoxically, began to heal with the eruption of the *Intifadat al-Aqsa* and the total collapse of the Oslo peace process.

Barnett describes how Rabin used (or abused), Israel’s identity crisis at the height of the 1992 Israeli election by presenting the voters with two ostensibly competitive visions of Israel’s identity. Rabin launched a campaign strategy that portrayed the Labor Party as a stronghold of peace in contradistinction to the nationalist policies of the Likud Party, which were jeopardizing Israel’s chances for peace. In its propaganda, Labor accused the

Likud of diverting scarce resources from high priority items within Israel proper to superfluous ideological settlement expansion and to undeserving *yeshivot* and religious institutions. At a campaign rally in the Likud stronghold of Beer Sheva, he sent the crowd wild with enthusiasm when he stated, “The Likud took your money; the money you paid in taxes, and threw it away in the territories.”<sup>33</sup>

In an address to the commencement exercises at the National Security College, Rabin answered his own rhetorical question as to what kind of Israel do Israelis want by offering an all-encompassing vision: “We want a state of Jews, a Zionist state, a progressive democratic state, and a strong state.”<sup>34</sup> Deliberately or not, the fact is that he omitted “a Jewish state” from this vision. In these and other moments, he stressed Israel’s secular and humanistic tradition, a tradition, he argued, that could only thrive in a democratic Israel that was connected to the West. In a series of highly visible speeches and interviews, he articulated a view of the Israeli identity defined by Zionism and democracy, reserving only a marginal space for religion.

To be sure, Rabin felt little love for the settler and ultra-religious communities, but it also appears that he recognized that it was to his electoral advantage to claim that these groups were a drain on the state’s security and financial health.<sup>35</sup>

In this spirit, he ridiculed the religious right and the settlers whom he believed were a threat to that tradition. In his memoirs he wrote “in *Gush Emunim*, I see an extremely grave phenomenon, a cancer in the body of Israeli democracy”. In his campaign, he called the settlers “parasites”, and as Prime Minister he referred to the Bible as an “antiquated land registry”.

Thus, Rabin successfully convinced a diverse groups of voters to vote for the Labor Party, persuading the economic elites, *Sephardim* (Jews from Arab countries) and Russians that a reduction in government subsidies to the religious and settler communities would benefit them economically.

Without a doubt, Rabin’s strategy was successful. But at what price?

### **Chapter 3: Negotiating the Declaration of Principles**

Makovsky encapsulated the Oslo Accords negotiation process in one sentence: “It is a testament to Israel’s highly personalized decision-making process that so few could make such a momentous decision for so many, essentially short-circuiting top-level security institutions – and more critically – with virtually no Cabinet debate.”<sup>36</sup>

Depending on the reader’s perspective, such a situation can be perceived as fraught with danger, and tantamount to jeopardizing Israel’s democratic processes, or a demonstration of courage and proof of Rabin’s inimitable stature. At the time of the signing of the Declaration of Principles, this was an open debate. The following is an attempt to add another voice to the debate.

#### **Opening the Oslo Back Channel**

In August 1993, the world was astounded at the news from Oslo that direct negotiations had secretly been facilitated between the PLO and Israel. A bilateral agreement had been reached on a “Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements (DoP)”, or “the Oslo Accords”. Up to that time, no one had had an inkling of the talks that had been conducted in Oslo, and certainly not the ramifications of this peace agreement.

In contrast to regular peace treaties, this agreement declared mutual recognition between the PLO and Israel, stipulating how to proceed in the next five years in order to reach a lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It established a staged approach and a timetable for reaching a permanent settlement.

Chance played a crucial role in starting this process that culminated in the Oslo Accords. A casual meeting in June 1992, between MK Yossi Beilin, a member of the opposition Labor Party, and Dr. Yair Hirschfeld, a social scientist of the Israeli NGO Economic Cooperation Foundation, with Terje Larsen, of the Norwegian Labor Union’s applied social research institute, FAFO, was the first step in the process.

The second step was an informal visit, in November 1992, at the home of Hanan Ashrawi, a member of the Palestinian delegation to the Washington Peace talks. At Beilin’s initiative, Hirschfeld and his academic colleague,

Dr. Ron Pundak, met with Ashrawi, who had just returned from the Washington talks. As Hirschfeld and Pundak sat, drinking coffee and eating cookies at Ashrawi's home, the conversation revolved around the peace talks and the widespread poverty in Judea, Samaria and Gaza.

Ashrawi proposed that the Israelis contact Ahmed Qurai (Abu Alaa), the Finance Minister of the PLO, to discuss ways and means of promoting economic development. Right then and there, she made a phone call to Arafat's headquarters in Tunis, talked to Arafat's assistant and suggested that a meeting be set up in London for December 1992. On being told of the proposal, not only did Arafat approve, he even groomed Abu Alaa towards the meeting which was to take place, briefing him that, since the Israelis were sensitive on this issue, he should always agree with them whenever the topic of security was raised.

As it happened, two other main characters in this tale, Larsen and Beilin, were also in London at the same time, attending a conference on economic cooperation and peace in the Middle East. Hirschfeld met with Abu Alaa and subsequently reported the results of the meeting to Beilin. Larsen was let into the secret and promptly offered the full facilities of the Norwegian Labor Union's services to continue the dialogue under absolute secrecy in Norway.

It was about this time that the Washington talks between Israel and the Palestinian leadership of the territories had come to a deadlock, making the decision to open a back channel in Norway between Israel and the PLO easier. The Norwegian Deputy Foreign Minister, Jan Egeland, offered to facilitate the secret back channel, with Larsen handling the logistics. Thus, the meeting in London between Hirschfeld and Abu Alaa led to the first exploratory meeting in Norway.

### **The Oslo Accords' First Draft: Sarpsborg III**

The first meetings were held in January 1993, under the cover of a conference on FAFO's research in Judea, Samaria and Gaza, at a countryside manor 60 miles outside Oslo. Abu Alaa, the PLO's chief negotiator, arrived, together with political advisor Hassan Asfour, and economist Maher al-Kurd from PLO headquarters. Hirschfeld and Pundak were presented as Beilin's envoys, although they had no mandate to make decisions. The first meeting focused on "exploratory pre-negotiations" to ascertain whether there was common ground for proceeding with the Israeli-Palestinian dialogue. The

cardinal principle underlying these talks was the retractability and reversibility of all positions put forward by both sides. It was also agreed that the ground rules set for the meetings were total secrecy and no past grievances.

In the first round of talks, Hirschfeld and Abu Alaa agreed on three main ideas: Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, gradual devolution of economic power to the Palestinian-based self-rule and a “Marshall Plan” for international assistance to the nascent Palestinian entity in Gaza. After being let into the secret, Peres took over the helm. In endorsing the continuation of the Oslo back channel, he emphasized that three rules must be obeyed:

1. Jerusalem would not be included in the autonomy arrangements.
2. The Palestinians must drop the demand that outstanding issues be referred to binding international arbitration.
3. Israel would retain control over all external and internal borders.

Three weeks after the first meeting, the five participants reconvened in Norway to continue.

Hirschfeld briefed Beilin regularly, the latter subsequently reporting the minutes of the proceedings to Peres. In the first week of February it was decided to broach the subject of Oslo with Rabin. Peres persuaded Rabin to allow the direct talks with the PLO to continue, arguing that the back channel provided valuable information about PLO positions without obligating the Israeli government. Subsequently, on February 9, Peres appealed to Rabin to negotiate directly with the PLO and reach an agreement that would allow Arafat to serve as the head of an entity of Palestinian self-rule.

It was about this time that the idea of drafting a Declaration of Principles (DoP) for the interim period of Palestinian self-rule was proposed, although it is not clear who had conceived the idea. Since the ground rules permitted either side to retract any offer at any point of the talks, Beilin saw no danger in incorporating ideas in the DoP that Israel had not raised in the stalled Washington talks. Abu Alaa approved and the drafting process began the second round of Oslo talks from February 11-12 at Sarpsborg. The DoP was concluded at the third round of talks on March 20-21.

The Declaration of Principles that emerged on March 21, entitled Sarpsborg III, contained 15 articles and was accompanied by annexes on the

status of Jerusalem, Palestinian elections, and Palestinian and regional economic development. The participants adopted the joint document and prescribed a staged withdrawal of the Israeli forces and gradual autonomy for the Palestinians, as the foundation for further negotiations. The substance of the DoP was the principle of phased progress, whereby negotiations would begin with the least problematic issues and gradually move on to the more formidable ones.

The adoption of this principle of phased progress, with the most difficult questions postponed to future negotiations, was conceived with an eye to creating a climate conducive to mutual confidence-building measures that would ultimately lead to the end of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

However, as David Makovsky points out, despite the principle of retractability, many of the provisions debated in the course of these talks were incorporated into the Oslo Accords, making it difficult for subsequent Israeli negotiators to amend or discard them. Makovsky goes on to demonstrate how the failure of this principle manifested in elements in the DoP which were departures from existing Israeli policy:

Certain elements of the Sarpisborg III that contravened long-standing Israeli policy would come back to haunt Israeli negotiators when the talks were later upgraded to an official level. Israeli officials were forced to make concessions in the ensuing four months just to retract positions that the academics had already agreed upon.<sup>37</sup>

Thus, in their eagerness for agreement, the two academics, Hirschfeld and Pundak, created three major stumbling blocks in the Oslo process:

1. The scope of Palestinian authority and the eventual establishment of a Palestinian state,
2. The future status of Jerusalem,
3. International arbitration.

All three of these issues had always been non-negotiable. By placing them on the table, Hirschfeld and Pundak created a new reality. The Israeli policymakers were infuriated, as these concessions had breached Israeli positions. For the first time ever, Israel explicitly agreed to negotiate the status of Jerusalem, the settlements, Palestinian sovereignty and borders in future talks on the final status of the territories.

Since Sarpsborg III did not delineate the powers of, or constraints upon, Palestinian jurisdiction in Judea and Samaria, the Palestinians understood this to mean that their powers would be total. This ambiguity led Palestinian leadership to believe that the first step towards Palestinian statehood had been made. Aggravating the controversy was the Palestinian interpretation of the Sarpsborg III proposal to place East Jerusalem under Palestinian self-rule, to mean that all impediments to establishing self-rule headquarters had been removed.

In a post-Oslo interview, PLO official Nabil Shasta made the ramifications of Israel's consent to discuss the status of Jerusalem very clear. Shasta pointed out that by placing the final status of Jerusalem on the agenda of the permanent status negotiations, Israel had called into question the legality and the finality of its annexation. In other words, one of the canons of Israeli policy, a united Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty, was placed into question.

The third stumbling block constituted an extraordinary departure from past policy. According to the DoP, Israel consented to binding international arbitration of disputes when negotiation and mediation had failed. As pointed out by Makovsky: "*The implication was monumental. Israel could be coerced into ceding sovereignty.*"<sup>38</sup>

As can be seen, the inexperience and the over-eagerness of the Israeli participants sowed the seeds of discord between Israel and the Palestinians in subsequent rounds of negotiations.

In assessing Sarpsborg III, Makovsky remarks that although some of the concessions made by the academics were probably necessary in order to achieve a deal, the question was one of timing. The fact remains that Hirschfeld and Pundak were regarded as representatives of the Israeli government. The positions they put forward, perhaps even recklessly in the belief that they could always retract, were perceived as official Israeli policy, and therefore binding. By offering concessions, some at variance with accepted Israeli policy, early on in the process, the academics deprived the Israeli negotiators of bargaining chips when negotiations were upgraded.

### **Upgrading Israel-PLO Negotiations**

It was at this stage that Abu Alaa insisted that the unofficial status of the Israeli negotiators was unsatisfactory. He, thereupon, informed the Israelis,



in April, that the PLO would not continue talks unless official state representatives participate. Thus, Israel made a critically important move when it decided, in late May 1993, to upgrade the talks to the official level. It was decided to send Uri Savir, the Director General of the Foreign Ministry to head the official Israeli delegation. In assuming the position of the head of the Israeli delegation, Savir declared that the aim of the government was to “bring about a historic reconciliation with the Palestinian people” over whom there was no desire to rule. The moral aim of the negotiations was to “ensure the Palestinians’ freedom and provide Israeli with security”.<sup>39</sup>

Understanding Savir’s background sheds light on some of the unprecedented concessions he initiated at the negotiation table. Savir was the son of Leon Savir, an Israeli diplomat who had already written an article in the early 1980s that argued that Israel should negotiate with the PLO. Evidently, the apple did not fall far from the tree because Savir confessed that:

When I was younger, in the 1970s, I would have told you, “I want to be the first Israeli to shake the hand of the PLO...” I had long believed that our biggest problem was the psychological damage of being persecuted for so long...

Rabin’s instructions to Savir were not ambitious. He did not give Savir a mandate to negotiate a deal at Oslo but merely to recommend whether Israel should launch into detailed negotiations. He was to keep Jerusalem outside the interim accord, and temporarily set aside Jericho. Of special importance was his obligation to ensure Israeli’s right to veto the issue of arbitration in the case of an irreconcilable dispute. This was a mandatory requisite in order to prevent internationalizing the conflict and precipitating an enforced international resolution.

Notwithstanding their different backgrounds, a strong bond was formed between Savir and Abu Alaa. As the negotiations became increasingly tough and contentious, with both sides issuing ultimatums and threatening to withdraw, with crisis following the heels of a previous crisis, their strong personal relationship sustained the talks. However, irrespective of this rapport, sharp differences remained on a range of issues. One of the outstanding ones was the Palestinian rejection of Israel’s request to end the uprising in the territories, the *intifada*, as a preliminary step in the peace

process. Abu Alaa countered this request by conditioning acquiesce on official recognition of the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people that is empowered to end the violence.

At a later stage, Joel Singer, an Israeli lawyer, joined the Israeli negotiating team in Norway. Rabin was well acquainted with Singer from his work on Israel's disengagement agreements with Egypt and Syria in the mid-1970s and on the Camp David accords. Rabin implicitly trusted Singer who was not only a stickler for detail and a hard-liner, but was also the most closely associated with the military on the Israeli negotiating team, thus perceiving the Oslo negotiating process with the same viewpoint as Rabin.

Both the Israelis and the Norwegians informed the United States about the Oslo track but evidently no one took the talks really seriously. There was no consensus even among those privy to the secret. In July 1993, Beilin and Peres gave Warren Christopher, the US Secretary of State the impression that a breakthrough was imminent, while, at the same time, Rabin dismissed the news, remarking at a meeting with Christopher, that he doubted anything would come of it.

## **The Red Lines**

Two issues lay at the heart of the negotiations over the DoP: A Palestinian state and Israel's security.

From the outset, Israel made it crystal clear that Israel's security was the cornerstone and the touchstone of any agreement. Although the Palestinians did not really grasp Israel's obsession with security, they were aware of its cardinal importance to Israel. At one point in the negotiations, Abu Alaa actually said to Savir:

You are strong enough, you can dominate the whole region, your fighter planes can bomb wherever they want. You can make war with Syria, but you cannot make war with Palestine. We have no tanks, no planes...we are the cancer in the Israeli stomach. Let's cooperate and make peace together.<sup>40</sup>

However, cognizant of the fact that security was the prime issue, Abu Alaa assured the Israeli negotiators throughout the Oslo talks that Arafat was uniquely capable of ending terror against Israel. According to Abu Alaa, only Arafat had both the capability and the will to end terror against Israel. The Palestinian police would enforce Arafat's will on the street and the very

entry of Arafat into Gaza would create such “shock waves” among the Palestinian population that even the public would turn against *Hamas*.

It is not clear whether or not Israel deliberately obscured its stance towards the issue of a Palestinian state; nonetheless in recalling the framework within which he was to negotiate, Savir did claim that he was authorized to give the Palestinians the impression that autonomy could lead to a state.

“The Palestinians needed to know that autonomy could lead to a state, while we needed to know it would bring security. Once the ‘red lines’ were understood, everything else could be negotiated.”<sup>41</sup>

Hirschfeld qualified Savir’s statement by emphasizing that Israel had never actually guaranteed the PLO a state. What Israel did tell the PLO was that if they wanted a state, they had to begin by establishing institutions that were consistent with democratic principles, such as control of police. The obvious conclusion is that Israel did not exclude the possibility of a Palestinian state.

Undoubtedly, it was these kinds of Israeli statements that led the Palestinians to believe that compliance with the interim agreement would inevitably result in Palestinian statehood. Abu Alaa confirmed this in a private interview where he stated that the Palestinians viewed the Oslo Accords as leading inexorably to statehood. For them it was imperative that Israelis accept the notion of a Palestinian state as an eventuality rather than a distinct possibility.

“We needed to know the Israeli view of whether the interim agreement would determine the scope of the final status. This was the most key point.”<sup>42</sup> Abbas (Abu Mazen) once more confirmed this expectation in his book where he noted that

the mechanism by which the terms of the [Oslo] accord will be implemented will eventually give rise to the emergence and crystallization of many features of sovereignty, and this process will go on until complete national sovereignty is realized.<sup>43</sup>

Ostensibly, Israel’s and the PLO’s “red lines” were thus put in place and it was possible to reach agreement. But this was only on the face of it. In reality, there was a vast chasm in expectations between the Israeli and the PLO delegations. The Israelis expected Arafat to assure Israel’s security by

suppressing the *intifada* and quelling the terrorist organizations, while the Palestinians expected that the final agreement status would lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state. This created a virtual Gordian knot, since Arafat could not deliver security as he had no control over *Hamas*, and the Israelis, at this stage, were opposed to the establishment of a Palestinian state.

Savir and Abu Alaa seem to have been oblivious to the amorphousness of their red lines and reached agreement on many of the basic elements of the Oslo Accords in only three weekends of negotiations. They added a security annex to the DoP, according to which Gaza would be demilitarized, the Palestinian police force would disarm all groups perpetrating terror against Israel, and the IDF would redeploy outside of Palestinian population centers.

The Palestinians maintained their insistence on full jurisdiction throughout the territories, but Israel did succeed in limiting their functional jurisdiction. The Palestinians also agreed to exempt settlers, settlements, and Israeli visitors to the territories and military locations from their control.

These were important points for Rabin, who wanted broad language that would enable him to claim jurisdictional exemptions in the final status talks for “security zones”: swaths of land that would ultimately remain under Israeli control. Rabin, at this stage, defined virtually the entire Jordan valley as “military locations”. One point that was non-negotiable: the requirement that Israel retain responsibility for internal security in the Palestinian entity itself. However, as Makovsky points out, this would remain a key area of dispute throughout the Oslo process.

Political and security considerations also led Rabin to seek a more ambiguous commitment on redeployment. In a June 10 meeting with his top aides, he insisted that redeployment be made “a matter for Israel’s sole discretion”.

### **Chain of Command**

Upgrading the talks to official negotiations led to the creation of an informal “steering group”, empowered to develop Israel’s negotiating strategy. This group included Hirschfeld and Pundak, who were urged to stay on to share their experiences and to preserve the informal atmosphere. The group established a three-tiered negotiation model:

- Savir, Singer, Hirschfeld and Pundak briefed and discussed strategy with Beilin, Shlomo Gur and Avi Gil of the Foreign Ministry, and formulated option papers.
- The option papers were presented to Foreign Minister Peres who modified them to reflect his own ideas.
- Peres then presented these modified option papers to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

Thus, although Peres and Rabin had numerous meetings to discuss the substance of the negotiations throughout the Oslo rounds of talks, Rabin was, to a great extent, left out of the loop. In essence, the information presented to Rabin was filtered through the worldview of active participants in the negotiations, all of whom were unreservedly committed to the process and desperately eager to finalize an agreement with the PLO. This failure in the decision-making process was compounded by the need for secrecy. Rabin was a product par excellence of his military background, feeling comfortable among soldiers, and they in return admired him and had full confidence in his abilities. It is, therefore, not surprising that Rabin, in all his official positions, preferred to rely on the IDF on security issues. However, in the case of Oslo, because of the imperative of secrecy, he was forced to exclude senior IDF officers, intelligence officials and Arab affairs experts from the inner circle of those privy to the discussions. Rabin didn't take General Yatom into his confidence or his military intelligence chief, Maj-Gen. Saguy, who found out about the Oslo back channel through his own intelligence means. Apparently even Jacques Neriah, a veteran military intelligence officer, who served as Rabin's diplomatic advisor and in-house Arabist, was also kept in the dark about Oslo.

Rabin, in essence, was highly dependent for information regarding the Oslo negotiations upon the two men mostly intimately involved in the Oslo process and therefore had the greatest stake in its success: Peres and Beilin. And Peres and Beilin were dependent on Hirschfeld and Pundak, who were dedicated believers in the process. In other words, Rabin did not have the benefit of impartial advisors.

Rabin's military and strategic advisors had all been excluded by the imperative of secrecy. As a consequence, Rabin was totally bereft of any objective advisors with whom he could consult. Rabin had no unbiased staff, no military or intelligence experts, no one with a dispassionate view of the

proceedings at Oslo or of the various drafts presented to him. Thus, the absence of an objective, impartial view forced Rabin to vet every line of the DoP himself.<sup>44</sup> For example, Yaakov Amidror, the head of Analysis for Military Intelligence, observed that the signing of the DoP and IDF redeployment, reduced rather than increased the PA's incentive to quell anti-Israeli violence. Once Israeli forces had been withdrawn from Judea and Samaria, the terrorist organizations would not have to be concerned with Israeli military retaliatory measures.

Rabin did allow IDF Chief of Staff Ehud Barak a cursory look at a draft of the DoP, but it remains unclear how much influence Barak had on Rabin's thinking. His negative remarks to the Cabinet when the issue was brought to a vote would suggest that any advice Barak may have given Rabin was neither decisive nor adopted. Rabin later explained that he had not consulted with the military because he felt that it was important for this decision to be wholly political, not military.

The upshot was that Rabin had no touchstone, no criteria to judge the ramifications of each concession Israel was making at each step of the Oslo negotiation process. Everyone on the steering group was deeply involved in the Oslo process. They were emotionally enthralled with the talks themselves and with the historic opportunity that had fallen to them – to bring about reconciliation with the Palestinians. Their enthusiasm and eagerness in pursuing a deal with the Palestinians was such that it tended to cloud their judgment.

The truth was that Rabin, cautious and wary by temperament, was skeptical about the Oslo talks, sometimes even wholly disbelieving in them. When asked later why he did not share the secret with any of his close aides, he replied frankly that he doubted anything would come of Oslo. Nevertheless he did give the talks a chance and authorized them to continue. This raises the hypothesis that it was because of his initial skepticism, Rabin trivialized the whole process and did not methodically and rigorously scrutinize every decision with his typical thoroughness. By the time he realized that the Oslo process was the only game in town, his previous decisions constrained him from reassessing Israel's points of agreements and concessions.

There is no dispute that without Beilin, Oslo would never have been attempted. Beilin was responsible for initiating the Oslo peace process; Peres

subsequently lent his weight to the effort. Peres apparently was certain that the survival of the Rabin government hinged on a breakthrough on peace. A defeat at the polls would rule out any possibility that Labor would have a chance for reelection during his and Rabin's political lifetimes. He also believed that the intractable situation in Gaza could not be maintained indefinitely. To persuade Rabin to pursue the Oslo track, those close to Peres say he focused on security issues, using third-party assessments to bolster his own views, and playing down the significance of controversial moves he himself had proposed, such as the talks with the PLO themselves.

### **Arafat's Strategy**

Throughout the Oslo peace negotiations, the PLO operated on two planes: conciliatory and offensive. It is not clear whether this was a deliberate, well thought-out policy or one more phenomenon of the PLO's incapability of changing its terrorist spots. As observed by Savir, the tendency of the Palestinian negotiators to withdraw earlier concessions and to introduce new demands created a situation where the talks "resembled a marathon chess game fraught with feints, bluffs and diversions".<sup>45</sup>

In either case, the strategy was brilliant.

At the height of the Oslo talks, the Palestinians were conducting talks on two other tracks: the Washington talks, which had reached an impasse, and the Rome talks, another secret back channel under the auspices of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (AAAS). Participating in these meetings were Nizar Amar, a former senior member of the PLO's Force 17 commando group; Ahmed Khalidi and Yazid Sayegh, two UK-based Palestinian academics with PLO affiliations; Shlomo Gazit, former head of Israeli military intelligence; Joseph Alpher, deputy head of Tel Aviv University's Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies; and **Haaretz** military commentator Ze'ev Schiff.

Contrary to the rhetoric regarding Arafat's capability and eagerness to suppress all the terrorist organizations, Nizar Amar unequivocally informed the participants that Arafat's agreement to a ceasefire would not apply to the *intifada* or to attacks by rejectionist groups like *Hamas*. The reason for this was simple, but controverts the entire *raison d'être* of the Oslo track: the PLO had no control over these terrorist groups. Evidently, either this information was not brought to Rabin's attention or he ignored it.

Another brilliant tactic adopted by Arafat, which brought him huge dividends, was playing off the two negotiation tracks. Accordingly, as Abu Alaa was conceding on Jerusalem at Oslo, Arafat was instructing the Palestinian delegation in Washington to insist that East Jerusalem be included as an integral part of any interim agreement. This diplomatic ploy – taking contradictory positions in different venues – achieved two objectives simultaneously. Raising the issue of Jerusalem in Washington alarmed the Israeli public and brought those talks to a screeching halt, providing the PLO with breathing time to negotiate at Oslo.

### **A Palestinian State and Jerusalem**

The Israeli and Palestinian delegations strove to tackle the major disputed issues as moderately as possible, in keeping with the phased model. One of the first issues confronting them was Jerusalem. In a major divergence from official Israel policy, Sarpsborg III had specified that the status of Jerusalem would be discussed in future negotiations. The Israeli delegation made intensive efforts to exclude this issue from the DoP, but the Palestinians were adamant upon making Jerusalem their administrative headquarters, no doubt with a view to preparing the groundwork for its eventual transition to the capital of the Palestinian state. It was, therefore, not surprising that the Palestinians stood firm against Israeli efforts to scrap this hard-won concession, forcing the Israelis to reaffirm the previous commitment.

Makovsky describes the last minute nerve-wracking negotiations, especially over Jerusalem, as “a race against the political clock” due to the precariousness of the domestic situation. The architects of Oslo were desperate to achieve an agreement but Jerusalem constituted a major stumbling block. The PLO were firm in their stance that they could make no more concessions after having agreed to excluding Jerusalem from the self-rule area. They continued to insist that the DoP include a clause specifying that the Palestinian leadership be allowed to administer the self-rule area from its headquarters based in Jerusalem. Rabin and Peres knew that this would be totally unacceptable to the Israeli population. As Peres succinctly put it: “If they had insisted on [maintaining a presence in] Jerusalem, we might not have had a government or an agreement.”<sup>46</sup>

The compromise hit upon by Peres, apparently with Rabin’s authorization, was to issue a letter indicating that Israel would not deny the Palestinians access to Christian or Muslim holy sites in Jerusalem or close



existing Palestinian institutions there, which would even be encouraged. He realized that such a letter, should it come to the notice of the Israeli public, could offend and even reduce public support for the Accords. To circumvent this hurdle, Peres insisted that the letter be written only after the Knesset had approved the Accords “so he could tell its members that there were no secret written agreements.”<sup>47</sup>

In order to avoid any implication that Arafat was the custodian of the holy places, Peres addressed the letter, written in October 1993, to Johan Jorgen Holste, the Foreign Minister of Norway. The letter remained secret until Arafat divulged its existence in May 1994 in the course of his *Jihad* speech at a Mosque in Johannesburg. Peres felt the full force of the widespread indignation and condemnation both for the contents of the letter and for his deceit. Not only did he publicly deny that there were any secret deals with the PLO when the Oslo Accords were debated in the Knesset, but only two weeks prior to its exposure, Police Minister, Moshe Shahal, had denied, from the podium of the Knesset, that such a letter existed.

## **Refugees**

No government in Israel, even a totally peace-oriented government could or would accept the fulfillment of the “right of return”. The overwhelming majority of Israelis, throughout the political spectrum from left to right, perceived the “right of return” of even hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees as a direct existential threat to the survival of Israel as the Jewish homeland. Nonetheless, the DoP could not avoid the issue. The compromise arrived at was to defer the resolution of this issue to final status talks. However, the DoP did prescribe the creation of a panel, comprised of Israel, the Palestinians, Jordan and Egypt, to discuss the return of persons displaced by the 1967 war as called for in the Camp David Accords. In the course of the dispute, it became clear that there was a huge discrepancy between the Israeli and Palestinian estimations of the number of refugees displaced. Israel calculated that this article applied to approximately 200,000 refugees, whereas the Palestinians claimed that this figure had mushroomed to 800,000.

## **Recognition of the PLO and the Amendment of the PLO Charter**

Rabin knew that mutual recognition was a *sine qua non* for the PLO. Accordingly, in order to assure that a deal would be reached, Rabin authorized Savir to open discussions on the issue of mutual recognition at

the July 25-26 meetings. A week earlier, the Israeli negotiators and their Palestinian counterparts had reached a provisory agreement; the Israelis confident that they were on the verge of signing a final draft. To their consternation, the Palestinians brought to this meeting no less than 26 revisions. The Palestinians demanded exclusive control of the Allenby Bridge across the Jordan River and over the roads between Gaza and Jericho, and insisted that Arab residents of East Jerusalem be eligible to run in the elections for the self-rule council. At the meeting itself, in an effort to force the issue of mutual recognition, the PLO, as it continued to do countless times in the future, raised numerous objections to the DoP, and demanded the integration of nearly all of their amendments into the DoP. The Israelis categorically refused to even discuss revisions in the DoP. In response, Abu Alaa announced that he was resigning from the talks.

Foreshadowing the course of all future Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, the future of the DoP was left hanging on the thread of PLO brinkmanship. Savir, realizing that the talks were on the brink of a breakdown rather than a breakthrough, handed Abu Alaa a sheet of paper listing seven pre-conditions for mutual recognition with the PLO. The terms of the agreement would have to be a package deal: Israel would yield on “eight points” under dispute, the PLO would agree on “seven points”. The Oslo talks had moved to the point of no return. These key issues were resolved when on September 9, 1993, Chairman Yasser Arafat sent Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin a letter, referred to as the “recognition letter”, in which he declared that:

1. The PLO recognizes the right of the State of Israel to exist in peace and security.
2. The PLO accepts United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338.
3. The PLO commits itself to the Middle East peace process...all outstanding issues will be resolved through negotiations.
4. The PLO renounces the use of terrorism and other acts of violence and will assume responsibility over all PLO elements and personnel in order to assure their compliance, prevent violations and discipline violators.
5. Those articles of the Palestinian Covenant which deny Israel’s right to exist, and the provisions of the Covenant which are inconsistent with

the commitments of this letter are now inoperative and no longer valid.

6. The PLO undertakes to submit to the Palestinian National Council for formal approval the necessary changes in regard to the Palestinian Covenant.

In exchange, Rabin gave a letter to Arafat, also dated September 9, stating that: "Israel has decided to recognize the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people and commence negotiations with the PLO within the Middle East peace process."

Rabin legitimized and framed the Accords in a way that articulated a direct relationship between the Israeli collective identity, its national interests and the peace process. In an interview on the night of the historic handshake between himself and Yasser Arafat, Rabin explained:

I believe...annexation will bring...racism to Israel, [and] that racism and Judaism are in contradiction by their very essence. Israel that will preach racism will not be a Jewish state by my understanding...[the Palestinians will constitute] 35% of the voters to the Knesset... They'll dictate if Israel will be a Jewish state with a destiny to serve the Jewish people all over the world, or we will become another small Jewish country... Therefore, whoever speaks now about the whole land of Israel speaks either of a racist Jewish state which will not be a Jewish or a bi-national state, I prefer Israel to be a Jewish state, not all over the land of Israel.<sup>48</sup>

### **Principles of the Oslo Accords**

The official name of the Oslo Accords, "The Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements", embodies the aim and the substance of the agreement: Palestinian self-rule. This Declaration of Principles (DoP), signed by the PLO and Israel, was predicated on two main principles: mutual recognition and the cessation of terror. Accordingly, Israel recognized the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people and the PLO recognized the State of Israel and its right to exist. Further, the PLO undertook to cease all hostilities, with Arafat declaring a ceasefire and establishing Israeli-Palestinian cooperation in anti-terror efforts.

The DoP itself contains a set of mutually agreed-upon general principles regarding the five-year interim period of Palestinian self-rule. As such, the DoP defers permanent status issues to the permanent status negotiations,

which would begin no later than the third year of the interim period. The permanent status agreement would take effect after the five-year interim period.

### **The Main Points of the Oslo Accords**

The preamble of the Declaration states:

The Government of the State of Israel and the PLO team (in the Jordanian-Palestinian delegation to the Middle East Peace Conference) (the “Palestinian Delegation”), representing the Palestinian people, agree that it is time to put an end to decades of confrontation and conflict, recognize their mutual legitimate and political rights, and strive to live in peaceful coexistence and mutual dignity and security and achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace settlement and historic reconciliation through the agreed political process.

1. **Preparatory Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities:** The DoP stipulates the transfer of powers to the Palestinians in Judea, Samaria and Gaza so that they may have control over their own affairs.
2. **The DoP Does Not Prejudge the Permanent Status:** The phased model of the DoP was predicated on the deferral of contentious issues. Thus, the DoP specifically states that permanent status issues, such as Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, security arrangements and borders are to be excluded from the interim arrangements and that the outcome of the permanent status talks should not be prejudged or preempted by the interim arrangements.
3. **Future Status of Jerusalem:** Ostensibly Israel’s position on Jerusalem remained unchanged, but by agreeing to include Jerusalem as an issue to be raised at the permanent status negotiations stage, Israel conceded, by all intents and purposes, that Jerusalem would eventually become the capital of a Palestinian state. Thus, although under the DoP, Israel’s position on Jerusalem remained unchanged, the future of Jerusalem was shrouded in uncertainty.
4. **Control over International Borders:** Israel shall retain sole responsibility for security along the international borders and the crossing points to Egypt and Jordan and foreign affairs. Israel will also retain responsibility for, and the overall security of, Israelis in Judea, Samaria and Gaza, the Israeli settlements in those areas, and freedom of movement on roads.

### **Implementation of the DoP:**

1. **Gaza-Jericho:** Self-rule in the Gaza Strip and the Jericho area, including a withdrawal of Israeli forces from those areas, is to serve as a first step in the implementation of the DoP.<sup>49</sup>
2. **Preparatory Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities:** The redeployment from Gaza and Jericho will serve as the first step in the implementation of the DoP.<sup>50</sup> In the rest of Judea and Samaria, the Palestinians will assume responsibility for five specific spheres – education and culture, health, social welfare, direct taxation and tourism representatives through early empowerment.
3. **Interim Agreement and Elections:** The DoP mandated the election of a Palestinian Council for the Palestinian people in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip, for a transitional period not exceeding five years, leading to a permanent settlement based on UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. The Interim Agreement shall also specify the self-government arrangements in Judea, Samaria and Gaza.
4. **Israeli Forces were to be Redeployed Outside Populated Areas to Specified Locations:** To guarantee public order and internal security, the council will establish a strong police force. Central to the DoP were two economic annexes, which outlined economic cooperation between Israel and the Palestinians and the measures to be taken to promote economic development in the territories.
5. **The Permanent Status:** Negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians on the permanent status will commence as soon as possible but not later than the beginning of the third year of the interim period (May 1996). These talks will determine the nature of the final settlement between the two sides.

## Chapter 4: Celebrating the DoP: The Fulfillment of a Dream

The signing of the Oslo Accords in September 1993 was a watershed not only in Israel-Palestinian relationship but also in the Right-Left, religious-secular interrelationships within Israel. The architects of Oslo, and in particular Prime Minister Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, believed that the prophet Isaiah's prophecy, had finally been fulfilled in modern Israel: "Peace, Peace to him that is far off and to him that is near," said the Lord. "And I will heal."<sup>51</sup> In his speech on the lawn of the White House, Peres imparted a more modern hue to the prophecy: "Let all of us turn bullets to ballots, from guns to shovels."

All of the speakers spoke of peace. President Clinton talked of the "peace of the brave", the Declaration of Principles charting a course of reconciliation. Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres spoke of a decisive move "on the path of dialogue, understanding and cooperation". Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, quoting the Bible, "*May He who creates peace in His high heavens, create peace for us, and all Israel,*" expressing his belief that the time for peace had arrived.

The eyes of the world were riveted to the unprecedented occasion – the first step in a peace process that would lead to peace between Israel and the Palestinians and ultimately in the Middle East. The speakers, as was the world, were euphoric at this momentous event. The speakers all bespoke of their hopes for the future, a future of peace and coexistence. Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin eloquently expressed what he felt:

On the eve of an opportunity for peace, and perhaps an end to violence and wars...We have come to try and put an end to the hostilities so that our children and our children's children will no longer experience the painful cost of war, violence and terror. We have come to secure their lives and to ease the sorrow and the painful memories of the past, to hope and pray for peace.

The only discordant note in the ceremony was contained in the nucleus of Yasser Arafat's speech by emphasizing its enforcement on Israel and by avoiding any allusion to his renunciation of violence:

Enforcing the agreement and moving toward the final settlement, after two years, to implement all aspects of UN resolutions 242 and 338 in all of their

aspects, and resolve all the issues of Jerusalem, the settlements, the refugees and the boundaries will be a Palestinian and Israeli responsibility. It is also the responsibility of the international community in its entirety to help the parties overcome the tremendous difficulties, which are still standing in the way of reaching a final and compressive settlement.

In sum, the White House ceremony, on September 13, 1993, permeated belief in the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy: "*and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.*"<sup>52</sup>

Nevertheless, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin projected a sense of doubt and misgiving about his own policy, as reflected in his reluctant handshake with Mr. Arafat. Rabin's words and body language gave the distinct impression of discomfort with the evolving peace process.

In contrast, Foreign Minister Peres had no qualms. In looking back on the signing of the Oslo agreements, he presented his visionary outlook for the future of the Middle East:

We are ending a decades-long history dominated by war, and embarking upon an era in which the guns will stay silent while the dreams flourish... Peace in our region is no longer part of a dream-world; it has built a permanent place for itself in the realm of reality.<sup>53</sup>

### **Presenting the Oslo Accords to the Knesset**

The Oslo Accords were never submitted for debate to the Knesset. Instead, Prime Minister Rabin decided to present the Accords as a no-confidence vote. By doing so, he was avoiding a prolonged debate over the Accords and expediting their implementation. In his speech before the Knesset, Rabin stated that:

This government decided to bring an end to the wars and the terror and to attempt to create a new world in the country... We also said that the new government has placed as its central goal to advance the making of peace and to initiate active steps in order to bring the Arab-Israeli conflict to its conclusion. We shall do so on the basis of the Arab countries and the Palestinians will recognize Israel as a sovereign country with the right for peace and security...

Rabin concluded his speech by stating that the Accords were a victory for Zionism, as they validated the recognition of the existence of the State of Israel by its most bitter and sworn enemy.

### **Back to the Future**

Paving the way for the famous “handshake” on the lawn was a metamorphosis in the worldview of the leadership of the Labor Party, with the security views of both Rabin and Peres changing dramatically. **Both Rabin and Peres viewed peace as a strategic need.** Rabin especially was motivated by security considerations, believing that the international and regional changes offered a short-term window of opportunity to resolve the conflict with Israel’s Arab neighbors. Rabin felt that peace must be reached before the Arab countries acquired nuclear capability and before Islamic fundamentalism became too powerful to contend with.

Rabin offered a vision of Israel’s national identity and its historical narrative that were explicitly tied to a frame for the peace process. This vision was predicated on the belief that a withdrawal from the territories would further security and generate a peace dividend – not only in terms of a reallocation of the budget from defense to social welfare and capital formation. Rabin truly believed that the peace process would expedite Israel’s acceptance in the community of nations and the global economy, thus creating a climate that would encourage foreign investment.

### **Falk and Schwartz Pinpoint Three Processes that Laid the Foundations for Rabin’s Approval of the Oslo Negotiations<sup>54</sup>:**

- The threat of a Palestinian state posed existential risks to the security of the State of Israel, especially potential military dangers.
- The potential strategic threat emanating from the “right of return” and the ramifications of a large Arab minority within the borders of Israel constituted an existential threat to the existence of Israel as a Jewish state.
- A shift in the doctrine for dealing with threats to Israel’s security, as reflected in a move from self-reliance to bilateral and multilateral obligations. Peres’ view can be encapsulated in his assessment that: “There is no foolproof means of national defense other than a wide-ranging regional arrangement. National security hinges on this regional security. Eventually, we will need global defense.”<sup>55</sup>



The Oslo Accords became a feasible option when both Rabin and Peres, together with the majority of the military establishment, were prepared to cede territories that hitherto were considered decisive and crucial for the defense of the state. Israel's security was redefined so that geography and military potential was no longer the only pertinent factor. Rabin and Peres recognized that there were military disadvantages to the new positions; they believed that these disadvantages were more than outweighed by the political benefits. One such benefit was that the new borders would give the Palestinians something they would fear losing, thus strengthening Israel's deterrence. In the words of Peres:

Borders can no longer stop an armed attack since they make no impression either on missiles or on terrorism. Maginot lines are useless when a chemical, biological or even nuclear weapon is following, not a territorial, but a ballistic trajectory.<sup>56</sup>

However, notwithstanding their belief in peace, Rabin's and Peres' distrust of Arafat and the PLO was not allayed, as demonstrated by their unswerving adherence to maintaining the articles relating to security in the various agreements and the hard-nosed negotiations surrounding these articles. Certainly, Rabin's government attributed great importance to the security arrangements contained in the contractual bilateral agreements with the Palestinians. However, there was an inherent contradiction in these policies because these security arrangements were wholly based on the assumption that genuine peace would develop between Israel and the Palestinians. As a direct consequence, the security of Israel and its citizens was rendered, to a great extent, dependent upon Palestinian compliance to these peace agreements. In other words, should Rabin's and Peres' worst nightmare materialize, the security structure constructed by these agreements would collapse.

### **Arafat's Attitude Towards the DoP**

For Rabin and Peres, the DoP was a means to an end: assuring Israel's security and, hopefully, ultimately create a "New Middle East". Arafat, too, regarded the DoP as a means to an end, but in the context of the Qureish truce between Muhammad and the Caliph Omer. This agreement allowed Muhammad to pray in Mecca, which was under Qureish control, until he grew stronger. Two years later, Muhammad abrogated the agreement, slaughtered the tribe of Qureish and conquered Mecca.

Arafat did not hide his ultimate goals. Typically, at a rally in Gaza, after comparing the Oslo Accords to this temporary truce, Arafat declared: “We signed that agreement in Oslo, and if any of you has one objection to it, I have one hundred objections.”

Foreshadowing the future was Arafat’s speech at the signing of the Oslo Accords, where he emphasized resolving the issues of borders, Jerusalem and the refugees, but did not see fit to call for a cessation of violence.

Arafat’s ultimate goals were exposed at an unpublicized meeting that took place on January 30, in Stockholm’s Grand Hotel shortly after an official state dinner in his honor sponsored by Sweden’s Foreign Minister. At a closed meeting, Arafat met with the Swedish-based Arab diplomats, and revealed his true vision of the future: the final-stage will ultimately bring about Israel’s collapse. He reportedly told the diplomats that a migration of Arabs to Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem, and the psychological warfare the Palestinians would wage against the Israelis, would cause a massive emigration of Jews to the United States. In the course of his speech, it was reportedly said that Arafat had declared that

We Palestinians will take over everything, including all of Jerusalem... We of the PLO will now concentrate all our efforts on splitting Israel psychologically into two camps... Within five years, we will have six to seven million Arabs living on the West Bank and in Jerusalem. All Palestinian Arabs will be welcomed by us.

Arafat, reportedly, had also added that the PLO plans “...to eliminate the State of Israel and establish a purely Palestinian state. We will make life unbearable for Jews by psychological warfare and population explosion; Jews won’t want to live among us Arabs.”<sup>57</sup>

### **Israeli-Palestinian Pattern of Negotiation**

There is always progress in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. Progress in this context is the Palestinian precipitation of a crisis culminating in Israeli capitulation. This pattern was engraved in steel even before the signing of the DoP.

The first crisis broke out a few days prior to the signing of the DoP, on September 7, when Arafat demanded control over the gateways/bridges between the territories and Jordan. Israel adamantly refused. Since the security of the state was Israel’s main concern, there was to be no

compromise over this issue. Rabin was resolute that the PLO would have no hold or claim to the Jordanian bridges during the self-rule period. Jordan also was opposed to Palestinian control from fear that Palestinians swarming into the country through the Jordanian bridges would inundate the country.

This did not deter Peres from declaring, in headlines in the major Israeli newspapers, that “only a few words” were delaying recognition of the PLO.

The issue arose once more in Cairo, with Arafat refusing to compromise, demanding that the Allenby Bridge and other gateways to Jordan be placed under Palestinian jurisdiction and under international supervision. The “unbridgeable” conflict forced Rabin to inform Warren Christopher, the US Secretary of State, that there was a grave dispute.

This oft-repeated pattern was replicated hours before the gala signing of the Declaration of Principles on the White House lawn. Behind the scenes, far away from the prying eyes of the media, a drama was taking place that could have crashed the ceremony and wreaked unprecedented embarrassment to President Clinton. As Israeli and Palestinian diplomats flocked to the White House lawn, Peres received a panicky telephone call from Ahmed Tibi, an Israeli Arab who acted as an advisor to Yasser Arafat. What was the problem? Arafat refused to attend the ceremony unless the Israelis amended the Declaration of Principles. Evidently, he objected to the reference to the “Jordanian-Palestinian Delegation to the Middle East Peace Conference” as the party signing the DoP and demanded that it be amended to the “PLO”. Under the pressure of the imminent ceremony, Peres yielded and PLO was appended to the name of the signee of the DoP. On the face of it, this may have seemed to be a minor glitch, but its ramifications were infinitely profound. Arafat recognized Israel in a personal letter addressed to Prime Minister Rabin; the PLO was recognized by Israel in an official agreement, recognized and adulated by the world.

### **The Flawed Declaration of Principles**

The basic aim of the Oslo Agreement was to initiate a process, which would begin with an Interim Period and lead to a Permanent Status Agreement between Israel and the PLO. It was envisioned that the Oslo peace process would ultimately bring the two sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to peace and coexistence, and thus decrease the probability of violent confrontation and war.

Left-leaning politicians, newspapers, and opinion-makers in Israel unreservedly hailed the DoP as a breakthrough – even before seeing its contents. The opposition condemned the DoP, they, too, before perusing its contents.

The DoP was perceived as a symbol by both sides of the great divide: the dawn of an era of peace on the one hand, and the inevitable destruction of Israel, on the other. The truth is that the DoP was neither. It was an agreement that was totally dependent on the intentions and the goodwill of its signees. It was so riddled with contradictory expectations that its ultimate demise could have been predicted.

The DoP was deliberately ambiguous in respect to the contentious issues. Both parties to the DoP knew that there were differences in interpretations on many points, but each side went forward because it believed that signing the document and proceeding to the next stage would produce benefits. To ensure the creation of a constructive atmosphere for negotiations, all divisive issues, including Jerusalem and Palestinians refugees, were postponed for later stages.

If there had been unconditional sincerity on both sides of the agreement, it is quite possible that the ambiguity would have imparted flexibility to the final status negotiations. What actually happened was that the ambiguity created what Makovsky defined as “unrealistic expectations” that were fundamentally unbridgeable. The ultimate result was an open-ended dispute and a breakdown in the Oslo process.

Even a casual scrutiny of the Declaration of Principles (DoP) reveals its shortcomings. The preamble to the DoP itself opens up a number of pitfalls. The definition of Israel’s partner in signing the DoP as some obscure entity called the “PLO team” (in the Jordanian-Palestinian delegation to the Middle East Conference) (the “Palestinian Delegation”) raises a score of questions. Who is this entity? Who does it represent? What is its authorization to assume the obligations contained in the DoP? Is it capable of complying with these obligations? What is the nature of the relationship between the State of Israel and this entity – in the present and in the future?

More substantially, was this an attempt on the part of Israel to obfuscate or attenuate its recognition of the PLO or was it a PLO attempt to force Israel to a point of no return in its recognition of the PLO as the official representative of the Palestinian people?

## A Palestinian State and Jerusalem

The preamble of the Declaration speaks of the “mutual legitimate and political rights” of the two parties to the agreement, thus placing the PLO on an equal footing as the State of Israel although the PLO was merely the PLO team and not a sovereign state. On reading this sentence, Binyamin Netanyahu, the leader of the Likud opposition, immediately exclaimed that the Accords would lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state. And notwithstanding Rabin’s and Peres’ assurances to the contrary, the wording does, indeed, open the door to this ultimate outcome.

A key premise at Oslo was that formal peace agreements would produce greater trust and security for both sides. However, compounding the imbroglio, the DoP contains a clause that epitomizes the ambiguity of the Accords, sowing the seeds for future discord: “These elections will constitute a significant interim preparatory step toward the realization of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and their just requirements.”

The conflicting interpretation of the phrase “the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and their just requirements” hovered over all the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, from the Cairo Agreement in October 1993 up to and including the Taba talks in January 2001. This should not have raised any eyebrows. The 1979 Israel-Egypt and the 1994 Israel-Jordan peace treaties were a guiding principle for the PLO. At the foundation of these treaties was Israel’s willingness to return all the territories captured in 1967 in exchange for their demilitarization. Even an Israeli-Syrian peace agreement was nearly reached in the 1990s, based on the same principles. Certainly, the Palestinians were unlikely to accept anything less.

Not surprisingly, the Palestinians regarded this clause as empowering them to institutionalize their legitimate rights in a Palestinian state whose capital would be Jerusalem. There was also no question in their mind that the “right of return” would be implemented, at the very least, within the boundaries of the Palestinian state.

The DoP had not yet been signed, and already the gulf in interpretation of the Oslo Accords became apparent. On September 8, Arafat unequivocally declared that the agreement with Israel was the first step towards the establishment of a Palestinian state, whose capital is Jerusalem. He reiterated this vision in an interview with Dean Fischer on September 27.<sup>58</sup>

In his speech at the signing of the Declaration of Principles at the White House, Abu Mazen, a member of the PLO Executive Committee, declared that it was important:

...to affirm that we are looking forward with a great deal of hope and optimism to a date that is two years from today when negotiations over the final status of our country are set to begin. We will then settle the remaining fundamental issues, especially those of Jerusalem, the refugees and the settlements. At that time, we will be laying the last brick in the edifice of peace whose foundation has been established today.

Clearly, “laying the last brick in the edifice of peace” was a Palestinian state.

The question is, what was in the Israeli delegation’s mind when they drafted it? There is no doubt that Prime Minister Rabin opposed a Palestinian state, was uncompromising on the issue of a united Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty, and intransigent in his opposition to the “right of return”. When asked directly by the journalist Lisa Beyer whether the Labor Party had softened its opposition to a Palestinian state, Rabin categorically replied, “No. I am against this. I oppose the creation of an independent Palestinian state between Israel and Jordan, and I don’t believe that at this stage it would be a good idea if I brought out the options.”<sup>59</sup>

This fundamental chasm in interpretation became abundantly clear to Rabin at his first face-to-face meeting with Arafat (dubbed “a catastrophe”) in December 1993, in Cairo, where Arafat told him bluntly that the DoP would lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state.

Similarly, Prime Minister Rabin did not equivocate over the future of Jerusalem. He was resolute that Jerusalem should not be divided, and had no intention of handing over East Jerusalem to the Palestinians in general, and certainly not as the capital of a Palestinian state. Rabin made his position abundantly clear when he unequivocally declared, upon introducing his government in the Knesset, that:

This Government, like all of its predecessors, believes there is no disagreement in this House concerning Jerusalem as the eternal capital of Israel. United Jerusalem will not be open to negotiation. It has been and will forever be the capital of the Jewish people, under Israeli sovereignty, a focus of the dreams and longings of every Jew.

He repeated this stance even as he stood at the podium of the White House: “We have come from Jerusalem, the ancient and eternal capital of the Jewish people.”

In presenting the DoP to the Knesset, he unequivocally stated that: “Jerusalem shall remain united and nonnegotiable. It shall be forever the capital of the people of Israel and under the sovereignty of Israel.”

## Chapter 5: The DoP: Full of Holes Like Swiss Cheese

The Oslo framework was based on Arafat's promise to Rabin that henceforth all disputes would be solved peacefully. During the Oslo negotiations, PLO officials assured their Israeli counterparts that, in return for mutual recognition, Arafat, as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, would be able to enforce the principles of the DoP, control terrorism and otherwise ensure Israeli security. However, allusions to peace and the end of violence were, in the main, omitted from the DoP. Arafat's commitments to recognize Israel, to amend the articles in the Palestinian Charter calling for the destruction of Israel, and to combat terror are all contained in a letter to Prime Minister Rabin. There is no trace of these undertakings in the DoP – only Israeli obligations.

On that basis, Rabin persuaded Israelis that one of the virtues of the Oslo Accords was that Arafat would crack down on the terrorists “without the Supreme Court and *B'Tselem*” (a left-leaning human rights organization).

There is no evidence, however, that this premise was tested in advance to determine whether Arafat either had the ability or the will to curb attacks by Islamic extremists against Israelis.

The DoP addresses peace in just two places, and then only vaguely and perfunctorily... Instead, the DoP goes into detail on two other subjects, Israeli withdrawal (Israel's “transfer of powers and responsibilities”, “redeployment of Israeli forces”, “Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and Jericho Area”) and the establishment of proto-sovereign Arab institutions.<sup>60</sup>

Nonetheless, the Oslo Accords were marketed to the Israeli public as the attainment of an historic reconciliation between the two peoples. When asked by Lisa Beyer what were the security risks of the DoP, Rabin replied that, “The Palestinians don't present a military threat to the existence of Israel. There are certain risks to the personal security of a limited number of Israelis.”

Nonetheless, he refused to address questions relating to the meaning of the agreement should terror continue.<sup>61</sup>

However, on the basis of the PLO commitment to combat terrorism, Israeli leadership consented to an agreement that shackled the Israeli



government and placed constraints on its ability and flexibility to respond to terror. Israel foreswore all rights of preemption and hot pursuit, thus limiting the military's ability to retaliate in the event of violence. Such measures were no longer considered to be political viable. Such actions would be considered as undermining Arafat's authority and derogating from the letter and spirit of the Oslo Accords.

Sources say that after looking at the agreement, Chief of Staff Ehud Barak warned Rabin: "Yitzhak, be careful, we have a lot of holes. It's like Swiss cheese."<sup>62</sup> Subsequently, in a post-Oslo meeting, Barak voiced opposition to the wholesale IDF redeployment for two reasons.

- He doubted that the Palestinian police would be able to control the areas from which the IDF had withdrawn.
- It was tactically unwise to implement such a deep redeployment as it deprived Israel of bargaining chips during the final status talks.<sup>63</sup>

### **Creating Unrealistic Expectations**

The aim of the Oslo Accords was to bridge the competing demands of Israelis and Palestinians to a small strip of land by shaping a *modus vivendi* that would lead to lasting coexistence between the two peoples. A short recapitulation of Israel's position one day before Oslo will shed light on the risks Israel assumed in signing these Accords.

Ehud Barak, then Israel's Chief of Staff and Moshe "Boogy" Ya'alon, then military commander of Judea-Samaria, had the *intifada* almost totally subdued. The wanted terrorists, as well as weapons still at large, were – literally – numbered. The PLO was bankrupt, ostracized and starved out by most Arab states, following Arafat's miscalculated alliance with Saddam Hussein. Arafat's influence inside Israel, too, was on the decline, for lack of means to finance his followers. *Hamas* was yet of no significance. The military and logistical mainstay of most Arab states and terror organizations, the USSR, was no more. Thanks to a huge wave of *aliya* from the former USSR, the "demographic demon" was on the wane.

The economy was on the upswing. Oil prices were low, the Arab oil-weapon dead. In the US, a new President was elected whose interest was concentrated on the economy and other domestic problems, not on adventures in the Middle East.

Consequent to the DoP, courtesy of Israel, the PLO was totally rehabilitated, granted an entree into the Arab, as well as the Western world. Billions were collected for its regeneration, its whole establishment brought in from Tunis. Rescued from bankruptcy and near oblivion by the Oslo process, within three years, Chairman Yasser Arafat found himself absolute sovereign over 95% of the Palestinian population of Judea, Samaria and Gaza. As observed by Jonathan Rosenblum, these gains have long been forgotten by the Palestinians who have convinced themselves that they have received nothing. Back to ground zero.<sup>64</sup>

Reviewing the entire process, Makovsky laments that the Oslo Accords were sold to the Israeli public as a historic breakthrough despite the fact that Rabin and Peres had known that neither the mutual recognition nor the DoP could “produce an outbreak of idyllic harmony between Israelis and Palestinians”. Regrettably, the unrealistic expectations generated by the Rabin-Arafat handshake simply heightened the disappointment that accompanied the post-Oslo terror waves.

Savir, on the other hand, concluded that “the greatest weakness of the three-year negotiation effort was that its message did not filter down enough to the people.”

He argues that both Israeli and Palestinian decision-makers frequently reacted to internal criticism by maintaining that diplomacy was the best means to attain traditional policy goals: security for Israel, eventual statehood for the Palestinians. As a result, there was insufficient emphasis on reconciliation and even less appreciation for the other side’s dilemmas.

### **Polarization of Israeli Society**

Not everyone in Israel went into ecstasy at the news that Israel had signed a peace agreement with the PLO. In fact, peace polls showed that support for the Oslo peace process fluctuated around 50%. In other words, close to 50% of the Israeli population opposed the Oslo Accords, indicating a deep cleavage within Israeli society.

In order to ensure the success of his new, incontrovertible policy, Rabin set out to inculcate a new, progressive ideology to the Israeli populace. As described by Barnett,<sup>65</sup> his method of choice was to expunge traditional ideology and religion from the Israeli collective identity in order to challenge the counter-narratives that were being offered by the religious right, the

settlers and the security hawks. By promoting Israel's secular and liberal tradition, he was situating Israel in the West's historical narrative of progress, development, democracy and modernity, and encouraging Israelis to reconsider the extent to which they were truly isolated in the international community. Although acknowledging the Holocaust, Rabin and his political allies advocated discarding Israel's existential isolation and jettisoning the worldview of "a people apart" and to view itself as part of the democratic, liberal west. In introducing his government to the Knesset, Rabin submitted that it was time that the Jewish nation

...set aside the notion that Israel stands alone, that the whole world is against us... It is our duty, to ourselves and to our children, to see the new world as it is now to discern its dangers, to explore its prospects, and to do everything so that the State of Israel will fit into this world whose face is changing. We must overcome the sense of isolation that has held us in its thrall for almost half a century. We must join the international movement toward peace, reconciliation, and cooperation that is sweeping the entire globe lest we be the last ones to remain, all alone, in the station.

There were broader currents within society that made Rabin's message resonate and politically conceivable. Rabin was following a solid decade of intellectual and cultural developments within Israel that were challenging and questioning many of the most closely cherished interpretations of the past, symbols and taboos of Israeli society and history. The "New Historians" were re-writing many of the "myths" of Israel's beginnings, rendering Israeli history less unique, with Zionism a typical product of modern nationalism.

After establishing his coalition government, the attacks on the nationalist and religious sectors did not subside. Rabin's assault on the settlers and the religious right paled in comparison to that leveled by Meretz, his coalition partner. Yossi Sarid, the Minister of Education, suggested that references to religion be eliminated in war memorial services, that Jewish dietary laws were unnecessary, and that there should be a new code of ethics for the Israel Defense Forces that should highlight the defense of democracy and downplay references to Judaism.<sup>66</sup>

The height of the anti-nationalist and anti-religious incitement was reached after Prime Minister Rabin's assassination. Typical of the unfettered hatred towards the right-wing and religious sectors in Israeli society is an

article, written by Yisrael Harel,<sup>67</sup> which exposed the radical ideology embedded in the mindset of the intellectual elite. Harel wrote that after Rabin's assassination there was no longer one nation, but two, in Israel. One nation, who is real, humanistic, hates violence and pursues peace, in contrast to "the other nation" (or "the nation of the right"), who has sprouted like (poisoned) mushrooms after the rain. This other nation is religious, fundamentalist, violent, hates peace, and is guided by their *Ayatullah* rabbis who preach to their students to perpetrate terrorist activities and murder Arabs and Jews. Harel, while advocating the exclusion of the right from being part of the nation for its complicity in the murder of the Prime Minister, could not ignore the problem of their existence. "Apparently, you can no longer choose your enemies and therefore there is no choice but to overcome feelings of revulsion and grit our teeth and create ties with the more moderate among them – "Woe to that moderation."<sup>68</sup>

The signing of the Oslo Accords precipitated a split in Israeli society, already predicted by PLO Executive Committee Secretary General, Abu Mazen, the first Arab leader to attribute importance to the fragmentation of Israeli society. In the introduction to his 73 page study of the racial and religious polarization in Israel, Abu Mazen poses a very salient question: "What may better increase and escalate the conflicts and racial and religious contrasts in the Israeli society: a state of war or a state of peace?" Although he does not answer the question, he does point out that:

All the conflicts within Israeli society were so [sharply] exposed only after the beginning of the peace process, following Camp David, Oslo, the peace accord with Jordan, and the negotiations with Syria that...almost ended with a peace agreement... We do not say that the [disintegration of Israeli society] is the Arab nuclear weapon [i.e. doomsday weapon]... All that is required from us is to bring the Israelis to the absolute conviction that we Arabs really want peace, because such conviction will deepen the dispute in Israeli society and bring the Israelis down from their tanks and out of their fortresses.<sup>69</sup>

## **Chapter 6: Israeli-Palestinian Agreements – 1995-1998**

### **Cairo Agreement**

Although the talks on the Cairo Gaza-Jericho agreement opened with an impressive ceremony, the talks themselves were harsh. As described by Savir:

...the honeymoon in Taba was short-lived. For upon setting forth their opening positions, both sides grasped that there was a huge gap between their interpretations of the Declaration of Principles. Israel had to withdraw completely from the Gaza Strip and Jericho, transfer control of the border crossings to the Palestinians who demanded joint patrol of the international borders. In addition, they demanded civil powers be transferred.<sup>70</sup>

Typical of the clashes that marked the course of the negotiations, Rabin and Arafat's first meeting, in December 1993 in Cairo, was a catastrophe. At this first face-to-face meeting between them, Rabin was aghast at Arafat's interpretation of the DoP. Arafat, without mincing any words, informed Rabin that the nature of the relationship between the Palestinians and Jordan and Egypt, and how the Palestinians managed their borders with them, was "strictly a Palestinian affair", and none of Israel's business.

In view of the barely bridgeable gap in opening positions, it was no surprise that the talks very quickly stalled. One such crisis, that nearly precipitated the collapse of the talks, was Arafat's accusation that Peres was scheming the cantonization of Judea and Samaria. Only through the intervention of Warren Christopher and Hosni Mubarak were the talks renewed. Not surprisingly, the Cairo agreement involved eight months of negotiations.

The crux of the clash was the conflicting interpretations of the DoP in respect to the derogation of authority. One of the Israeli negotiators commented that from the way Rabin and Arafat were talking, they could have signed different agreements at the White House. The dispute ostensibly revolved around the Arafat's insistence on placing his soldiers on the borders despite the relevant clause in the DoP that specifically stipulated that the Israelis would be responsible for external security. However, in essence, the controversy raged over whether the DoP would lead to Palestinian statehood or not. The Israeli reading stressed the civil and military powers to be

retained by Israel after withdrawing its troops, the implication being that Israel, as the official “source of authority”, would grant the Palestinians limited powers and most importantly, retain direct control of the border crossings.

In contrast, Arafat understood that the interim period of autonomy would have the attributes of statehood, and, therefore, just the opposite. Israel was obligated to withdraw completely from the Gaza Strip and Jericho, and transfer control of the border crossings to the Palestinians. They also demanded joint patrol of the international borders and the transfer of civil powers.<sup>71</sup>

In Cairo, the Israelis ultimately prevailed over Arafat and retained responsibility over the borders, or “gateways” between the Palestinian territories and neighboring Arab countries – the Allenby Bridge, connecting Judea, Samaria and Jordan, and the Rafiah border crossing between Gaza and Egypt.

In appraising these demands, Uri Savir, the leader of the official Israeli delegation to Cairo, writes that they were a function of the Palestinians’ strategic goal throughout the peace process, a goal they didn’t even bother hiding: “Our aim is the establishment of a Palestinian state in accordance with the 1967 borders.”<sup>72</sup>

### **Signing the Cairo Agreement**

The signing of the Cairo Agreement was a typical Arafatian nightmare. The signing ceremony was set for 11:00, May 4, 1994, in Cairo, Egypt. Cairo’s main auditorium filled up with dignitaries. President Hosni Mubarak was sitting on the stage together with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, Chairman Yasser Arafat, and Secretary of State Warren Christopher. The cameras were transmitting one of the most important events in the history of the Middle East – the signing of the Cairo Agreement.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin moved to the podium, turned to Yasser Arafat and said to him directly, as a representative of the Palestinian people:

Today, you and I stretch out our hands in peace. Today, we are beginning a different reckoning. The people of Israel expect you not to disappoint us. Give them new hope that we may flourish. It is not easy to forget the past. But let us try to overcome the bad memories and the obstacles in order to

light a new, unique, historic horizon an opportunity which may never come again for a different life, a life without fear, a life without hatred, a life without the frightened eyes of children, a life without pain, a life in which we shall build a home, plant a vineyard and live to a ripe old age, side by side as neighbors. We all hope that we shall wake up tomorrow morning to a new day, to a new future and a new opportunity for our children. For them, we had to fight. For them, we have to achieve peace.

Then Arafat stepped up to the podium. In his speech, he condemned all manifestations of violence. *“We do not want any danger that would threaten the lives of innocent Palestinians and Israelis.”* He then stressed that violence strews mines on the road to peace, and places obstacles on the road to the fulfillment of the aspirations of the Palestinian right for political independence.

The momentous moment arrived – the signing of the agreement. First Arafat signed the agreement and then Yitzhak Rabin approached the podium. As Rabin went about signing the various clauses of the agreement and the maps attached in the Appendix, he discovered that Arafat had not signed the maps appended to the agreement. Rabin got up, indicated the problem to Arafat and unequivocally demanded that he sign them. Arafat, conscious of the pressure of the momentous event, refused to sign, attesting to the fact that his lapse of not signing had not been accidental but deliberate. Rabin was adamant in his refusal to sign unless Arafat signed the maps before him.

An uproar broke out in the full view of the world’s TV cameras. “Everyone on the stage pleaded with Arafat and all but physically assaulted him, but the man would not be moved.” Finally Mubarak cornered him and bluntly demanded that he not disgrace Egypt. Arafat replied that he was prepared to sign but he had further demands from the Israeli delegation. The upshot of Arafat’s machinations is that he extracted a commitment on the part of Rabin to open up some of the articles contained in the Cairo agreement for renegotiations. Rabin, shaking with rage, agreed and Arafat, practically dragged to the podium, signed the maps.

It is said that a picture is better than a thousand words. In this case the truth of this saying leaps into our eyes when we see the picture immortalizing the moments after the signing of the agreement. Arafat, Mubarak, Peres, Christopher and other dignitaries huddle together, while Rabin stands at a distance, aloof.

I believe that at this moment, Rabin realized precisely the true nature of his partner to the Oslo process. But even he did not realize that a pattern of negotiations had been established: first a mutually accepted agreement was attained, and then the Palestinians demanded the reopening and renegotiating of some of the articles.

The following are the main clauses contained in the Cairo Agreement:

- Israel is to withdraw from the Gaza Strip and Jericho area within three weeks.
- The establishment of the Palestinian Authority. All civil authority transferred to the Palestinian Authority, while Israel retains control over foreign relations, internal security, and settlements.
- The powers of the PA are defined and a police force is created.
- This day marks the beginning of the five-year interim period defined in the DoP.
- The Palestinians undertake to combat terror and prevent violence.

An assessment of the Gaza-Jericho Agreement four years down the line, in 1998, demonstrated that Israel had made tangible concessions to the Palestinians:

- Israeli forces withdrew from Jericho and most of the Gaza Strip (May 1994).
- After the signing of the September 1995 Oslo II Accords, Israeli forces withdrew from six cities in Judea and Samaria: Jenin, Tulkarem, Qalqilya, Nablus, Ramallah, and Bethlehem.
- After the signing of the January 1997 Hebron Accord, Israeli forces withdrew from 80% of Hebron, one of Judaism's holiest cities.
- On March 6, 1997, the Israeli Cabinet approved the first phase of further redeployments from Judea and Samaria, consisting of 9.1% of the territory. This included 7% of territory that is currently Area B (Israeli security control, Palestinian civilian control) and 2.1% of Area C (exclusive Israeli control). The redeployment would have tripled the size of territory in Judea and Samaria under exclusive Palestinian control. The PA rejected the Israeli Cabinet decision.



- On March 19, 1997, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu announced that Israel was prepared to enter final status talks with the Palestinians immediately, offering an accelerated timetable under which the negotiations would be completed within six to nine months. The PA rejected the Israeli proposal.
- On November 30, 1997, the Israeli Cabinet approved in principle the second stage of the further redeployments in Judea and Samaria. Subsequent meetings have been held to work out the conditions and details of the move.

As a result of Israel's withdrawals, more than 95% of Palestinians in Judea, Samaria and Gaza lived, by 1998, under Palestinian administration.

### **Oslo II – Interim Agreement, September 1995**

The Oslo II – Interim Agreement – (Judea, Samaria and Gaza) was signed in a gala ceremony in September 1995.

On July 4, 1995, Arafat and Peres marked out the principles for this deal on self-rule in Judea and Samaria. On August 11, in Taba, an initial outline of “partial agreement”, on the expansion of self-rule was drafted. Peres made a substantial and critical concession, without consulting the military involvement or obtaining approval, by agreeing to accelerate Israeli redeployment. Substantively, Peres consented that, beginning September 1996, Israeli troops would begin redeployment in three six-month phases from Area C (Israeli-controlled territory) and the transfer of responsibility for internal security in Areas B and C would follow the same timetable. This committed Israel to the withdrawal of troops from most of the territory more than a year before the permanent status negotiations were concluded. General Biran, Chief of the Central Command, opposed this concession, arguing that in eighteen months the Palestinians would have control over the land, “...but Jerusalem, right of return, settlements all remain for permanent status, and if we have given them the land, what assets remain [to trade]?”<sup>73</sup>

On August 27, despite the detonation of a suicide bomb on a bus just over two weeks earlier, on August 11, Israel and the Palestinian Authority signed the second stage of the “early empowerment agreement” for Judea and Samaria. Despite the deadlock over Hebron, an agreement on Palestinian Interim self-rule was reached at Taba on September 24, and Oslo II was signed in Washington on September 28. Prime Minister Rabin felt it was

imperative to reach an agreement and to put an end of Israel's rule over the Palestinians: "We can continue to fight. We can continue to kill – and continue to be killed. But we can also try to put a stop to this never-ending cycle of blood. We can give peace a chance."

Nonetheless, in traditional Arafat fashion, just before signing the agreement, Arafat precipitated a crisis by insisting that the territory allocated to the autonomous area be expanded to create a contiguous area. In precipitating the crisis on the eve of the gala ceremony, Arafat was forcing the Israelis to reopen agreements that had already been concluded. Predictably, Israel capitulated and it was decided to transfer 30% of Judea and Samaria to Arafat.

Oslo II expanded Palestinian self-rule by withdrawing the Israeli military administration from six large cities in Judea and Samaria. Palestinian police forces took over and elections for a Palestinian Council were to be held. The following are the main articles contained in Oslo II Interim Agreement:

1. Divides Judea and Samaria into three areas: Area A (Palestinian authority), Area B (Palestinian civil authority and Israeli security control), and Area C (Israeli authority),
2. Israeli withdrawal from specific towns in Judea and Samaria (Bethlehem, Jenin, Nablus, Qalqilya, Ramallah, and Tulkarem) to take place 22 days prior to the Palestinian elections (January 1996),
3. Additional redeployments from Area C to Area B to take place in three stages at six-month intervals following the Palestinian elections,
4. Establishment of joint Israeli-Palestinian Security and Cooperation Committee for Mutual Security Purposes,
5. Begin permanent status talks no later than May 4, 1996. Final status issues include Jerusalem, settlements, borders, and refugees.

Oslo II brought the Palestinians one step closer to a Palestinian state. It made it clear that henceforth Judea, Samaria and Gaza were a single economic entity and the Palestinian residents were a single people, thus strengthening the principle of Palestinian unity. Above all, the provision that all adult Palestinians living in the territories, and in East Jerusalem, would be entitled to vote in the elections for the Palestinian Council, reinforced the Palestinians nationality and defined, to a large extent, the boundaries of the future Palestinian state,

It is quite revealing that two years after the signing of the Oslo Accords it was felt to be imperative to add Article XXII, that prohibits incitement, to Oslo II: Israel and the PA

shall seek to foster mutual understanding and tolerance and shall accordingly abstain from incitement, including hostile propaganda, against each other and, without derogating from the principle of freedom of expression, shall take legal measures to prevent such incitement by any organizations, groups or individuals within their jurisdiction.

### **Hebron Agreement, January 1997**

Upon being elected as the Prime Minister of Israel, Binyamin Netanyahu affirmed his commitment to implementing the Oslo Accords and its accompanying agreements, thus accepting the concept of territorial compromise. In signing the Hebron agreement and agreeing to withdraw from 80% of Hebron, the Likud jettisoned 60 years of ideology.

Israel's redeployment in Hebron completed the implementation of IDF withdrawals from the seven major Palestinian population centers, as called for in the September 1995 PLO-Israel Accords (Oslo II).

Netanyahu admitted that it was very difficult for him to sign the agreement.

Giving up any territory is difficult; I admit it readily. It's part of my homeland; it's part of the place where my ancestors, the prophets and the kings of Israel and so many generations of Jews, had walked on and had dreamed of coming back to. But this was an agreement that had been ratified by Peres and I was going to carry it out...

The Hebron Protocol of January 15, 1997 was accompanied by the Note for the Record in which the Palestinians reaffirmed their commitment regarding, "**Preventing incitement and hostile propaganda**", as specified in Article XXII of the Oslo II Interim Agreement.

In addition, the then-Secretary of State Christopher submitted a letter to Netanyahu stating that Israel and Israel alone would determine the location and the extent of the specified security locations. This meant that, effectively, Israel only would determine how much it would withdraw under the agreement.

Most significantly, the Hebron Agreement thrust the issue of the PLO Charter back into the forefront of the process. Although the Palestinians had

undertaken to amend the Charter under the Oslo Accords, Israel had been lapse in demanding that the PA complete the process of revising the Palestinian National Charter. In May 1996, when the Palestine National Council approved a resolution that it “had decided to amend the Charter”, and to bring it into conformity with the Oslo Accords, the then-Prime Minister Peres praised the move as the most significant ideological shift of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Governments around the world, including the United States, acknowledged it as fulfillment of the PLO’s contractual obligation. Netanyahu and the Likud disagreed, contending that the PNC’s declaration had only been the beginning of the process of compliance, not its end. The inclusion of the article demanding that the PA Charter be amended validated the Likud’s view. Despite all the fanfare around the PA “re-commitment”, ten days after signing the Hebron Agreement, Arafat essentially dismissed this obligation, repeatedly saying he would not amend the organization’s charter until Israel adopts a written constitution.

In presenting the Hebron Agreement to the Knesset, Prime Minister Netanyahu said:

These are difficult days. Every step that we take in the city of the patriarchs and the matriarchs is difficult... In Hebron, we touch on the very basis of our national consciousness, the bedrock of our existence. Everyone whose heart beats with national feeling, with Jewish feeling, cannot help but feel the weight of the responsibility placed on our shoulders, and the supreme obligation to preserve our heritage... At the same time, we cannot ignore reality. I must say to the Members of the Knesset and the citizens of Israel, that we inherited a difficult reality. The agreements signed by the previous governments are binding upon the Government of Israel.

I call from this podium upon the Palestinians and our Arab neighbors to support the agreement, to fulfill all its provisions, in order that security should be preserved... Until now, Hebron has been a symbol of division and conflict because of the hostility between Palestinians and Israelis. Now we have an opportunity to prove that Hebron can also serve an opposite example – one of cooperation, of co-existence, a paradigm of peace.

Rather than being a period of cooperation, the record of the post-Hebron Agreement showed that in terms of obligations, Israel largely implemented its pledges whereas the PA did little to fulfill its side of the bargain. In fact, the PA’s compliance with the agreement began to erode within days after

signing the agreement. PA security forces continued to maintain a force in Hebron of significantly more than the 400 Palestinian policemen permitted under the agreement, many with firearms banned under the Hebron Agreement. Notwithstanding his demands for reciprocity, Netanyahu, too, following in the footsteps of the previous government, turned a blind eye to PA violations of core elements of the agreement.

### **Wye River Memorandum – October 1998**

After 18 months of stalemate in the peace process and increasing violence, President Clinton pushed to get Israeli and Palestinian leaders to continue the Oslo peace process. The US convened a summit at Maryland's Wye River Plantation. After a rocky start, Clinton's marathon 21-hour session with Yasser Arafat, Binyamin Netanyahu, and senior negotiators produced the Wye River Memorandum. The accord followed nine days of talks mediated by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and featuring President Clinton's direct involvement. Jordan's King Hussein, who was being treated for cancer in the United States, also took part in the negotiations.

The Wye Memorandum was signed on the lawn of the White House, at another gala ceremony, on October 23, 1998. The speakers were imbued with hope that the Oslo peace process had, indeed, been resuscitated and that there would be peace and prosperity to the peoples living in the Middle East.

Secretary of State Madeleine Albright declared, with great satisfaction that the ceremony culminated almost a year and a half of efforts to restore confidence and forward movement to the peace process. "It ends a dangerous impasse that has eroded trust and stalled progress towards a broader peace."

President Clinton, too, full of hope for the future, declaring:

This agreement is good for Israel's security. The commitments made by the Palestinians were very strong, as strong as any we have ever seen. They include continuous security cooperation with Israel and a comprehensive plan against terrorism and its support infrastructure. This agreement is good for the political and economic well-being of Palestinians...the Palestinian people will be able to breathe a little easier and benefit from the fruits of peace.

Even Yasser Arafat praised the peace process, once more renouncing violence:

But our agreement in the Wye River underscores that the peace process is going ahead and that whatever we agreed upon in Madrid, Oslo, and in Washington and Cairo is being implemented on the same bases that have been agreed to and that we will never go back. We will never leave the peace process, and we will never go back to violence and confrontation – no return to confrontation and violence.

The following are the principal articles of the Wye Agreement:

1. Sets a 12-week program for a three-stage Israeli withdrawal from 13% of Judea and Samaria, while transferring 14% of Area B to Area A,
2. Approves the building of an international airport in the Gaza Strip,
3. Creates two free-passage corridors between Judea, Samaria and Gaza,
4. Release of 750 Palestinian security prisoners.

Not surprisingly, the Wye River Memorandum includes two perennial issues dating from the Oslo Accords in 1993: stamping out terrorism and the nullification of the articles in the Palestinian Charter that call for Israel's destruction.

5. Defines the Palestinian security responsibilities including the arrest of specific terrorist suspects, confiscation of illegal weapons. The Palestinian Authority agrees to combat terrorist organizations, arrest those involved in terrorism, and to collect all illegal weapons and explosives. The CIA will review Palestinian security plans.
6. Requires that the Palestinians convene a special meeting of the Palestinian Central Council within two months to amend all 26 articles of the Palestinian National Covenant. This action would subsequently be ratified by the Palestine National Council (PNC) at a meeting in December 1998 attended by President Clinton.

## **Chapter 7: The Israeli-PLO Endgame: Camp David to Taba<sup>74</sup>**

The Camp David Summit was the quintessential test of the Oslo process. As can be recalled, the model of gradualism adopted at Oslo prescribed that the especially thorny issues, such as Jerusalem, the borders and the refugees, would be settled in the final status talks. These issues could no longer be deferred, swept under the carpet upon which the supporters of the Oslo process stood as they hailed the benefits and achievements of the process.

### **Pre-Camp David Talks – Stockholm**

Prime Minister Ehud Barak, in his pursuit for peace, enthusiastically authorized Israelis to negotiate with the Palestinians, no holds barred. In the course of the Stockholm talks, Israel placed a map [with a ratio] of 12-88% on the table, with three settlement blocs [Etzion and Ariel clusters, and the Jerusalem area] annexed to Israel and a security hold in the Jordan Rift Valley for about 20 years. In addition, the Jordan River line itself would remain under Israeli sovereignty in order to prevent the entry of weapons and to forestall any violation of the demilitarization arrangements. Israel strongly objected to the idea of an exchange of territory.

Throughout the months of negotiation in Stockholm, the talks followed a pre-ordained ritual: the Israelis submitted a proposal, and then waited for a counterproposal that never arrived. The Palestinian positions were not clear, although there was an unsubstantiated rumor that Arafat had pledged, to President Clinton, that he would relinquish two percent.

Nonetheless, Prime Minister Barak accepted President Clinton's invitation to attend a summit conference with the goal of advancing the negotiations with the Palestinians.

On the eve of Camp David, Israeli negotiators described their purported red lines to their American counterparts: the annexation of more than 10% of Judea and Samaria, sovereignty over parts of the strip along the Jordan River, and rejection of any territorial swaps. At the opening of Camp David, Barak warned the Americans that he could not accept Palestinian sovereignty over any part of East Jerusalem other than a purely symbolic "foothold". Earlier, he had claimed that if Arafat asked for 95% of Judea and Samaria, there would be no deal. Yet, at the same time, he gave clear hints that Israel was

willing to show more flexibility if Arafat was prepared to “contemplate” the endgame. Bottom lines and false bottoms: the tension and the ambiguity were always there.<sup>75</sup>

These were the opening positions when, on July 5, 2000 the Camp David convened.

### **Barak Embarks to Camp David Summit**

In his statement before embarking on the road to Camp David, Prime Minister Barak said:

If there is an agreement, it will only be one that will comply with the principles to which I committed myself before I was elected, and principles that I have consistently and repeatedly stressed: a united Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty; the 1967 borders will be amended; the overwhelming majority of the settlers in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip will be in settlement blocs under Israeli sovereignty; no foreign army in the entire area west of the Jordan River; and a solution of the problem of refugees outside Israeli sovereign territory.<sup>76</sup>

He reiterated these principles in his statement to the Knesset on July 10: “We will act with determination, courage and resourcefulness, while insisting on separation from the Palestinians, and upholding our assurances on these critical ‘red lines’.”

Barak pledged to adhere to the following red lines:

- No return to the 1967 lines nor to the 1949 armistice lines or the UN partition lines;
- A united Jerusalem as the eternal capital of Israel under Israeli sovereignty;
- No compromise over the Jordan Valley considered vital for Israeli security. No foreign military forces situated west of the Jordan River or north of the Kinneret;
- An absolute majority of the settlers in Judea and Samaria living in settlement blocs shall remain under Israeli sovereignty;
- Israel will not accept moral or legal responsibility for the creation of the refugee problem;



- No return of Palestinian refugees to Israel proper – right of return non-negotiable;<sup>77</sup>
- Israel shall maintain control over the strategic Samarian water aquifers that hold over 30% of Israel's water supply;
- No abandoning the early warning stations on top of the central mountain ridge of Judea and Samaria.

### **Arafat Embarks to Camp David Summit**

Notwithstanding polls to the contrary, from the outset there was widespread opposition to the Oslo process among the Palestinians. The voices denouncing the process as a betrayal of the Palestinian cause became a cacophony as Arafat set out, under protest, to Camp David. He was unequivocally warned that he dared not give in on the two major contentious issues, Jerusalem and the refugees. This domestic chorus against concessions to Israel followed the Palestinian leader all the way to his cabin at Camp David.

Arafat reportedly told President Clinton that if he agreed to give up Jerusalem he would find himself drinking coffee with the late Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. As explained by Fadel Tahboub, a member of the Palestine National Council, the PLO's legislative body, "Arafat does not have a mandate to make concessions on Jerusalem, because it is not his personal property...Jerusalem and the *al-Aqsa* mosque belong to all the Arabs, all the Muslims."<sup>78</sup>

Similarly, Arafat was aware that his critics were forewarning should he sell out the refugees to Israel. For decades, hundreds of thousands of families had nurtured the hope that they would be able to return to Israel, and they reacted with fury to the news that Arafat was considering compensation instead of full-scale repatriation. At one point during the summit, Muslim religious leaders, including the *mufti* of Jerusalem, Sheik `Ikrima Sabri, issued a *fatwa* (religious decree) forbidding Muslims to accept money in return for their property.

In sum, the opening positions of Barak and Arafat were in diametrical opposition; for both sides in the negotiations, Jerusalem and the right of return were non-negotiable.

## The Key Negotiators

In describing the key figures involved in the Camp David and Taba talks, the former Israeli Foreign Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami was not very complimentary of either leader. He describes Ehud Barak as being cold and "...not a very pleasant person. It's hard to like him. He is closed and introverted and there is no emotional contact with him. We all experienced that."

Ben-Ami relates a typical Barak response when losing control over a situation. When Arafat refused to even look at one of Israel's proposals, refusing, despite Israeli pleas, to present a counter proposal "Barak went into two days of isolation in his cabin. None of us saw him for two days. He was in deep depression."

Yossi Sarid, leader of the Meretz Party, initially invited to participate in the Camp David Summit but removed at the last minute, affirms Ben-Ami's assessment of Barak's personality. In diagnosing Barak's flawed interpersonal management behavior, Sarid commented that "he is convinced that he is terribly clever and that everyone around him is pretty dumb."<sup>79</sup> He suffers from two traits that are calamitous for a leader: arrogance and insensitivity. To illustrate Barak's leadership style, Sarid described how Barak had woken him up at 1:00 in the morning, on the night preceding Election Day. Barak then ordered him to cancel any plans he had and to canvass the leaders of the Arab community and to persuade them to go to the polls and vote for him.

Ben-Ami depicts Arafat as a very problematic negotiator, as became more and more obvious throughout the Camp David Summit. His vision of himself and place in history dominated his thinking, as if he was suspended in a time warp:

Arafat is not an earthly leader. He sees himself as a mythological figure. He has always represented himself as a kind of modern Salah a-Din. Therefore, even the concrete real-estate issues don't interest him so much. At Camp David, it was clear that he wasn't looking for practical solutions, but was focused on mythological subjects: the right of return, Jerusalem, the Temple Mount. He floats on the heights of the Islamic ethos and the refugee ethos and the Palestinian ethos.

### **Aggravating the Situation was Arafat's Thinking and Speaking Style:**

Arafat's discourse is never practical, either. His sentences don't connect and aren't completed. There are words, there are sentences, there are metaphors – there is no clear position. The only things there are, are codes and nothing else. At the end of the process, you suddenly understand that you are not moving ahead in the negotiations because you are in fact negotiating with a myth.

In Ben-Ami's evaluation, Arafat was afraid of facing up to reality and incapable of reaching a final compromise. Throughout the talks he constantly fled the imperative to take the decision to end the conflict with Israel.

But when the end of the game arrives, he finds himself in a terrible plight because for him to conclude the process is to say, "I have stopped being a myth; now I am just the head of a small state..." I don't know any precedent in history for such severe behavior of fleeing decisions as that of Arafat.

Ben-Ami may have been correct in his assessment, but, to his dismay, as it transpired, Arafat intuitively exploits these faults to gain points in the negotiation game. Assuming that "what he doesn't get today, he will get tomorrow," Arafat would remain aloof, letting his aides conclude the agreements, and only then intervene, free to renegotiate the details.

The Americans, and especially President Clinton, aware of all the obstacles strewn on the road of negotiations, structured the negotiations so that the Israelis and the Palestinians never met face-to-face; the Americans were constantly mediating between the two sides.

Specially revealing of the nature of the relationships between the leaderships of the Israeli and Palestinian delegations is Ben-Ami's description of the one occasion where Barak and Arafat met face-to-face at a dinner arranged by Secretary of State Albright to break the ice between the delegations. Despite her good intentions, Barak sat like a pillar of salt and didn't say a word for hours. He was absolutely furious, after another frustrating meeting with Arafat and couldn't bear the situation in which he was risking everything, dependent on Arafat, who refused to budge an inch from his opening positions.

## The Negotiations at Camp David

The Camp David Summit revolved around three issues: borders, Jerusalem and refugees. The boundaries of the Camp David negotiations were laid down at the pre-Camp David talks in Stockholm.

To encapsulate, Israel's official open positions at Camp David was a ratio of 12-88 (12% annexed to Israel and 88% transferred to the Palestinians), but unofficially, Israel was prepared to pare off another two to four percent and compromise on eight to ten percent. Israel was not prepared to compromise on Jerusalem nor on its objections to a territorial swap. The Palestinians, in contrast, from the first day of the summit, insisted that the discussion open with recognition by Israel of the 1967 lines, rigidly maintaining their stance on this point. Even Abu Alaa vehemently refused to enter into any negotiations before everyone recognized the June 4, 1967 borders, informing Clinton: "Mr. President, I cannot take my hand, part of my body [and] give it to somebody else."<sup>80</sup>

Clinton, boiling mad, told Abu Alaa: "Sir, you hold personally the responsibility for the failure of the summit. If you want to address speeches, go to the United Nations Security Council, address speeches there. Don't waste my time here."<sup>81</sup>

According to Ben-Ami, Clinton turned completely red, demanding that the Palestinians come up with positive proposals of their own, and then he stalked out. Abu Alaa was so deeply offended that he ostracized himself from all further discussions at Camp David.

In the course of the negotiations, apparently Arafat made a proposal to Clinton according to which he was prepared to relinquish between eight to ten percent of the territory in exchange for a territorial swap, leaving the details of the security arrangement to Clinton himself. The formula for this swap, which never crystallized in a binding document, was a territorial exchange of nine percent of the territories in return for one percent of sovereign Israeli territory – constituting a retreat on the part of Israel from its objection to a territorial swap.

When the Palestinians allowed Ben-Ami a peek, by accident or on purpose, of a Palestinian map, he saw, to his horror, that it reflected a territorial swap in a 1:1 ratio. But they didn't want the Halutza dunes in the Negev offered by Israel, but rather wanted territory adjacent to Judea and

Samaria that included sovereignty over Kochav Yair, Prime Minister Barak's place of residence.

Negotiations continued, with Clinton beginning to feel more optimistic, believing that things were finally moving along, if slowly. He was certain that everything was falling into place, and that Israel's proposal was on the verge of crystallizing into a binding document. And then the roof fell in; Arafat sent a note to Clinton conveying to him that he was retracting everything.

The situation was no better in respect to the resolution of the future of the refugees, with Abu Mazen persuading Abu Alaa to stick with the principle of the "right of return".<sup>82</sup> The outcome was that the Palestinians submitted a four-point proposal that totally flabbergasted both the American and the Israeli delegations:

- The right of every Palestinian refugee to return home in accordance with UN Resolution 194.
- The need for a mechanism to implement this right, starting with the return of refugees in Lebanon. A timetable, including numbers of refugees, would then be established for the return of all those who wished it.
- After the recognition of the "right of return" and the establishment of the implementation mechanism, a compensation regime could be instituted.
- The issue of the Jews who left Arab countries and their compensation was not the province of the Palestinian side and would not be discussed.<sup>83</sup>

The Palestinians foresaw an influx of 150,000 refugees each year into Israel for the coming decade, obligating Israel to absorb 1.5 million refugees! There was no way that Barak could consent to such a demand. Even the most extreme leftist in Israel viewed this idea as the destruction of Israel as a Jewish state.<sup>84</sup>

## **Jerusalem**

On one point there is universal consensus: everything stood or fell over Jerusalem. As a consequence, the Camp David Summit metamorphosed, as observed by the journalist Ari Shavit, to the Jerusalem Summit. In

retrospect, Ben-Ami understood Arafat's strategy: maneuvering the Israeli negotiator into further concessions without the Palestinians budging an inch from their positions.

...the Israeli negotiator always finds himself in a dilemma: Either I get up and walk out because these guys aren't ready to put forward proposals of their own, or I make another concession. In the end, even the most moderate negotiator reaches a point where he understands that there is no end to it.

Nonetheless, even with this insight, Ben-Ami labeled Israel's capitulation on Jerusalem as a "breakthrough".

To break the deadlock, Clinton organized a simulation game that went on for a whole night, until noon the next day. It was during this game that the Israeli delegation, for the first time, put forward a proposal that signaled an Israeli retreat from their initial positions on the status of Jerusalem. Israel proposed that the outer envelope of Arab neighborhoods be placed under Palestinian sovereignty, the inner envelope under functional autonomy, the Old City under a special regime, and the Temple Mount under a perpetual Palestinian trusteeship.

President Clinton modified the proposal, proposing a clear division of sovereignty. Barak, without reservation, agreed to continue negotiations with Arafat on the basis of this proposal. Ben-Ami was ambivalent. While telling Martin Indyk [of the State Department] that Barak was nuts, he praised Barak for being so courageous: "...he was far more courageous than we were. Truly courageous. Clinton told me a few times: I have never met such a courageous person."

Certainly, Clinton and Barak were very pleased. The Jerusalem proposal was unprecedented and they had no doubts at all that they had extricated the process from its impasse. But an unpleasant surprise was awaiting them. Upon hearing the Israeli proposal, the Palestinians added more demands. Ben-Ami was astounded and outraged:

I felt terribly frustrated that we were making such a creative, flexible move and reaching one of the finest moments of the negotiations, and they couldn't free themselves from their gibes, from the need for vindication, from their victimization.

Reacting to the Palestinians' refusal to accept the President's proposal on Jerusalem, and grasping the tenuousness of the situation, Barak retracted his

agreement, and sent an angry letter to Clinton, purporting that the President was not putting enough pressure on Arafat. Indeed, Clinton did try again, with no results. Barak, realizing that he had no partner, felt cheated. He had gone farther than any other Israeli Prime Minister, "...and risking himself politically and losing his government, but despite that, Arafat would not budge. Arafat refused to get into the game."

At this point, Ben-Ami informed Clinton that the proposal was off the agenda.

The summit stood at a standstill after President Clinton's departure for Japan, with Barak barricading himself in his cabin. When Clinton returned, the conference resumed, the final confrontation unfolding.

Negotiations over the status of Jerusalem resumed with the Palestinians rejecting the Israeli proposals. When Israel proposed to Arafat to defer the future of status of Jerusalem for two years, Arafat waved two fingers in the air and asserted: "Not even for two hours." Resolute to break the deadlock, President Clinton gave Ezer Weizman an ultimatum to submit to Arafat: either accept his Jerusalem proposal or present a counterproposal. An hour later, Ezer came back with Arafat's refusal, signaling the collapse of the Camp David Summit. Clinton, enraged, banged on the table and shouted to Arafat: "You are leading your people and the region to a catastrophe."<sup>85</sup>

Arafat explained to the disillusioned Clinton and to the sympathetic American diplomats that he could not concede Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem. Arafat told Clinton, if the city is not divided, then Palestine can wait. According to one report, Arafat told Clinton that he speaks on behalf of a billion Muslims. It also transpired that President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt and Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia "*all but threatened Mr. Arafat with political excommunication if he accepted Prime Minister Ehud Barak's proposals*" on Jerusalem.<sup>86</sup>

In assessing the course of events at Camp David, one can only reach the inescapable conclusion that Arafat succeeded in breaching Israeli's resolve not to compromise on Jerusalem. Ultimately, the Israeli delegation assumed the Palestinians' position – the division of Jerusalem – without Arafat having to concede anything. Ben-Ami and Dennis Ross, US Special Envoy to the Middle East, both argue that the Palestinians actually went beyond intransigence, constantly introducing new obstacles to an agreement. Gradually, it became clear that whereas the Israeli side was interested in

resolving the issue of Jerusalem, the Palestinians were not interested in negotiating.

The crux of the impasse was the totally different goals that guided the two delegations. The Israeli delegation embarked “on a mission of peace”; the Palestinians embarked on a mission of stonewalling. As Ben-Ami, woefully described it:

You have to understand one thing: we at Camp David were moving toward a division in practice but with the aspiration of reaching an agreement that didn’t look like a division. The big problem there was that the Palestinians weren’t willing to help us with that. They weren’t ready for any face-saving formulation for the Israelis. Not on the issue of the Temple Mount, not on sovereignty, not on anything. Arafat did not agree to anything that was not a complete division at Camp David.

Officially, Israel retracted all the ideas and proposals presented by the Israeli delegation at Camp David, unofficially, the offers had a life of their own.

### **Playing the Blame Game**

The controversy surrounding the breakdown in the Israeli-Palestinian talks is legend, with those unreservedly blaming Arafat, such as President Clinton, and others charging that Barak not only humiliated Arafat, but his true aim was to perpetuate Israeli control over the Palestinians.

### **Israeli Perspective**

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak was met with a muted homecoming. With bravado, he portrayed himself as a warrior, the brave Israeli who had striven for success at the negotiating table. “We did not find a partner prepared to take hard decisions.” Israel was willing to pay “a heavy price” for peace – but “not any price”. But the Israelis did pay a heavy price – the movement of the goalposts.

Israel’s official statement placed the blame squarely on the shoulders of Arafat and the Palestinians.

During the course of the Summit, the Palestinian leadership showed that it had not yet internalized the need to demonstrate flexibility and compromise on a number of key issues. In particular, the positions presented by



Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat with regard to Jerusalem prevented the achievement of an agreement.

In retrospect, Barak portrays Arafat's behavior at Camp David as a "performance" geared to exacting from the Israelis as many concessions as possible without ever seriously intending to reach a peace settlement or sign an "end to the conflict". Barak confirms Ben-Ami's assessment that "not only did Arafat not negotiate in good faith, he did not negotiate at all. He just kept saying 'no' to every offer, never making any counterproposals of his own."<sup>87</sup>

Israel also accused the leadership of the Arab world of not providing Arafat with sufficient backing for a more flexible stance, and for not exerting "the necessary influence" on the Palestinian delegation so they would realize the need for a real compromise.

On a more personal level, and in frustration at returning from Camp David with empty hands, Ben-Ami vented his anger on Arafat, accusing him of wanting to destroy the State of Israel.

- He does not recognize the idea of two states between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River.
- He wasn't interested in the peace process.
- His overriding goal, to the exclusion of any other consideration, was the establishment of a PLO-Palestinian state.

To attain his goals, Arafat was prepared for a prolonged confrontation and war with Israel. Signing the Oslo Accords was only a camouflage or a mirage for his real goals.<sup>88</sup>

Ben-Ami refutes allegations that the Camp David Summit collapsed because the Israelis humiliated Arafat. Paradoxically, Hussein Agha and Robert Malley,<sup>89</sup> despite their transparent attempts to absolve Arafat from all blame for the failure of Camp David, confirmed Ben-Ami's assessment of Arafat's intentions. Regardless of whether the Palestinians, and especially Arafat, deliberately planned to humiliate the Israelis or not, the strategy they adopted left the Israelis hanging on a limb. This was, in fact the crux of the stalemate, as underscored by Ben-Ami: The Palestinians never introduced counterproposals or maps, only asked for more: more land, more concessions. "Never, in the negotiations between us and the Palestinians was

there a Palestinian counterproposal. There never was and there never will be.”<sup>90</sup>

Even Dennis Ross, the head of the American peace team, stated that at Camp David, Arafat – unlike the Israelis – did not propose a single negotiating idea throughout the 15 days, other than claim that the Temple Mount never existed in Jerusalem.<sup>91</sup>

Malley and Agha also confirm Ben-Ami’s contention that the Palestinians never even bothered to submit a counterproposal:

...the Palestinians’ principal failing is that from the beginning of the Camp David Summit and onward, they were unable either to say “yes” to the American ideas or to present a cogent and specific counterproposal of their own.<sup>92</sup>

Ben-Ami reiterates the opinion that Arafat is incapable of practical discourse. “At the end of the process, you suddenly understand that you are not moving ahead in the negotiations because you are in fact negotiating with a myth...”

Arafat could certainly not have been an enigma after six years of negotiations. So, if Prime Minister Barak, Foreign Minister Ben-Ami and the other members of the Israeli delegation were aware of his elusiveness, why did they participate in negotiations whose failure was pre-ordained? Why did Ben-Ami continue the farce after realizing Arafat’s ploy? Why did they continue to appease Arafat, even at the price of retreating from their red lines? Clearly, a Salah a-din cannot compromise in general, and certainly not on all those contentious issues which were to be the foundations of the final status agreement: Jerusalem, the Temple Mount and the right of return.

### **Palestinian Perspective**

Among the Palestinians, the summit’s demise was met with relief and even jubilation. Before embarking for Camp David, Arafat was weak. In contrast, upon flying back to Gaza, he was greeted as a hero, with even his rivals praising him. Thousands of Palestinians lined the streets to welcome his motorcade. On buildings throughout Judea, Samaria and Gaza, huge placards saluted “the hero and symbol of the Palestinian cause”. Men and women danced in the streets, and radio and TV stations broadcast songs and programs dedicated to the Palestinian Authority chairman, cheering children chanting, “We are following Arafat on the way to Jerusalem.” Many

Palestinians likened him to Salah-a-din, and hailed him for his toughness – especially his refusal to yield in his demands for sovereignty over East Jerusalem.

Hasan Asfour, Palestinian Authority Minister of Non-Governmental Organizations, places blame for the failure of Oslo squarely on the shoulders of Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, who

succeeded as no one before him (not even the Israeli right wing) in destroying the infrastructure of the peace process and pushing Israel to political extremism. Ingenuously, he was able to destroy the peace camp inside Israel and render it a camp of surrender, only defending itself instead of defending the future of Israel.<sup>93</sup>

Ahmed Queria, better known as Abu Alaa, the Palestinians' top negotiator at Camp David, denied the prevailing explanation for the failure of the Camp David Summit: "The biggest lie of the last three decades is...that Barak offered everything [and] the Palestinians refused everything."<sup>94</sup> There was nothing generous about the offer. After looking over the maps, the Palestinians understood that the proposal was no more than a deception geared to mislead the Palestinians. The territorial concessions, as drawn up by the Israelis at Camp David – to cede 91% of Judea and Samaria to Arafat and annex the other nine percent – would have carved Israeli-controlled cantons, or in the words of Arafat – *bantustans* – out of Judea and Samaria. Accepting such an agreement would have dashed any hopes for a viable, territorially contiguous Palestinian state.

Barak vehemently protests this interpretation, calling it a blatant lie stemming from Arafat's fear of being exposed for his irresponsibility for rejecting the proposal.

Malley and Agha's main accusations against Barak targeted his over-eagerness to achieve a deal during Clinton's term in office and his over-flexibility that was aimed at finding an offer too good and generous for the Palestinians to refuse. But, contrary to the Malley-Agha allegation, this "sliding-scale" approach did not translate into an all-or-nothing offer. On the contrary, Barak was so flexible that he made it impossible for the Palestinian side to determine when his real red line had been reached. Paradoxically, it was this very flexibility and over eagerness that raised the Palestinians' suspicions, leading them to conclude that "strictly speaking, there never was an Israeli offer." Abu Mazen condemned the summit as a trap that the

Palestinians managed to survive,<sup>95</sup> as did Arafat. Camp David forced him to reassess his options, and compelled him to adopt a strategy of cutting losses rather than maximizing gains: "...they were prepared to accept Israel's existence, but not its moral legitimacy."<sup>96</sup>

The Palestinian negotiators provided a number of reasons for the summit's collapse. First of all, they had been reluctant to go to Camp David without further preparations. Abu Alaa accused Barak of having doomed Camp David by cutting short the preparatory session. "We told him without preparation it would be a catastrophe, and now we are living the catastrophe." According to Abu Alaa, he and Arafat had informed Clinton at the White House, two weeks before Camp David, that they needed more time. But rather than postpone the summit, Clinton just told Arafat to try his best.

An additional reason for the summit's failure was, as suspected by Ben-Ami, the determination of the Palestinians not to make any concessions. Top Palestinian negotiator Abu Mazen himself admitted that they had no intentions of making any concessions at Camp David and had actually communicated this to President Clinton. They viewed the whole exercise as a trap to be escaped, rather than an opportunity to establish a Palestinian state. "We made clear to the Americans that the Palestinian side is unable to make concessions on anything." Abu Mazen summed up Camp David as: "a trap, from beginning to end... We did not miss an opportunity at all, but rather survived a trap that was laid for us."<sup>97</sup>

Confirming that Jerusalem lay at the core of the summit's failure, high-ranking officials told **Al-Hayat** that the Palestinians made it clear to the Americans that giving the Jews a license to pray on the Temple Mount would prompt massacres around the world.<sup>98</sup> Arafat, in reminding President Clinton that Moshe Dayan himself had prohibited Jews from praying on the Temple Mount since 1967, inquired: "Why do they want to do it now? The [Israeli] proposals are like mines that will ignite fires in the region and throughout the world. Beware not to repeat these proposals [because] they are dangerous and destructive."<sup>99</sup>

One can only speculate as to the real reasons why Arafat rejected Israel's proposals, but one cannot ignore the lessons the Palestinians have learned from previous rounds of talks with the Israelis. What is sacrosanct in one round becomes negotiable at the next round. It is very possible that they

assumed that they would get more Israeli concessions at the next round, so why concede. As Abu Mazen observed when asked whether there were any temptations in Barak's unprecedented offer: "The temptations were in what was offered...[but] despite the fact that it was true that they offered things that were never offered before, it never reached the level of our aspirations."<sup>100</sup>

Apparently, the Palestinian strategy was correct, as attested by Clinton's bridging proposal and Israel's concessions at Taba, where Barak hoped that by breaking every taboo he would succeed in enticing Arafat to agree to the final settlement of the conflict.

### **Camp David: Vision or Folly**

Without a doubt, hindsight is the best sight. Nonetheless, a dispassionate assessment of the situation would have indicated that the failure of the talks should have been foreseen.

First of all, although the Israelis may not admit it, the Palestinians were correct in their contention that further preparations were required. The preparations for the summit were, indeed, faulty, but not because the Israelis and the Palestinians hadn't talked enough. They never stopped talking. The problem was that the pre-Camp David consultations revolved around maps and did not deal with the substantive of the problems. The Israelis remained fixated on one strategy: discovering the right balance of territory to transfer to the Palestinians without compromising Israeli security. The real problem, as pointed out by Ross, was that there was a most critical difference in the mindsets of the Israelis and the Palestinians: Barak was thinking about a historic deal, Arafat was thinking in terms of another interim agreement. In other words, Barak was striving for a final settlement; Arafat was striving for further Israeli concessions on all disputed issues.

This was also the rationalization for the Palestinians protest that not enough time had been allocated for preparing the Camp David Summit. Dennis Ross fortuitously allows us to understand the true meaning of the need for further preparations. In a post-Oslo panel, Ross revealed that the month before the summit, which he had spent attempting to prepare the parties towards the summit, "was actually a period in which the Palestinian negotiators 'hardened their positions', with Arafat 'revealing nothing'."<sup>101</sup> In other words, the time was not yet ripe because the Israelis had not yet yielded to these "hardened positions".

There is no doubt that the Israelis were severely remiss in their preparations for the Camp David Summit. They had no idea what were the Palestinian positions or intentions. All they had were the aspirations of the Israeli people and their hopes for peace and security.

And I look forward to Yasser Arafat coming to Camp David with the full backing of the Palestinian people to achieve a historic peace. I expect him to come full of resolution and the ability to make a decision in order together to achieve our goal. Together, with the help of the President of the United States, we will be able to bring peace and security to our peoples.<sup>102</sup>

Ben-Ami accuses Arafat of living a myth; perhaps this can be said of the Israelis too. They came to Camp David in their quest for peace. Rather than understanding the essence of the Palestinian's quest, they projected their aspirations onto them.

### **Post-Camp David Talks: Down the Sliding Path**

Throughout the period of August through November intensive meetings were held between the Israelis and the Palestinians. The net result was further Israeli concessions as against an impregnable Palestinian position.

Although Arafat explicitly told Clinton that "*The Arab leader who would give up Jerusalem has not yet been born,*"<sup>103</sup> nonetheless, on July 23, the United States submitted a new proposal. The proposal, based on modified Israeli positions, granted the Palestinians full sovereignty in the Muslim and Christian quarters [including Christian holy sites], while leaving the Jewish and Armenian quarters under Israeli sovereignty. In a response to this proposal, Arafat told Clinton,

I will not agree to any Israeli sovereign presence in Jerusalem, neither in the Armenian quarter, nor in the *al-Aqsa* Mosque, neither on the Via Dolorosa, nor in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. They can occupy us by force, because we are weaker now, but in two years, ten years, or one hundred years, there will be someone who will liberate Jerusalem [from them].<sup>104</sup>

The PA *mufti* of Jerusalem and Palestine, Sheikh `Ikrima Sabri, explained that the Western Wall is part of the *al-Aqsa* Wall, and therefore is an Islamic *Waqf*. Nonetheless, the Palestinians were prepared to acknowledge the right of Jews to pray at the Western Wall out of respect to Judaism, but only on the condition that the Palestinians retained sovereignty over the Wall.

In respect to the territorial concessions, Israel back-stepped, informing the Palestinians that they were prepared to settle with seven percent of Judea and Samaria, in contradistinction to the 12% stipulated at Stockholm. An additional unprecedented concession was the forfeiture of two percent of sovereign Israeli territory, to be transferred to the Palestinians in return for the seven percent they would be relinquishing. Israel also dropped the demand for sovereignty in the Jordan Rift Valley. Ben-Ami justified this additional concession by confessing that “It was clear to us that our demand for sovereignty in the Jordan Rift Valley was something the Palestinians could not live with.”

Throughout this whole period, the Palestinians didn’t bother to present maps of their own. Why should they? The Israelis were constantly modifying theirs to propitiate them.

On September 28, 2000, taking advantage of Likud Party leader, Ariel Sharon’s visit to the Temple Mount, the Palestinian Authority launched attacks against Israelis, both within Israel proper and in the territories – the *Intifadat al-Aqsa*. In the aftermath of the September events, violence spread across Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip, precipitating repercussions in the international arena. Throughout the Arab and Islamic world, anti-Israel and sometimes anti-American demonstrations flooded the streets. In Amman and Cairo, angry marchers attempted to storm the Israeli embassies, but were thwarted by the local security forces.

Throughout the remainder of his period in office, Barak had to contend, simultaneously, with the pressure of moving forward in negotiations with the Palestinians and the containment of the *Intifadat al-Aqsa* launched by Arafat. The government adopted two ostensibly complementary crisis management strategies, coercive diplomacy and tit-for-tat/limited escalation. However, the government, as so eminently demonstrated by Assaf Moghadam, demonstrated dismal inconsistency, or zigzagging, in implementing these strategies.

Barak, oscillating between rebuffing and pursuing Arafat as a partner for peace, wavered between restraining the IDF in its war against the terrorists and reinforcing “tit-for-tat reprisals and limited escalation”. The inevitable result was that the government’s main objective, to persuade the Palestinians to end the violence, failed to bear fruit in the first three months of the crisis.<sup>105</sup>

In the first days of the *intifada*, Barak implemented a “try-and-see” approach. When this proved futile after a mere four days, he changed tactics and ordered the IDF to undertake a “show of force”. This, too, turned out to be equally unsuccessful in bringing about the desired outcome. Then, on October 4, in a meeting with Madeleine Albright, Barak conditioned further negotiations on a cessation of violence. On October 7, following the kidnapping of three Israeli soldiers by *Hizbullah* guerillas, Barak issued a 48-hour ultimatum for the Palestinians to halt their assaults on Israeli military outposts and civilian settlements. He threatened that should the PA fail to comply, he would “*direct the IDF and the security forces to use all means at their disposal to halt the violence.*” When the ultimatum expired 48 hours later, Barak extended the deadline, saying that he wanted to give intensive diplomatic efforts a chance. The nature of the ultimatum and its sudden cancellation by Barak left many Israelis and non-Israelis stunned.

On October 16-17, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak hosted a summit at Sharm e-Sheikh in an attempt to de-escalate the crisis. President Clinton, Prime Minister Barak and Chairman Arafat attended. The summit produced a communiqué calling upon both Israel and the PA to issue public statements unequivocally calling for an end to the violence and to take immediate concrete measures to end the confrontation. In order to forestall Palestinian attempts to internationalize the conflict, Israel agreed to the appointment of a fact-finding committee to present recommendations as to how to prevent the recurrence of the violence.<sup>106</sup>

On October 20, an Arab summit of Arab heads of state was convened in Cairo. After two days of deliberations, the Cairo summit issued a communiqué that expressed its full support of the Palestinian uprising and encouraged the suspension of further political and economic links with Israel. The communiqué endorsed the Palestinian objectives and called upon the UN Security Council to “assume responsibility of providing the necessary protection for the Palestinian people...by considering the establishment of an international force or presence for this purpose.”

Israel responded by issuing a statement in which it rejected the “*language of threats used at the Arab summit in Cairo*”, and condemned the call for continued violence.

On October 22, in response to what Barak termed the failure of the Palestinian side to uphold the Sharm e-Sheikh understandings, Barak



suspended talks with the Palestinians to reassess the diplomatic process. On November 1, he once more changed gear, with talks resuming between Peres and Arafat at the Gaza-Israel border. The outcome of the meeting was an agreement “on a series of steps on the basis of the Sharm understanding that are due to lead to the renewal of security cooperation and a halt to the violence and incitement.”

As so many other agreements, this one too remained on paper, with Arafat refraining from giving an order to halt the violence. Not only was there no abate in the violence, it soared to new heights. At this point, Barak adopted a new policy of targeting and killing Palestinian instigators of the violence.

In the second half of November, despite the continued violence, Israeli strategy zagged again as Barak dumped his quest for an all-inclusive, end-of-conflict agreement, as was the goal of Camp David, and confined himself to striving for an interim agreement based on the declaration of a Palestinian state. In mid-December, Barak, reverting back to the policy adhered to by Rabin and Peres, dropped the precondition that the Palestinians suppress the violence, informing the Palestinians that he was prepared to restart talks as long as they made an effort to clamp down on incitement and terrorism. Incitement and terror continued, the talks between Ben-Ami and Arafat remained fruitless, but a new round of talks, which was scheduled to be held in Washington, opened a new stage in the negotiations.

### **Washington Talks: President Clinton’s Bridging Proposals<sup>107</sup>**

At the end of the November, Ben-Ami, together with other Israeli delegates, were once more negotiating with the Palestinians at Bolling Air Force Base, with Yasser Abed Rabbo, a top Palestinian negotiator. On December 18, the Israeli delegation, without consulting anyone, raised the idea of granting the Palestinians full sovereignty over the Temple Mount provided they do not undertake to conduct excavations because of its sanctity to the Jews. Not only did the Palestinians denigrate the idea of not being allowed to excavate, but also under no circumstances would they agree to verbally concede that, “the site is sacred to the Jews.” The Palestinians responded with scorn and disdain to this demand, denying that the Jews had any tie or right to the Temple Mount. What particularly outraged Ben-Ami was their manner of total contempt, dismissiveness and arrogance towards

Israeli appeals. Ben-Ami was deeply offended by the contempt the Palestinians exuded, and confessed to Shavit that

At that moment I grasped they are really not Sadat. That they were not willing to move toward our position even at the emotional and symbolic level. At the deepest level, they are not ready to recognize that we have any kind of title here.

These talks were cut off by a summons issued by President Clinton on December 23 to the delegations to appear at the White House. The Israelis and the Palestinians sat around a long table in the Cabinet Room of the White House to receive a carefully calculated ultimatum. When the Palestinian and Israeli diplomats were seated, a door to the Cabinet Room opened. Clinton walked in, pulled his chair up to the table and unfolded his notes. "I want to be as precise as I can, so I'll read this slowly." He then dictated his ideas for finally closing a peace deal, while the Israeli and Palestinian delegates scribbled down each word.

After concluding his "dictation", Clinton folded his notes and looked up. "If you want to reach an agreement, I think that the only way to get it done is to accept this."

Barak and Arafat had till midweek to give their answer, but President Clinton made it crystal clear that the proposal had an expiration date. When he left office, the ideas would go with him.

The pivot around which the bridging proposal revolved was the obligation, on the part of both parties, to accept the two-state solution. The agreement would recognize Israel, as the historic homeland of the Jewish people while the State of Palestine would be the focal point for Palestinians who choose to return to the area. The agreement did not rule out the possibility that Israel would accept some of these refugees.

1. **Jerusalem:** Palestine would gain sovereignty over East Jerusalem with Arab neighborhoods becoming part of Palestine. Jewish neighborhoods will remain part of Israel. Palestine will also gain sovereignty over the top of the Temple Mount, over the *al-Aqsa* Mosque, the Dome of the Rock and the plaza between them. The Palestinians will be forbidden to conduct archaeological digs there and will have to acknowledge the Jewish connection to the site. The Western Wall, the Jewish Quarter of the Old City and most of the

- Armenian Quarter will remain Israeli. The entire Old City will be open, with no border controls. Jerusalem will be the capital of both countries.
2. **Refugees:** Israel would acknowledge “the suffering of the refugees”, and absorb tens of thousands of Palestinian refugees into Israel under the rubric of family reunification. Palestinian refugees will be granted the “right to return” to their “homeland”, which would be defined in the agreement as the Palestinian state. There would be no “right of return” to Israel. An international framework, in which Israel will participate, will be set up for compensating and resettling the refugees. Israel alone would decide which Palestinians it will allow to return, if at all.
  3. **Palestinian state:** The borders of the Palestinian state will conform to the June 4, 1967 lines, with minor adjustments, for which Israel will compensate the Palestinians with territory in the Negev. Israel will cede the entire Gaza Strip and the Palestinians will control some 95% of Judea and Samaria. About 80% of the settlers will be annexed to Israel, with territorial contiguity between Israel and the annexed settlements. Israel will guarantee a “safe passage” between Judea, Samaria and Gaza.
  4. **Finality:** Upon signing the agreement, both sides will declare “*an end to the conflict*”. The agreement will be implemented in two stages, the first lasting three years and the second, six years. When implementation is complete, the Palestinians will announce that they have no further claims against Israel.<sup>108</sup>
  5. **Security:** A “demilitarized” or “non-militarized” Palestinian state will be established. Israel will have the right to deploy troops along the Jordan Valley in the event of a military threat from the east.

Significantly, Israel’s acceptance of the Clinton parameters pushed Israel’s territorial offer essentially to a 100% withdrawal: approximately 97% in Judea and Samaria, between 1-2% from Israel proper, and a “safe passage” cutting through Israel. This compromise would enable Arafat to present Clinton’s solution to the Palestinians as constituting the 100% of the territories they insisted upon.

After perusing the “bridging proposal”, Barak accepted the plan. In doing so, he not only abandoned his own red lines, but also exceeded the mandate he had received for compromise. The bridging proposal, in essence, virtually amounted to withdrawing to the 1967 borders, the division of Jerusalem, a territorial swap and the legitimization of the “right of return”.

These points were made quite clear to Barak when he presented the proposal to his cabinet. Barak assured the Cabinet members that Israel would not be swallowing all of Clinton’s ideas. He pleaded that despite the painful concessions, this was an opportunity for Israel. “I will not sign an agreement that transfers sovereignty of the [Temple] Mount to the Palestinians.”

Israel’s army chief, Lieutenant General Shaul Mofaz, participated in the debate, in the course of which he warned the Cabinet “there are a lot of gaps in the American plan.” His greatest concern was how to protect Israel’s eastern border from a potentially hostile Palestinian state. Ultimately, after ten hours of haggling behind closed doors, Barak succeeded in convincing his Cabinet members with a 10-2 vote to accept the plan in principle.

Arafat, under immense pressure from the refugees, who denounced him for his sellout, delivered a long letter to the White House Wednesday with 26 questions, clarifications and objections he wanted answered prior to responding to the proposal. Then the entire world waited, with baited breath, for Arafat’s final answer. “Arafat succeeded, beyond his wildest dreams, in getting world attention.” As described by Ben-Ami:

Arafat wasn’t in any hurry. He went to Mubarak and then to all kinds of inter-Arab meetings and dragged his feet. He didn’t even return Clinton’s calls. The whole world, and I mean the whole world, put tremendous pressure on him, but he refused to say yes. During those 10 days there was hardly any international leader who didn’t call him – from the Duke of Liechtenstein to the President of China. But Arafat wouldn’t be budged. He stuck to his evasive methods. ...Finally, very late...Bruce Reidell, from the National Security Council, told me that we shouldn’t get it wrong, that there should be no misunderstandings on our part: Arafat in fact said no.

The Palestinian delegation sent a memorandum to President Clinton outlining the reasons for their rejection. “The latest United States proposals, taken together and as presented without clarification, fail to satisfy the conditions required for a ‘permanent peace’ and do not provide for ‘workable security arrangements’.”<sup>109</sup>

The memorandum went on to say that the Palestinians objected to a settlement that would lead to a division of the Palestinian state by Israeli settlements, the geographic isolation of Arab areas of Jerusalem and the surrender of the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their former homes. “The United States proposal seems to respond to Israeli demands while neglecting the basic Palestinian need: a viable state.”<sup>110</sup>

To recapitulate, throughout the period from August 2000 through mid-December, intensive meetings were held between the Israelis and the Palestinians. The net result was further Israeli concessions as against an impregnable Palestinian position.

1. Israel backstopped in respect to the territorial issue, settling for seven percent of Judea and Samaria, in contradistinction to the 12% stipulated at Stockholm.
2. Israel agreed to forfeit two percent of sovereign Israeli territory.
3. Israel dropped the demand for sovereignty in the Jordan Rift Valley.
4. Israel agreed to the division of Jerusalem and forfeited the Temple Mount.

Throughout this whole period, the Palestinians didn’t bother to present maps of their own. Why should they? The Israelis were constantly revising theirs to accommodate them. This pattern of behavior was replicated at Taba.

### **Taba Peace Talks**

While Israel preferred that the US issue a presidential declaration on the peace plan, President Clinton was averse to the idea, and called for direct Israel-PA negotiations. These negotiations were resumed at various levels from January 11, 2001. After the Palestinians had once more rejected an Israeli map, Arafat met with Ben-Ami and decided that direct talks would start on January 20.

Apparently, Barak realized the fruitlessness of the whole exercise and did not want to go to Taba. On the eve of these talks, he restated Israel’s position on three crucial issues:

1. Israel will never allow a “right of return” to Palestinian refugees inside Israel.

2. He will not sign any document that transfers sovereignty over the Temple Mount to the Palestinians.
3. 80% of the Jewish residents of Judea, Samaria and Gaza will be annexed in settlement blocs under Israeli sovereignty.

The reality of the situation stared the Israelis in the face. Throughout the duration of the talks, from June 2000 till the latter half of December, the Palestinians had consistently succeeded in maneuvering the Israelis into abandoning their own positions and adopting those of the Palestinians, without budging from theirs. Why were the Israelis so obstinate in adhering to Clinton's parameters despite being fully aware that Arafat was incapable of committing himself to the closure of the Palestinians conflict with Israel?

Ben-Ami, who had seen with his own eyes, and experienced, the intractability and tenacity of the Palestinians, evidently still hoped that there would be some movement towards Israel's positions. It is not clear what sustained this hope. At Israeli's insistence, the starting point of the talks in Taba was Clinton's parameters, but, as could be expected, the Palestinians, indefatigably worked at whittling away at these parameters.

They tried to squeeze a bit more out of us: on the Jerusalem question they didn't accept the idea of the Holy of Holies, which appears explicitly in the Clinton proposals. And on the refugee issue they suggested a formulation that meant that they had their own reading of [United Nations General Assembly Resolution 194, December 11, 1948], while the Israelis had a different reading. They said "we have to establish the right of return and then discuss the mechanisms."<sup>11</sup>

In view of the outstanding success of their strategy at Camp David, where Israel ultimately caved in on most of their demands, the Palestinians transformed the Taba talks into the Refugee conference. With no less success, Israel sweetened the Camp David offer to previously unimaginable extremes.

It is not clear whether the Palestinians really expected Israel to capitulate on the numbers they demanded (150,000 refugees a year during a 10-year period), but they succeeded in attaining their real goal. After fighting tooth and nail at all forums against the principle of "the right of return", Israel finally capitulated. Yossi Beilin, Deputy Foreign Minister admitted that he had proposed admitting 40,000 refugees.

On the territorial issue also, Israel progressed backwards: a ratio of 94.5% [of the land for the Palestinians] against 5.5%, before the territorial swap. The offer was never crystallized because the Palestinians refused to accept the Halutza dunes. One of the operative ideas was to move the border with Egypt to the east and then giving the Palestinians Egyptian territory adjacent to the Gaza Strip – regardless of the fact that this would entail uprooting about a hundred Israeli settlements.

At Taba, Israel, on the fast track towards more concessions, presented a new map to the Palestinians, a map that entailed the uprooting of more than 100 settlements. The Palestinians high-handedly rejecting the new map, finally presenting a counter-map. To Ben-Ami's dismay, their map totally eroded the three already shrunken [settlement] blocs, leaving only a few isolated settlements dependent on narrow access roads. Accepting this map would have pushed Israel's territorial offer beyond 100%. "A calculation we made showed that all they agreed to give us was 2.34 percent."

In response to this revelation, Shavit commented with astonishment that nearly seven months of negotiations with the Palestinians, from July 2000 to January 2001, had yielded only 0.34%. Ben-Ami, apologetically replied, "It's hard for me to argue with you... Neither of us [Barak and Ben-Ami] is a professional peace industrialist. But look where we got. Tell me what more we were supposed to do."<sup>112</sup>

To summarize: from June 2000 till January 2001, Israel agreed to hand over more than 100% of the territories, conceded the Rift Valley, accepted the idea of a territorial swap, divided Jerusalem and handed over the Temple Mount. During this same period, the whole movement of the Palestinians toward Israel was in fractions of percentage points. The talks at Taba ended at this point in a deadlock, the participants issuing a joint statement on January 27 that was a masterpiece in doublespeak:

The Taba talks were unprecedented in their positive atmosphere and expression of mutual willingness to meet the national, security and existential needs of each side. Given the circumstances and time constraints, it proved impossible to reach understandings on all issues, despite the substantial progress that was achieved in each of the issues discussed. The sides declare that they have never been closer to reaching an agreement and it is thus our shared belief that the remaining gaps could be bridged with the resumption of negotiations following the Israeli elections.

As has been eminently demonstrated above, the only progress made in Taba was further Israeli capitulation to Palestinian demands – but up to a limit. Evidently, the Palestinians crossed that border, bringing the talks to an impasse. A contributing reason for the deadlock was probably the storm surrounding the very conducting of the talks in the midst of elections. The question that hovered over the talks was whether any agreement that Barak would sign, should he be defeated, would have any legal validity. On February 8, Barak allayed any fears by sending a letter to President Bush in which he clarified that all the ideas brought up in the course of the negotiations with Arafat, from the Camp David Summit up to and including Taba, were not binding on the new government. Although his government had done the utmost to bring about an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, all his efforts had not borne fruit “primarily because of a lack of sufficient readiness for compromise on the part of the Palestinian leadership.”

Thus, taking a page out of President Clinton’s book, Barak, too, emphasized that his ideas would be rendered null and void at the end of his term of office.

In assessing the progress of the talks from Camp David to Taba, one cannot escape the conclusion that Arafat’s maneuvers were absolutely brilliant. By refusing to “get into the game” by submitting counterproposals to those the Israelis put on the table, Arafat succeeded in moving the negotiation parameters towards his red lines without budging an inch. In contrast, Barak’s main “achievement” was to squander Israel’s bargaining chips. Israel’s red lines were breached and regardless of Barak’s statements to the contrary, the next round of negotiations will probably begin with his concessions.

### **Hindsight is the Best Sight**

Former Prime Minister Ehud Barak’s assessment of Arafat has undergone a radical overhaul since his ousting from office. In retrospect, he has reached the conclusion that Arafat and his colleagues want a Palestinian state in all of Palestine and not two states for two peoples. Cognizant of the reality that Israel was too strong to defeat, they formally recognized it as an interim ploy towards fulfilling their real aspirations. Their game plan was to establish a Palestinian state while always leaving an opening for further “legitimate” demands down the road. “He [Arafat] did not negotiate in good faith, indeed, he did not negotiate at all. He just kept saying ‘no’ to every offer, never making any counterproposals of his own.”<sup>113</sup>



Barak believes that Arafat sees the Palestinian refugees of 1948 and their descendants, numbering close to four million, as the main demographic-political tool for subverting the Jewish state. Arafat, according to Barak, believes that Israel “has no right to exist”, and he seeks its demise, the Palestinians willing to agree to a temporary truce only *à la Hudnat Hudaibiya*.<sup>114</sup>

They will exploit the tolerance and democracy of Israel first to turn it into “a state for all its citizens”, as demanded by the extreme nationalist wing of Israel’s Arabs and extremist left-wing Jewish Israelis. Then they will push for a bi-national state and then, demography and attrition will lead to a state with a Muslim majority and a Jewish minority. This would not necessarily involve kicking out all the Jews. But it would mean the destruction of Israel as a Jewish state. This, I believe, is their vision. They may not talk about it often, openly, but this is their vision.<sup>115</sup>

Ben-Ami, too, has severe criticism for Arafat. Prime Minister Barak’s primary goal was to reach a final settlement and to bring an end to the conflict. However, this goal was predicated on reciprocity on the part of Arafat. As the negotiation process proceeded, and the scope of Israeli concessions continuously expanded, it became clear that, for Arafat, the process of Israeli incremental concessions had no end. To perpetuate this process, he had chosen a strategy of conflict.

Arafat’s recognition of Israel and its right to exist was a formal concession, but

morally and conceptually, he didn’t recognize Israel’s right to exist. He doesn’t accept the idea of two states for two peoples. He may be able to make some sort of partial, temporary settlement with us - though I have doubts about that, too – but at the deep level, he doesn’t accept us. Neither he nor the Palestinian national movement accept us.

With the benefit of hindsight, Ben-Ami confesses that it was a nearly catastrophic failure in policy to agree to negotiate with Arafat. “In retrospect, I agree that it was an historic mistake to bring him here; it almost cost us the State of Israel. At various instances we should have taken stock.”<sup>116</sup>

Even more startling, Ben-Ami acknowledged that the opposition parties were right in their assessment of Arafat. Nonetheless, this did not diminish his disparagement towards them. “Here the right wing was right in its gut

feelings both about the partner and about the deep currents of the conflict. But the right wing was not right about a solution, because it has no solution.”<sup>117</sup>

Ben-Ami accuses the Palestinian national movement of having serious pathological elements and being incapable of setting positive goals; its leadership incapable of grasping the tragedy it was inflicting on its people.

At the end of the process, it is impossible not to form the impression that the Palestinians don't want a solution as much as they want to place Israel in the dock of the accused. More than they want a state of their own, they want to denounce our state. That is why, contrary to the Zionist movement, they are incapable of compromising. Because they have no image of the future society that they want and for which it is worth compromising. Therefore, the process, from their point of view, is not one of conciliation but of vindication; of righting a wrong, of undermining our existence as a Jewish state.<sup>118</sup>

Ben-Ami experienced this epiphany when Arafat rejected President Clinton's parameters. “He saw us drowning and the peace drowning and time running out. It was only then that I understood clearly that for Arafat, the negotiations would end only when Israel was broken.”

It was at this point that Ben-Ami realized that the conflict had nothing to do with the scope of Israeli concessions. The Palestinians didn't care about resolving the conflict. They had been offered a dream proposal, but they wouldn't budge. This insight into the true nature of the Israeli-Palestinian relationship was reinforced at Taba, when once more, despite the enhanced offer, they unconscionably refused to budge from their positions.

Ben-Ami's main conclusion from his experience is that a new paradigm should be constructed, one that does not ignore Palestinian belligerency towards Israel's right to exist. A critical element of this paradigm should be a halt to Israel's culture of “giving in to pressure, a process which is liable to lead Israel to suicide”.

We mustn't forgo Jewish and Israeli patriotism any longer, and we must understand that the blame does not always lie with us. We have to say: That's it, there is no more. And if the other side wants to destroy that core thing, too – I take my stand by that core.<sup>119</sup>

## Chapter 8: Folly or Failure

When the government of Israel signed the Oslo Accords with Yasser Arafat, the leader of the terrorist organization, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), it opened the gates to one of the most bitter, unrelenting and unrepentant enemies of the State of Israel. No longer were the terrorist forces outside the gates – they were inside, free to create havoc.

Barbara Tuchman opens her book with the story of the Trojan Horse, the epitome of folly. It is precisely this analogy that one of the PLO senior leaders used in describing the Palestinian vision that jeopardizes the very existence of the State of Israel.

Faisal al-Husseini, the holder of the Jerusalem Portfolio in the Palestinian Authority, in his last interview prior to his death, defined the Oslo Accords as the Trojan Horse used towards fulfilling the Palestinians' strategic goal: the liberation of Palestine from the [Jordan] River to the [Mediterranean] Sea.<sup>120</sup>

Husseini differentiates between strategic long-term phased goals and political phased goals, “which we are compelled to temporarily accept due to international pressure”. In asking all the Palestinian forces to regard the Oslo Accords and other agreements as “temporary” procedures, or phased goals, he was really saying “this means that we are ambushing the Israelis and cheating them.”

The Oslo Accords is one such goal.

Had the US and Israel not realized before Oslo, that all that was left of the Palestinian National movement and the pan-Arab movement was a wooden horse called Arafat or the PLO, they would never have opened their fortified gates and let it inside their walls.

The *intifada* is another phased goal.

So come down out of the horse and start working for the goal for which you entered the horse to begin with. In my opinion, the *intifada* itself is the coming down out of the horse...this effort [the *intifada*] could have been much better, broader, and more significant had we made it clearer to ourselves that the Oslo agreement, or any other agreement, is just a temporary procedure, or just a step towards something bigger...

When asked what would be the borders of the Palestinian state he foresees, Husseini revealed the Palestinian long-term goal, which is “the liberation of Palestine from the river to the sea...”

...if we agree to declare our state over what is now only 22% of Palestine, meaning Judea, Samaria and Gaza – our ultimate goal is [still] the liberation of all historical Palestine from the [Jordan] River to the [Mediterranean] Sea, even if this means that the conflict will last for another thousand years or for many generations... If you are asking me as a pan-Arab nationalist what are the Palestinian borders according to the higher strategy, I will immediately reply: “From the river to the sea.” Palestine in its entirety is an Arab land, the land of the Arab nation, a land no one can sell or buy, and it is impossible to remain silent while someone is stealing it, even if this requires time and even [if it means paying] a high price.

In contrast, the Israelis wanted to peaceful coexistence. In introducing his government, Rabin declared that:

The new Government has made it a prime goal to promote the making of peace and take vigorous steps that will lead to the conclusion of the Arab-Israeli conflict. We shall do so based on the recognition by the Arab countries, and the Palestinians, that Israel is a sovereign state with a right to live in peace and security.

Subsequently, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, at a press conference with US President Bill Clinton at the White House, on November 12, 1993, declared his vision of the future, as derived from the Oslo Accords:

The signing of the Declaration of Principles has created a new hope and opened many opportunities in our negotiations with other Arab parties to the Washington negotiations for peace... We have found that direct and quiet contacts between Israel and its partners in the effort to achieve a comprehensive peace is the best way to overcome prejudices of the past.

A long view of the road taken since the signing of the Accords reveals that the realization of peace has become even more elusive since the signing of the Oslo Accords.

### **Israel's Follies**

Peace is an inspiring vision, a means to create a better society and a better world. The Israeli negotiators of the Oslo Accords were so desperate for peace that they forgot that peace was merely a means, and subordinated the

welfare of society, the goal, to the realization of the means. When peace began so elusively that it seemed to slip beyond their reach, they substituted the peace agreement for peace, ignoring the repercussions on the countries, societies and people bound by the agreement.

Peace is a means not an end. To the detriment of the State of Israel, the Labor Party, as well as other parties and movements on the left of the political spectrum, made peace into an end in itself. By prioritizing peace before security, the welfare of the State of Israel and its citizens were subordinated to the attainment of this goal.

This is best illustrated by Prime Minister Rabin's defining the victims of the suicide bombers as "victims of peace" regardless of the fact that extirpating terrorism was the reason for and the goal of the Oslo peace process. The phrase, "victims of peace", trivializes the atrocity and makes a mockery of such a peace process.

The negotiators struggled to define each word contained in the agreement, thus creating a virtual world, divorced by reality. In their desperation to flaunt their success, they forgot the Israelis and the Palestinians and the roots of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Thus, the negotiators that led the signing of the Oslo Accords did not seek to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; they sought to prevail upon the representatives of the Israeli government and the Palestinian Liberation Organization to sign an agreement. By obscuring the differences between the means and the goal, the negotiators became bogged down by the means to the means – the signing of a peace agreement. In dreaming for "Peace Now", they laid the foundation for the total collapse of any real hope of peaceful relations between the two peoples involved – the Israelis and the Palestinians.

### **Dichotomy of Goals**

The shift from self-reliance to bilateral and multilateral agreements was rooted in the belief that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was a territorial dispute. Within this ideological framework, transferring territory held by Israel to the Palestinians would resolve the conflict and peace would reign in the Middle East. The DoP contains no explicit recognition of Israel's right to exist, nor does it contain a PLO recantation of violence. There is only a personal pledge in a personal letter to Prime Minister Rabin to this effect. Nonetheless, Israeli officials took pains to affirm their intention to begin

withdrawals irrespective of PLO recognition of Israel. Even before Arafat had sent the side-letter to Rabin, Peres had already declared that Israel was prepared to sign the DoP immediately and unconditionally.<sup>121</sup> Time and again, Peres responded that the DoP is “independent”, “stands on its own two feet”, and “doesn’t need any further confirmation”.<sup>122</sup> In other words, Israel was so desperate to withdraw that Israeli leaders were prepared to waive PLO commitment to renounce terrorism and to recognize Israel’s right to exist.

The formula, “land for peace”, that lay at the basis of the DoP, was envisioned to create a win-win situation. However, as the Oslo peace progressed, the clash between the ultimate goals of the parties to the DoP became clearer, more palpable, and more ominous:

- For Israelis, peace with real security was the *sine qua non* and ultimate goal of the negotiations with the Palestinians.
- For the Palestinians, the establishment of a sovereign national Palestinian state was the *sine qua non* and ultimate goal of the negotiations with Israel.

The fundamental goal of the DoP, as defined and conceived by the Israelis, was the cessation of violence and the end of the conflict. Since the signing of the DoP, more than nine years ago, there have been very few, if any, statements made by Palestinian leaders that condition the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian state with these goals. No Palestinian leader has ever declared that the establishment of such a state would bring the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to an end. No Palestinian leader has renounced the right of return, an imperative condition to the end of the conflict. As long as the right of return has not been abrogated, it remains an open issue, allowing new Palestinian movements to emerge, seeking full restitution of the rights of Palestinians within Israel proper.

The dichotomy of goals was aggravated by the ambiguity in the definition of the concept of “Palestinian national rights”. This created a huge chasm in interpretation and precipitated unbridgeable negotiating positions. The concept of gradualism, conceived as a mechanism to ease the transition from hostility to peace, in reality, exacerbated hostilities. The underlying assumption was that in the interim, an atmosphere of cooperation and mutual confidence would have been created, with both sides taking confidence-building measures. The expected result was the establishment of a

foundation conducive to the attainment of constructive, mutually satisfying agreements. The possibility of failure of these initial stages was not even addressed. In retrospect, by postponing the most divisive topics for final-status negotiations, Israel frittered away its bargaining chips.

On the eve of new elections, the current leader of the Labor Party announced that should he establish a coalition, he would unconditionally resume negotiations with Arafat from the point they broke down at Taba. All of the divisive issues are still outstanding but Israel has already conceded more than 100% of the territory under dispute. What has emerged is a destructive zero sum game, not a win-win situation.

### **Resurrecting Arafat and the PLO**

The Labor Party's major folly was in trusting that Arafat's political isolation had made him more amenable to negotiating the end of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Perhaps they expected gratitude for resurrecting him from his pariah status in Tunis and crowning him the leader of the Palestinian people. The reason for making this decision is moot, but post-factum it is manifestly clear that Rabin and Peres had irresponsibly chosen a man whose very *raison d'être* was predicated upon the perpetuation of the ideology dedicated to the destruction of the State of Israel. As described by Falk and Schwartz:

In the final account, Arafat and the Tunis cadre – a vestige of the Palestinian past – were a hollow vessel for the Palestinian cause. Apart from launching numerous “successful” attacks on Israelis and Jews around the world, they had brought the Palestinian people no closer to national self-determination... Arafat, as opposed to the local leaders in the Territories and their future successors, was not concerned with the trials and tribulations of the population. As an icon and a persona inextricably bound to the ethos of the Palestinian issue, he is committed to perpetuate the Palestinian plight as a personal political vessel.<sup>123</sup>

The proponents of Oslo rationalized Arafat's endorsement by repetitively asserting that although the PLO is not the ideal partner, “*Israel cannot choose its enemies and that peace is made between enemies.*” In legitimizing Arafat and the PLO, and forsaking the resident Palestinian people, the Labor Party pinned their hopes on a leader that represented the million of Palestinians in the Diaspora who were living in squalor in the refugee camps, awaiting the implementation of the “right of return” to Israel. Falk and

Schwartz pinpoint this decision as the turn point in Labor policy that led it to fall into folly.

The Israeli government consciously decided on negotiation with a long-time terrorist organization representing not the Palestinian leadership in the Territories, which was more concerned with the issues facing the resident population, but the Palestinian Diaspora (i.e., the refugees, and the concomitant issue of the “Right of Return”).<sup>124</sup>

Who was Arafat?

After months of negotiation, former Prime Minister Ehud Barak defined Arafat as a

terrorist thug and does not have the character to make peace...an Arafat who does not recognize the moral and legal right of Israel to exist as a Jewish, Zionist, democratic state... Mr. Arafat does not envision a Palestinian state alongside Israel but a Palestinian state instead of Israel.<sup>125</sup>

It was only in retrospect that Barak understood that the *Intifadat al-Aqsa*, in essence, confronted both Israel and the world with the question of whether they were ready to accept suicide bombings, and the slaughter of scores of innocent Israeli civilians every week, as a legitimate political tool.

I know it is not about occupation because less than two years ago at Camp David, President Clinton put on the table an offer that could lead to a contiguous and independent Palestine over more than 90% of Judea and Samaria. Furthermore, the proposal included a right of return for refugees into the Palestinian state, but of course not into Israel, and even a foothold in East Jerusalem as a part of its capital.<sup>126</sup>

### **Ignoring Existential Risks to Israel**

From the security perspective, the Oslo process symbolized a watershed in the Israeli security doctrine: the readiness to entrust Israel's security and anti-terror activity to the safekeeping of others. Rabin and Peres did not make the decision lightly. Their whole perception of Arafat was the epitome of dissonance. On the one hand, they did not trust his integrity or his sincerity to quash the terrorist organizations. On the other hand, they believed that Israel was incapable of quelling the *intifada* and thus had no choice but to place the security of Israeli citizens in Arafat's hands. What actually happened was that the DoP laid the foundations for the establishment of the Palestinian state, the division of Jerusalem, the ceding



of the Jordan Valley, and other parts of Israel inside the Green Line, but did not lead to a suppression of terror. Jettisoning Israel's traditional security doctrine, as embodied in the DoP, led to an unprecedented intensification in terror, both in scope and in barbarity, with soaring terrorist acts and casualties.

The futility of the Oslo process from the Israeli perspective was also embodied in the *Hamas* chorus that accompanied Arafat's declarations in English calling for peace: "We shall continue our struggle against the Jews." The struggle was not over this or that piece of land; it was the very presence, or existence, if you will, of Jews in proximity to Muslims in the territory they had arrogated to themselves. The rejectionists did not peruse the document, nor did they examine or assess its potential benefits or risks. They realized that the nucleus of the DoP was the rejection of the option of renouncing their hatred, their hostility, and their revulsion for Jews. This they were not prepared to do, nor are they capable of doing. It is this hatred of Jews, and their presence in the Middle East, that defines the organization and every single one of its members. The inescapable conclusion is that territorial concessions will never ever placate or conciliate them, only the disappearance of the Jews.<sup>127</sup>

In looking back on the past nine years, the concept of "peace with security" proved to be an illusion. Rather than inculcate the Palestinians with the concept of peaceful coexistence, Arafat has imbued them with the notion that they are engaged in a "*Jihad*" against Israel. Israel's unfettered retreat from its red lines has led the Palestinians to believe that they have weakened the country's resolve. The unrelenting terror, coupled with the failure of Israeli decision-makers to decisively respond to Palestinian terrorism, convinced the Palestinians that they were winning their struggle to destroy the State of Israel.

### **Fluidity of Israel's "Red Lines"**

One of Israel's biggest failures, or follies, was in not making it crystal-clear from the outset, what were the limitations to peace. In doing so, Israel raised the hopes and expectations of the Palestinians and created illusions that this could be realized. Issues that were especially non-negotiable included:

1. No Palestinian state;

2. No division of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall remain united under Israeli sovereignty;
3. No right of return;
4. No control over the borders with Jordan and Egypt;
5. No transfer of the clusters of Jewish settlements;
6. No removal of Israeli warning stations in the Jordan Valley and at strategic points on the mountains of Judea and Samaria.

However, since the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, all of these non-negotiable issues, with no exception, have been dumped, with no reciprocity from the Palestinian side. Is it surprising that the Palestinians are confident that they shall achieve all their goals?

Israel believed that the crux of the Arab-Israeli conflict was over the territories that Israel captured in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. Nine years after the signing of the DoP, Palestinian leaders often cite UN Resolution 194 of 1947-8, “the Partition” Resolution that carves up and pares down Israel. **The moving of the territorial goalposts, combined with the outbreak of the *Intifadat al-Aqsa* in September 2000, constitute a compelling rebuttal to those who unquestionably adhered to the conviction that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict revolved around locating the point where Israel’s and the Palestinian’s territorial demands converge.**

### **Downplaying Palestinians Incitement Against Israel**

On September 13, 1993, the attention of the world was riveted on the drama of the decades as it unfolded in front of their eyes. The stage was the White House, the producer President Bill Clinton, the key players Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Chairman Yasser Arafat, the occasion the signing a peace agreement. There was nearly universal consensus that an unprecedented breakthrough had been made towards resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Euphoria prevailed; but what was occurring behind the scenes?

Twelve days before the highly celebrated ceremony, and the famous handshake, on the lawn of the White House, Arafat reiterated his determination to implement the Palestine National Council resolution, issued in 1974.<sup>128</sup> This resolution calls for the establishment of a national authority on any part of Palestinian soil from which Israel withdraws or which is

liberated. Inherent in this statement is Arafat's allusion to the Palestinian "Phased Plan", which calls for the creation of a Palestinian state as the first in a series of stages culminating in the destruction of Israel. On that very same day, Arafat also made an explicit reference to this Phased Plan in a telephoned speech to students at the Najah College in Shechem.<sup>129</sup>

On November 22, 1993, in a speech at Bir Zeit University, Faisal al-Husseini assured the students that: "Everything you see and hear today is for tactical and strategic reasons. We have not given up the rifle. We still have armed gangs in the areas and if we do not get our state, we will take them out of the closet and fight again."<sup>130</sup>

Arafat and the PLO, certainly, did not make any special effort to obscure their intentions. They were convinced, as it turned out rightly so, that they have been accorded *carte blanche* both by Israel and the world. By advocating peace and supporting violence, they leveraged their status in both worlds.

The march of the Oslo progress did not put a damper upon Arafat's vision of a far-reaching Palestinian state. On May 10, 1994, Arafat, in a fit of ecstasy at a mosque in Johannesburg, South Africa, proclaimed that: "The *jihad* will continue... You have to understand our main battle is Jerusalem... You have to come and to fight a *jihad* to liberate Jerusalem, your precious shrine... No, it is not their capital. It is our capital."<sup>131</sup>

Not realizing that his words were being recorded, Arafat further stated that the Oslo Accords was akin to the temporary truce between Muhammad and the Qureish tribe, which was later broken:

This agreement, I am not considering it more than the agreement which had been signed between our prophet Muhammad and Qureish, and you remember that the Caliph Omar had refused this agreement and considered it a despicable truce... But the same way Muhammad had accepted it, we are now accepting this peace effort.<sup>132</sup>

Especially striking in its obfuscation of "the real Arafat" was his speech to the Arab diplomats at a meeting in Stockholm. To review, Arafat, believing that he was speaking at a closed meeting, opened his heart and spoke of the "psychological pressure" and "demographic pressure" that would cause Israel to crumble in the end. Ehud Ya'ari, Israel Television's premier Arab Affairs reporter and commentator, reported that although

Peres' government was fully cognizant of Arafat's Stockholm speech, it deliberately ignored both its existence and political ramifications. Even worse, evidently there was a concerted effort by the Peres government not only to ignore the story, but to actively spread disinformation abroad, denying its validity<sup>133</sup>:

The government of Israel already has, for example, full confirmation of the accuracy of the words Arafat has been quoted as saying in his meeting with Arab diplomats in Stockholm. For reasons of momentary convenience, the [Peres] government chose not to challenge Arafat on his vision of the New Middle East. In the Israeli press, the item was pushed to the bottom of the inside pages.<sup>134</sup>

The Israeli government also, consistently, ignored the surge in anti-Semitic incitement and the systematic inculcation of hatred for Israel in the Arab world, and especially in the Palestinian media.

The proliferation of anti-Semitic expressions triggered a debate over their significance for the Arab attitude toward the Jews and Israel. For anyone still disposed to credit the standard Muslim-Arab contention that, so far as Palestine is concerned, Arabs have never had anything against Judaism or Jews but only against Zionism and Zionists, this fall's [September-October 2000] anti-Israel riots should have gone far to dispel any remaining illusions. And if not the riots themselves, or the wanton destruction of ancient Jewish sites in Nablus and Jericho, then the words accompanying them; and if not the words shouted by frenzied mobs, then the presumably more reflective words articulated by leaders and dignitaries.<sup>135</sup>

### **Crippling the Decision-Making Process**

Oslo lay exclusively in the hands of two left-leaning academics until May 21, 1993 when Rabin gave his consent that Uri Savir join the talks. Only on September 7 did Rabin present the DoP to the IDF General Staff, who had no idea what it contained. The Chief of Staff, Ehud Barak, was only allowed a cursory glance of the document at the last stages of the negotiations.

By excluding major Israeli security organization – the Mossad, the General Security Services, Israeli military intelligence, as well as the IDF, Rabin did not receive an expert opinion relating to Arafat's willingness and capability to suppress the terrorist organizations. This turned out to be a tragic miscalculation. Certainly, if Rabin had consulted with military and

intelligence experts before making an irrevocable commitment to the Oslo process, they would have apprised him of the possible and the probable errors in calculation.

### **Rewarding Terror**

In order to assess Arafat accurately, it is necessary to differentiate between declarations and deeds. On the declarative level, Arafat has often reiterated his commitment to the Oslo Accords and the “peace of the brave”, asserting that his aspirations to liberate all of Palestine are merely a “dream”. The Israeli government embraced Arafat’s declarations of peace, and totally disregarded the implications of his “dream”.

Arafat demonstrated his superior astuteness relative to the Israeli leaders. He correctly assessed that he could manipulate the Israelis to place their trust in his commitment to the peace process while allowing him to support and placate the militant Palestinian factions. Thus, for years, Israel avoided demanding accountability for Arafat’s and the PLO’s non-compliance to agreements, for the sporadic terrorist acts, orchestrated riots, and violence. Instead, Israel downplayed their violations of the agreements.

Arafat had the best of both worlds.

Prime Minister Rabin’s injunction to negotiate as if there were no terror and deal with terrorism as if there were no negotiations, further empowered Arafat. He could present himself as a person prepared to make compromises, a seeker of peace and at the same time allow the Islamic terrorist organizations to perpetrate acts of terror against Israel. His success in leveraging his power and influence enabled him to extract increasingly more concessions from Israel.

Later on a new theory was developed, absolving Arafat from all blame of acts of terror in Israel and in Areas B and C under Israel control on the strength of his protests that he could not prevent terror originating from these areas. This forgiving standpoint freed Arafat from any complicity in terror, discounting the fact that the planners, the resources, the intelligence, the bombs – all originated in the area of autonomy.<sup>136</sup>

The *Intifadat al-Aqsa* is the direct result of the Israeli government’s policy of disparaging the possible risks to Israel’s integrity from the entrenchment of terror throughout the PA territory. This policy encouraged the use of violence as a strategy to obtain further Israeli concessions,

ultimately leading to deterioration in the situation. Since the outbreak of the *Intifadat al-Aqsa*, Israel has been stuck in a cycle of violence with no solution in sight: terrorism – closure – withdrawal – terrorism.

The Palestinian terrorism initiated by Arafat since September 2000 represents the direct result of Arafat's evaluation that violence is worthwhile and serves the Palestinian national interest. These attacks are intended to persuade the decision-makers and the Israeli public to make political concessions and give up territories in return for Arafat's "worthless promises to halt terrorism", all made under cover of such attacks. The various Israeli governments failed to understand Arafat's strategy of double-talk over the years, and time after time fell into the trap of Palestinian violence.<sup>137</sup>

By declaring that "*negotiations will continue as if there were no terrorism,*" the government of the late Yitzhak Rabin neutralized any motivation to refrain from terrorism. Even worse, it strengthened the Palestinians' conviction that they could win more concessions from Israel through violence and terrorism than through negotiations. As a direct consequence of Israel's folly, Arafat adopted a strategy of preserving the terrorist capabilities of the terrorist organizations to be used as a bargaining chip against Israel.<sup>138</sup>

Currently, the new buzzword is "reform".

Hitherto, successive Israeli governments have been indifferent to the corruption and repression rampant in the Palestinian Authority, raising questions as how Israel could have consented to placing its security at the discretion of such a regime. To rectify this situation, the new mindset, held both in Israel and in the Western world, is that by reforming the Palestinian Authority, violence would cease, and it would be possible to resume negotiations that would lead to peace in the Middle East.

However, the new roadmap, drafted by the US State Department does not even bother to stipulate that the PA desist from all violence prior to further Israeli withdrawals and the establishment of a Palestinian state. Worse, as so many other peace plans, this one may also foreshadow an escalation in violence. Karsh underscores the dangers inherent in the plan:

As for the trendy advocacy by Western pundits of a wholesale democratization of the Arab world, this fad is misconceived and dangerous. It ignores the realities of the Middle East and instead imposes Western values

in the place of Middle Eastern ideals, hopes, and beliefs. For another, this approach grossly overstates the ability of the great powers, the United States in particular, to bring about such an eventuality. There is no grassroots yearning for democracy in the Arab world, and any American attempt to impose such a system is bound to encounter mass resistance and to be viewed (quite correctly) by the local populations as neo-imperialism or a latter-day imposition of the “white man’s burden”.<sup>139</sup>

### **The Canard of Reversibility and Retractability**

Although retractability was one of the ground rules of the Oslo negotiations, when push came to shove, every single idea voiced by Pundak and Hirschfeld, regardless of the fact that they had no mandate or official status, was perceived as binding by their Palestinian counterparts.

Prime Minister Rabin and Foreign Minister Peres used reversibility as a ploy to placate the concerned citizens of Israel. They explained that Israel, virtually, had nothing to lose as the Oslo Accords had a built-in fail-safe mechanism – reversibility. They assured Israelis that should the situation become intolerable, anything ceded in the Accords was retrievable. If the plan worked, Israel would have peace at last. Should the plan collapse, everything conceded would be reversed. The extra benefit was that Labor would get credit for at least trying. Susan Hattis Rolef, the editor of the Labor Party publication, articulated this conviction when she noted that “...if things go wrong, the situation is reversible... If one side fails to fulfill its obligations, the other side is released from its. Should things go wrong, it would take the IDF a few days to step in and reverse the situation.”<sup>140</sup>

The Labor Party’s unequivocal belief in this canard resounds in Beilin’s warning that Israel would refuse to “go on” if the PLO leaders “cannot control their opposition and there is no order”; and that “a key part” of the DoP plan is “the fact that it is reversible”.<sup>141</sup>

Unfortunately, the truth was that retractability and reversibility were no more than Israeli delusions. In theory it sounded plausible; in reality it was fallacious. Not only did the concessions contained in the agreements become binding, but proposals presented by Israeli negotiators, even when they were rejected by the Palestinians, became binding.

## Fragmentation of Israeli Society

Throughout the negotiations over the DoP, Arafat proved to be far more adept in his strategic analysis than his Israeli counterparts. He correctly assessed that the majority of Israelis were tired of the conflict and were willing to negotiate a territorial compromise over the territories that came into Israel's possession in 1967.

Indeed, the vast majority of the opinion-makers in Israel were ecstatic over the Oslo Accords, even before seeing its contents, and what had been promised to Arafat. They enthusiastically called the DoP an unprecedented achievement that would bring peace to Israel. However, this did not reflect public opinion both in the Knesset and in the populace. Rabin and Peres had great difficulty in legitimizing the peace policy in the Knesset. Only 61 Knesset members supported the Oslo Accords, 50 opposed it, while eight abstained. In fact, the government received a minimal majority in the Knesset, but only after relying on two "deserters" from a right-wing party. Similarly, the Cairo Agreement was supported by only 52 Knesset members of the coalition, as well as by the Arab parties. The opposition boycotted the vote to show that there was no majority among the public in favor of the agreement.<sup>142</sup>

As can be seen, only 50% of the citizens of Israel were swept away by their hyperbolic. The other 50% perceived the dangers and risks enfolded in the Accords, and were up in arms, organizing demonstrations, and denouncing the agreement.

But they were denied legitimate outlets to express their resistance. All the media (newspapers, radio and television) gave their unqualified support to the Oslo peace process. They gave a voice to Israeli leaders supporting the process, stifled those who opposed. In their obsessive belief in Oslo, they resorted to marginalizing the opposition through omission and commission. The media systematically omitted information critical to the freedom of making informed decisions as to the peace process, and provided an open platform to those who demonized the opposition, such as those who called them terrorists and obstacles to peace.

The ultimate result was that Arafat gained his first victory over Israel in the first days after the DoP was publicized: the deepening of cracks in Israeli society that could potentially lead to fragmentation.



Since the outbreak of the *Intifadat al-Aqsa*, public support for the Oslo peace process has slid to new lows, and a substantive change in Israeli public opinion. Whereas in the not too distant past, the prevailing consensus in the Israeli public had been to deny the Palestinian right to a Palestinian state, currently the Israeli public at large, even in right-wing circles, acknowledges that a Palestinian state will eventually be established.

The shapers of public opinion in Israel succeeded in imposing the Palestinian agenda on the populace of Israel. What was before considered to be taboo had become conventional wisdom.

In parallel, not only has there been no change in Palestinian public opinion in the direction of reconciliation with Israel, there has been a radicalization of public opinion, with more than 75% supporting terrorist acts against Israel.

### **Speaking Peace, Planning Separation**

Oslo was supposed to have created peace between Israel and the Palestinians; its failure gave birth to the idea of physical separation. The Labor Party, as did the Left, rather than admit that the DoP had been a catastrophic blunder, and confront and deal with its results, preferred to patch up the DoP by advocating unilateral separation, buttressed by fences – saying that good fences make good neighbors. But the truth is the opposite – good neighbors make good fences. The volatile situation on the northern border with Lebanon is a striking example of the failure of fences to protect Israel and its citizens.

...the unbearable reality being evaded was that Israel's yearning for peace was shared neither by the Arab world in general nor by the Palestinians in particular – that their objection was not to anything Israel had done or failed to do, but to the very fact that it existed at all. Then, as time went on, and episode after episode occurred exposing the delusion of Oslo for what it was, more and more rationalizations had to be invented, and more and more lies had to be told, to keep it alive. Too much hope – and too much political capital – had been invested in the “peace process” to allow any opening of eyes that had been blinded and minds that had been closed by the dazzling mirage on the White House lawn.<sup>143</sup>

In their disappointment with the fruits of the Oslo Accords, Rabin and Peres began to promote a new strategy: separation. Whether or not this was

Arafat's calculated strategy, the political schisms within Israel impeded the capability of Israeli leaders to formulate a coherent effective strategy to counter his refusal to adhere to the peace accords.

As clarified by Dore Gold, the former Israeli representative to the UN, Rabin, Peres and the Labor Party, upon being confronted with the rapidly deteriorating security situation, chose to adhere to a convoluted policy of separation. Committed to the Oslo ideology, they could not accept that the DoP concept had manifestly failed in attaining any one of its objectives:

1. It did not enhance Israeli security; it exacerbated its precariousness.
2. It did not improve Palestinians' well-being; it precipitated a decline.
3. It failed to bring prosperity to the region; it precipitated a recession.
4. It failed in protecting Jerusalem from encroachment; it expedited the possible division of Jerusalem.
5. It did not bring peace; it precipitated suicide terrorism.

To encapsulate, the Oslo peace process, rather than forestalling or preventing Peres' and Rabin's nightmares, actually facilitated and accelerated their realization. Contrary to Rabin's assurances that the PA does not threaten Israel's existence, as if terror against civilians is the only problem, nine years of Oslo has created a situation that places the very existence of Israeli in jeopardy.

## Chapter 9: Prognosis

In the previous chapters, the Oslo peace process was dissected and analyzed with a view to shed light on the motives of Labor Party leaders who spearheaded the process of reversing all of Israel's achievements for the past 53 years. This chapter takes a look towards the future.

Is there a “diplomatic horizon” for the relationship between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. Is there a real hope for the end of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?

### Unresolved Issues

#### Refugees

For the Palestinians, the greatest failure of the Camp David Summit was in the refugee committee. While the Camp David negotiations and the Clinton proposals focused on the possibility that the refugees would have the right to return to the future Palestinian state, the Palestinians demanded recognition of their right of return “to their homes”, as stated in UN General Assembly (UNGAR) Resolution 194.

The Palestinians made overwhelming efforts to legitimize their narrative, bluntly stating that their goal was to force Israel to confront what they referred to as “the witnesses to Israel's crimes”. But Israel refused to play the game, consistently underscoring Arab complicity in creating the refugee problem. The Palestinian negotiation stance was, thus, predicated on Israel assuming responsibility for the plight of the refugees. Israel's failure to submit to this condition precluded substantive negotiations to resolve the refugee problem.

So the refugee committee did not move one inch forward. Refusing to take any moral or legal responsibility for what happened, the Israelis were willing only to express sorrow over what befell the Palestinians as a result of the Arab-Israeli war of 1948. And because any discussion of the right of return was taboo for Israel – in their eyes tantamount to declaring a war of destruction on the Israeli state – there could be no talk about a timetable for the implementation of return.<sup>144</sup>

Israeli concessions are taken for granted and not acknowledged as moving forward: “...Israel only committed itself to allowing several

thousand Palestinians to return over a ten-year period through ‘family reunification’ and ‘humanitarian cases’.”<sup>145</sup>

The Palestinian official position, as presented by Secretary-General of the PLO Executive Committee, Abu Mazen,<sup>146</sup> is that the “right of return” to Israel, and not necessarily to the Palestinian state, was non-negotiable. This demand is based on UN Resolution 242 paragraph 2b that states that “achieving a just settlement for the refugee problem” is necessary. General Assembly Resolution 194 from 1947 emphasizes this as well. The Palestinians interpret these articles to mean that the “right of return” has priority and only those who do not wish it, may demand compensation. “We made it clear to the Israelis that the Right of Return means a return to Israel and not to the Palestinian state...because it is from there that [the Palestinians] were driven out and it is there that their property is found...”<sup>147</sup>

A similar position was also expressed in the letter of reservations the Palestinians delivered to President Clinton in response to his proposals at Camp David:

Resolution 194, which is the basis for a just settlement of the Refugee Problem, determines that the return of the Palestinian refugees “to their homes” and not “to their homeland” or “to historical Palestine”. The essence of the Right of Return is freedom of choice: The Palestinians must be given the right to choose where they live, and that includes returning to the homes out of which they were driven.<sup>148</sup>

## **Borders**

From the Palestinian perspective, the failure to reach agreement on borders at Camp David was due to the Israeli mindset since the “mentality of occupation and control prevailed on the Israeli side.” The Palestinians had no qualms about rejecting Israelis security concerns, labeling them “absurd theories”.<sup>149</sup>

Within the framework of this perception, the Palestinians have no doubt that the Israelis had conjured the threat of danger from the East for the express purpose of justifying a strong Israeli military presence in Judea and Samaria. Israelis invoke their security requirements just to promote their requirements of early warning stations in the Jordan Valley, and strict restrictions on the military personnel and capabilities of the State of Palestine.

As can be seen, the Palestinians demonstrate total imperviousness to Israel's security concerns despite their being the foundation for the Oslo process.

Substantively, the successive Israeli maps submitted to the Palestinians, each one inching forward towards the Palestinian maps, from the 12% annexation demanded at Stockholm whittled down to eight percent at Camp David, were all labeled "provocative". Israel's compromises did not yet satisfy the Palestinians' unarticulated demands. "Clearly, the Israelis came to Camp David not in search of a language of dialogue with a neighbor and partner but to cement the gains from the 1967 War, to restructure and legalize the occupation."<sup>150</sup>

### **The Specter of Resolution 181 of 1947 – The Partition**

Since Taba, the Palestinians have changed (again) the goalposts, resurrecting the Partition of 1947 and invoking the "viability of the Palestinian state" as the main parameter for further Israeli withdrawals. Accordingly, the Palestinian Information Ministry no longer presents figures for the size of the Palestinian state. Instead, it focuses on the parts that Israel seeks to keep for itself. The strategy now adopted is to force Israel to concede territory that would ensure the independence and viability of the Palestinian state, as interpreted by the Palestinians.<sup>151</sup>

The political analyst Ehud Ya'ari has warned Israel of the danger that the Palestinian Authority may have recourse using the UNGAR 181 of 1947 – the Partition – as the cornerstone of their claim to a Palestinian state.<sup>152</sup> Without a doubt, resuscitating Resolution 181 changes the paradigm of the diplomatic negotiations.

Although this tactic was adopted originally to confront Prime Minister Netanyahu, there is evidence that the Palestinians continue to promote its relevance and validity. When the PLO Central Council met in Gaza in April 1998, many of the delegates insisted that the PLO reject Israel's official position that Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 have superseded Resolution 181. Since the signing of the Wye Agreement, the Palestinian leadership has attempted to strengthen the resolution in an attempt to place it as the centerpiece of Palestinian diplomacy around the world.

MEMRI, the first to report this change, revealed the PA's operative plan that aims at implementing the 1947 Partition Resolution. The plan was

presented at a Gaza press conference, in April 1999, by the PA Minister of International Cooperation and member of the Palestinian negotiating team, Nabil Sha'ath.<sup>153</sup>

According to Sha'ath, in his meetings throughout the globe, Arafat has been reemphasizing that the Palestinians base their claim for independence on the 1947 Partition Resolution:

...in his tour through most of the world's countries, the president spoke of the right to a Palestinian state, a right that is based on Resolution 181 of 1947 and not on the resolution of the Madrid Conference and the Oslo Accords.<sup>154</sup>

The PLO aims to apply the "Model of Namibia" – a model frequently alluded to by Arafat in the past – within the borders of the 1947 Partition Resolution. In accordance with this model, all the territories Israel occupied beyond the 1947 partition borders, including West Jerusalem, would be temporarily transferred to the UN who will determine their final status through a referendum among the Palestinian people.<sup>155</sup>

Arafat, as other Palestinian leaders, have unequivocally declared that there would be no end to the conflict until the 1948 problems were resolved to his satisfaction. Establishing an independent Palestinian state in Judea, Samaria and Gaza will not solve these problems. Even should Israel agree to divide Jerusalem, remove all the settlements and retreat to the 1967 borders, this would not end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. And, indeed, during the Camp David and Taba talks, the Palestinians tended more and more to divert the basis for discussions from UN resolutions 242 and 338 passed after 1967, to the 1947-48 Resolutions 194 and 181.

## **Jerusalem**

The Palestinian position on the issue of Jerusalem is simple: Jerusalem is part of the territories occupied in 1967 and, hence, UNGAR 242 applies to it. Jerusalem must return to Palestinian sovereignty to be established as the capital of the Palestinian state. East and West Jerusalem will be open to one another and there is no objection to municipal cooperation in municipal activities. In deliberating on the future of Jerusalem, the Palestinians expected that Israel would relinquish all Jewish claim to the city and to the Temple Mount. Their refusal to do so was castigated, with the Palestinians accusing Barak, his ministers, and the members of his delegation of assuming "...The garb of the most extreme fundamentalist Jews. Suddenly,

secularists began talking a religious line avoided even by some Israeli rabbis. Suddenly, allowing Jews to pray in the *Haram al-Sharif* became an essential Israeli demand.”

Palestinian negotiators are impervious to Jewish religious, national and historical bonds to Jerusalem and the Temple Mount. Their stance is in line with Palestinian anti-Jewish and anti-Israeli propaganda that denies the existence of the Holy Temple on the Temple Mount and its significance as the most holy site of the Jewish religion.

Accusing the Americans, at Camp David, for adding a religious dimension to the conflict and making a conflagration inevitable, Arafat warned them that

Jerusalem is not only a Palestinian city... It is also an Arab, Islamic, and Christian city. If I am going to make a decision on Jerusalem, I have to consult with the *Sunnis* and the *Shi`a* and all Arab countries. I have to consult with many countries starting with Iran and Pakistan, passing by Indonesia and Bangladesh, and ending with Nigeria. Do you really believe that any of these countries or groups would agree to give legitimacy to Israel's pretensions, to give up Jerusalem and the *Haram al-Sharif*?”

Arafat even resorted to threatening President Clinton with an all-out Islamic war should he force the issue. In a decisive meeting with President Clinton on July 19, Arafat told President Clinton: “The Palestinian leader who will give up Jerusalem has not yet been born. I will not betray my people or the trust they have placed in me. Don't look to me to legitimize the occupation!”

In other words, the entire Islamic world has rights to Jerusalem and to the Temple Mount; the Jewish people have none.

### **Palestinian Strategy**

Yossi Klein-Halevi relates that his “most instructive conversation on the Middle East conflict” was with an Anglican minister. After a long heart-to-heart conversation, with both agreeing that there was an imperative need for dialogue between Jews and Palestinians, Klein-Halevi acknowledged that Jews should formally concede the wrongs they had committed towards the Palestinians. Klein-Halevi inquired whether the minister was prepared to reassure the Jews and to reciprocate by confessing the Palestinians' faults? The Reverend responded by drawing an analogy between the meeting of

Ben-Gurion and German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer to negotiate reparations. Just as Ben-Gurion was not expected to pay reparations to the Germans, so too are the Palestinians, being victims as were the Jews, exempt. The balance of power between Israelis and Palestinians, from a Palestinian perspective, prevailed in the conclusion of the conversation. Klein-Halevi asked the Reverend whether he regarded the Jews as his Nazis, and the latter smiled and replied: “Now you’ve understood.”<sup>156</sup>

### **Palestinian Victimization Syndrome**

Klein-Halevi’s insight goes a long way in explaining the collapse of the Camp David Summit:

From the start, Palestinian-Israeli peacemaking was burdened by asymmetry. The gap between Israeli power and Palestinian powerlessness was translated into a political process that required tangible Israeli concessions – reversible only through war – in exchange for Palestinian promises of peace: In essence, land for words. But the deepest and most intractable asymmetry has been psychological: it has been an asymmetry of pity, or, more precisely, of self-pity. The Palestinians, as losers of the conflict, continue to see themselves solely as victims, without guilt for helping maintain the conflict or responsibility for helping to end it; indeed, for many Palestinians, the war is not over borders but absolute justice, a battle between good and evil.<sup>157</sup>

In a nutshell, the imperative to concede falls exclusively upon Israel; Palestinians, as victims, have no obligations, no responsibility, and no accountability. As can be seen, the Palestinian negotiation positions clearly reflect their perception of the imbalance of power in the past, present and future.

Klein-Halevi’s conclusion resounds in nearly every line in the Palestinian narrative of the Camp David Summit as transcribed by Akram Hanieh, editor in chief of the Palestinian daily **al-Ayyam** and close adviser of Yasser Arafat. The Palestinian narrative is suffused with indignation borne out of self-righteousness.

At Camp David, the Palestinians in particular, denounced the American administration’s ostensible “flexibility”. They were outraged at the ground rule that required concessions in equal measure from the Palestinian and Israeli sides, with every Israeli step matched by a Palestinian step. “Such a



policy ignores the fact that the Palestinians are the victims of Israeli aggression...”<sup>158</sup>

Epitomizing the Palestinians’ victim “patho-ideology”, is Hanieh’s differential response to Israeli versus Palestinian rejection of proposals submitted to them. While praising Palestinian tenacity in face of American pressure, Hanieh blasts Israel’s intransigence in refusing to concede to Palestinian demands. Obviously, the Israeli establishment was not yet ready for real peace.

The colonialist, militaristic mentality – the occupier’s mentality, nourished by myths – still predominated and shaped their vision of peace. The Israelis were not prepared to take the “the risks needed for a historic reconciliation that would end the conflict...”

From the Palestinian perspective, they are the victims, and demands from them are tantamount to “bias”; the burden of taking risks falls wholly and exclusively on Israel.

Abu Mazen, considered to be moderate and one of the Palestinians’ top negotiators, subscribes to the same convictions. When asked why the Palestinians did not accede to Ben-Ami’s request to demonstrate more flexibility at Camp David, Abu Mazen became upset at the very question.

I don’t understand what he means by “some flexibility”! When we [gave up] the [1947] Partition Resolution and accepted Resolution 242 – wasn’t that flexibility!? [We conceded] half of the lands that had been given to us in the Partition Resolution... We are ready to negotiate, to meet, and to talk. But when we ask them to make concessions, they refuse. We have made excessive concessions.<sup>159</sup>

### **Arafat’s Strategy**

Major General Amos Gilad – Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories for the Ministry of Defense, presented what he believed to be Arafat’s strategy:

1. Arafat insists on the right of return and, thus, is determined that, within any peace agreement, Israel must absorb approximately 300,000 Palestinians.
2. The independent Palestinian state must be free to absorb more than half a million more Palestinians.

3. Arafat's long-term goal is to combine these with the 3.2 million Palestinians in Judea, Samaria and Gaza, and the 3.2 million in Jordan, to create an overwhelming Palestinian majority from the Mediterranean Sea to the Iraqi desert. This would result in a new political entity replacing both Israel and Jordan.

This is Arafat's dream, if not his obsession. The Camp David talks failed mainly because Arafat simply could not give up his dream. According to Gilad, although Arafat may be losing power locally, because of his dedication to the Palestinian cause, he is still a powerful national and supra-national leader. He is determined that, in 30 to 50 years, there will be one sweeping pan-Palestinian state in place of Israel and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Within that time frame, the demographic factor becomes crucial, with Israel losing its Jewish majority.

The internationalization of the conflict and the resulting reduction of the United States' role in the bilateral negotiations are another of Arafat's strategic goals. Thus, Arafat has been striving to obtain the intervention of the United Nations, the European countries and the Islamic world on the side of the Palestinians.<sup>160</sup>

There are hints that Arafat has not yet abandoned the "phase strategy" adopted by the PLO at the 1974 Palestinian National Congress. The "phase strategy" advocates the liberation of every inch of Palestinian territory that can be obtained through political negotiations with Israel and the continuation of the struggle from this territory for the liberation of all occupied Palestine.

To fulfill his dream, Arafat is cooperating with both Iraq and Iran.<sup>161</sup>

### **Palestinian Anti-Israeli and Anti-Semitic Incitement**

Palestinian intellectuals acknowledge the existence of Israeli empathy to the Palestinians' plight. "Indeed, there is no doubt that Israeli leaders now allude to Palestinian suffering, and some have gone so far as to speak about their legitimate political rights."<sup>162</sup> They also admit that Israelis have, increasingly, expressed sympathy concerning the Palestinian tragedy. Even Israeli leaders have recognized the crucial importance of far-reaching attitudinal change. Indeed, there has been a deep attitudinal change within the Israeli populace.

On the Israeli side, a vigorous and successful effort was made by Labor Party leaders to wean the public from its emotional attachment to the biblical borders of “greater Israel”. Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres repeatedly told the Israeli people that the dream of greater Israel was unrealistic and self-destructive. That message was reinforced by the Israeli media, often by what we journalists chose to omit as much as to publish.<sup>163</sup>

However, the only attitudinal change that has occurred amidst the Palestinian populace is a deeper and more pervasive hatred for Jews and for the State of Israel. The Palestinian Authority has waged, and is waging, a persistent war of incitement to hatred in sermons in the mosques, in the newspapers, and on the official Palestinian television station. Palestinian children are educated to be *shihadim* – human bombs sent to slaughter Israelis. For example, this paragraph appears in a school textbook:

...know my son that Palestine is your country...that its pure soil is drenched in the blood of martyrs because it is a land of glorious battles and war: in Jerusalem, Ein Harod, Acre, Haifa, Sha’ar Hagay and the Negev. Just as this sacred soil returned to its owners [in the past] so it will return again through your courage and determination, If Allah wills...<sup>164</sup>

The incitement is not sporadic, but rather a deliberate strategy. Palestinian leadership celebrates the children’s devotion to the cause of killing Israelis: “I finished practicing on the submachine gun of return. I trained my friends from among the children and the youths. We swore to take vengeful blood from our enemies for our killed and wounded.”<sup>165</sup>

They organize summer camps dedicated to hatred. There are TV shows that glorify suicide bombers. In an ad on TV, a camper at Khan Yunis sings: “I came to you with my sword in hand. We will drive them [the Jews] out to the sea. Your day is coming, conqueror, then we will settle accounts. Our accounts are unending in stones and bullets!”

Palestinians are at the forefront of racism and Holocaust denial:

When Nazi persecution of the Jews began, the winds began blowing in their favor. What Hitler did to the Jews actually exposed the Jewish plot... They concocted horrible stories of gas chambers which Hitler, they claimed, used to burn them alive... The truth is that such persecution was a malicious fabrication by the Jews. It is a myth which they named “The Holocaust” in order to rouse empathy... Even if Hitler’s onslaught facilitated the

persecution of Jews to some degree, Jews certainly benefited from its aftermath...<sup>166</sup>

Taking incitement to a new depth of depravity, Arafat accused the Israeli occupation forces of not only killing Palestinian children, but “*they also mutilate their bodies, and extract vital organs to use them as ‘spare parts’*.”<sup>167</sup>

Hatred is quite often the main theme of sermons on the official PA television station,

Allah described them [Jews] in His Book, characterized by conceit, pride, arrogance, rampage, disloyalty and treachery...deceit and cunning...for which Allah transformed them to monkeys and pigs. They are guilty of “trickery, plotting and treachery, and ideological terrorism...” and are the “cursed enemies of Allah; curse upon curse up to Judgment Day.” Jews’ behavior, they teach, has always been evil: “They coveted, and they covet still. They killed, and they kill still. They betrayed, and betray still. They spilled blood, and they spill blood still...” Muslims therefore have a special role to torment the Jews... We shall battle them and wage *Jihad* against them... The Jews’ future has been determined for ultimate punishment...” [Allah] will not resurrect them [Jews] until Judgment Day, and then they will be tortured harsh torture.<sup>168</sup>

Sermons are replete with incitement for violence and war against Jews (not Israelis): “Allah render us victorious over the devils and demons and over our submission to them...” “Allah render us victorious over the Jews and those who side with them!”<sup>169</sup>

With such an intensive and barbarous effort to inculcate hatred and educate for murder – is there hope for reconciliation?

### **A Look Towards the Future**

As of this writing, the *intifada* which the PA launched against Israel continues. Since its eruption in 2000, more than 765 Israelis have been murdered; more than 1,070 since Rabin signed the Oslo Accords. Israel continues to seek peace; the terms of this peace are still obscure.

In looking to the future, a key sentence in Prime Minister Barak letter to President Bush has bearing on future negotiations: “...one of the cornerstones of the negotiations was the principle that ‘nothing is agreed upon until everything is agreed upon’, a principle which was accepted by both sides.”

However, this principle of retractability has been disregarded, raising the specter of open-ended Israeli concessions. Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, when signing the Oslo Accords in 1993, categorically rejected the possibility of the establishment of a Palestinian state. Since then, Israeli consensus has been so altered by the constant regression in its red lines that the entire political spectrum has moved towards the left. Even the Prime Minister of Israel, Ariel Sharon, the leader of the former opposition party, supports the establishment of a Palestinian state.

The Israeli negotiators of the future, when sitting at the table with the Palestinians, are under obligation to engrave upon their mind former Prime Minister Barak's and former Foreign Minister Ben-Ami's assessments of Arafat and the PLO. Only by keeping in mind Arafat's brilliant maneuvers and ploys will they be able to avoid the pitfalls.

## Conclusions

- Signing the Oslo Accords was the most immoral deed in Jewish history.

With great insight, Ruth Wisse, a professor at Harvard University, denounced the Oslo Accords as being worse than the Munich pact which Britain and France made with Hitler in 1938. Why? Because at Munich, they sold Czechoslovakia, not their own countries. By signing the Oslo Accords, the leaders of Israel went to the worst people in history, the Palestinians, and told them that by arming them, there will be peace.<sup>170</sup>

- In retrospect, it transpired that the Oslo negotiation strategies, secrecy and phased progress, hailed as brilliant and ingenious, facilitated the failure of the Oslo peace process.
- Secrecy surrounding the negotiations:
  1. None of the negotiators, including Prime Minister Rabin and Savir, consulted experts in the areas being negotiated and thus had no means of assessing the implications of what they were conceding.
  2. No objective assessments of the negotiation process itself; only meetings between those involved in the process.
  3. No control or “brakes” on the negotiators who abandoned their own ground rules in the course of the negotiations, especially that of “retractability”.
- Phased progress:
  1. Israel squandered bargaining chips, crucial for the final settlement stage, at the early stages of the negotiations.
  2. The most contentious issues, Jerusalem and the “right of return” were deferred to the final settlement stage. After redeploying from 95% of the territories, the Palestinians presented their non-negotiable demands; Israel’s refusal to capitulate was conducive to the outbreak of the *intifada*.

- The Oslo Accords precipitated the suspension of the democratic process.
- Negotiating with a terrorist organization is contrary to Israeli law.
- Constitutional violations of Israeli Law, such as:
  1. Section 11-B of the Law and Administration Ordinance that stipulates that no governing body in the State of Israel has the legal authority to cede any portion of the Land of Israel falling under its *de facto* jurisdiction to any foreign entity.
  2. Basic Law: Jerusalem, Capital of Israel.
  3. Basic Law: Israel Lands.
- Preventing a debate on the Oslo Accords in the Knesset by presenting it as a non-confidence vote in Prime Minister Rabin.
- Preventing legitimate and democratic opposition to the Oslo Accords by the demonization and marginalization of its opponents.
- Lack of responsible leadership:
  1. Subordinating the security of the State of Israel to the ideology of peace was a betrayal of the Israeli government's responsibility for the welfare of the State of Israel and its citizens.
  2. Obscuring and obfuscating PLO violations, including acts of terror in general and suicide bombers in particular.
  3. Repudiating any sense of accountability for the consequences of signing the Oslo Accords.
  4. Over-obsessivity with signing agreements with the PLO produced a consistent tendency to capitulate to Palestinian demands.
  5. Breaching all of Israel's red lines in the negotiations with the Palestinians, including the non-negotiable "right of return".
- Trapped in the "peace now" delusion:
  1. The "peace now" ideology is predicated on the belief that conceding to Palestinians demands will inaugurate peace – now. This ideology is plagued by extreme tunnel vision. "Peace now" focuses only on the "here and now" and only on the facts that cohere with that ideology. Realities that conflict with the ideology

are either trivialized or ignored. There is no future, no consequences and no ramifications to this ideology. The very real risks that the “now” peace will prepare the conditions for a war in the future is never taken into consideration.

2. The most striking phenomenon in the Israeli-Palestinian relationship since the signing of the Oslo Accords is Israel’s desperate pursuit of agreements. Israeli leadership was trapped in the illusion that a peace agreement was equivalent to peace, and thus the “peace process” and the “peace agreement” became surrogates for peace.
- Arafat is a brilliant manipulator and negotiator.
    1. The PLO engraved its demands in stone, and has not budged from them since Israel initiated negotiations in January 1993. In contrast, Israel has yielded on every single issue raised in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. Most notable are the concessions offered to Arafat by Prime Minister Barak, which exceeded more than 100% of the territories, in contrast to Arafat’s concession of 0.34%.
    2. Arafat’s sense of timing for submitting new demands is superb, knowing full well that the Israeli negotiators would have no choice but capitulate.
  - The inescapable necessity of reinventing the government of Israel.

Clearly, it has become apparent, especially since the eruption of the *intifada* in September 2000, that peace is elusive. The government of Israel must reinvent itself as the bulwark of security, whose main concern is the welfare of the citizens of Israel. The “political horizon” and the “peace process” must be subordinated to national interests, giving the highest priority to rebuilding the country and restoring the citizenship’s confidence in the integrity and steadfastness of its leadership.



## Endnotes

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- <sup>3</sup> Lieutenant General Brent Scowcroft served as Assistant for National Security Affairs to Presidents Ford and George Bush and is presently the founder and president of the Forum for International Policy.
- <sup>4</sup> Caroline Glick, "The New Iranians", **Jerusalem Post**, February 14, 2003.
- <sup>5</sup> Ehud Ya'ari, "Not Just Anti-Semitic Lies!", **The Jerusalem Report**, December 16, 2002.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>7</sup> Raphael Israeli, "The Oslo Delusion – Or the Collapse of Axioms", Israel: Ariel Center for Policy Research (ACPR), Policy Paper No. 126, May 2001.
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- <sup>9</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>10</sup> Shawn Pine, "Myopic Vision: Israeli Withdrawal from the Golan Heights and the Prospects for War with Syria", Israel: ACPR, Policy Paper No. 75, 1998.
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- <sup>13</sup> According to Egyptian Brig. General Morad Dessouki, military expert at the al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies.
- <sup>14</sup> **Al-Wasat**, August 4, 1997.
- <sup>15</sup> Ilan Asya, "Arab Territorial Continuity as a Focus of the Middle East Conflict", Israel: ACPR, Policy Paper No. 21, 1998, pp. 32-33.
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- <sup>18</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>19</sup> Anti-Defamation League website, <[www.adl.org](http://www.adl.org)>.
- <sup>20</sup> There is an abundance of literature on this topic, such as Yossef Bodansky, **Islamic Anti-Semitism as a Political Instrument**, the USA: Freeman Center for Strategic Studies and the Israel: Ariel Center for Policy Research, April 1999, and Raphael Israeli, "Arab and Islamic Anti-Semitism", Israel: ACPR, Policy Paper No. 104, March 2000.
- <sup>21</sup> Yoash Tsiddon-Chatto, "Israel-Arabia: Eye to Eye with the Future as Taught by the Past", Israel: ACPR, Policy Paper No. 112, January 2001, p. 29.
- <sup>22</sup> Shawn Pine, "The Egyptian Threat and the Prospects for War in the Middle East", Israel: ACPR, Policy Paper No. 110, November 2000, p. 21.
- <sup>23</sup> Dany Shoham, "Chemical and Biological Weapons in the Arab Countries and Iran – An Existential Threat to Israel", Israel: ACPR Publishers, July 2001, p. 77.
- <sup>24</sup> Op. cit., Tsiddon-Chatto, January 2001, p. 77.
- <sup>25</sup> M. Zuhair Diab, "Syria's Chemical and Biological Weapons: Assessing Capabilities and Motivations", **CNS Nonproliferation Review**, Fall 1997, pp. 104-111, <<http://www.cns.miis.edu/pubs/npr/vol05/51/diab51.pdf>>.
- <sup>26</sup> Dany Shoham, "Chemical and Biological Weapons in Egypt", **The Non-Proliferation Review**, Spring/Summer 1998, pp. 48-58; CNS website, <<http://www.cns.miis.edu/pubs/npr/vol05/53/shoham53.pdf>>.
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>28</sup> Yitzhak Rabin, Speech to the Knesset, July 13, 1992, cited by David Makovsky, **Making Peace with the PLO**, Westview Press and Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Oxford and Boulder, Colorado, 1996, p. 23, footnote 15. These words are reminiscent of the foremost poets of the Haskala Movement in Europe during the second half of the nineteenth century, Y.L. Gordon. In calling the Jews of Europe to emerge from the closed Orthodox society and to enter secular, non-Jewish society, he wrote a poem in which he called the Jews to be, "a Jew in your tent and a man when you leave". Decades later, in assessing the results of his and his contemporaries' ideology, he mourned the mass exodus out of Judaism. In his poem, "For Whom Am I Laboring", he cries that there is no one left to read his poems in Hebrew.

- <sup>29</sup> Yitzhak Rabin, speech at the inauguration of the Steinmetz Center for Peace Research, Tel Aviv University, November 16, 1992, cited by Makovsky, 1996, pp. 111-112, and Christopher Barder, **A Statistically Based Survey of the Oslo Process, its Agreements and Results**, Israel: ACPR Publishers, 2002, p. 23.
- <sup>30</sup> Douglas J. Feith, "The Inner Logic of Israel's Negotiations: Withdrawal Process, Not Peace Process", **Middle East Quarterly**, Volume 3, No. 1, March 1996.
- <sup>31</sup> **Middle East Mirror**, November 25, 1993.
- <sup>32</sup> Michael Barnett, "Culture, Strategy and Foreign Policy Change: Israel's Road to Oslo", **European Journal of International Relations**, Vol. 5 (1), 1999, pp. 5-36.
- <sup>33</sup> Horowitz, David (ed.), **Shalom, Friend: The Life and Legacy of Yitzhak Rabin**, New York: Newmarket Press, 1996, p. 131, cited in *ibid.*, Barnett, 1999, pp. 19-20.
- <sup>34</sup> Yitzhak Rabin, 1996, cited in *ibid.*, Barnett, 1999.
- <sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, Barnett, 1999.
- <sup>36</sup> David Makovsky, **Making Peace with the PLO: The Rabin Government's Road to the Oslo Accords**, San Francisco and Oxford: Westview Press, 1995.
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33
- <sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>39</sup> *Op. cit.*, Barder, p. 22.
- <sup>40</sup> Connie Bruck, **The New Yorker**, October 14, 1996, pp. 70-72.
- <sup>41</sup> *Op. cit.*, Makovsky, 1996, p. 47.
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>43</sup> Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), **Through Secret Channels**, Reading, UK: Garnet Publishing Ltd., 1995.
- <sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51
- <sup>45</sup> Uri Savir, **The Process: 1,100 Days that Changed the Middle East**, New York: Random House, 1998.
- <sup>46</sup> Interview with Peres, August 18, 1994, cited in *op. cit.*, Makovsky, 1996, p. 71.
- <sup>47</sup> *Op. cit.*, Makovsky, 1996, pp. 71-72.
- <sup>48</sup> *Op. cit.*, Barnett, 1999, p. 32.
- <sup>49</sup> The details of the Gaza-Jericho aspect of the DoP were negotiated and concluded in an agreement signed in Cairo between Israel and the PLO on May 4, 1994.

- <sup>50</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>51</sup> Isaiah 57:19.
- <sup>52</sup> Isaiah 2:4.
- <sup>53</sup> Shimon Peres, **Battling for Peace**, London: Orion Edition, 1995, p. 414.
- <sup>54</sup> Ophir Falk & Yaron Schwartz, “The Oslo Process – Fate or Folly?”, Herzliya: ICT – The Interdisciplinary Center, April 28, 2002.
- <sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 10
- <sup>56</sup> Shimon Peres, “Why Israel Needs a Palestinian State”, **Le Monde Diplomatique**, May 1998.
- <sup>57</sup> Arutz 7 <[www.israelnationalnews.com](http://www.israelnationalnews.com)>, February 14, 1996, **Haaretz** and **Maariv**, February 15, 1996, “Arafat Gave Speech about Israel’s Destruction”, **Dagen** (Norway), February 17, 1996, **Jerusalem Post**, February 23, 1996, **Magazinet** (Sweden), February 24, 1996.
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- <sup>59</sup> Lisa Beyer, “Interview with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin”, **Time**, September 27, 1993, Vol. 142, Issue 13, p. 33.
- <sup>60</sup> Douglas J. Feith, “The Inner Logic of Israel’s Negotiations: Withdrawal Process, Not Peace Process”, **Middle East Quarterly**, Vol. 3, No. 1, March 1996.
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- <sup>63</sup> Op. cit., Makovsky, 1996, p. 57
- <sup>64</sup> Jonathan Rosenblum, “Process, Not Peace”, **Jerusalem Post**, July 14, 2000.
- <sup>65</sup> Op. cit., Barnett, 1999.
- <sup>66</sup> Ibid.
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- <sup>73</sup> Op. cit., Connie Bruck, 1996, p. 78.
- <sup>74</sup> I wish to acknowledge that the description of the events at the Camp David Summit and at Taba is based, to some extent on Ari Shavit's interview with the former Foreign Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami, "End of a Journey", **Haaretz**, October 24, 2002.
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- <sup>84</sup> Editorial, **Jewish Post of New York**, <[www.jewishpost.com](http://www.jewishpost.com)>, December 2001.
- <sup>85</sup> Benny Morris, "Camp David and After: An Exchange" (an Interview with Ehud Barak), **The New York Review of Books**, June 13, 2002.
- <sup>86</sup> In the words of **The New York Times**' reporter in Cairo.
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- <sup>97</sup> **Al-Ayyam**, July 29, 2001, at <<http://www.memri.org/sd/SP25001.html>>, cited in op. cit., Singer, 2002.
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- <sup>99</sup> **Al-Quds**, August 15, 2000.
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- <sup>106</sup> The fact-finding commission, led by former US Senator George Mitchell, began its inquiries on December 11, 2000.
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- <sup>112</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>113</sup> Benny Morris, “Camp David and After: An Exchange” (an Interview with Ehud Barak), **The New York Review of Books**, June 13, 2002.
- <sup>114</sup> A temporary truce that the Prophet Muhammad concluded with the leaders of Mecca during 628-629, which he subsequently unilaterally violated.
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- <sup>116</sup> Shlomo Ben-Ami, “A Preliminary Summit Should Have Been Held”, <[www.bitterlemons.org](http://www.bitterlemons.org)>, Edition 26, July 15, 2002.
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- <sup>118</sup> Op. cit., Shavit, 2002.
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- <sup>122</sup> **Jerusalem Post**, September 6, 1993; September 1, 1993; and Cable News Network, reported in **The New York Times**, September 2, 1993, cited in op. cit., Feith, 1996.
- <sup>123</sup> Ibid., p. 14.
- <sup>124</sup> Ibid., p. 13.
- <sup>125</sup> Ehud Barak, “Return to the Camp David Principles..and Put a Fence Round the Palestinians”, on the Diplomatic Club in Israel website, <[www.diplomacy-club.com](http://www.diplomacy-club.com)>, April 15, 2002.
- <sup>126</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>127</sup> The situation increasingly deteriorated towards the end of 2002, with the PA in shambles, and *Hamas* planning, with the help of Egypt, to take over the PA and establish a joint front of terrorist groups to intensify acts of terror against Israel.
- <sup>128</sup> Radio Monte Carlo, September 1, 1993.
- <sup>129</sup> David Bar-Ilan, “Why a Palestinian State is Still a Mortal Threat”, **Commentary**, November 1993, p. 18.
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- <sup>134</sup> Ehud Ya'ari, **The Jerusalem Report**, April 4, 1996.
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- <sup>136</sup> Boaz Ganor, "Security Aspects of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict", **In the Wake of the Peace Process: Change in Ideology and Political Orientation in Israel and the Palestinian Community**, Gabriel (Gabai) Sheffer (ed.), Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research, Research Report No. 12, 2000, pp. 148-155.
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- <sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>139</sup> Ephraim Karsh, "Misunderstanding Arab Nationalism", **Middle East Quarterly**, Spring 2001, Volume VIII, Number 2.
- <sup>140</sup> **Jerusalem Post**, September 29, 1993.
- <sup>141</sup> **The Wall Street Journal**, September 1, 1993, p. A10.
- <sup>142</sup> From 1993 to 1994, polls showed that support for the Oslo peace process revolved around 50%. 53% supported the Oslo Accords while 45% opposed. Oslo II was supported by only 51% and 47% opposed. From October 1994 to October 1995, support for Oslo process actually decreased to less than 50% and was even lower in the Israeli Jewish sector. It was only following Rabin's assassination that public support reached its zenith, in November 1995, subsequently dropping once more in January 1996.
- <sup>143</sup> Norman Podhoretz, "*Intifada* II: Death of an Illusion?", **Commentary**, December 2000, Vol. 110, Issue 5, pp. 27-38.
- <sup>144</sup> *Op. cit.*, Hanieh.
- <sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>146</sup> Palestinian officials do not commit to any idea that deviates in any way from the official Palestinian line. Abu Mazen fought for years to clear his name, after it was reported that he had agreed to the return of the refugees to the Palestinian state in the "Beilin-Abu Mazen understandings". Abu Mazen now presents the hardline position according to which the refugees must return to their homes, literally.
- <sup>147</sup> "Palestinian Thoughts on the Right of Return", MEMRI, Special Report No. 4, <[www.memri.org](http://www.memri.org)>, March 30, 2001.



- <sup>148</sup> **Al-Ayyam** (PA), January 2, 2001.
- <sup>149</sup> Op. cit., Hanieh.
- <sup>150</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>151</sup> Yotam Feldner, “The (Revised) Palestinian Account of Camp David Part II: Jerusalem and Territorial Withdrawal”, MEMRI, Inquiry and Analysis Series, No. 69, <www.memri.org>, September 7, 2001.
- <sup>152</sup> Ehud Ya’ari, “Palestinian Strategy on Resolution 181: From Netanyahu to Barak”, **Peacewatch**, No. 212, June 1, 1999.
- <sup>153</sup> MEMRI, <www.memri.org>, “Palestinians Reveal Long Range Plans”, Special Dispatch No. 31, April 23, 1999.
- <sup>154</sup> **Al-Ayyam** and **Al-Quds**, April 23, 1999. Arafat himself made this statement in a press conference in Moscow on April 6, 1999, cited in MEMRI, <www.memri.org>, April 23, 1999.
- <sup>155</sup> MEMRI’s previous publications examining the PLO’s focus on the Partition Resolution of 1947 include: Yotam Feldner, “The Independent Palestinian State and the Partition Resolution of 1947”, MEMRI Inquiry & Analysis, No. 7, November 30, 1998; “Abu `Alaa: “The Borders of the Palestinian State that Will be Declared on May 1999 are Those Set by the 1947 UN Partition Resolution”, MEMRI Special Dispatch, No. 18, <www.memri.org>, December 21, 1998; Yotam Feldner, “Changes in the EU’s Positions on Jerusalem and the Palestinian State”, MEMRI Inquiry and Analysis, No. 17, <www.memri.org>, April 12, 1999.
- <sup>156</sup> Yossi Klein-Halevi, “The Asymmetry of Pity”, **National Interest**, Fall 2001, Issue 65, pp. 37-44.
- <sup>157</sup> Ibid., Klein-Halevi, 2001.
- <sup>158</sup> Op. cit., Hanieh.
- <sup>159</sup> “Abu Mazen on the Peace Process”, MEMRI, Special Dispatch Series No. 122, <www.memri.org>, August 29, 2000.
- <sup>160</sup> Ely Karmon, “Arafat’s Strategy: Lebanonization and Entanglement”, International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism, November 16, 2000.
- <sup>161</sup> It was Iran that gave Arafat the Karin-A ship, complete with \$15 million worth of weapons.
- <sup>162</sup> Rema Hammami, Salim Tamari, “The Second Uprising End or New Beginning?”, **Journal of Palestine Studies**, Winter 2001, Vol. 30, Issue 2, pp. 5-26.

- <sup>163</sup> Op. cit., Klein-Halevi, 2001.
- <sup>164</sup> Arabic language textbooks for 5th graders, March 1998.
- <sup>165</sup> Sung by a seven- year old girl who was then kissed by Yasser Arafat on May 19, 1997, Palestinian Broadcast Company TV.
- <sup>166</sup> Seif `Ali Al-Jarwan, "Jewish Control of the World Media", **Al-Hayat Al-Jadida**, July 2, 1998.
- <sup>167</sup> In a televised interview IslamOnline on the Al Jazeera station, January 14, 2002.
- <sup>168</sup> **Palestinian Media Watch Bulletin**, November 4, 2002.
- <sup>169</sup> Dr. Mahmoud Mustafah Najem in the Sheikh Ejlin Mosque in Gaza, Palestinian Authority Official TV Friday Sermon, Palestinian Authority TV, November 1, 2002.
- <sup>170</sup> Interview with Ruth Wisse, **Makor Rishon**, February 21, 2003.

Last question! the failure to comply with or follow general rules this is a questions that is repeated about 10 times for different offenses.Â  
Glossary entry (derived from question below). English term or phrase: failure to comply with or follow. Spanish translation: el incumplimiento.