

# DOOMED TO FAILURE?

The Politics and Intelligence of the Oslo Peace Process

Ofira Seliktar

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## **The Politics and Intelligence of the Oslo Peace Process**

**Ofira Seliktar**

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For My Friend Robert B. Sklaroff, MD



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# The Theory and Practice of Predicting Political Change

The Oslo Peace Accord signed in a widely watched ceremony on the lawn of the White House on September 13, 1993 promised to end the century-long conflict between the Jews and the Palestinians and usher in a period of peace in the Middle East. Yet, less than a decade later, after the failure of the Taba talks in January 2001, the peace process collapsed. Although subsequent efforts to revive negotiations included elements of the original plan, they have never amounted to the sweeping vision guiding the Accord, nor have they been successful so far. As such, Oslo peace looms large in the pantheon of Israeli predictive failures and has focused attention on the way in which the country forecasts and manages political change.

Prediction and foreign policy making are closely related. Consciously or subconsciously, policy decisions rest on prediction of a likely course of future events. Henry Kissinger perceived the establishment of a foreign policy with “our ability to perceive trends and dangers before they become overwhelming,” noting that, often, “judgment about the future cannot be proved when [decisions] are made.”<sup>1</sup>

Given the difficulties involved in this dictum, an enormous intellectual effort to identify sources of predictive failures has been conducted since the middle of the twentieth century. Following the pioneering work of Roberta Wohlstetter on Pearl Harbor, a large body of literature has dealt with military-strategic and political-strategic projecting. The traumatic October 1973 War spurred a similar effort in Israel.

While military and political changes focus on different dimensions of international reality, they both are susceptible to the same types of predictive

errors. Logically conceived, prediction is comparable to a form of statistical inference. In every predictive episode, evidence is assessed and probability is assigned to the “hypothesis” that an event will or will not occur. Prognosticators run the risk of committing two types of inferential errors. They can either accept a “false hypothesis,” that is, decide that an event will take place when it will not occur (alpha-error), or reject a “true hypothesis,” that is, decide that an event will not take place when, in fact, it is going to occur (beta-error). Experts have worked to eliminate both types of errors, but instances where adverse events were not predicted have, understandably, attracted the most attention.

Failures range from minimal to fundamental and are grouped in four categories. In the first two (residuals and errors), the actual prediction of the event is successful (with the former being minuscule and the latter being more substantive), but the time frame is off by a particular margin; the failure in these categories does not necessitate any change in basic theory and/or predictive methodology. In the third category (outliers), the miss is large enough to warrant revision of the methodology and applications used by the community of practitioners, but the basic theory is still viewed as adequate. In the last category (anomalies), the miss is so great that it casts doubt on the underlying theory being used by practitioners; in terms of the philosophy of science, it triggers a revision at the epistemic level of knowledge, a paradigm shift.

The role of such fundamental failures can be best understood in terms of Thomas Kuhn’s analysis of revolutionary change in knowledge. In his famous work on the structure of scientific revolution, Kuhn postulated that in routine times, a set of agreed-upon fundamental concepts are used to analyze a situation. These deep-seated concepts (master theories) constitute the rules that dominate the field of a given intellectual endeavor and dictate the standards of rational inquiry. They form the “entire constellations of beliefs, values, and technologies . . . shared by the member of a given community.” The dominant paradigm determines what questions will arise, what forms of explanations will be deemed acceptable, and what interpretations will be perceived as legitimate. As long as the paradigm is not challenged, its normalcy is accepted widely. In the wake of a severe crisis, though, the dominant paradigm is questioned and ultimately overthrown. These paradigmatic battles—which are fought at the very frontiers of rationality—dictate how the community of practitioners looks at the relevant reality. When a new paradigm wins, its novel and “revolutionary” perceptions become routine and “normal.”<sup>2</sup>

Although Kuhn was primarily concerned with the scientific community, his work was applied to the study of prediction. The assumption here is that foreign policy practitioners use paradigms to evaluate political reality, present and future. As one scholar put it, in their absence, “the policymaker is lost [because] all problems, approaches, facts and possible courses of action seem equally plausible.” Another added, “even the naïve practitioner who insists that he makes every

decision solely on the facts at hand operates with an implicit assumption of what the future will be like.”<sup>3</sup>

It is not easy, however, to discern how a paradigm may shape perceptions of political reality. Traditional models of foreign policy decision-making do not focus explicitly on the epistemics of “understandings” which are vital to this endeavor. Such models—“rational choice,” “bureaucratic politics,” and “crisis behavior”—have either emphasized the political, environmental, and/or structural dimensions of policymaking or analyzed the process through which a collective understanding of a situation has been reached.

Close to the issue of epistemology is the cognitive approach, for the belief system of foreign policy practitioners is a “set of lenses through which information concerning the physical and social environment is received.”<sup>4</sup> Studies on how bureaucracies “think” reveal that a collective understanding of a situation is arrived as a result of the performance of a large number of individuals who apply concepts from an “analytical communal inventory.” Such inventories are formed through complex and ill-defined intellectual interaction among foreign policy actors, bureaucratic experts, scholars, and journalists. But even the leading experts in this field have failed to agree on how the two key elements in the “cognitive map” of the actors—broad fundamentals and the more narrowly proscribed instrumental beliefs—interact in discerning the kinetics of international reality. This is due to the fact that this model, epistemically, is based on a dominant assumption that is too static and limited, for decision-makers in charge of apprising the situation cannot always be identified readily, and their beliefs and perceptions cannot always be deduced through cognitive mapping, simulation, or other analytical devices.

Studies of foreign policy culture offer an alternative for tracking paradigms used in discerning international reality. This literature shows how enduring patterns of thought, symbols, and values affect policy deliberations and inform perception of the future. Although direct empirical links between prevalent intellectual modes and foreign policy practitioners are hard to demonstrate, they are necessarily pervasive. One scholar used the image from Indian cosmology to describe how fundamental beliefs affect practitioners. “The table at which policy-makers sit is like the platform . . . on which the world stands; under it is a pyramid of arbitrary assumptions, untested and indeed untestable hypothesis and imprecise measures.”<sup>5</sup> While unquestionably true, this definition is too broad to capture the paradigmatic assumptions that underlie a given forecasting episode.

To transcend these limits requires a more dialectically oriented psychological, sociological, and ethnographic approach. Ralph Pettman, a leading authority on the epistemology of foreign policy, argued that the entire community of discourse on a given issue should be studied to identify the paradigms that determine how practitioners conceive of foreign realities. Giandomenico Majone, in his *Evidence, Argument and Persuasion in the Policy Process*, formalized this

proposition. Majone defined the *discursive community* as all those who share an active interest in a certain policy domain—academics, public intellectuals, political actors, lay experts, advocates, journalists, and others. Because such a community is loosely joined and each of its members has a different (but hard to estimate) impact, Majone suggested that the focus of inquiry should involve the entire discursive community rather than selected participants thereof.<sup>6</sup>

The “thinking professions” have a major impact on policies; intellectual scholars create a “climate of ideas,” define situations, and mold the perspectives of policymakers. Given their pervasiveness, “academic pens leave a mark . . . [for] policymakers’ basic understanding of their world seldom differs fundamentally from [that of] social scientists.” Over time, they create an “almost rigid, congealed mass of conventional wisdom.” Yet, the influence they wield is unpredictable, indirect, and difficult to measure, for “ideas are not consumer goods shipped from intellectual warehouses . . . to be retailed in the executive branch or on Capitol Hill.” And one commentator has observed bluntly that, perhaps for this reason, policymakers “have seldom given much heed to the writings of theorists.”<sup>7</sup>

Still, the use of the output of a discursive community for comprehending how forecasting occurs makes it possible to amalgamate the features of the more traditional approaches to decision-making with the elements of political culture and the epistemology of using collective concepts.

An analysis of the Israeli discursive community is especially useful in understanding the Oslo peace process as it was heavily shaped by the academic-intellectual paradigms of the day. Indeed, this book is based on the assumption that a dialectical relation exists between such paradigms and the way in which collective concepts inform politicians, bureaucrats, and intelligence officials. To restate the Kuhnian proposition, paradigms developed in the relevant branches of social knowledge influence the epistemology of foreign policy practitioners who are responsible for predicting and managing political change. In turn, political reality influences the structuring and restructuring of these paradigms. This interaction is essentially inseparable; however, for analytical purposes, elements of this process can be isolated and sequenced.

First, this study discusses the series of paradigms that evolved in the discourse of the relations between Israel and the Palestinians since 1967. After decades of acute struggle unfolding against the background of the Cold War conflict, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Gulf War in 1991 were said to have changed the Middle East, offering a conflict resolution “ripeness” moment. Dubbed the New Middle East, the paradigm drove the effort of Israeli peace activists and their Western supporters to initiate the Oslo negotiations that ended with the Declaration of Principles. Although the New Middle East paradigm engendered a vocal critique, the enthusiastic support of the academic-intellectual community, elite media, and parts of the intelligence/security establishment virtually assured

its dominance. Not coincidentally, members of this community were engaged both in the drafting of the Accord and in the variety of plans and programs deemed necessary for its implementation.

Second, this book demonstrates how these paradigmatic assumptions shaped the peace process, including the stage-by-stage approach, the efforts at confidence-building measures, and the prominence accorded to the economic underpinnings of peace, capped by the vision for an economic union between Israel, Palestine, and ultimately, other states in the region. Key to the peace process was the creation of a progressive democratic Palestinian Authority under the leadership of Yasser Arafat, envisioned as the Palestinian incarnation of Nelson Mandela. The credibility of the core New Middle East assumptions, however, was challenged by the mismanaged, corrupt, and violent PA and the unpredictable behavior of Arafat and his inability or unwillingness to control Islamist terrorism. The terror and tumult generated by the failed state-to-be had eroded Labor's mandate to deal with Israeli Right, and in due course, forced it into a punitive policy of territorial closures and physical separation. Bypassing the interim stage policy, the Camp David summit strove to reach a final agreement while assuring a permanent separation between Israel and the Palestinian entity.

Third, this work demonstrates that advocates of the New Middle East paradigm were undermined by the failure of the Oslo peace, the subsequent bloody Al Aqsa Intifada, and the rise of Islamist militancy. With conflict resolution seemingly impossible and "peace now" rendered ethereal, the new dominant view emphasizes the durability of the old Middle East and a return to the more modest goal of conflict maintenance and management of regional geopolitics.

The structure of this book reflects the above research strategy. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the evolution of the Israeli approaches to the Palestinian problem. Chapters 2–7 use a *thematic chronology* in the analysis of the Oslo peace. Chapter 2 details the path to the negotiations and the premises that underpinned the Accord. Chapter 3 discusses the evolution of the PA, considered the linchpin of the peace process, into a failed proto-state. Chapter 4 analyzes Labor's uphill struggle to implement the Accord in spite of the progressively repudiated legitimacy of Arafat. Chapter 5 details the efforts of the Likud government to effect a midcourse "correction" of the Oslo peace. Chapters 6–7 scrutinize the efforts of Labor to bypass PA violations of interim provisions to effect a final peace settlement. The concluding Chapter 8 analyzes the predictive shortcomings of the Oslo peace, conceptualized as a synergistically interacting failure at the paradigmatic, foreign policy, and intelligence levels.

Work of this scope could not have been undertaken without adequate data. Unlike the failure of prediction in the 1973 War, the Oslo debacle was not formally investigated by the Israeli government. Still, throughout the peace process, and especially after its collapse, a large body of literature has emerged on the subject. Most of the Israeli Oslo architects, some of their Palestinian counterparts,

and a few American leaders have written biographical accounts and/or have granted extensive interviews. Although such material tends to be self-serving and is tainted by hindsight wisdom, it elucidates their perceptions of the public/secret process that was occurring. Supplementing an appreciation of the Palestinian mind-set are well-informed biographies of Yasser Arafat and documents seized by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) in the PA headquarters in Ramallah. To round out the picture, the author interviewed a large number of politicians, intelligence officials, and academics/intellectuals associated with the peace process, including former Prime Minister Ehud Barak, heads of Mossad and Military Intelligence, and the chiefs of their analytical divisions.

To preserve the integrity of the discursive approach, however, a major effort was made to use materials that were *contemporaneous* to the period under discussion, particularly those reports, writings, and/or interviews that had predictive/forecasting implications.

## **The Theory and Practice of Conflict Resolution: The Israeli-Palestinian Struggle**

Throughout much of modern history, the study of conflict was part of the field of international relations (IR) that focused on state behavior, balance of power, and deterrence. Using these tools, two powerful IR theories—realism and neorealism—sought to explain how conflicts between states are generated and settled. Underlying the realist paradigm was the notion that international reality is anarchic and prone to violence rather than harmony and peace. A group of social scientists disaffected with traditional IR searched for alternative ways to conceptualize conflict and to achieve peace. Spanning the second part of the twentieth century, a number of theoretical traditions have emerged from this quest, but the degree to which they can validly be applied to the chronic Israeli-Palestinian clash is unclear.

### **PEACE STUDIES, CONFLICT RESOLUTION, AND RIPENESS THEORIES**

Peace studies were developed to cope with the tensions of the Cold War and the nuclear arms race. At the applied level, a growing cadre of peace researchers participated in conferences, workshops, and simulations designed to influence the foreign policy discourse. One such forum, the Pugwash Conference, evolved into a high-profile advocate for nuclear disarmament. The creation of the government-funded U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP) in 1981 and the decision of major foundations in the United States and Europe to support peace research resulted in a huge increase in the number of peace studies programs, academic journals, and a vast body of scholarship devoted to creating a peaceful international community. While heterodox in nature, peace research rejected



the notion that conflict and violence are the default position in international reality. As the inaugural issue of *Peace and Conflict* declared, for example, the journal “was guided by a world in which peaceful means of resolving conflict prevail upon violent ones.”<sup>1</sup>

One branch of the new discipline, under the lead of Anatol Rapoport and other prominent rational choice theorists, was initially preoccupied with rational choice, bargaining, and negotiation theory. However, radicalized by the Vietnam War, Rapoport had moved to Canada where he had established the Science for Peace, a nongovernmental organization (NGO), which spearheaded academically based peace studies programs. Science for Peace was also in the forefront of creating NGOs to monitor military behavior of states with regard to local populations caught up in the conflict.

A strand in the European peace research tradition went one step further. The Norwegian scholar Johan Galtung used a neo-Marxist approach to argue that conflict is caused by Western colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism rather than the anarchic nature of international society. Galtung urged broadening the notion of peace to encompass the fight for global equality, for freedom from all forms of “cultural imperialism,” and for basic human needs. Through his influential *Journal of Peace Research*, Galtung called for a rebalancing of relations between the “topdogs and underdogs” of the international system, his term for Western colonial countries and their former Third World charges. Although the United States had no colonial history, Noam Chomsky, a prominent neo-Marxist academic, used Galtung’s “topdog-underdog” dichotomy to blame Washington’s policies for creating conflict and dissension around the globe.<sup>2</sup>

Conflict resolution (CR), a newly emergent discipline in late 1970s, was less critical of the United States but even more removed from traditional IR. Derived from social psychology, CR has been attributed to Herbert Kelman (a Harvard social psychologist who offered a course titled “Social Psychological Approaches to International Relations”) and Joseph Montville, a State Department official. They held that intractable conflicts could not be solved through traditional diplomatic statecraft. Rather, CR required use of an array of tools ranging from confidence-building measures (CBM) to reconciliation and “cathartic” forgiveness. To overcome deep-seated hostilities, the CR approach advocated contacts among “citizen diplomats,” academics, former politicians, and retired military and intelligence officers in specially designed workshops or conferences. Less structured and sheltered from media scrutiny, this so-called “Track II” diplomacy was said to be ideal for exploring creative and unorthodox ideas in a nonthreatening environment. Central to the CR approach was the role of the “scholar-practitioner” who, in Kelman’s words, could understand “the parties’ needs and concerns, their hopes and fears” while maintaining an objective posture.<sup>3</sup>

Transcending such elite endeavors, some CR theorists urged a change of the collective belief system of longtime adversaries. Accordingly, reduction in intergroup

conflict could be achieved through “identity affirmation,” increase in empathy, and the overcoming of the image of the enemy “other.” At a minimum, changing mass perceptions required a balanced coverage of events by the media; a more ambitious effort called for rewriting the history of the conflict with a view of eliminating the “foundational myths” and purging offending images of the “other.” If successful, such a rewrite of collective memory was expected to remove existential fears and perceptions of victimhood that were said to hinder reconciliation.<sup>4</sup>

Yet another approach, ripeness theory, spanned systemic features of IR and diffuse psychological processes. Developed by William Zartman, an Africa expert, ripeness theory stipulated that intractable conflicts can be solved when the leadership and/or the public of antagonistic countries shift from a conflict to cooperative perception. Ripeness theory was embraced by the USIP and the Brookings Institution to train American foreign policy practitioners—schooled in traditional diplomacy—to discern such alleged shift as a way to settle long-festered conflicts. Epistemologically, the ripeness construct was premised on difficult-to-measure psychological changes in perception, but it was commonly understood that a fortuitous combination of international events, external pressure, and internal dynamics would trigger the shift to cooperation.<sup>5</sup>

These and other advocates of peace research, CR, and ripeness theory were eager to apply their conceptualizations to an extensive list of intractable conflicts, including Northern Ireland, Cyprus, and Kashmir. However, the Middle East conflict, the “holy grail” of the field, attracted the lion’s share of attention. By the early 1980s, these academics and their followers had firmly trained their attention onto the struggle between Israel and the Palestinians.

### **THE MAKING OF A HISTORIC CONFLICT: LAND, LEGITIMACY, AND SOVEREIGNTY**

The origins of the conflict are well known. Jews had maintained a continuous presence in their “promised land” since Joshua conquered Jericho in the twelfth century BCE. However, the modern Jewish immigration to Palestine at the beginning of the twentieth century was met with stiff opposition from the local Arab population. Following repeated failures to reconcile Jewish and Palestinian Arab interests, the United Nations voted to partition Palestine in 1947. After rejecting the UN decision, the Palestinians, with the help of a number of Arab states, fought to dislodge the Jewish community in Palestine. In 1948, when the Jews reestablished the independent state of Israel, an estimated 700,000 Palestinian Arab refugees settled in Jordan, in Egypt-controlled Gaza Strip, in Lebanon, and in Syria.

The Six Day War (of June 1967) brought some two million Palestinians (formerly living in lands controlled by Jordan and Egypt) under Israel’s control. Less than a month later, the wartime Labor government decided to exchange the newly acquired territories for Arab recognition and peace. However, in August,

Arab leaders meeting in Khartoum rejected the Israeli overtures by announcing the “three no’s”—no negotiations, no recognition, and no peace. With Labor rebuffed, the Greater Israel Movement, a coalition of religious Zionists and hard-line nationalists, declared part of the newly acquired land to be historical Israel, *Eretz Yisrael Hashlema*, or Greater Israel. For the former, the Six Day War was a fulfillment of a messianic prophecy, in which the return of the land was considered to be *aqavta de’mashiha*, the showing of the heel of the messiah, a portent of the coming of *geuala*, redemption. For the latter, the allure of history was enhanced by the strategic imperative of defensible borders. The Likud government headed by Menachem Begin that came to power in 1977 provided the political muscle for the growing settler movement. By the late 1980s, the settlement drive, spearheaded by Gush Emunim, the Bloc of Faithful, numbered some one hundred thousand Israelis in the territories.<sup>6</sup>

Proclaiming Israel’s right to the territories was one thing, but controlling a large hostile population was another. In 1967, Defense Minister Moshe Dayan sought to establish a “low-cost” occupation regime through the retention of much of the Jordanian framework and the running of a low-profile, “invisible” military administration. Major General Shlomo Gazit who headed the research division in Aman, Israel’s Military Intelligence, noted that Dayan wanted to create the impression that “nothing had changed in their [Palestinian] lives.” The unimpeded access to the Israeli labor market quickly raised the standard of living in the territories. According to Amnon Cohen, a Middle East expert at the Hebrew University who became Dayan’s adviser on the territories, this was a winning formula for keeping Palestinians quiescent. Cohen, a senior reserve officer in Aman, characterized Palestinians as patient and passive, despite their nationalist rhetoric. This “they bark but don’t bite” optimism was not universally shared by the intelligence community, especially as the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), created under the auspices of the Arab League in 1964 by groups like Fatah, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) had grown in popularity. Five years later, the Arab League picked Yasser Arafat, the leader of Fatah, to chair the PLO. Arafat, an ardent champion of Palestinian nationalism, called for a violent struggle of liberation. In 1974, the PLO adopted the goal of establishing an independent Palestinian state between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean.<sup>7</sup>

The PLO’s ascendancy presented Israel with two problems. Militarily, there was a dramatic increase in terrorist attacks within the Green Line, Israel’s pre-Six Day border. Israeli interests abroad were also targeted; in one high-profile operation, a group of Israeli athletes was massacred during the 1972 Munich Olympics. Yehoshafat Harkabi, a former chief of Aman turned academic, declared that the PLO had embarked on “politicide,” a new strategy of destroying Israel in stages. Although the IDF pushed the PLO out of the territories, Arafat established a new stronghold in Jordan where his forces challenged the Hashemite Kingdom.

After King Hussein expelled Arafat from Jordan in 1970, the PLO moved its headquarters to Lebanon, which served as a base for the shelling of northern Israel and for launching often spectacular terrorist attacks in which scores of Israelis died. Though Palestinian terrorism was not considered an existential threat, the continuous disruption of daily life in the Galilee and bold attacks in the heart of the country embarrassed the security-oriented Begin government.

Politically, buoyed by his success in taking on Israel, Arafat, working through the Palestinian National Front (PNF), managed to displace the traditional clan-based leaders in the West Bank, many of whom were loyal to the Hashemites. In 1974, the PLO declared itself to be the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, a claim accepted by the Arab League and the United Nations. Worried about the growing popular support for the PLO, the Israeli authorities resolved to cultivate a less confrontational alternative leadership. In the late 1970s, Menachem Milson, a Hebrew University professor who served as an adviser to the Likud government, conceived of the Village Leagues, a well-financed group of clan-based politicians; nevertheless, it was repudiated by the majority of the Palestinians. Following the Village Leagues debacle, the General Security Service (Shin Bet), in charge of security and intelligence in the West Bank, recommended supporting the emerging Islamist movement. Among others, the Israeli authorities were involved in the creation of the Gaza Islamic Center and the al Najah University in Nablus. As one senior intelligence official explained, cultivating the Islamists was seen as a way to countermand the PLO.<sup>8</sup>

Not surprisingly, the Camp David agreement with Egypt in 1979 made little difference in managing the occupation. According to the peace accord, the Palestinians were to be given limited autonomy, but the PLO and the PNF's successor, the National Guidance Committee, vehemently rejected the proposal. On orders from the PLO, the Palestinians refused to comply with Israel's unilateral efforts to provide a semblance of autonomy. When, in 1980, the military administration was restructured as the Civilian Administration, it brought few cheers. To the contrary, Israeli authorities were faced with the fact that, after years of increasingly harsh measures, including arrests and deportations, Arafat and the PLO were firmly in control.<sup>9</sup>

The growing threat of the "state within a state" that the PLO had created in Lebanon prompted Ariel Sharon (the Minister of Defense in the Begin cabinet) and Raphael Eitan (the IDF Chief of Staff) to urge an offensive into Lebanon. The 1982 Lebanon War proved to be a watershed in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; the PLO forces were soundly defeated and Arafat had to relocate to the distant outpost of Tunis. Although observers disagreed on the future of Arafat, the PLO, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, CR theorists were optimistic that the war had provided a real breakthrough. The new resolve to end the conflict was fueled by the large and influential peace movement that the war in Lebanon had stimulated. Alongside the leading Peace Now group, a plethora of NGOs had

emerged. Many of the peace activists who had come of age during the Lebanon War went on to occupy prominent positions in academia and the media, creating a movement for solving the conflict.

### THEORY IN PRACTICE: PERSPECTIVES ON SOLVING THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

Taking an early lead, Galtung used his “topdog-underdog” theory of conflict to argue that Israel’s creation, part of a larger British colonial scheme, was a “mistake” that, like Rhodesia, another alien “ethnic island,” had fomented conflict in the region. Galtung rejected the various claims of legitimacy of the Jewish state and argued that the original “mistake” should be redressed by creating a federation in the territory of the Palestinian Mandate that would empower Jordanians, Palestinians, and Jews to take charge of their own cantons. Edward Said turned Galtung’s original “mistake” into the “original sin” theory, decrying Israel’s “colonial creation.” This notion was picked up by Said’s disciples in the Middle East Studies Association (MESA) and transferred into the emerging field of colonial studies. The *Middle East Report*, a publication of the radical Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP), and the *Journal of Palestine Studies* took the position that the only “atonement” for the “original sin” was through the creation of a secular democratic state in the entire region of Israel, West Bank, and Gaza.<sup>10</sup>

In Israel, only fringe communist and Trotskyite groups shared the radical peace studies view. One high-profile advocate was Uri Avinery, the publisher of the tabloid *Haolam Haze*. Another was Michael Warshawsky (Micado), a member of the Revolutionary Communist League “Mazpen” who, in 1984, founded the Alternative Information Center (AIC) dedicated to monitoring the Israeli occupation. Warshawsky’s wife, Leah Tsemel, a board member of the AIC, made her name defending Palestinians accused of terrorist attacks.<sup>11</sup>

Distancing himself from critical peace studies, Kelman used CR to promote practical measures to achieve peace. In the late 1970s, the Harvard professor established a workshop where Israeli and Palestinian scholars and practitioners could meet for intense “joint thinking” sessions. Among the Israeli participants of the so-called Harvard Seminar were Shlomo Gazit and other intelligence and military officials, as well as the respected *Haaretz* military analyst, Zeev Schiff, Labor politicians, and prominent academics. Yezid Sayigh, Camille Mansour, Ziad abu Ziad, and Ghassan al Khatib and other academics and activists represented the Palestinian side. Kelman hoped that the ideas generated in his seminar would subsequently be circulated among the Israeli and Palestinian leadership and spread via the media to the public. In the words of one Israeli attendant, the participants would create a “critical mass” of people capable of changing mutually hostile perceptions.<sup>12</sup>

Alongside his applied work, Kelman was busy expanding theoretical parameters for breaking the historical impasse. The Harvard professor stipulated that

in order to move the parties to the negotiating table, the conflict had to be presented in a symmetrical way, even if the underlying reality was asymmetrical. Using this “functional parallel,” Kelman was able to claim that both the Israeli Jews and the Palestinians were equally responsible for creating the conflict and for perpetuating it. He applied the same symmetry to the proposed solution: direct communication between the Palestinians and the Israelis; mutual recognition of national identity, legitimacy, and sovereignty of the other side; and the creation of two states, coexisting side by side in peace.<sup>13</sup>

As a “scholar-practitioner,” Kelman knew that the Israelis would not engage in negotiations with the PLO chairman, a reviled terrorist. To change this image and present Arafat as a leader ready to make a historical compromise, Kelman interviewed Arafat twice. He gave the chairman high marks for his cognitive style, pragmatism, and flexible thinking. Though Kelman admitted that Arafat did not specifically recognize Israel’s right to exist, he felt that Arafat’s hints (as interpreted by Kelman) were “more convincing than direct statements of support for a peaceful settlement which are subject to deliberate manipulation.” In 1983, Kelman presented these ideas to the International Center for Peace in the Middle East, a leftist Israeli group that advocated dialogue with the PLO.<sup>14</sup>

Stephen P. Cohen, Kelman’s student and associate, furthered the CR drive by creating the Institute for Middle East Peace and Development in 1979. Among Cohen’s early backers were Cyrus Vance, President Carter’s Secretary of State, and the Slim-Fast mogul, S. Daniel Abraham. Cohen, who developed an impressive range of contacts in the region, was instrumental in arranging a meeting between Yossi Ginosar, a former Shin Bet official, and PLO representatives. Seeking to change public perceptions about the viability of a settlement, the Institute took a lead in financing research on public opinion toward CR among Palestinians and Israeli Jews. Cohen funded a comprehensive survey of the attitudes of both peoples, led by two prominent Israeli social scientists, Ephraim Yuchtman-Yaar and Michael Inbar. They found that all their respondents were pragmatic enough to distinguish between the normative claims of Greater Palestine and Greater Israel and what was realistically achievable. Equally encouraging, from the CR perspective, the scholars noted that both populations consider the United States to be an honest broker that could mediate the conflict.<sup>15</sup>

In Europe, Track II diplomacy found an eager following among a group of Scandinavian socialist leaders. Leading the way was Jan Egeland, Norway’s deputy foreign minister who, as a young political scientist, envisioned a major mediation role for his small country. In 1982, the Norwegian Labor party helped to establish FAFO, the Norwegian acronym for the Institute for Applied Social Research, which tracked living condition in the occupied territories. FAFO’s associates—Terje Rod Larson, Mona Juul (his wife), and Marianne Heiberg (the wife of the Norwegian Foreign Minister Jorgen Holst)—repeatedly traveled to Tunis to press Arafat to renounce terrorism and to embrace a peaceful solution

to the conflict. Holst's predecessor, Thorvald Stoltenberg, was instrumental in winning over Isaam Sartawi, the leading PLO moderate, to this idea. The Dutch Foreign Minister Max van der Stoep was another early enthusiast of Track II; he initiated numerous meetings between Palestinian moderates and Israeli activists. His Swedish counterpart, Sten Andersson, a longtime head of the Socialist Democratic Party, was convinced that a breakthrough could be achieved because both the Israelis and the Palestinians desired peace.<sup>16</sup>

These and other peace advocates suggested a public relations campaign to improve the image of the PLO. In 1983, Nabil Shaath, an Arafat confidant, met in Washington with Robert Keith Grey, head of Gray and Company Public Communication International, to discuss a deal. Although Gray changed his mind after having visited Tunis, public relations efforts to present Arafat as a peacemaker proceeded apace. In 1984, the British journalist Alan Hart, at the invitation of the PLO, published a biography of Arafat. The highly flattering profile purported to show that the PLO chief had moved away from terrorism. Helena Cobban of the Brookings Institution gave an equally upbeat assessment of the PLO in her widely-read book.<sup>17</sup>

While changing the image of the PLO was an uphill struggle, the Europeans had found a receptive audience among the Israeli Left. Shimon Peres, a veteran of the Socialist International who personally knew many of the European activists, was an early convert. A former hard-liner, after Likud's victory in 1977, Peres became convinced that the vision of Greater Israel was incompatible with the country's democratic and Jewish character, a view shared by the influential ideological research unit of the Labor party in Beth Berl and a group of young Laborites headed by Yossi Beilin. Beilin, a political scientist and journalist, believed that academics, with their advantage in policy analysis, would make better politicians than retired generals and party apparatchiks. In 1982 Beilin founded the Mashov faction in the Labor party to work toward a more secular and peaceful Israel. Further to the left was Meretz whose leaders, Yossi Sarid and Shulamit Aloni, were dedicated to Palestinian sovereignty and fought for the strict separation of religion and state.<sup>18</sup>

Beilin, who became a close confidant of Peres, networked with a group of academics and peace activists, including Nimrod Novik, Boaz Karni, Yair Hirschfeld, and Uri Pundak. He put many of his "brain trust" in contact with Peres, who had served as the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the National Unity government in the 1980s. Peres appointed Novik, dubbed a "one person peace industry," to be his political adviser. Beilin knew of FAFO which, over the years, had received assistance from the Bureau of Economic and Social Research of the Histadrut (Israel's labor union) to produce reports on the humanitarian conditions of the Palestinians. Through FAFO and other channels, Beilin and his group were able to conduct informal talks with a number of Palestinian leaders who lived in the territories. More significantly, in 1987, Arafat authorized Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), a

senior member of the Executive Committee of the PLO, to head a small committee to coordinate contacts with Israeli peace activists.<sup>19</sup>

Much as these by-the-book CR projects strived to create momentum, it was the Palestinian Intifada that energized the nascent peace process.

### THE INTIFADA: TURNING A “LOW-COST” OCCUPATION INTO A “HIGH-COST” ONE

By the early 1980s, there were clear indications that the Palestinians were resolved to increase the cost of the occupation. Though the PLO had been forced out of Lebanon, civilian resistance in the territories had actually increased. This was highly unwelcome news for Likud and the Greater Israel movement, which vehemently opposed plans to relinquish Judea and Samaria, the core of Greater Israel. Yitzhak Shamir, who succeeded Begin as Prime Minister in 1983, expressed faith in Israel’s ability to control the territories, but the intelligence community and the IDF were less sure how to deal with a restive and politicized population and the shadowy terrorist elements that it harbored.

Some intelligence problems were structural, stemming from the incoherent and clashing division of labor among the various services. There was competition among Shin Bet (which collected information), the research division in Aman (which wrote the estimates), and the Mossad (which functioned like the Directorate of Operations in the CIA). During crisis periods, tensions turned the intelligence community into what one insider despairingly described as “a jungle.” *Vaadat Rashi Sherutim (Varash)*, a committee of the heads of the three services, was expected to coordinate assessments, but persisting disagreements were often manifesting in anonymous leaks to the press. Personal clashes were exacerbated by politicization as the chiefs of all the intelligence services were appointed by the government that changed hands frequently. For example, any head of Aman who contemplated a promotion to Chief of Staff (a frequent career move) could hardly afford to offend the prime minister. As one observer put it, there was a tendency in Aman to “fall in line” with the politics of the cabinet *de jure*.<sup>20</sup>

Others were methodological, as the political analysis of the Palestinian society posed daunting problems for intelligence personnel. Though in charge of political estimates, Aman—like the American Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA)—was geared toward strategic and tactical military analysis. When Aman was caught by surprise by Anwar Sadat’s peace initiative, Gazit, by then Aman’s chief, asked scholars from the Shiloah Center at Tel Aviv University (the forerunner of the Dayan Center) to generate a list of “peace indicators.” Gazit and his successors tried to expand the analysis of “basic processes,” their terminology for social and economic trends and public opinion surveys. Shin Bet, which specialized in counterterrorism, was highly reluctant to track social trends, leaving the task to Civil Administration officials who periodically “talked” to selected groups of Palestinians.



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